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No. I.

ART. I.—*Sustentation Fund.*

AT the recent meeting of the Synod of New Jersey, the Rev. Samuel J. Baird, D. D., as chairman of a committee appointed a year ago, presented an elaborate report on the subject of "unemployed ministers." One reason assigned for the fact that so many ministers, well qualified for the sacred office, were destitute of regular employment, was the insufficiency of support. Many of them had been forced to leave their fields of labour because they could not sustain themselves and families upon the salaries which they received. As the truth of this statement could not be denied, it naturally gave rise to the inquiry, What could be done to meet the difficulty, and to secure to every faithful minister devoted to his work an adequate support? The importance of this question and its bearing on the interests of individuals and of the church, secured for it the earnest consideration of every member of the Synod. In the course of the discussion which arose on this subject, reference was made to the attempt originated in 1847 to secure the adoption of the plan of a general sustentation fund analogous to that which had been so successfully carried out in the Free Church of Scotland. In that year, James Lenox, Esq., of New York, caused to be printed a pamphlet on Church Economics by the late illustrious Dr. Chalmers, a copy of which was sent to every

regard the great Teacher sent from God as only an "unspoiled human being."

We lay aside the volume with a mingled feeling of sorrow and surprise—sorrow that one capable of exerting so powerful an influence upon the interests of popular education, should have been led so far astray respecting its essential principles and ends—and with surprise, that the advocate and propagator of such radical errors in philosophy and religion should have received such unusual posthumous honours in the Old Bay State.

What more fitting inscription than the following could have been placed on the monument, erected, as it has been said, by the contributions of school children, and occupying a place in the State House enclosure, opposite a statue of the renowned *Webster*—

"HE DID WHAT HE COULD TO OBLITERATE FROM THE YOUTHFUL MIND THE NOTION OF THE PROVIDENTIAL GOVERNMENT OF THE WORLD, AND TO BRING INTO EXERCISE THE NOBLE BUT NEGLECTED FACULTY OF CAUSALITY!"

ART. V.—*Imperfect Rights and Obligations as related to Church Discipline.*

THE distinction of Perfect and Imperfect Rights and Obligations has long been recognized in jurisprudence and ethics. It is simply this. A Perfect Right is one which may be enforced, and which we may apply adequate power to enforce, either personal, legal, judicial, executive, as the case may require. An Imperfect Right is so named because it cannot be so enforced. In equity it may be as valid for the possessor, as binding upon others, as a Perfect Right—morally, *in foro conscientiæ et Dei*, it may be as complete and obligatory as any other. But if those from whom it is due to us, refuse or neglect to render it, there is no remedy. We cannot realize or enforce it. However great the wrong of being denied this right, there is no help for it, except to bear it patiently, and commit our cause to Him who judgeth righteously.

Perfect and Imperfect Obligations are the correlatives of Perfect and Imperfect Rights. The right to any benefit or privilege presupposes the obligation upon some party, individual or collective, to bestow it. If they can be compelled by the power of law to discharge this obligation, it is perfect. If they cannot, it is imperfect. The obligation of a parent to barely support his dependent minor children, if he have the means, is perfect. The obligation, if he be a man of large wealth, to expend it in giving a proportionate education, social position, and establishment in life, or to leave them a suitable inheritance, is imperfect. He cannot be compelled to discharge it unless he chooses.

Other examples of these respective kinds of Right and Obligation are such as the following. The right of the poor and helpless to the support which the State provides for paupers is perfect, for it can be, and is enforced. The obligation of the rich to contribute their portion of the taxes for this purpose is perfect, for it can be enforced. But the claim of the poor and distressed to the charitable assistance of the opulent, is an imperfect right. The duty of bestowing it is an imperfect obligation, for it cannot be enforced. A child has been adopted, and trained, and treated, by those who assume towards it the place of parents, in such a way as to create a reasonable expectation of being their heir, and a moral right to become so. But this right and the correspondent obligation are imperfect, because they cannot be enforced without positive testamentary provision on the part of these parents *quasi*. The man who fell among thieves had a right to the same kindness from the passing priest and Levite which he received from the good Samaritan. They too were under a like obligation to bestow it. But the right and the obligation respectively were alike imperfect. They could not be enforced. So the correlative right and obligation of gratitude from the beneficiary to the benefactor are imperfect. The right of the servant to the usual gratuities or perquisites of his situation, beyond the stipulated wages, for his faithful services, is in like manner imperfect, because the obligation to confer them is imperfect.

It must not, however, be understood that such obligations are of course morally imperfect, because they are legally so, or in-

capable of human enforcement. In the eye of conscience and of God, they may be absolute and perfect. The obligation to fulfil lawful promises implied or express, to minister according to our ability to the helpless and suffering, to cherish gratitude to benefactors, in every way to do justice and love mercy, is complete in itself and before God. It is only imperfect with respect to the power of human enforcement. But it is perfect, in that it can and will be perfectly enforced, either at the hands of the obligee or his Surety, at His tribunal, who will lay justice to the line and righteousness to the plummet; who will judge every idle word and the secrets of the heart; who will cause all to appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, to receive according to the things done in the body, whether they be good or bad. The priest and the Levite might not answer before human tribunals for their wicked and heartless neglect of the helpless victim of violence and robbery, whom they passed on the other side; but they assuredly are held to account for it at the bar of God.

It should be observed, however, that many of these imperfect obligations are such, because of their indeterminateness, which renders it difficult to see precisely where obligation begins and ends, and thus proportionably abates the guilt of error and consequent delinquency in the premises. The nature and scope of these indeterminate duties we shall soon see cause to develop at greater length. We now only call attention to them provisionally, for the purpose of pointing out, that they give rise to degrees of the stringency, and, in this sense, of the perfection of obligations, in certain cases, even in the eye of conscience and of God. Thus the precise amount which one ought to give in charity, as well as the objects on which it ought to be bestowed, may be involved in considerable obscurity and uncertainty. To err, or to come short of the full measure of duty here, is obviously a very different thing from the commission of theft or blasphemy. The obligation is, in a sense, less stringent or perfect in the one case than the other; and the failure to discharge it duly, involves proportionally less guilt.

Corresponding to the foregoing distinctions, is that between the adjective and substantive *right*. To bestow charity upon

the needy may be very right on the part of the thrifty or the wealthy. But the former have no right to it, in the sense of a perfect, legal, or demandable right. If they have a moral right, still they cannot realize it, unless it please those from whom it is morally due, to discharge their obligation. It is right for parents, not only to feed and clothe, but to be kind, tender, and affectionate to their children, to train and furnish them, according to their circumstances and social position. But it is not a right which children can enforce.

It is obvious that this distinction of perfect and imperfect rights and obligations has a wide application to virtues, sins, and delinquencies of "professing Christians," and the power of the church to enforce the one and prevent the other, on pain of excommunication. In short, it is implicated with the whole subject of conditions of church-membership, terms of communion, and the grounds, kinds, and degrees of discipline. That is to say, there are many Christian traits and deeds which are truly obligatory in the sight of God, that cannot be enforced; and many faults which incur Divine condemnation, but cannot be prevented by church censures or exclusion from communion. It is the right of the church, and the obligation of its members, that they all be real believers and saints. But this right and obligation are imperfect so far as regards the possibility of enforcing and realizing them, through any church courts, or any human power whatever, ecclesiastical or civil. It is also obligatory upon all church members, and the church has a right to claim, that they shall be not merely Christians, but exemplary, blameless, zealous, humble, active, devoted Christians; full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. But how many church members are sadly deficient in these traits, who cannot, nevertheless, be compelled to manifest them by any ecclesiastical discipline or peril of excommunication? Nay, who could not be excommunicated by any process which would not expose genuine and even excellent Christians, whom Christ has received, to a like penalty; or incite divisions and contentions that would jeopardize the very existence of the church.

Hence it follows, that there are sins and faults in Christians which cannot be made a ground of exclusion from the com-

munion, whatever other agencies or forms of discipline may be applied to check or repress them. Indeed, to say otherwise, would be to say that Christians, in this life, may attain sinless perfection. If it is true, that they who say they have no sin deceive themselves, and the truth is not in them, it is also true that, if there be a church, it must be composed of those who are deformed with sins which are no bar to communion. The church has a right to claim of its members that they be holy, harmless, undefiled; without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. But it is not a perfect right. There are spots and wrinkles which it is no function of compulsory church discipline to remove. There are others which come within its scope to purge away. There are sins, the right to exclude which from the church, is perfect; others, respecting which the right is imperfect. This distinction, whether clearly seen or not, is at all times acted on by every church which pretends to maintain discipline at all. Indeed, no church could live which wholly set it at naught. It would be utterly extirpated, or convulsed and shivered to atoms. Yet, we apprehend that a due understanding, appreciation, and application of this distinction, would be of inestimable benefit in showing more clearly where attempts at church discipline, tending or amounting to exclusion from the communion, ought to begin and end, and in preventing those unwarranted attempts at it, which so often prove abortive, or worse still, disastrous and ruinous; which, so far from promoting the vigour and efficiency of church discipline, tend to bring it into disrepute and impotence, even within its legitimate sphere.

All this is beautifully signified in the parable of the tares and the wheat. The tares are to remain, "lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up the wheat also. Let both grow together until the harvest; and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them; but gather the wheat into my barn." Matt. xiv. 28. To the same effect, our Book of Discipline, chap. iii. 3, "An offence gross in itself, and known to several, may be so circumstanced, that it plainly cannot be prosecuted to conviction. In such cases, however grievous it may be to the pious, to see an unworthy member in the church,

it is proper to wait until God, in his righteous providence, shall give further light; as few things tend more to weaken the authority of discipline, and to multiply offences, than to commence process without sufficient proof."

The principle involved in the foregoing quotations from Scripture, and from our own Book, is essentially the same in each. It is simply this: Ecclesiastical discipline is to be kept within limits, and prosecuted upon principles, which do not expose true Christians to the danger of loss of church standing, or exclusion from the communion. Such tares are to be allowed to grow together with the wheat, as cannot be rooted out without "rooting up the wheat also." So the charge not to institute process, even against the gravest offenders, "without sufficient proof," is imperative, because such discipline exposes the innocent, the true followers of Christ, to excommunication. Here we reach the limit of offenders and offences, amenable to extreme ecclesiastical discipline; and of the kinds of judicial procedure which can be brought to bear against them. We may not shut out, or adopt any principles or modes of procedure which shut out from the church and table of the Lord those whom he has received. We have no option in this matter. Besides the monstrous absurdity and awful assumption of poor mortals attempting to "fence" out from the Lord's table those whom he has received to himself, he, who alone is Head of the church and Lord of the conscience, has bound us by his explicit command—"Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not unto doubtful disputations." It is given as the sufficient reason why we should shun all uncharitable judgments in regard to any one, "that God hath received him." (Rom. xiv. 1—4). "Receive ye one another as Christ also received us." (Rom. xv. 7). Indeed, the fact that throughout the New Testament, faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is exhibited as the only and the sufficient condition of admission to the sacraments, precludes the need of further argument.

Not less decisive to this effect are our standards.

The only requisites which the Directory for Worship permits us to demand evidence of, in candidates for the sacraments, are "knowledge and piety." And the knowledge required is simply that which is "sufficient to discern the Lord's body," to

know the meaning of the sacraments, and to ensure more than a blind faith. (Chap. ix. 1—3.) Ministers are required to “invite to this holy table, such as, sensible of their lost and helpless state by sin, depend upon the atonement of Christ for pardon and acceptance with God; such as, being instructed in the gospel doctrine, have a competent knowledge to discern the Lord’s body, and such as desire to renounce their sins, and are determined to lead a holy and godly life.” (Chap. viii. 4.)

Nor does the statement in the Book of Discipline, (Chap. i. 2, 3,) that the “end of discipline is the removal of offences;” and that an “offence is anything in the principles or practices of a church member, which is contrary to the word of God; or which, if it be not in its own nature sinful, may tempt others to sin, or mar their spiritual edification,” militate against this view. For first, discipline is not limited to judicial processes and penalties culminating in excommunication. There are many modes of discipline in which the authority of the session is brought to bear for the removal of offences, such as solemn warning, expostulation, entreaty. (*Id.* chap. i. 5.) “It becomes the rulers of the church, therefore, to take into view all the circumstances which may give a different character to conduct, and render it more or less offensive; and which may, of course, require a very different mode of proceeding in similar cases, at different times, for the attainment of the same end.” Secondly, while this definition of offence is made so broad as to prevent any evasion of ecclesiastical responsibility by those guilty of scandal or heresy, on the ground of mere technicality, yet it is to be interpreted consistently with the whole requirements of our standards in the premises. But interpreted in connection with the section following, which is stated as an inference from it, it is to be understood, rather negatively than positively, as designing to exclude every other ground of church discipline, than asserting that every thing, whether directly or indirectly, nearly or remotely, contrary to the word of God, or tending to lead others to sin, is an offence that should bar from communion. Section iii. is: “Nothing, therefore, ought to be considered by any judicatory as an offence, or admitted as a matter of accusation, which cannot be proved to be such from Scripture, or from the regulations and practice

of the church, founded on Scripture; and which does not involve those evils which discipline is intended to prevent." Besides, according to other portions, whatever offences may be subject to discipline in other forms, it is very clear that none are to operate as a bar to communion but those sins, which, if unrepented of, are counted incompatible with Christian character, viz., scandals. The only class of professors desiring to come to the Lord's Supper, who "ought to be kept from that sacrament by the power which Christ hath left in his church," are the "ignorant or scandalous;" and these only "until they receive instruction or manifest their reformation." (*Larger Cat.* 173.) Baptized persons trained to a pious life, "when they come to years of discretion, if they be free from scandal, appear sober and steady, and have sufficient knowledge to discern the Lord's body, ought to be informed that it is their duty and privilege to come to the Lord's Supper." (*Dir. for Worship* ix. 1.) By "scandal" is to be understood immoral and unchristian conduct, so flagrant that persistence in it is incompatible with Christian character, or a credible profession of piety. Thirdly, the evidence already given that our standards require us to receive to communion with ourselves and the Lord, at his table, all whom he has received to communion with himself, prove the same thing. It proves that the definition of "offence" and the methods of discipline to remove it, must be understood in harmony with this great principle.

Such has been the actual historic attitude of our church on this subject. So have its courts expounded the Scriptures and our standards, and administered its discipline. In 1729, the General Synod avowed the principle of "admitting to fellowship in sacred ordinances all such as we have grounds to believe Christ will at last admit to the kingdom of heaven."

Recently the General Assembly declared, "we have ever admitted to our communion all those, who, in the judgment of charity, were the sincere disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ. If, in some instances, stricter terms have been insisted on—if candidates for sealing ordinances have been required to sign pledges, to make profession of any thing more than faith, love, and obedience to Jesus Christ—these instances have been few

and unauthorized, and, therefore, do not affect the general character of the church."

All these proofs of the doctrine of Scripture and our church concur to one issue. The church has a right to piety in her members. She has a right to claim of them an exemplary deportment, abstinence from all evil and appearance of evil; and those fruits of holiness which adorn the doctrine of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. They are under obligation thus to honour Christ in all things. But the right and the obligation are imperfect, in the sense already explained, when we pass beyond certain limits, viz., the limits within which discipline can be prosecuted to excommunication, without excluding true Christians from the household of faith and table of the Lord.

The cases in which offences, sins, or faults of professing Christians cannot be made a bar to communion are two-fold.

I. Where the offence itself, if duly proved, and unrepented of, is a righteous ground of excommunication; but it cannot be proved, except by methods which would expose to conviction those innocent of the offence charged. Direct violations of the fundamental principles of religion and morality—enunciated in the decalogue—of course, if proved, debar from communion till renounced. Such also are denials of the fundamentals of Christian doctrine, or violations of Christian duty which plainly subvert the profession of Christianity. "But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one, no not to eat." (1 Cor. v. 11.) "Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Cor. vi. 9-10.) So we are commanded to "mark them that cause divisions and offences among you contrary to the doctrine ye have learned, and avoid them." (Rom. xvi. 17.) "A man that is an heretic, after the first and second admonition, reject." (Titus iii. 10.) These are samples of sins that sever from Christian and church communion. Yet these must be proved by evidence and modes of procedure that would not ex-

pose the innocent. And, in regard to some of these sins, how exceedingly difficult, often impossible, is this? Take the various forms of licentiousness for example. How rarely can they be detected? And, if sins that make themselves known, how often is it impossible *judicially* to ascertain them? There is covetousness. How often is it palpable and undeniable, and yet incapable of being judicially proved in ways which would not convict the innocent? Nay, is not this so difficult, if not impossible, that in practice it is never, or almost never, attempted? When the Apostle John says: "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" he gives a test of piety. Yet it is such that the lack of it cannot be judicially ascertained, in any ordinary case, on any principles that would not expose persons of true piety to excision from the church. Where these and like offences can be proved on sound principles of evidence, of course, they are incompatible with Christian character and a bar to communion.

II. The second great class of duties of imperfect obligation, inasmuch as the church cannot enforce them, are those which are requisite to the symmetry and beauty, but not to the being, of Christian character. Their absence, or the presence of the contrary sins, is not, therefore, decisive evidence of the want of piety, or of disqualification for communion. Such sins may be great deformities. But inasmuch, even if proved, they do not disprove the existence of a sincere love of the Lord Jesus Christ, they are no evidence that He has not received those defiled with them, or that we should not receive them. In this class are, of course, included all those infirmities which still cleave to good men, and deform the excellent of the earth—defilements and delinquencies which they, most of all, bewail. Their coldness, negligence, unbelief, worldliness, indeed their defects of inward love and outward service, are often most all known and felt by themselves. But aside from these (with reference to church discipline) vague generalities, there are several classes of faults, which, though, as far as they go, unchristian, are not evidence of the want of piety. They may proceed from the absence of religion. And they may exist, in spite of its presence. Therefore they cannot be made tests of Christian cha-

acter, or of a right to the communion. To this class belong violations of indeterminate duties—which thence become themselves indeterminate transgressions, impossible strictly to mark out or enforce. Into this category fall,

1. Duties of kindness, charity, liberality. Men may sin as really and fatally, to their own eternal undoing, by the neglect of these virtues, as in any other way. A man of ample means or great affluence, is bound to give largely in charity, and may lose his soul if he do not. Yet who can prescribe how largely? Who knows all the private claims upon him? Who knows how much he does in private? Who knows that he may not be husbanding his resources in order to establish some great charitable foundation, which otherwise would fail? Who knows enough, in short, to prove that he may not be a follower of Christ, notwithstanding? In all this, to his own Master he stands or falls, not to any church court. There is the charge to lay by in store, on the first day of the week, as God hath prospered us, for purposes of religion and charity. But who can determine how far God has prospered any one, and how much he should lay aside, but his own conscience? The same reasoning applies to the amount contributed by different men to the support of religion. How many refuse to pay for this purpose at all in proportion to their means, *i. e.*, simply their just dues, who cannot be constrained by any pressure of ecclesiastical discipline? How rarely can a petulant, irascible, vindictive, unforgiving temper, thoroughly unchristian as it is, be reached by judicial process? How many professors, even among those who make great pretensions, and have high public standing for piety, fall into such sins, which no ecclesiastical penalties can prevent, without shattering the church to atoms?

Want of Christian activity, zeal, and decision, is a grave sin. Yet, how impossible in any ecclesiastical process, to draw the line between the utter absence, and that low state, of these virtues, which is compatible with, at least, a feeble state of piety in the soul. Indeed, sins of omission, as a class, are less within the reach of church discipline than sins of commission. Imperfect obligations lie especially in this region. The sin of the priest and Levite, of unkindness, ingratitude, want of liberality, all shortcomings whatever, are sins of omission. How important

a place they occupy may be seen in the fruitless fig-tree, the lamp without oil, the man who lacked one thing yet, the slothful and unprofitable servant, the doom of those who have not the love of God in them, and who profess not Christ before men, the final consignment to everlasting punishment of men for what they have *not* done unto Christ in the persons of the least of his brethren. And let it be observed, how difficult it is to convict men, at any human tribunal, of that omission of those ministries to the cause or people of Christ, which will consign them to everlasting fire? Or if they are convicted of the omission of them in some measure, that it should be demonstrated to be of that degree which proves absence of piety and debars from communion? To deal decisively with this class of cases is seldom within the competency of man who looketh on the outward appearance. It is mostly, if not entirely, the exclusive prerogative of God, who looketh on the heart; and alone knows what omissions of this kind proceed from, and prove, that carnal mind which is enmity with God.

2. Another class of sins or errors, which neither prove nor disprove piety in the soul, consists of mistaken applications of right principles. It is a duty to obey the powers that be. This may be accepted and acted on, in all good faith, by those who err as to what is the real government in authority over them. To have been a tory in the Revolution, or a rebel in our late rebellion, was no proof of the possession or want of piety, because it was perfectly compatible with fealty to what they honestly conceived to be the legitimate government. Men may agree that it is their duty to provide for their own, so far as in their power, according to their situation and prospects in life. But they may, as honestly, differ widely as to the manner of carrying out these principles, and what constitutes a suitable provision and allotment for them. There are many cases of mixed morality in which the same act may have proceeded from a good or a bad motive, according to the light in which it was viewed by the actor; and, therefore, *per se*, neither evinces the presence nor absence of piety. This is very largely true of acts in themselves indifferent. Gifts may be bestowed upon the poor, from the purest Christian charity, or for the sake of mere popularity; or in order to purchase their votes; or where it is

known that the gift will be spent upon the means of intoxication; or for a deadly weapon to be thrust at an enemy. Intoxicating liquors may be taken for the sake of inebriating excitement, or because they are supposed to be, within the limits of temperance, conducive to health and vigour.

3. This brings us into the region of sins of ignorance. In regard to these, much confusion and perplexity prevail. All feel that it is no excuse for profaneness or blasphemy, to be ignorant that they are wicked. Such ignorance only evinces depth of depravity. So in a large measure of all the duties of the decalogue, and of the fundamentals of Christian doctrine, faith, and life. Here the principle applies, in its utmost fullness, "Woe to them that call good evil and evil good; that put light for darkness and darkness for light." Here it is principles and duties, in themselves moral and religious, that are concerned. Ignorance is no excuse for the contrary sins, because it is itself inexcusable. Yet, even here, sins committed ignorantly are less flagrant, and closer to the Divine mercy and forgiveness, than those deliberately committed against light and knowledge. This is the teaching of the human conscience, and of Him too who is "Lord of the conscience." Did not he pray for his crucifiers, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do?" And did not Paul say of himself, "who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious; but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly, and in unbelief." (1 Timothy i. 13.)

But there is a clear distinction between these cases, in which the ignorance or error respects the principle, and those in which they relate to matters of fact. A strong illustration of this would be the case of killing another through mistake, by one who abhorred the crime of murder; or that of our soldiers in the war shooting down each other, as sometimes happened, mistaking them for the enemy. The reader may also recur to the numerous illustrations of this kind which we have just presented.

This distinction between error or ignorance, as to moral principles and facts governing the application of those principles, and as to the guilt respectively of the two, has not been overlooked by ethical writers. Ignorance as to facts may be culpa-

ble in proportion as it is wilful, or might have been overcome by due diligence. Says Whewell, "Hence, as a general distinction, Moralists pronounce *Errors of Fact*, when not accompanied with negligence, to be *exculpations* of the actions which they occasion; but *Errors of Principle*, not to be *exculpations*. And in this distinction they agree with the Jurists: who lay down these two cardinal maxims: *Ignorantia facti excusat: Ignorantia juris non excusat*. Ignorance of the fact is an excuse; ignorance of the law is no excuse. A man is not criminal for not directing his actions by a fact, which he did not know from observation or testimony; and which he could not know any other way. On the other hand, ignorance of the law cannot be accepted by the law as an excuse."

4. Here, too, we find the clew to the solution of the question, how far the moral quality of an action is determined by the intention of the doer. 1. A bad intention, or want of good intention, necessarily vitiates all actions prompted by it, be they good, bad, or indifferent, in themselves. A man who means wrong, or does not intend to do right, of course, sins. And hence, whether known to man or not, there is an inherent vitiosity in all acts not animated by faith and love. 2. An act in itself morally evil, cannot be cured, or made right and innocent, by any good intention in doing it. Men are not excused for blaspheming, lying, stealing, denying the faith, because they mean well, or think it right, or that good may come of it. They have no commission to do evil that good may come. Nor can they make evil good by thinking or calling it so. 3. In regard to actions indifferent, *in themselves* neither good nor evil, their moral quality is determined almost wholly by the intention with which they are done. The extent, however, to which this is true, depends upon the closeness of their implications with things moral or immoral, and the facilities for knowing this relation. Thus it is, in itself, a thing indifferent whether one spends two or ten thousand dollars per year. But if the effect of spending the latter sum would be obviously to disable from paying one's just debts, or to enervate and corrupt a family of children, then it is culpable to be ignorant, and to act in ignorance of this, just in proportion to its palpableness. But ordinarily, such consequences are not obvious, and the intention

in doing acts indifferent, determines their moral quality. If a man fixes his residence in a city, thinking thus to give his children greater advantages for education, business, and usefulness, and they resort only to its theatres, saloons, and dens of vice, thus plunging themselves down to ruin, the character of his choice is determined by his intentions, not by its consequences. This is clearly the apostle's teaching in regard to things indifferent. The moral quality of the action depends on the intention of the doer. "I know, and am persuaded of the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean in itself; but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean it is unclean. . . . Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that which he alloweth. And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith; for whatsoever is not of faith is sin." (Rom. xiv. 22—23.) Though "an idol is nothing," yet to eat "with conscience of the idol," and "as a thing offered to an idol," defiles the conscience. (1 Cor. viii. 7.) But how seldom, if ever, are such sins of ignorance or intention within the scope of church discipline?

5. Thus we come into the sphere of expediency, so prolific of indeterminate duties and imperfect obligations. Expediency applies not to actions, *per se*, good or evil, but to those which are, *per se*, indifferent. There are countless actions, not in themselves good or evil, which we ought to do or to shun, as they appear likely to promote or hinder what is in itself morally good or evil. These are the things which we ought to do or avoid, on the ground of expediency. When the apostle says, "all things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient," the "lawful" things here specified, are things indifferent. To things intrinsically good or evil, expediency is irrelevant. It would be absurd to speak of its being expedient or inexpedient to love and obey God, to speak the truth, to do justice, love mercy, to profess Christ, &c., &c. These things are intrinsically and for ever binding, independently of all expediency. Not even an angel from heaven could set them aside. But the amount which one spends in comforts and luxuries is a thing indifferent. Moral obligation in the premises varies with circumstances. He who spends in unnecessary indulgences what ought to be reserved for charity, or to avoid

bankruptcy, or to provide for the necessary support of his family, present and prospective, does what is indeed "lawful (in itself, aside of its consequences,) but not expedient." But what man or church can prescribe to him how he shall spend his money, or inflict penalties upon him, if he spends it unwisely or improvidently? Who shall determine what is expedient for him? If this prerogative were transferred to others, it would be an intolerable infringement of that liberty, in the use of our own, which gives it its chief attraction, and constitutes the great incentive to its acquisition. In like manner, who shall determine the style and equipage, and general modes of living, which are right, proper, or expedient for other people? Sumptuary laws are proverbially impracticable by civil government. Their execution involves an espionage and petty despotism that are intolerable and fatal. They are still more impracticable in the church. And yet, what prodigious violations of Christian duty, what deprivation of morals, and injury to religion, result from improvident and extravagant expenditure? Again, no church court can pronounce any particular style, gorgeousness, or cost of dress, incompatible with Christian character, or a bar to communion. And yet, it is undeniable that the present enormous extravagance of female dress, often aggravated by a corresponding general extravagance or costliness of living, especially in our great cities, tends to sap the very foundations of social life, and of morality and religion, as implicated therewith. Considerate young men cannot, and dare not, enter the married state, without generous, and even princely incomes, such as few can obtain. Hence the vast and increasing numbers who live in perpetual celibacy, with the inevitable consequences of such a state of society. Who can doubt that there is great sin in these things, yet of such a kind that it cannot be extirpated or even reached by church discipline? These are things, in which, whatever may be true in the general, it is impossible to fix the charge of scandal, or of being incompatible with piety, in particular cases. Here we may not judge another man's servant; to his own master he stands or falls.

6. One topic under this head has greatly exercised different branches of the church for the last quarter of a century, viz.,

The relation of the manufacture, sale, and temperate use of intoxicating drinks to church standing and discipline. It is agreed, on all hands, that drunkenness or intemperance is, *per se*, a sin, which, unrepented of, should debar from the communion. It is agreed also, that the mere manufacture, sale, or sparing use of drink, that, used in excess, may intoxicate, is not, in itself, a sin. But it is argued that such making, selling, and using of these drinks, as a beverage, is the occasion of all the drunkenness that exists, without any countervailing benefit to justify it; that it gives rise to all the immense evils, physical, moral, and religious, of the intemperance that desolates the country, while it does no good. Hence, if not sinful in itself, it is the occasion of others sinning, and that to their eternal undoing. To do that which leads to such results, is alleged to be inconsistent with Christian character, and a proper ground of exclusion from the church. It is alleged that, when any "so sin against the brethren, they sin against Christ," (1 Cor. viii. 12,) and, therefore, ought to be debarred from communion.

Such is the substance of the argument which has had extensive currency among Christian people, and been endorsed by some ecclesiastical bodies in this country.

Our first remark upon this is, that while the apostle (Rom. xiv. and 1 Cor. viii.) charges us to use our Christian liberty, with regard to things indifferent, in a spirit of charity, and for the edification of the brethren, he, none the less, invests us with this liberty, and requires others to respect it. If the strong are not to be regardless of, or uncharitable towards the weak, neither are they to be judged or condemned by them. It is true, on the one hand, that "it is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak." But what is the power which the apostle would enlist to ensure this generous self-sacrifice for the good of others? Is it church discipline, and the terror of excommunication? or the impulses of Christian love? These questions answer themselves. Suppose any "eat flesh," when, in the judgment of others, Christian charity should lead them to abstain from it. What then? Let the apostle answer. "One believeth that he may eat all things; another, who is weak, eateth herbs. Let not him that eateth despise him that

eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him. Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth; yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand. One man esteemeth one day above another; another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard it. He that eateth, eateth to the Lord, for he giveth God thanks; and he that eateth not, to the Lord he eateth not, and giveth God thanks." (Rom. xiv. 2—6.) This, beyond all question, is decisive, that while we ought to use our Christian liberty, in things indifferent, aright, yet we are bound not to surrender, but to preserve that liberty. Its highest and best Christian use is a duty, of imperfect obligation, with respect to enforcement by human tribunals. It is God's prerogative to enforce it, and not for us herein to judge another man's servant. "Why should our liberty be judged of other men's consciences?" (1 Cor. x. 29.) Indeed, it may become a duty for Christians sometimes to assert their liberty, in these matters, by a practical exercise of it which would otherwise be unnecessary, in order to counteract misguided efforts to bring them under a yoke of bondage. It may be even necessary to do it, at the risk of calumnious misconstructions and imputations. There are limits to the checks upon our liberty which may be imposed by the duty of conciliating, or not scandalizing, weak Christians. If they attempt to forge unscriptural fetters and bonds for the conscience, which interfere with our freedom in serving God, and holy living, it is our duty to refuse them. A higher than we incurred the groundless opprobrium of being a "wine-bibber and gluttonous, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children." This suggests a second unanswerable reply to the argument in question, viz., that if all making of intoxicating liquor to be used as a beverage is a sin, then our Saviour committed a sin in his first miracle; and if any, even the least use of such drinks, as a beverage, be a sin and a bar to communion, then the drinking of the wine made by him to be so used, was a sin and bar to communion. Further, while the Scripture repro-

bates drunkenness, and makes it a bar to communion, it will hardly be claimed that it puts all use of "wine which maketh glad the heart of man" in this category. There must be some mistake about arguments and principles that involve such consequences. The case is plain. Intoxication is a sin—which, persisted in or unrepented of, should exclude from communion. So he who knowingly supplies liquor to be used for purposes of intoxication, or keeps a haunt of drunkenness; is a partaker of the sin. But even this is more difficult to be dealt with than intoxication itself. And so the further we get to the more remote agents in producing it, the more difficult it is to establish a sinful participation in it. Those who manufacture, and sell it, may claim that they do so to supply it for lawful and not for illegitimate purposes; to be used, not abused; that there are manifold purposes, medical and hygienic, as well as in the arts, besides its moderate use as a beverage, that are lawful, for which it is required to be made and sold. Then again, many excellent and judicious people suppose that the free and ordinary use of native fermented liquors, wine and cider, would banish or greatly lessen the use of the more fiery and acrid beverages, which are so prolific of drunkenness, and thus indirectly promote temperance. These opinions may be wrong. We stand in doubt of them. But, right or wrong, they relate to matters in which a difference of opinion is no legitimate test of Christian character. We do not believe that excommunication on such issues is the Lord's way of preventing intemperance, or that it will have such a tendency—quite the reverse. For ourselves we have long felt called upon to abstain and, as far as possible, to induce others to abstain from the ordinary use of intoxicating liquors as a beverage. We devoutly wish that the use of them as a common beverage might be banished from society. We cordially adopt the Assembly's deliverance—"Especially should there be the frequent warning to the young and inconsiderate," touch not, taste not, handle not, "accompanied by a corresponding example." But we believe that these results are to be reached by persuasive appeals to the conscience, and the constraining power of Christian love, and not by making a new, unauthorized, and divisive term of communion. It is quite time it were understood that there are

manifold evils, sins, and shortcomings, which it is entirely beyond the power or province of church discipline to eradicate. So far as things indifferent are concerned, we "are called unto liberty, only we must not use our liberty as an occasion to the flesh; but by love serve one another." (Gal. v. 13.) It is our duty to use our liberty for the edification of ourselves and others on the one hand; and on the other, to vindicate and maintain that liberty against the efforts of those who would turn it into a yoke of bondage. Suppose a large party should arise, who should maintain that it is a sin for Christians to spend more than a certain moderate sum annually for clothing, while the demands of Christian charity are so imperative. Suppose they should procure votes to this effect to be passed by ecclesiastical bodies; and, in fact, so far as we can see, such a curtailment of expenses, in order to give what is thus saved to the cause of Christ, would be productive of great good. But suppose any think and act otherwise. What then? Is it to be, or can it be, enforced by church discipline?

In the same manner we believe, that, if the great body of the people, especially of Christian and moral people, would abstain from the use and sale of intoxicating drinks, great good and no evil would result therefrom. But what if many, including some of the most eminent, devoted, liberal, and exemplary members of our own and other churches think and act otherwise? If they judge it proper, and not unchristian, to drink a glass of wine, cider, porter, occasionally, or even daily? We may regret it. But can we make it a test of Christian character or term of communion, or enforce compliance with our views in that way? By no manner of means.

The same principle applies to the manufacture, sale, and use of tobacco. The writer of this is of that class who believes that the prevalent use of tobacco is productive of great evils, physical and moral; that it has a great influence in developing an appetite for strong drink, and thus promoting intemperance, with other evils; and that it would be an unspeakable blessing to the church, the nation, and the world, if we could bring about its universal disuse. Multitudes of good men are of the same opinion, and have succeeded in procuring the utterance and endorsement of this opinion by some ecclesiastical bodies.

But multitudes of others are quite otherwise in theory and practice. Would it not be quite absurd and monstrous to try to reach or extirpate this evil by ecclesiastical discipline? Could it be done without "rooting up the wheat also," and extirpating the church itself?

More than a quarter of a century ago, a case came before the Consociation of Fairfield West, in Connecticut, on appeal from the action of a church which had sustained a complaint against one of its members for "selling distilled spirits as a drink for persons in ordinary health." On the question whether such a charge was a ground of ecclesiastical action, that body unanimously adopted the following minute, framed by the Hon. Roger M. Sherman, who was a member of the body, and one of the first Christian jurists which this country has ever produced, withal an earnest advocate of total abstinence. This they did after saying: "they do earnestly beseech and solemnly charge all members of churches who so make, vend, or use distilled spirits, to desist from a practice thus injurious to society and perilous to themselves."

"The act charged is 'solely the practice of selling distilled spirits as a drink for persons in ordinary health.' It is not charged that he has so sold distilled spirits as to produce intoxication, or has sold it to drunkards. The rights of a church like those of a civil government, are of two classes, viz., perfect and imperfect. Perfect rights are such as can be enforced by adequate penalties; such as the right of requiring members to abstain from theft, lying, &c. These can be enforced by the heaviest censures of the church. Imperfect rights are such as can be asserted, but not enforced by penalty if not yielded; such as bountifulness, attending social meetings, avoiding frivolity and evil communications, &c. Of this latter sort, we deem the acts under consideration to be, in the present state of things, in many of our churches."

This principle might be elucidated through various lines of illustration, at much greater length. But if we have thus far succeeded in making ourselves understood, our main object has been accomplished. It has been shown that there is a wide range of Christian virtues which, while they are the proper outworkings of Christian principle and love, cannot be enforced

by the exactions of church discipline; of sins and evils which cannot be purged out by ecclesiastical censures or excommunication. To say that a given course of conduct is sinful, is not, as some suppose, proof that it exposes to excommunication, or can be thus extirpated from the church, without "rooting up the wheat also," and rending the church into fragments. Evils, faults, sins, must be borne with, which can only be extirpated by procedures that would expel the true members of Christ from communion with him and his people, at his table.

It does not follow that the church and ministry are not to bring their appropriate powers to bear for the removal of sins and faults which are beyond the province of the last penalties of church discipline. By argument, persuasion, expostulation, entreaty, example, a living ministry and church, will, by the power of the Holy Ghost, make continual and mighty progress in elevating the tone of piety, benevolence, liberality, self-denial, zeal, and activity on the one hand; and in rooting out sins, errors, and unchristian practices and fashions on the other. How much, for example, has been done in this way to raise the standard of Christian liberality, and to abate even the temperate use of intoxicating drinks? How much remains to be done in these respects, and also to exorcise the covetousness, worldliness, selfishness, and voluptuousness which still infest the church?

Church censures culminating in excommunication have one aim; to remove from the church those offences which, being capable of judicial ascertainment, are clearly inconsistent with a credible profession of piety; and to exclude from the communion those whose conduct is not only unchristian, but unchristian in such a sense, as, if persisted in, to certainly evince the absence of piety. Carried beyond this sphere, instead of subserving, it defeats its proper end of purifying the church, and invigorating religion. It is itself thus greatly weakened and brought into disrepute. It divides, debilitates, and destroys. It roots up the wheat not less than the tares, and, from being a power for edification, becomes a power for destruction. The clear apprehension of the distinction between perfect and imperfect rights and obligations, we think will assist not a little in enabling us to define the proper sphere of ecclesiastical dis-

cipline; and to avoid those misapplications of it, which have so often brought it into disrepute, neutralized its efficacy, distracted the church, and, instead of promoting religion, inaugurated the reign of envying and strife, confusion and every evil work.

ART. VI.—*Strauss and Schleiermacher, in their biographies of Jesus compared.* By P. HOFSTEDE DE GROOT, D. D., Prof. of Theology in the University of Groningen. Translated from the Dutch.

CARL SCHWARTZ, in his ingenious work, *History of Modern Theology*, where he treats of Schleiermacher, relates that Strauss, tutor at Tübingen, once more visited the university of Berlin, mainly because he desired to attend the celebrated lectures of Schleiermacher on the life of Jesus; and he adds that these lectures, full of disorganizing scepticism in analyzing and of sagacity in combining, gave the principal impulse to the destructive work of Strauss. This account of Schwartz is in some respects modified, but on the whole confirmed by what Strauss himself, recently in an essay, and now in his *Leben Jesu für das deutsche Volk bearbeitet*, communicates. He did not indeed, he tells us, in the winter of 1831, 1832, which he spent in Berlin, himself hear Schleiermacher deliver these lectures; but yet he made from two copies a copious extract. From his account of these lectures given in his last *Life of Jesus*, we receive moreover the impression that they both stand on one foundation; yet with this difference, that Schleiermacher moves cautiously and reluctantly, like one walking on a yet untrodden glacier, whilst Strauss sets his foot firmly and courageously, like one passing over ground with which he is familiar. Strauss remarks concerning them: "Schleiermacher's lectures on the life of Jesus have not, like his other lectures, yet been given to the public. They gave so little encouragement to the conservatism which has ever prevailed in the school of Schleiermacher; they were especially against the