

THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW.

VOL. XX.—NO. 2.

APRIL, MDCCCLXIX.

ARTICLE I.

THE SOUTHERN PRESBYTERIAN UNIVERSITY.

The time has been when the name "Presbyterian" was a synonym for an intelligent and cultivated gentleman. The fact of being an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church was *prima facie* evidence of learning, talent, and piety. Three-fourths of all the colleges on the continent were, a few years ago, under Presbyterian influence—using the term in its widest signification, to include Congregationalists, (Dutch) Reformed, Associate Reformed, and other branches of the great Presbyterian family. One-half of the Presidents of the United States were nominally Presbyterians; and a large proportion of all the great men who have taken a prominent part in the civil affairs of the country have been educated by Presbyterian teachers. So that our precedence as a learned denomination was universally conceded, and we had some right to be proud of our name.

But we must not disguise from ourselves the unpleasant fact that our enviable *prestige* is gradually but surely passing away from us; not that we have lowered our standard, but that we have stood still, content with past honors. One is never in

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soon, like Harvard and Yale and Princeton, become a favorite legatee of great and good men, who, nobly ambitious, would, with their unstinted munificence, embalm their names in an institution that will become a monument to future generations of the wisdom, piety, and energy of the Southern Church, which, with renewed life and vigor, arose, phoenix-like, out of the ashes of a wasting and desolating war.

ARTICLE II.

A PLEA IN BEHALF OF THE WIDOWS AND ORPHANS
OF DECEASED MINISTERS OF THE PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH IN THE UNITED STATES.

The General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States, at the sessions held in November, 1867, at Nashville, Tenn., adopted the following minute and resolutions, being a report of the Committee of Bills and Overtures, in reply to Overture No. 10; the said overture being a letter from the Rev. J. T. Pollock, asking aid from the Assembly for the family of a minister of this Church recently deceased:

“Inasmuch as this Assembly has control of no funds for the purpose proposed, and this request cannot at once be granted, and yet the Assembly appreciates the importance, not only of this special case, but of all such as it represents:

“*Resolved*, 1. That the Committee of Sustentation be authorized to appropriate five per cent. of all contributions to its object to the relief of destitute widows and orphans of ministers, and to indigent ministers in infirm health: *Provided*, That no such per centage be appropriated from the contributions of any church or person prohibiting such appropriation: *And provided further*, That this plan of operation shall not continue longer than the meeting of the Assembly for the year 1869.

“2. That this present application be referred to the Committee of Sustentation, who are hereby charged, in the exercise of due diligence and discretion, with the duty of considering it and all others of like character.”

The Committee of Sustentation reported to the Assembly at the sessions held in Baltimore, Md., in May, 1868, the discharge of that trust in the following manner :

“The Assembly, at its meeting in Nashville, directed the Committee of Sustentation to devote five per cent. of all its receipts to the relief of disabled ministers and the widows and orphans of deceased ministers. Due notice was given of this arrangement through all the weekly religious journals, and Presbyterial Committees, as well as others, were requested to send up applications in behalf of all such persons and families. In consequence, applications have been made in behalf of twenty-three such families, all of which have been met in sums varying from \$25 to \$50, but chiefly of the latter amount. It is not supposed that these families have been placed in circumstances of comfort by these small sums, but perhaps some of their more urgent wants have been relieved. The arrangement, therefore, was wise and judicious, and perhaps ought to be continued until the circumstances of the country will justify the effort to raise a special fund for this purpose.” (Minutes 1868, p. 287.)

In reference to that part of the report of the Committee of Sustentation, the Standing Committee recommended the following resolution, which was adopted :

“*Resolved*, That it be recommended to all the churches under our care to take up a collection for the relief of disabled ministers and the widows and orphans of deceased ministers, on the first Sabbath in July next, or as soon thereafter as may be convenient.” (Min. 1868, p. 280.)

The efficiency of the foregoing plan is now to be tested by experience. The resolution of the Assembly has carried the subject to the churches for their consideration and action. We are of the opinion that the churches will respond promptly and liberally, if they are made to understand the necessity and importance of this charity.

The subject being of great importance to the ministry and the Church, we shall endeavor to give some prominence to it by a brief discussion in the pages of this *Review*.

That it is the duty of the Church to make an adequate and liberal provision for the comfortable maintenance of the distressed families of her deceased ministers, is a doctrine neither

new nor of human origin. It is as old as the Church herself in her organised form, and is found among the divine statutes of the Mosaic economy. Under that dispensation, the priestly tribe had no part nor inheritance among their brethren, and were to be supported in all their generations by the tithes paid by the other tribes. This was an annual provision larger than that which was gathered into the storehouses of the rest of the people; for, though they were but the twelfth of the population, they were to receive the tenth of all the increase of the land. The priests in the immediate service of the sanctuary obtained an additional compensation, as certain portions of the sacrifices were retained for them by divine appointment.

With the Jewish dispensation before our eyes, we can readily believe that the fact recorded in Acts vi. 1, and the custom to which the Apostle Paul alludes in 1 Tim. v., are evidences of a provision made under the gospel for the support of widows. Every person conversant with the Scriptures is fully aware that in numerous places we are commanded mercifully to relieve the fatherless and widow; to plead their cause; that such acts are described as pious and well pleasing to God; that such cases of necessity will always be in the Church, to be a test of true religion; that the neglect of such persons is always displeasing to the Father of mercies, and for its punishment he has sent heavy judgments upon the earth, as he is the Judge of the fatherless and widow.

The Presbyterian Church did early feel and acknowledge her solemn and religious obligation to make a wise and suitable provision for the comfortable support of the indigent families of her deceased ministers. Nearly one century and a half ago, her attention was attracted to the subject, as her records show; and she began to raise a fund for the pious purpose. A society for the more successful accomplishment of this laudable object was formed in 1755, under the auspices of the Synod of Philadelphia; which society, in 1759, was incorporated by a charter from the Proprietary Government of Pennsylvania. In the petition to the Proprietors for a charter, the Committee of the Synod used the following language: "We have often with sor-

row and regret seen the widows and children of great and good men, who were once of our number, very much pinched and distressed by want and poverty, without being able to afford them suitable relief. To remedy these evils as far as we can in our circumstances, your Honors' petitioners, in imitation of the laudable example of the Church of Scotland, have agreed to raise a small fund for the benefit of ministers' widows and helpless children belonging to this Synod, by obliging ourselves to contribute a small sum out of our yearly income for this purpose."

To commiserate and relieve the wants and distresses of widows and orphans are among the most praiseworthy acts which spring from the most generous impulses of humanity. They are prompted by the feelings of an elevated and heavenly charity. They are such acts of noble tenderness as beings of the purest and most exalted natures rejoice to perform. They are acts of the highest and most disinterested philanthropy, and we always witness them with feelings of the most decided approbation. We love to behold and are eloquent in the praise of those who have been distinguished for such deeds of mercy. They are the benefactors of the afflicted, and the noble exemplars of the brightest virtues which adorn human character.

Sympathy is always refreshing to the soul when passing through the dreary and chilly night of adversity, but has a peculiarly balmy and benign influence upon the stricken widow and the tender children, who mourn the irreparable breach made upon the happy family circle by the premature death of the beloved husband and affectionate father. Its generous light dispels the gloom from the house of affliction, and its genial warmth is full of consolation to the widow's heart, bleeding and crushed beneath the overwhelming sorrow springing from the most devastating of earthly bereavements.

Men, banded together by such ties as exist in Masonic and Oddfellowship associations, are influenced by the principles of common brotherhood to make some provision for the distressed families of their deceased members. We profess to be associated by the bonds of a purer benevolence, and consequently we ought to excel, rather than fall below, their standard of love and charity.

Is it not a reproach to the name we bear, that so many of the widows and orphans of the beloved ministers of God, who once labored with us, are permitted to pine away in poverty and want, unpitied and unnoticed? Can the compassionate Jesus be otherwise than displeased with such unfraternal, unmerciful, not to say unchristian, neglect? Will not the cry of the widow and orphan pierce the heavens and reach the ears of the Judge of the widow and fatherless, bring down his withering indignation upon those who ought to, and yet do not, relieve the destitute? Has religion so far changed in its nature and claims since the days when the Apostle James so pointedly condemned the inconsistent conduct of those professed Christians who simply said to the needy, "Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled," that its divine claims for a merciful and substantial charity can be liquidated now by the cheap and unfelt sympathy expressed in words of unsubstantial condolence by a presbyterial or synodical resolution, entered formally upon the records of the body, published without cost in the newspapers, and a copy sent to the poor heart-broken widow and almost starving children? Does not the whole thing seem to be a cruel mockery? It resembles an outrage upon the sanctuary of mourning for such word-professions to enter its sacred walls. Our fathers did not think that resolutions of condolence, however eloquent and eulogistic, were a sufficient and Christian expression of sympathy for the weeping family of a dear and honored deceased brother. They did not imagine that words could warm and clothe, or that newspaper *uffs* would answer as bread to the famishing widow and orphan. Their charity was not in words merely, but in pious deeds of substantial benevolent aid. In those days, the families of the ministers who had fallen in the service of religion were not permitted, unaided and friendless, to meet the desolating storms of adversity; nor with their untaught and unskilful hands, to guide their *unmanned* bark amid the breakers of life's tempestuous sea. Then the widow was enabled to feel that she was loved and cherished for the sake of her honored husband, and that his death had not broken, but only more closely cemented, the ties which connect her with the sacred associations of Christ's min-

isters. She felt that her dire calamity had not cast her forth upon the unfenced grounds of a cold and heartless world's charity. She felt that she still had a warm place in the loving bosoms of the cherished Christian fraternity. The fatherless child was permitted to feel the quick, the generous pulsations of the living heart of the blood-bought Church of our precious Jesus. That was religion indeed—fresh as spring, warm as summer, fragrant as the breath of heaven.

The ample provision for which we plead will endear the Church to the ministry. This point needs plain illustration and patient explanation, in order to avoid misconception. The preaching of the gospel is emphatically a work of love; and under the sweet constraining influences of the Holy Spirit, ministers voluntarily enter upon the self-denying duties of the arduous vocation; they consult not with flesh and blood; their eyes are not fixed upon human applause and temporal rewards. They rejoice to preach the gospel, because they ardently love their heavenly Father and their precious Redeemer. They thus glorify their beloved Saviour by the spread of his gospel and in the establishment of the kingdom of heaven upon earth. We hazard nothing in saying that ministers, in witnessing the success of their ministrations by the grace of God in the hopeful conversion of sinners, experience a happiness unknown to the votaries of the world, and in which angels participate. Such results every minister of Christ most vehemently desires; still they are men, and are subject to like passions as other men. They must feel concern for the temporal wants of their families, and for those wants they must provide; otherwise, they deny the faith, and are worse than infidels. In that compulsory labor, much of their time and talents are expended, and consequently withdrawn from the Church. Such an arrangement is as unwise and impolitic as it would be to employ the most cultivated and accomplished man to perform the most menial work of the drudge. This difficulty is not obviated by increasing the annual salary of the minister for it would still leave the necessity of managing some form of temporal goods, with all its perplexing cares and tendency to produce worldly-mindedness. Ministers generally will tea

that these things are among the most obstinate hindrances to an exclusive devotion to the appropriate duties of their sacred vocation. All things which tend to distract and draw off the attention and efforts of the ministry from the special work of their heavenly mission, are prolific sources of serious evil to the Church, and their removal would be greatly to her advantage.

From the peculiar nature of the heaven-appointed vocation, all the incumbents of the office are wholly consecrated to God in the service of his Church, and are removed from mere worldly employments as inconsistent with their exclusive dedication to the gospel. Most generally, ministers are subjected to certain civil disabilities in consequence of their calling. To his profession attach no emoluments, no social and civil honors. The world, though largely indebted for many of its greatest blessings and richest legacies to the noble moral, civil, and intellectual achievements of preachers, yet often treats the profession with the most studied scorn and contempt. The obligations of the human family to the labors of such men as Luther, Calvin, and Knox, and a host of others, are great beyond calculation; yet for them no garlands are woven; to their memories no colossal monument is erected. The historian fills his page with the results of diplomatic intrigue and with deeds of violence and blood; yet he seldom deigns to mention the labors of these men of God.

No facilities are furnished preachers to enable them to amass property and leave an inheritance to their families. They have no opportunities to make a sagacious provision against the day of adversity. They are often overtaken by temporal calamities in a most unprepared condition; and frequently are doomed to lose their toils and finish their earthly pilgrimage upon a bed of languishing in the comfortless hamlet of poverty. When the eye of faith of the dying preacher rests upon his Saviour's face, his soul is filled with heavenly ecstasy, and he earnestly desires to depart and be with Jesus, which for him is far better; but when he turns his eyes upon the pale and careworn face of his loved wife and the tender forms of his dear children, he remembers, with feelings of indescribable anguish, the melancholy, the

hopeless condition in which he is about to leave his dear family. One of the most touching scenes in the history of the divine Redeemer is where, in his dying agonies on the cross, he committed his mother (perhaps then a widow) to the filial care of the beloved John. But no such tender and faithful earthly friend usually stands by the death-bed of the poor minister of the gospel, to whose compassion he may confide his wife and children. The bitter pangs of that dreadful hour to the poor servant of Jesus may be imagined, but cannot be described. Hard and icy must that heart be that feels no pulsation of deep commiseration for such suffering, and is not prompted to some generous effort for its relief. The only support to the dying minister is that precious promise of God, addressed to all Christians, "Leave thy fatherless children; I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me." But here his faith, in this hour of bodily weakness and pain, may stagger; he may not be able to grasp the consoling promise, which even to the strongest is hope against hope; for he knows that the Church, constituted the guardian of the orphan and protector of the widow, has long neglected the trust, and has ceased to nourish the helpless ones. Is it not time for the Church to return and obey the divine appointment? Humanity advocates it; justice pleads for it; mercy requires it; religion demands it.

The compensation the Church usually allows her ministers is given of the things of earth in such stinted measurement as barely to meet the most urgent of their bodily wants by the most rigid and exact economy. Such a policy is calculated to exert a very degrading and contracting influence upon the disposition of ministers. To expect them to lay up any thing from this small pittance is most unreasonable; for the whole amount only permits the minister to support his family in such poor style as the larger portion of his congregation would never consent to have imposed upon their families. And is it not demanding too much to require men of the highest social and intellectual faculties, capable of holding the first positions in society, to descend to the humblest and poorest walks of life? It is manifestly unjust.

The equity of the plan of operation proposed by the Assembly appears again in the fact that ministers are given to the Church to be exclusively employed in the service of religion, and in many instances they are prematurely consumed in that service. The arduous and self-denying duties of the sacred vocation consume the minister's vital energies. In giving light, the oil in the lamp is exhausted. "The zeal of thy house hath eaten me up," may properly be inscribed as an epitaph upon the premature graves of many preachers of the gospel. The agony of their interminable travail for the salvation of sinners burns up life's marrow. They are exposed in every climate, and in visiting the sick and dying, they come in contact with every form of disease. Thus their pastoral duties place their lives in jeopardy. The Old Testament priesthood was not more entirely consecrated to the interests of true religion than are the preachers of the gospel. The former "lived by the altar," and the Apostle Paul informs us that New Testament ministers are to enjoy a like provision and "live of the gospel; and as the family of the priest was equally embraced with him in that provision of the ancient economy, as well after his death as during his life, so the same regulation ought to prevail under the gospel.

It is a principle universally admitted that "the workman is worthy of his hire," and his wages ought to be in proportion to the advantage his employer reaps from his labor. Upon that principle, it may be demonstrated, by an appeal to the most disputable historical facts, that ministers ought to receive a higher remuneration than any class of men; for none other can bestow such rich blessings upon society.

Two plans may be suggested for the liquidation of the whole claims of the ministry to a support for themselves and for their families. The one is to increase the salary of the preacher so far above the comfortable support of his family as to enable him to accumulate property, as other men do, as an inheritance for his widow and orphans. The other plan is to provide for the minister's present temporal wants in such liberality that he may support his family, at least in the middle walks of life, and then

to make some sure and comfortable provision for his family in case of his death.

The first plan is evidently objectionable for these, among other reasons: It would be so burdensome to feeble churches as to be impracticable; only very wealthy churches could carry out the plan. Then it does not guard against the improvidence of the minister and his family; the remains of the old Adam stir up an impulsive desire even in the preacher's family to keep fully abreast with the extravagances of fashion. Then the cares and temptations incident to the management of secular matters are too cumbrous and ensnaring to be consistent with the faithful discharge of ministerial duties.

The tendency of this plan would be to produce a profligate and worldly-minded ministry, than which there is no source of danger so great to the Church of the Lord Jesus.

The other plan proposed to meet the claims of the ministry and their families is free from the foregoing objections, and would be in unison with the desires and wishes of the great majority of ministers: would cement more closely the bonds of fraternity among the ministers themselves, and between the ministers and the churches.

Such provision as that for which we have been pleading for the widows and orphans of Presbyterian ministers, is liberally made for the widows and orphans of the clergy of the Methodist Episcopal Church. The fiscal regulations of Methodism exhibit a system of great uniformity, of wonderful efficiency, of a wise policy, and of remarkable equality and justice. The system of that numerous and powerful denomination, both in their mode of raising and disbursing funds, *under their Book of Discipline*, deserves to be profoundly considered by Presbyterian Church rulers. Among Methodists, the death of the circuit rider does not annul the connexion of his family with the fostering care of the Conference, and does not materially affect their temporal support.

A similar provision, but much more liberal, was made by a society under the patronage of the Protestant Episcopal denomination in the State of South Carolina. That society was organised so early as 1731; was regularly incorporated in 1762; was

in a very prosperous condition before the Radical hordes invaded the South; and numbered among its members or annual contributors the most influential of the clergy and laity of the denomination. That society administered relief to the widows and orphans of Episcopal ministers with a generous and Christian liberality, and its existence was highly honorable to the sect by whom it was, and, we hope, is still sustained. The annual festival of that society was so managed as to give satisfaction to the members and popularity to the cause.

A society was also formed by the Independent or Congregational Church in the State of South Carolina. The society was formed somewhere about 1765, and was incorporated by charter in 1789, by the name of "The Society for the Relief of Elderly and Disabled Ministers, and of the Widows and Orphans of the Clergy of the Independent or Congregational Church in the State of South Carolina." The preamble to the constitution of that society contains a sentiment so admirably just and scriptural that we are constrained to give it to our readers. "As it is an obligation of the gospel on Christians of all denominations to encourage and support its ministers, who are their pastors in the Lord, and as it appears to us that due encouragement may be more certainly and extensively provided and secured, by adding to the usual support afforded to the gospel ministers during their health and usefulness, an assurance of aid and relief when they are disabled for the services of the vineyard, and of provisions for their widows and orphans when they are removed without leaving them a competent support: we, the subscribers, desirous of carrying this good purpose into effect, and of testifying our regard to them, who have faithfully labored amongst us in the gospel, do hereby solemnly associate and bind ourselves under the following rules." That preamble contains the whole doctrine for which we are pleading, and provides for the whole relief contemplated by the action of the Assembly at Baltimore.

The early records of the first Presbytery formed in the United States inform us that the Church exercised anxious solicitude for the comfort of the families of deceased ministers, and made annual appropriations for their support. In 1755, some twelve or

more members of the Synod of Philadelphia formed a society for the more effectual relief of the widows and orphans of ministers, and, in 1759, it was incorporated by a charter from the Proprietors of Pennsylvania. That society accumulated an immense vested fund, but has not in recent years been of much advantage to the Church in consequence of some radical defects in its management. In 1841, the corporation said, "Notwithstanding, however, the great advantages which are thus presented to the ministers of the Presbyterian Church, and the facility with which they may be secured, the efforts of the corporation to extend its usefulness have heretofore been attended with very partial success. Very few annuities have been secured to the families of ministers." That society was originally a charitable institution, but ceased to be either charitable or Christian when it incorporated the principle of "Life Insurance" in its terms.

If the contingent event in the duration of the life of the insured does not involve the very principle upon which all lotteries and games of chance are condemned as immoral, then our judgment is at fault. True, men of reputed piety have advocated "Life Insurance;" multitudes have insured; yea, "Life Insurance" seems to be a mania of this present time; but the multitude is not the arbiter of ethical questions. We submit it as a case of conscience for Christian people.

That society having failed to carry out the purposes of its organisation, the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America have been inviting for many years charitable collections and donations to relieve those cases of distress. But we fear that that charity has been too much neglected for more showy labors.

Some fifteen or sixteen years ago, "The Society for the Relief of Superannuated Ministers and the Indigent Families of Deceased Ministers" was formed under a remote connexion with the Synod of South Carolina, and for the benefit of the ministers of that Synod who might become members of the Society and contribute to its funds. We are not informed as to the fate of that Society.

The late Hon. John Perkins, of Lowndes County, Mississippi,

by deed of trust formally executed on the 15th of January, 1859, conveyed ten thousand dollars to the Board of Directors of the Theological Seminary at Columbia, South Carolina, as the nucleus of a fund for the use, benefit, and support of disabled ministers of the gospel and their widows and orphans, belonging to the Presbyterian Church in the United States. The corpus of said fund was not to be used, but only the annual interest or proceeds, and the preference in the distribution to be given to the citizens of Mississippi and Louisiana. The said Board of Directors were enjoined in the said deed of conveyance to use all proper means in bringing said subject to the consideration of the Church, that the fund may be augmented; that it may be a permanent benefit to the Church. The donation was in the form of a note on certain parties, and the note was not due until January, 1863, at which time our circulation was Confederate paper; and when the note was collected, the proceeds were vested in Confederate bonds and lost.

We have noticed these various efforts for the relief of elderly and disabled ministers, and of the widows and orphans of ministers, not simply as matters of history, but to show that the duty to make some suitable provision for the relief of such persons has been clearly recognised in the consciences of the people of God. The conviction was not a transient furor, but a deep abiding sentiment, resting for authority upon the Sacred Scriptures. But it is painfully evident that the Presbyterian Church has as yet accomplished but very little in the direction of that important charity. Why, we are not prepared to say. The debt against her is rapidly increasing; the onus of the charity is also increasing—perhaps twenty-seven families of widows and orphans and several disabled ministers. But we cannot hope for more cheering results until the General Assembly gives more prominence to the charity, and gives more consistency and permanence to her efforts than mere annual resolutions. Perhaps the work would prosper in the hands of a special committee, organised as the other committees by the General Assembly. We ask attention to the suggestion.