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CONSIDERATIONS
ON THE
ECONOMICS OF THE FREE CHURCH
FOR 1844.



BY THOMAS CHALMERS, D.D.

THE greatest difficulty which we had to encounter in the formation of our present system, and the greatest to which we are still exposed in the working of it, both proceed from one and the same cause—and that is the insensibility of most minds to the power of littles. We got no help from them at first, and now that our weekly payments do amount to thousands and tens of thousands of pounds, they are quite filled with wonderment, and tell us that it is marvellous in their eyes. Yet they have become no wiser by the exhibition. They look to it merely as an individual phenomenon with a sort of gaping astonishment, but take no lesson from it. More especially, they seem as unschooled in the power of littles as before; or at least if they now admit the power of littles for building up a fund, they have yet another lesson to learn—and that is *the equal power of littles for the dissipation of it*. In regard to the first of these lessons they remind us of a family in humble life, whom some kind philanthropic visitor has induced to put by a small weekly saving from each member of the household who earns somewhat; and are perfectly amazed, when through the medium of a Providential Bank, or otherwise, they receive a five or a ten pounds to divide amongst them at the end of the year. In regard to the second of these lessons, they are like the household servants, who, when a stock of fuel, or whatever else in bulk or wholesale quantity has been got in, think that they can never come to the end of it; and so if they were not kept in check, would dissipate in a very few weeks what with careful husbandry should have served them as many months. It is truly a possible thing, that this exercise of the reflective faculties might be as much wanting, even with men of education, in the matters of business and finance, as with these toil-worn children of humanity. Certain it is that if there were men who, not conversant in the arithmetic of littles, were at the commencement of our associations incredulous of their result—these are the very men of whose demands I should be most afraid, and for the very same reason too, that is, because they are not conversant in the arithmetic of littles; and accordingly, now that the associations are working out a produce, their expectations from it of all sorts of aid have become quite unbounded. It were indeed a great misfortune if they, who do so little for the formation of this fund, should have the means or the access by which to injure it through their reckless expenditure—or if what is so laboriously reared by others, should be cruelly scattered in their hands. They who take so little part in the synthesis by which to compound it, should take as little in the analysis by which to disburse or decompound it back again. Before they can know how to divide, they must first learn how to multiply.

It was unfortunate that the idea had got abroad of ours being a Committee of miscellaneous distribution for all sorts of exigencies, instead of being, what it strictly is, a Committee for the single purpose of gathering in money to be again given out in a half yearly dividend for the sustentation of our Free Church Ministry. An Edinburgh Committee is not qualified to sit in judgment on all the special cases and difficulties that occur throughout the provinces. It is obvious that had this been one exercise of our functions, we should soon have laid ourselves open to interminable and ever increasing demands from all parts of the country. We have no fund from which to meet these demands. Our proper business is to gather in the monies raised from the friends of our Church, whether for the building of places of worship, or for the sustentation of the ministry. As far as the building money was concerned there could be no difficulty, as we had just to hand it all over to the Building Committee to whom it belonged, and let them be responsible for its expenditure. And in regard to the sustentation money there needs to be as little difficulty, which is just to receive it all, and report it all at the end of the year, or half year, to the General Assembly, and let them decide on the proper dividend for the ministers—and if surplus there be, let them allocate this surplus in any way which seemeth to them good. No Metropolitan Committee, even at the best, can rightly or adequately fulfil the task of providing for all the multiform and miscellaneous demands which would infallibly have thickened around us, had it been our function

to meet and satisfy all these. We should soon have found the duties thus imposed upon us to have been of a most impracticable as well as perilous description; and that if we really did entertain all sorts of proposals, as for a horse to one applicant, and a house-rent to a second, and an allowance for the conveyance of furniture in a case of translation to a third, and the payment of his life insurance to a fourth, and to a fifth the payment in advance of his next term's dividend—we should soon have been left without the means of any dividend at all, so as to frustrate altogether the main design of our formation.

Thus it is, that just as we have suffered from the scepticism of men who have no idea of the power of littles to build up—so may we suffer from the recklessness of men, nay even of the same men, who have just as little idea of the power of littles to dissipate. Why, as one specimen of the disposition to make common good of us at all hands, it is just the other day that we were asked to make compensation for a loss sustained by some ejected grave-diggers of the north. Now this, like many other causes, might be a most needful and most meritorious one. It might be worthy of a separate subscription, nay, if the Assembly so choose, of a separate committee. But the idea of its being provided for by us is truly preposterous; and I should have passed it over without any mention at all, had it not presented an apt exemplification of the extravagant conception that prevails of us everywhere, and in virtue of which we suffer at both ends—deemed to be so overflowing rich, that on the one hand we are looked upon by very many as in no need of their little help, and therefore are most inadequately supported; and on the other hand, are looked upon by more than enough as quite able to meet their little demand or necessity, and so are liable to be most profusely and heedlessly drawn upon. In both cases there is the same insensibility that we have already complained of to the power of littles. Were the friends of our cause but rightly impressed by this lesson, and on the one side each were to give us what they easily might, while on the other all were to spare us as much as possible, we should soon get over all our difficulties; nor would it be long ere we presented the magnificent spectacle of a nation that had been outraged in its dearest principles, not only cleaving to them with resolute adherence, but rearing a Church commensurate to the necessities of all her people, and that could at once perpetuate and extend the sacred lessons for which she has suffered to every quarter of the land.

And it does aggravate one's sense both of hardship and insecurity, when these drafts upon us ab extra are caused by an expenditure that we do not approve of. Now to such an expenditure we will be subjected, if we do not take timeous care in the matter of our Church Extension. Not that we can disapprove of this object, for what can be of more vital importance than the extension of the Church? It is in very proportion to our value for this great enterprise, that we desire to see it gone about as economically as possible—for then with our existing means we shall be able to carry it out so much farther, and so to prosecute it as extensively as possible. To be more particular. We do not want a smaller number of licentiates employed in this glorious work—would that there were three times more of them. Neither do we want them inferiorly paid. But we do think that, instead of being paid by us, they might, in the great majority of instances, and would in general, be most cheerfully paid by the respective congregations among whom they labour. Nay, their travelling expences form an item, which the friends of the Church in all parts of the country could lighten indefinitely; and to the habit of defraying which, the people themselves, with a few special exceptions, could most easily be brought. It were extremely hard, if, on the moment of having renounced our endowments, and of our being exclusively thrown upon voluntary resources—that then we should take upon ourselves expences which no other Church, not even those of them which are established and endowed, ever think of undertaking. The fund out of which these charges are drawn met with little help or countenance at the outset, because looked upon by many as a nostrum, or piece of vain Utopianism which it were utterly absurd to think would come to anything. But now that it is formed, or rather only yet in process of formation, these very parties, as if seized upon all at once by the opposite imagination, would now deal with it as freely and fearlessly as if it were wholly inexhaustible.

As a proof of the perfect safety wherewith we might devolve upon the people expences which ought never to be laid upon us, let me submit the following little narrative to the consideration of my readers:—One of our churches in the country fell vacant the other day, and had to be provided for a Sabbath or two with supplies from Edinburgh. There were circumstances which implicated me in the details of this arrangement, and I caused it to be understood that the travelling expences behaved to be paid by the congregation—a thing no sooner proposed than it was most heartily gone into as a matter of course. I had omitted, however, to mention the remuneration that should be given to the preacher; and in a few days after he had

accomplished his service, I caused him to be written to on this matter. The following is his reply:—"In reply to yours of the 23rd instant, I have merely to state, that, during the two months I was employed, only two of the congregations paid even the expences. I received no remuneration from any of the congregations. When at ———, however, not only were the expences paid, but I was requested to state what was the ordinary additional allowance made by congregations to preachers. I replied that no remuneration whatever had been tendered by any of the congregations, and that, therefore, I would receive none from them. I feel grateful for the kindness I received when at ———. They requested me to receive additional remuneration; but as I was engaged by and received my appointment from the Committee, I answered, that that matter lay with them. I may also state, that it was by the Committee that I was remunerated for the services of two months last autumn." Now, this was all very handsome on the part of the congregation, and very natural as well as very handsome on the part of the ecclesiastical labourer. But I ask, what is to be the consequence in the long run, if the delusion is thus to be fostered, and carried as if by contagion from one part of the country to another, that ours is a perennial and overflowing treasury, out of which every thing is to be paid? What was necessary perhaps at the first, might prove ruinous if persevered in.

Let me add one word more on the subject of a strict, because a most needful economy. It has been said that if this lesson is to be insisted on, we must give up the Highlands of Scotland, for there the travelling expences must all be paid. Our only reply to this is, Try; and see whether there too, if not a total, at least a very large and important retrenchment might not be made. Our last anecdote which demonstrates the complete willingness of the people to help themselves, if we will only not spoil them out of a habit so wholesome, relates to a place not so very far from our Highlands, as not to satisfy me that even that region is far from hopeless. And the following anecdote of what took place the other day in the heart of the Highlands supplies an evidence *a fortiori* upon the point—for it is a case not of our friends there being called upon to help themselves in the matter of their own supplies, but to help us in a matter of service. One of our ministers made the patriotic offer to go over a large tract of country, with a view to form and stimulate our Associations, an offer that was most gladly and gratefully accepted. I omitted, however, in the interview I had with him, to speak of his travelling expences which of course it was for us to pay. I therefore wrote him to this effect, but at the same time said that we were not just in such a state of affluence as many held us to be, and that it would be well if he availed himself of such gratuitous cars or gigs, as I was sure that such of our adherents as had them would most cheerfully provide him with. At the end of his expedition he wrote me an account of it, from which I extract these few sentences:—"In the letter with which you favoured me, you desired me to send in a note of my travelling expences; but as I did not receive your letter till after my return home, and so did not keep an accurate note of my outlay, I cannot furnish any proper account of it. As nearly as I can remember, I expended about L.6; but to be sure of erring on the safe side we may reckon it at L.4 10s., and the remainder if any will turn up in the Sustentation Fund. I anticipated your suggestion about free gigs, and travelled 200 miles in such conveyances; but as my journey extended to more than 300 miles additional, I could not carry economy farther than I did." Men of sublimer genius will despise all this; but it will eventually tell the Free Church many thousand pounds, could we only deliver its friends of their ruinous imagination, that with us there lies a boundless sufficiency, on the strength of which ignoble frugality and ignoble arithmetic might be given to the winds.

Should we economise as we might, the sum of Two Thousand Pounds will go as far as Ten Thousand under a system, which, however necessary at the first, ought not now to be continued. Or, what is the better, and at the same time true way of putting it, we might with the same means do five times more than we otherwise could for the Christian good of the people of Scotland—a consideration this which ought to sanctify and ennoble in the eye of the Church's friends, that virtue of economy, which, on grounds of principle the highest and most sacred, should be most strenuously recommended by all, and most strictly observed by all.

This much, however, must be said on behalf of the Preaching Stations. In many if not in most instances, where such have been established, Associations also are at work—not so productive on the average as the others which stand connected with fully and regularly served Congregations, nor can it be expected that they should. If the payment of our Licentiates shall henceforth come under the care of our Financial Committee, and we think that it ought, it will be our duty to foster these embryo and young Associations to the uttermost, and to link them in some such way with the allowances for probationers, as to maintain an analogy between

the economics of our Preaching Stations, and the general economics for the support of the ministry throughout the Church at large.

But though the maintenance of Probationers and Catechists should thus be devolved on the Financial Committee, this ought by no means to supersede the functions of another Committee, say of the Home Mission, whose proper office it is to look out for those ecclesiastical labourers, who may be sent forth on the yet unoccupied parts of Scotland. We should have nought to do but with the payment of them—a business which we ought so to manage, that, with the aid of the people themselves amongst whom they labour, we might bear very lightly indeed, if at all, on the Sustentation Fund. Yet though we should thus undertake for all the expences of this department, it would not do away with the necessity for the Home Mission having an independent revenue of their own. And this they of course would continue to have in their present Annual Collection—an income which has been devoted last year to the assistance of students who were prosecuting their education for the ministry. But what might be necessary at the first setting up of a new Church, might be neither right nor expedient as a permanent system, and throughout the future stages of its history. We shall therefore endeavour with all possible brevity to point out why it is that we look on this mode of expenditure as one that might be indefinitely abridged, and perhaps at length altogether abandoned; and how it is that the money which would thus be left in the hands of the Home Mission, admits of a most beneficial, and at the same time, a wholly characteristic application.

The following considerations will serve, we think, to prove, that the expenditure of any public fund now applied in aid to such students as might require it for the prosecution of their education at College, might with all safety be abridged.

The number of enrolments at the Free Church Theological Seminary last winter was 210. But of these 46, including those from Ireland, were General Students. There were 164 therefore in preparation for the ministry of the Free Church. And it delighted me to learn, that notwithstanding a system of aid flashed ostensibly upon general notice, and provided with means greater than there was any real occasion for—that still, less than a fourth of the whole, or only 39, received any help at all, and most of these a very partial allowance indeed. Such is the moderation of the present outset; but such most assuredly will not be the character of the future process, if this system be persevered in—a system which contains within itself the seeds and the elements of its own mischievous acceleration: And thousands of pounds will not do so much good afterwards, as a very few hundreds administered with the utmost caution and vigilance and delicacy might do at present. If even some small sum of this sort be at all necessary, could it not be charged in the form of but one of their incidentals on either the Home Mission or Education Committee?—when if gone about strictly and judiciously, it will be found to come upon them as a very rare and occasional charge; or, better still, might not the Presbytery from within whose bounds the students come, easily find the means by which to provide the necessary assistance for the two or three who may require it? Nay, there are Christian philanthropists who individually and unseen would take charge of some deserving protégé of their own. Under such an economy as this no young aspirant of genuine and decided aptitudes for the Christian ministry, who will not one way or other get forward to that vocation which his heart is set upon. Under the present economy again, we may come to have a tenfold greater number of that class of students who are pensioned and paid for; but if the majority of these be lured to the ecclesiastical profession by the bribery of its secular advantages, who would desire to perpetuate a scheme that as yet may have done little or no mischief, but which is fitted by its tendencies, and would be sure in its full blown development to vitiate as well as to oppress the Free Church of Scotland?

Let me here state once for all that I have no ambition for any other extension of our Church than a disinterested and pure extension—urged onward by principle alone, and carried no farther than it will be made to go by these great actuating forces, the love of souls, and a single-hearted apostolic desire for the spread of Christ's kingdom and truth among men. Beyond this I have no appetite for numbers, and would therefore deprecate any such system as is fitted to evoke the sordid and mercenary feelings of our poor fallen humanity, and so to enlist in our service any others than those who are thoroughly and most sacredly devoted to those high and heavenly objects, for which and for which alone a Church is worthy of being supported in the world. I have the most agreeable recollection of my students last winter—collectively speaking high in scholarship and talent, and I rejoice to believe honestly aspiring after the fulfilment of all that is dear whether to piety or true patriotism. I do not know a single instance of their being contaminated by the offers of assistance. The melancholy work of deterioration from this cause com-

mences with small beginnings—so small as in our case to be yet invisible. But I confess that I do have my apprehensions of first perhaps a solitary plague spot, and then a spreading leprosy, from a system of public and ostensible aid. We are quite aware that the Home Mission could not and ought not to abandon all at once their present expenditure in aid of students. They have not only assisted some who are in attendance on the Theological Seminary, but also so many who have attended the preliminary classes. There are some of these cases where this assistance could not suddenly and without due preparation be given up. But let us hope that many such cases might be transferred, and all new cases be henceforth confided to other sources. Meanwhile it would be the high function of this committee, and the highest and most sacred of all, to look out for and decide on the fit agents in carrying on the great work of Church Extension. Their office would be the selecting and the appointment and the right distribution both of our Licentiates and our Catechists; and though the care of their maintenance lies mainly upon us, still the Home Mission should continue to be both a receiving and an expending Committee—receiving their present annual collection as heretofore, and expending it in a way that is far more called for and far more in keeping with their title—that is *in the aiding of weak congregations*.*

The way is now open for a proposal of the utmost magnitude, because of the utmost importance to the future extension of our Church. And let it not be imagined that because of what we will now venture to recommend, the plan of this year would be made capriciously to change and vacillate from the plan of last year. We are most averse to change from one method to another till the first have been fully tried; and the over hasty abandonment of a first scheme to make way for a second, and that again for a third, is just the way to make us lose the benefits of experience altogether. Let the rule of an equal dividend from the General Fund *as far as we are able*, and this supplemented to each minister by his own congregation be persevered in till it is found wanting. But let it be recollected that this was a scheme for the sustentation of the existent ministry, and more especially for the ministers who came out at the disruption. The extension of the Church, and a provision for its new ministers, form an entirely distinct object, and should be provided for on its own distinct principles. More particularly, care should be taken that the secondary object shall not be so provided for, as hurtfully to abridge and far less to annihilate or overbear the primary one. This it will inevitably do, if new ministers are to be treated ad libitum, and each is to have the equal dividend allotted to him, however small the offering may be which comes to the General Fund from the association of his locality. We are not abandoning the principle of an equal dividend. But we are contending for another principle, which will keep up that dividend, and will in the long run be of mighty advantage to all; whereas unless this other principle be admitted, the effect in a very few years will be to stop this further extension of our Church, after having brought down all who are in it beneath the level not to say of a comfortable, but even of a decent livelihood. We shall run ourselves aground and that in a very short time, if we do not proceed with caution, and regulate the doings of the present by our anticipations or rather by the certainties of the future.

It must be quite obvious, that if Associations permit themselves to be lulled into the delusive confidence of a sufficient dividend being made good by the collective efforts of the Church at large, and that however small the item of their own contribution might be, it is quite obvious that, if such should be the prevailing sentiment and habit, our system will never hang together. We have no doubt that, if all would but do what they easily might, we should realise next year a dividend of £150, with far less trouble and anxiety than this year, in the midst of a thousand obstructions and difficulties, we have realised the dividend of £100. But we can hold out no such promise or perspective, if each Association is to trust the others, and do nothing themselves; or if they be satisfied to do as little, instead of striving to do as much as possible. We ask them, to think of the tremendous effect in bringing down the average, should Congregations only give £20 and look for £150 back again? We rejoice in the efforts of those richer congregations, who are nobly exerting themselves to contribute as large an overplus as they may to the General Sustentation Fund. And we rejoice still more in the yet nobler efforts of those poorer congregations, who are exerting themselves to the uttermost—and that to bear as lightly, or draw as small a difference as they may from this Fund. Could we get an emulation of this sort set agoing among all the Associations of our Free Church, whether rich or poor, we should feel no difficulty whatever in getting both ends to

* Since writing these paragraphs I have been given to understand by my highly valued friend, the Convener of the Home Mission Scheme, that these are very much his own views and those of his Committee, while they have at the same time the very admirable plan of so many bursaries to be adjudicated by a trial of candidates.

meet. Let it be our distinct aim to reach the allowance of £150 next year for as many congregations as we can, and at all events not to sink beneath the allowance of £100 for any of our congregations; and then let me crave the attention of our church's friends to what I hold the likeliest process for making this aim good.

The two proximate causes for such a result are, first, an increase of their overpluses on the part of those Associations which give us more than they get, and secondly a lessening of their deficiencies on the part of those Associations which give us less than they get. Now, it may not have occurred to many, but it is nevertheless true, and most importantly true, that the second cause is of far more powerful operation than the first. Doubtless we must have overpluses from one class of our associations, else how can we supply the deficiencies of the other class? But still a strong determination on the part of the latter to lessen their deficiencies will help us a great deal more, than a strong determination on the part of the former to augment their overpluses. Both are best. But if we can get 50 of the richer associations to increase their overpluses by L.100 each, this will not be nearly of so much avail to us—as if we can get the remaining 550 of our Associations to lessen their deficiencies by L.20 each. In the one way, we should have L.5000 more to give, but in the other way, L.11,000 less would be required.

Such being the real state of the case, it will not be regarded as strange if the first step of our process be the application of a stimulus to the Associations in our poorer localities, and which occupy the lower half of the scale. And instead of that stimulus, having in it the aspect of ought like menace or stern authority, let it be the stimulus of a fostering and liberal encouragement. Let it be such as is fitted not to compel, but to draw out the offerings of our adherents even in the most destitute regions of the Free Church. Let it be acted on, as an invariable rule, that whatever is given by any Association under L.100 a-year, that sum shall be given back to it, and a certain proportion of itself added thereto. For the sake of illustration, let us meanwhile fix on this certain proportion. Say that it is one-half of the sum received. Then the effect of this our initial rule would be, that should an Association send in L.20 a-year, it would get back L.30; or L.36 a-year, it would get back L.48, or L.70 a-year, it would get back L.105; or, finally, L.100 a-year, it would get back L.150.

I have now most earnestly to crave the attention of my brethren to a proposition which, if looked to in all its bearings, will be found charged with benefits of the highest order to the financial system of our Church in future years. That I may secure a better hold on their attention, let me, before stating the proposition, state first what these benefits are. It will make it the preferable interest of every congregation, from the very commencement of their efforts in behalf of their own minister, to contribute, in the first instance, to the General Fund—It will mightily foster and encourage all our poorer Associations—It will permit an indefinite extension to our Church, without injury or abridgment to the allowances of the existent ministry—And, finally, it will so operate on our yearly receipts, as will better enable the Committee to award a *general* dividend of L.150, in which far the greater number of our ministers will participate, reserving for the rest their present dividend of L.100—will better enable the Committee to compass this achievement, than without the proposition to keep up the present dividend for all. The truth is, that unless some such proposition as I am now to state be henceforth adopted and acted on, either a sudden arrest will be laid on the extension of our Church—or if at all hazards this extension be proceeded with, as we think it ought, the means for the support of the existent ministry will be indefinitely lessened, till our whole platform shall have been brought down, at future terms of payment, to the level of one common and most ruinous degradation.

The proposition may be divided into the following clauses:—

1. "That each Association which shall have contributed less than or up to the rate of L.100 a-year, shall receive its own contribution back, and one-half more.
2. That the remaining fund shall next be applied for the benefit of those Associations which, even after having had their annual contribution, and one-half more returned to them, still fall short of L.100 for the sustentation of their minister.
3. That the respective deficiencies of these Associations shall be supplied in the order of beginning with those that have made the largest contributions, and so have the smallest differences to be made up, till their allowance comes to L.100; and thus descending in the scale till all the differences shall have been overtaken, and so that each of this second class of congregations shall be brought up to L.100—provided, however, that at this second division no congregation shall receive more than L.50 upon the whole from the Financial Committee, after which, if still beneath L.100, they shall receive such further aid as the Home Mission might judge expedient, on the footing of being weak congregations.

4. But if the friends of the Free Church do what they ought, there will be a surplus—even after the great majority of our congregations shall have received their L.150, and the rest their L.100 each. Let the surplus be disposed of at the pleasure of the Assembly, in the earnest hope, however, that their first application of it will be a proportional compensation to those ministers who have resigned the largest endowments, and are now labouring with less productive congregations.

Before any shall pronounce on this proposition, we beg that he will make a study of it. There is many a proposition which is complex in its statement, yet nevertheless simple and easy in its execution. Confident we are, that if only consented to and acted on, it would both fill the coffers and facilitate the proceedings, as well as lay all the anxieties of our Financial Committee for the years which are to come. Perhaps the following brief exposition of its benefits may familiarise it all the more to the reader's understanding. We again, therefore, beseech from him the close and concentrated regard of a few minutes. Were there but more of forethought amongst us, we should be landed in fewer difficulties.

We have already said, in the first place, that we should thus make it the preferable interest of every congregation, from the very commencement of their efforts in behalf of their own minister, to contribute, in the first instance, to the General Fund. It would put an end, for so long at least, to the disposition, which it was feared would prevail so largely, of keeping back from the General Fund as much as they decently could, that they might reserve all the more for his special behoof. It would put an end to the existing competition in all our poorer localities between the general and the local interests, or rather it would make the whole competition run in the former direction. The most productive method, in fact, of providing for the local would be through the medium of the general, or by all the givings, up at least to L.100, being sent up to the Association, where by each deposition of L.2, L.3 was sure to come back again. A most intelligent minister assures me, that in his neighbourhood, where the Associations contribute on the average about L.60, the proclamation of such a rule would instantly, as if by a law of barometrical pressure, raise each contribution to L.100 a-year. I know of a very small and poor congregation, yielding not more than L.30 at present, and where a friendly heritor gives an annual L.50 to the minister. We should not be surprised if, on the adoption of our proposed rule, that L.50 were to find its way to the Association—a transaction this which we at least should have no disposition to challenge, but would rather look upon with the most benignant complacency. And we are quite sure that, when thus mounted to L.80, a fresh impulse throughout the congregation would speedily raise it to L.100. In short, the present distracting tendencies, whether to a larger Sabbath offering, or in the way of private liberality, so far as they operate to the prejudice of our Associations, would be kept in abeyance. The strong and natural, yet somewhat selfish preference for their own minister *versus* the Christian good of all Scotland, would, instead of working as now against our Associations, be enlisted upon their side. The influence would tell over the whole length and breadth of the Church; and in the consequent mighty enlargement of our resources, we should soon get the better of all our difficulties and all our fears.

We have further said in behalf of our proposition that it would mightily foster and encourage all our poorer associations. This effect is so perfectly obvious, that it were superfluous to utter one word more in its demonstration.

But again, we have said that our proposition would admit of an indefinite extension to our Church without injury or abridgment to the allowances of the existent ministry. We fix no minimum of contribution ere the ordination can take effect. The ordination of a licentiate is no question of ours, but for the regular ecclesiastical courts, and for them alone to decide upon. Our single concern is the protection of our Sustentation Fund against larger claims and larger expectations than it is in our power to meet. Now I should hold it a sufficient protection, that we were not required to give more for the support of each new or additional charge, than simply the produce of its association augmented by one half of itself. It prejudices no interest of ours, but the contrary, if a minister is admitted on a small provision rather than a larger—on the offer for example of L.20 from his association, for this would only cost us L.10, or of L.40, for this would only cost us L.20—rather than of L.60, which would cost us L.30, or finally, of L.100, which would cost us L.50. No doubt upon another ground—that is a decent sufficiency for the minister—we should far more welcome the last than the first of these offers, and so as that each new accession to our regular and ordained ministers should put us to the expence of L.50, rather than of any smaller sum. But it is a comfort to know, that by our proposed rule this would be the maximum or largest demand that ever could be made upon us. And we should not be afraid to encounter this expence—even though 400 churches were to

demand L.50 each, so long as we had 200 churches more than on the average gave us each L.100 more than our largest dividend. Neither should we be afraid of the future increase of those former churches amounting to 400, in the confidence that the latter churches, amounting to 200 would increase also, and that both the principle and the habit of Christian liberality will grow in strength with every new call for its exercise. But we should be afraid if without any such safeguard as we have now proposed, the extension was to proceed recklessly and without regulation. How would it be possible to realize a general dividend of L.150, or even of L.100, if new churches, bringing only L.20 or L.30 a-year into the General Fund, and yet receiving the full dividend, were to be indefinitely multiplied? We do not want to have any check on this multiplication. But we do want to lay a check on those extravagant hopes and demands which, if given way to, would put a final arrest to our Church Extension, in a very few years, after it had brought a most unseemly impoverishment on the whole body.

And we must confess, that beside this pecuniary we have a moral object in the regulation that we now press on the acceptance of the Church. If we deprecate a system that is fitted to vitiate our students, we should as carefully guard against a system fitted to vitiate either our aspiring licentiates or our infant congregations. Speaking generally, we trust that at this moment both these parties are nobly actuated, and so are acting under a purely spiritual impulse—the one seeking after the good of souls; the other alike disinterested consenting and with all cheerfulness to take their full share of the burden, and not seeking to relieve themselves, either to the prejudice of the general cause, or at the expence of other, and perhaps much poorer, localities than their own. The Free Church has been cradled in difficulties; and they who seek to join us, whether as ministers or people, should not look for exemption from the same ordeal—as if the one not called to any self-denial were to step over at once into the possession of an ample and secure income, and the other not called to any sacrifices should feel themselves exonerated from the burden which they would leave exclusively upon others. Both should be in readiness for that way of hardships on the one side, and liberalities on the other, which has been already trodden by those who have gone before them. And let nothing be held forth on our part to evoke the sordid and mercenary feelings of our fallen nature.

Neither let it be said, that we are resiling from our own principle of an equal dividend. There would be a maximum equal dividend (L.150,) to be reached and realized we trust in the great majority of cases. There would also be a minimum equal dividend (L.100,) which none we hope will fall short of, and on which it is likely that most of our new congregations would enter upon the outset. Had we but the sustentation of our original number to provide for, we might never have required but one dividend. But a provision for the sustentation of the Church has now been complicated with a provision for its extension; and it is this which induces the necessity or expediency of two dividends. Blessed be God, it augurs hopefully for the Free Church of Scotland, that in our first year, when no less than 103 ordinations have taken place, and so our Church has been augmented by more than a fifth part of its whole—we have nevertheless been enabled to proclaim the dividend of L.100 for all.

This brings us to our last affirmation or argument in behalf of the propositions that we have ventured with all earnestness to recommend. That with it we shall be in the likely way of securing L.150 for the greater number of our ministers, and L.100 to the rest—whereas without it, we shall, in all probability, fall short of L.100 to any. The dividend of this year might have been L.150, instead of L.100, had it not been first for the reservation of so much by the Associations to help the building of their own churches; secondly, for the large general expences of our outset; thirdly, for the outlay in the support of licentiates and catechists; and last, and most largely of all, for the enormous addition of 103 new ministers who share in the dividend along with those who came out at the disruption. From all these causes, the dividend this year has been brought down from L.150 to L.100, and unless the modifications that we propose shall be gone into, I should not answer for there not being a successive reduction from L.100 to L.90, L.80, L.70, &c. It were hard indeed, if because, under the system which we propose, there may be some few (we trust there may be none) who shall only receive L.100, while the great majority receive L.150, we must therefore persevere in our present system, under which, if the extension of the Church is to proceed at all, there must ensue a universal reduction of the dividend to a sum indefinitely beneath what even the least and lowest of payments might amount to by other methods, and more especially by the one which we have ventured to recommend.

















