

THE
BIBLICAL REPERTORY
AND
PRINCETON REVIEW.

EDITED BY
CHARLES HODGE, D. D.

OCTOBER, 1862.

PHILADELPHIA:

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CONTENTS OF N^O. IV.

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	PAGE
ART. I.—The Matter of Prophecy.....	559
ART. II.—The Presbyterian Historical Society.....	579
ART. III.—The Church and the Poor.....	601
ART. IV.—A Plea for High Education and Presbyterian Colleges..	635
ART. V.—Christian Enterprise.....	668
ART. VI.—African Colonization.....	686
Letter from Professor Lewis.....	711

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CONTENTS OF VOL. XXXIV.

No. I.

	PAGE.
ART. I.—God and Revelation.....	1
ART. II.—Memoirs of Philip de Mornay.....	40
ART. III.—The Human Body as related to Sanctification.....	71
ART. IV.—Bilderdijk.....	104
ART. V.—Are there too many Ministers?.....	133
ART. VI.—England and America.....	147
SHORT NOTICES.....	178

No. II.

ART. I.—Remarks on the Ethical Philosophy of the Chinese.....	193
ART. II.—The Philosophy of the Absolute.....	215
ART. III.—The History and Theory of Revolutions.....	244
ART. IV.—The Doctrine of Providence.....	277
ART. V.—Bilderdijk..	286
ART. VI.—The Nature and Effects of Money; and of Credit as its Substitute.....	310
SHORT NOTICES.....	358

No. III.

	PAGE.
ART. I.—Dr. Hickok's Philosophy.....	369
ART. II.—Vindications of Dr. Hickok's Philosophy.....	388
ART. III.—Augustine.....	406
ART. IV.—Diversity of Species in the Human Race.....	435
ART. V.—The General Assembly.....	464
ART. VI.—Slavery and the Slave Trade.....	524
SHORT NOTICES.....	549

No. IV.

ART. I.—The Matter of Prophecy.....	559
ART. II.—The Presbyterian Historical Society.....	579
ART. III.—The Church and the Poor.....	601
ART. IV.—A Plea for High Education and Presbyterian Colleges....	635
ART. V.—Christian Enterprise.....	668
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No. IV.

ART. I.—*The Matter of Prophecy.*

THE likeness of the prophets to Moses, and their position in the old economy, determine the task with which they were charged. This was to maintain in its integrity the covenant relation of the people to God, and so to conduct and superintend that relation that it might work out the grand end of its institution, a preparation for the coming of Christ. Hence every thing is viewed by them in its bearings upon that fundamental covenant. It is theirs to develope to the understanding of the people their obligations and privileges arising out of their special relation to God, the fatal consequences which would ensue from its abandonment or neglect, and the glorious issue which God designed to effect for them and for the world by means of it. As they were the authorized expounders of the purposes of God touching a plan still in progress, their communications largely concerned events which were yet future. It was given to them to anticipate the further unfoldings of the divine plan of grace, and to announce what the Most High had in store for Israel and for the world.

The predictions of the prophets are of course qualified and shaped by their grand aim as just exhibited. They are consequently not anticipations of future events selected at random,

ART. III.—*The Relation of the Church to the Poor.*

GOD, in the dispensation of his grace, has been pleased to reveal himself as a most bountiful almsgiver to needy souls. All mankind are absolutely dependent upon his free bounty, to which they have no claim but their necessities; in his sight all men are alike “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked;” and his saving mercy must be received by the impoverished soul as a free gift, as an alms, or it cannot be received at all. Moreover, the great object for which the church of God was instituted, is to make him known to the world in this his true character, of a most bountiful almsgiver to needy souls, and his only begotten Son as the bread and the water of spiritual life, and the righteousness of Christ as the covering for spiritual nakedness.

In this statement, as throughout the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, poverty in a natural sense—want, necessity, and helplessness, with respect to earthly things, are treated as chosen images, divinely consecrated symbols of spiritual destitution; nakedness, hunger, and thirst, are taken as the most significant and expressive representations of that spiritual want through which only it is possible to receive Christ as the bread and the water of life, and his righteousness as the covering of guilt and shame. Now the intimate connection which subsists between spiritual things and their natural or scripturally authorized images and symbols, might lead us to anticipate beforehand, that the church of God, in all ages of the world, would sustain a peculiar relation to ‘the poor among men, and him that hath no helper.’ Upon examination, we find this anticipation fully verified.

For under the old dispensation a great body of positive commands and ordinances were laid down, by which the theocratic people, *i. e.*, the church, was to be governed in guarding the rights, and in providing both for the spiritual and for the temporal wants of the poor. These are so numerous that they cannot be

cited here; and they are so striking that they cannot have escaped the attention of the most cursory readers. Also, it would seem that the provision thus made for temporal destitution was ample and sure, and that the system attained its object by means less grating to the natural feelings of the class for whose benefit it was designed than any other that has ever been known. The forms, at least, under which the divine charities were dispensed, according to the Mosaic law, had this great advantage over all the poor-laws of modern times, that they directed the minds of the destitute and afflicted who were relieved, directly to God himself, as their peculiar patron and benefactor, and taught them to recognise him as their helper, and as the object of their gratitude and trust. The want of this element in the modern state and national systems of relief for the poor, is, we are persuaded, a grievous defect, which goes far to neutralize their benefits. With respect to spiritual privileges, the whole property of the theocratic nation was rigorously taxed to provide religious accommodations, which should be adequate to the wants of all the people. These accommodations were available equally and alike by the poor and the rich. In all their solemn assemblies, in all their sacrificial rites, in all their ordinances of social worship, 'the rich and the poor met together on equal terms, because the Lord was the Maker of them all.' This characteristic of the worship of Jehovah, as distinguished from that of the false gods of the heathen, is celebrated with glowing praises in many passages of the Old Testament.

Accordingly, we have abundant evidence that under the church of the old dispensation the poor were effectually instructed in the peculiar relation which God sustained to them, that the means of grace did reach them, and that they, as a class, were the most zealous and faithful worshippers. 'The poor among men did rejoice in the Holy One of Israel.' Even in times of the most wide-spread declension and apostasy, a remnant of sincere souls was always found among them; and the prophets, when driven almost to despair by persecution from others, could still find encouragement to proclaim the divine word, and to minister to the poor. Thus one of them exclaims, turning away from the rich and powerful, "I will

feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. . . . And the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the Lord."

This idea of a peculiar relation between God and his poor, was a part of the inheritance of the New Testament church, by which it was taken up, developed, and more fully realized. This might be made to appear in a great number of particulars in the life and teachings of her great Head, and of his first chosen disciples, as also in the constitution of the church, and in her first and most glorious triumphs. The limits of this article do not allow of more than a glance at these leading ideas.

And, first, our Lord himself "was born in a low condition;" his mother was a poor virgin; his legal and reputed father was a poor mechanic; his birthplace was a manger. His infancy and childhood were passed in the midst of poverty; and his youth, as we are informed by a tradition which in itself is altogether probable, in working with his reputed father at the trade of a carpenter. Throughout his public ministry he appears to have depended for his food and clothing upon charity. Among the poor he spent most of his time, and his chief miracles were wrought for their benefit. It was his constant endeavour to win their confidence and sympathy. He spared no pains to comfort and encourage them under their sorrows and trials, by giving them the assurance that their poverty and destitution had no tendency to alienate from them their covenant God, but was a reason for his peculiar interest in their welfare. He taught them that it was intended by their Heavenly Father for a spiritual blessing; that through the sign they might be made partakers of the thing signified; viz., that poverty of spirit, that consciousness of spiritual destitution and want, without which none could share in the riches of his grace, nor in the glories of his kingdom. In his miracles of physical healing, and for providing them with food, which were extended even to the most degraded and abandoned, he sought to win their confidence and gratitude, and thus to bring them into such a relation to himself as would call into exercise their faith in his power and willingness to heal them

of their spiritual maladies, and open their hearts to receive at his hands the supply of all their spiritual wants.

The first act of the public ministry of Christ appears to have been a discourse which he preached in the synagogue at Nazareth, upon a text of the prophet Isaiah, which exhibited, in the most striking manner, the special relation which the coming Messiah should bear to the poor. Here, having opened the sacred volume, he found the place where it was written, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord." How he explained and applied this prophecy to himself and his mission, we are not informed; but it could hardly fail to give him a chosen opportunity of opening his heart to the destitute and afflicted, and of manifesting that deep interest in their temporal and eternal welfare, which, in all his subsequent ministry, seems to have missed no occasion of making itself known. And hence it is recorded, that after he had concluded, "all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth."

Some time after this, when John the Baptist sent two of his disciples to Jesus, to ask him whether he was indeed the long-expected Messiah, or they should continue to look for another, he pointed them to a series of miracles, which he wrought in their presence, and after these to the fact, that he preached the gospel to the poor, as the crowning evidence. He said to them, "Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk; the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached unto them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me." Thus he seems to give the fact that his gospel did actually reach the poor, as the crowning proof, without which even his miracles might appear to be incomplete evidence that he was the true Messiah and Saviour that should come into the world, as foretold by the prophets. But as if fully conscious that such condescension to the lowest and most degraded of the people was

not expected, but would surely give offence to the carnal pride of the higher classes, he adds a blessing upon all who should not be scandalized by it.

From this point of view, also, we can best appreciate the significance of that incident of his life, in which he fulfilled the prophecy, "Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy king cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt, the foal of an ass."

Nor is it unimportant to observe, that this special relation which the Messiah must bear to the poor, was so clearly defined and fixed in his own mind, and entered so essentially into his true character and mission, as to determine the form of one of his three great temptations in the wilderness; in which the tempter evidently aimed to seduce him from the course of procedure which it marked out for him, to ally himself, for the accomplishment of his purposes, with wealth and political power. For this end, Satan, by diabolical art, caused to pass before his eyes, "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; and saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me." But he resisted the temptation, and remained constant to his true character as revealed in prophecy.

In like manner, when he comes to state the principle by which he will distinguish at the last judgment the sheep from the goats, we are taught that his true people will be those who have ministered in his name, whilst the false professors and hypocrites will be those who have neglected to minister in his name to the poor and necessitous. "Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was an hungered and ye gave me meat, &c. . . . Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren ye have done it unto me." Whilst those on the left hand are consigned to everlasting punishment, because they have neglected these duties to the poor.

Hence it was, that mingling freely in the company even of the most degraded and immoral, the Lord gained their sympathy and their confidence. Abandoned women were among his first converts; who loved him much because they had

much forgiven. Thus he became obnoxious to the charge of the Pharisees, "This man receiveth sinners, and cateth with them." Hence the common people heard him gladly. For a long time they protected him from the enmity and machinations of the rich and powerful, by whom, almost universally, he was rejected, hated, and persecuted; and who, when they 'sought to lay hands on him, were restrained because they feared the people.' In fine, it was by the quenchless malignity of the priests and rulers that he was nailed to the accursed tree.

In harmony with these, and many other similar facts, the twelve apostles were chosen by their Master from the same class of society to which he belonged. With one or two exceptions, they appear to have been poor fishermen, or persons of kindred employments; whence they could readily appreciate the instructions they received with respect to the relation which the church (of which they were to be the foundation, Jesus himself being the chief corner-stone) must bear to the poor. What the drift of these instructions was, we easily gather, not only from the example and precepts of the Lord himself, but also from their own subsequent conduct and teaching. For almost immediately upon the Pentecostal outpouring of the Spirit, they took up the matter of making provision for the poor, and placed it upon a permanent and responsible footing, in the first church which they organized, by the institution, with solemn fasting and prayer, of a separate office for that sole purpose. That this procedure arose out of a particular occasion, does not weaken or limit its general significance; but rather it reveals the watchfulness and care of divine Providence, that occasions should not be wanting to direct special attention to the subject, and lead the church to take such action as might secure that the Lord's poor should be adequately provided for. Accordingly, the apostles said to the assembled church of Jerusalem, "Look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. . . . And the saying pleased the whole multitude; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte of Antioch:

whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them." This early institution of the diaconate is the more significant from the number of persons, with their distinguished qualifications, who were first chosen to the office, together with the solemn record which, according to the mind of the Spirit, was deemed proper to be made, of the time, circumstances, and manner of their appointment; as, also, from the fact that the constitution of the church of Jerusalem could hardly fail to serve as a model for all others that should be subsequently organized.

Also, when Paul claimed to be added to the number of the apostles, he seems to have been opposed at first on account of his previous persecution of the church, and of the peculiar manner in which he affirmed that he had been called. We have no evidence, indeed, that any difficulty grew out of the fact of his having belonged to a different class of society from that of the other apostles; but it is altogether remarkable, that, inasmuch as he had never been a personal companion of the Lord, and hence might not be so deeply imbued with his ideas of the peculiar relation which the church must bear to the poor as the others were, they deemed it necessary to give him a special charge upon that one point alone. In his own account of this transaction he says: "When James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do." It is true, indeed, that the poor, in this passage, were those among the Jewish converts in Syria, who, at this time, were reduced to great straits by a famine, for whose necessities Paul was to make collections among the Gentile converts; but this is only another instance of providential arrangement, that the apostle of the Gentiles, when he went forth to organize and give permanent character to the churches of the great capitals of the civilized world, should have the relation which those churches must bear to the poor, brought prominently before his mind. Accordingly this idea is prominent in his epistles; especially in those to the church at Corinth, at this time one of

the richest commercial cities in the Roman empire. There he devotes whole chapters to it; from which it appears that he required collections to be taken up for this object on the first day of every week, in all the churches which he founded. He mentions particularly in this connection those of Galatia, Macedonia, and Achaia; and endeavours to excite a holy emulation among them, liberally commending those that were forward, and rebuking with authority and severity those that were backward in the good work. In fine, the alms thus collected, he intrusts to no subordinate hand, but undertakes a journey to Jerusalem, that he might bear them himself to the suffering poor among the Jewish converts.

The writers of the other epistles are no less full and clear. Thus the apostle James, in his circular letter to all the Christian churches of the world, says: "My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or, Sit here under my footstool; are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts? Harken, my beloved brethren, hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?"

What view of this matter was taken by the church, as she came from the hands of the apostles, may be gathered from the foregoing citations, and from other sources of evidence. We know that she did reach with her gospel the poor and lower classes of society, much more extensively and effectually than the rich and powerful, and with a fulness and strength of saving influence which probably she has never since equalled. For even to the church in the wealthy city of Corinth, Paul could say: "Ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and . . . the weak things of the world to confound the . . . mighty;

and base things of the world, and things which are despised, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are; that no flesh should glory in his presence.” This fact, that the primitive church was largely composed of the poor and uncultivated, is so palpable, that it is made the basis of an infidel objection against the Christian religion. “The absurdities of its doctrines,” says Mr. Newman, “were such, that no man of a cultivated understanding in the Roman Empire could embrace it.” Yet the charity of these poor people was such as to astonish and amaze the heathen, upon whose necessitous and afflicted it largely overflowed. The following quotation is from the church history of Neander.*

“The care of providing for the support and maintenance of strangers, of the poor, the sick, the old, of widows and orphans, and of those in prison on account of their faith, devolved upon the whole church. This was one of the main purposes for which the collection of voluntary contributions in the assemblies convened for public worship, was instituted; and the charity of individuals, moreover, led them to emulate each other in the same good work. The hinderance occasioned to this kind of Christian activity, is reckoned by Tertullian among the disadvantages of a mixed marriage. ‘What heathen,’ he says, ‘will suffer his wife to go about from one street to another, to the houses of strangers, to the meanest hovels, indeed, for the purpose of visiting the brethren? What heathen will allow her to steal away into the dungeon to kiss the chain of the martyr? If a brother arrives from abroad, what reception will he meet with in the house of the *stranger*? If an alms is to be bestowed, storehouse and cellar are shut fast.’ On the other hand, he counts it among the felicities of a marriage contracted between Christians, that the wife is at liberty to visit the sick, and relieve the needy, and is never straitened or perplexed in the bestowment of her charities. In times of public calamity the contrast was strikingly displayed between the cowardly selfishness of the pagans, and the self-sacrificing brotherly love of the Christians. Dionysius, the bishop of Alexandria, thus speaks of it, as manifested during

* Church History, (Torrey’s Translation,) Vol. i. pp. 255—8.

a contagious sickness which raged in that capital in the reign of the Emperor Gallienus. 'To the pagans,' he says, 'this pestilence appeared a most frightful calamity, that left nothing to hope for; not so to us. We regarded it as a special trial and exercise of our faith. It was true of most of our brethren, that, in the fulness of their brotherly love, they did not spare themselves. . . . Many died after others by their care had recovered from the sickness. Some of the best among our brethren, presbyters, deacons, and distinguished men of the laity, thus ended their lives, so that the manner of their death . . . seemed not to fall short of martyrdom. . . . But with the heathens it was quite otherwise; those who showed the first symptoms of the disease they drove from them; they fled from their dearest friends. The half-dead they cast into the streets, and left the dead unburied, making it their chief care to avoid the contagion.' . . . In like manner the Christians of Carthage distinguished themselves . . . during the pestilence which, . . . in the reign of the Emperor Gallus, ravaged North Africa. The pagans . . . deserted their sick and dying; the streets were covered with dead bodies, which none dared to touch; avarice alone overcame the fear of death; abandoned men took advantage of the misfortunes of others to plunder them. But Cyprian called his church together, and addressed them as follows: 'If we are the children of God, who makes his sun to rise, and sends his rain on the just and on the unjust, who scatters his gifts and blessings not barely on his own, but even on those whose thoughts are far from him, we must show it by our actions, striving to be perfect, even as our Father in heaven is perfect, blessing those that curse us, and doing good to them that despitefully use us.' Animated by his fatherly words, the members of the church quickly divided the work among them. The rich gave of their substance, the poor contributed their labour."

This idea that the poor and suffering were a sort of legacy or inheritance to the church, over which she must watch with peculiar tenderness and care, penetrated so deeply into the Christian mind, that it continued to exercise a great influence even in the midst of general decline and apostasy. After the rise of the papacy, and during the middle ages, the rule which

applied to the dioceses and monasteries, was, that their revenues should be divided into four equal parts, one for the bishop and his family, another for the clergy, a third for the repair of the churches, and the fourth for the poor.* Even the monasteries, with all their corruptions, continued to appropriate a large portion of their revenues to make provision for the poor, until the destruction of these establishments, in England under Henry VIII., and in France by the revolution. "As late as the beginning of the sixteenth century, the monastic institutions, with which England abounded, furnished food and shelter to the hungry and the destitute." However the fact may be explained, it is undeniable that the great problem of modern society, that of provision for the poor—a problem for which our political economists find no better solution than prohibition of marriage—did not arise until the church had given up the care of the poor to the state, a transfer which, by an eminent Protestant author, has been characterized as a greater revolution than that of the Norman Conquest.

But the most significant fact, with respect to the peculiar relation which the church was intended to bear to the poor, is found in her divine constitution itself. For the church is the body of Christ, that is to say, the organ of his manifestation of himself, and the instrument of his operations, for the salvation of his people. For this object she is made partaker of his fullness, even grace for grace. His grace and beauty and love and power must be reproduced and exhibited in her, or the knowledge of these qualities as inherent in him, is soon lost to the world. In the degree in which he is formed, embodied, and exhibited in her with fidelity to the traits of his character, and in the degree in which her organization affords him suitable instrumentalities for his work, as the Saviour of sinners,

* Thus Gregory I. replies to the question of St. Austin, first bishop of Canterbury, "Into how many portions the things given by the faithful to the altar are to be divided?" "*Mos autem sedis apostolicæ est ordinatis episcopis præcepta tradere, ut in omni stipendio, quod accedit, quatuor debeant fieri portiones: una, videlicet, episcopo et familiæ propter hospitalitatem atque suspensionem, alia clero, tertia pauperibus, quarta ecclesiis reparandis.*" See Complete Works of Venerable Bede. London, 1843. Vol. ii. p. 106.

does she exercise power over the hearts of the children of men for their salvation. In the degree in which these traits and instrumentalities are lost or obscured, her power is lost. Moreover, the salvation of the people of Christ includes three subordinate aims, and requires that the organization of the church should provide three corresponding instrumentalities. These aims are represented, and these instrumentalities are provided in the three offices which he has instituted, viz., the ministry of the word, the eldership, and the diaconate.

1. The great object and work of the ministry is the preaching of the gospel. The importance of this to the final end of the salvation of the people of God, was such that it could not be left to take care of itself; nor could it be left to the care of the whole congregation of believers indiscriminately. Hence a separate office was instituted, and the work was committed to a class of official persons, ordained and consecrated to it, and who must be held responsible for its performance. The effects and consequences of the embodiment of this special object in a distinct office, could not fail to be what they have been, viz., to give prominence, dignity, and sacredness to the object in the eyes of the whole church; to instruct the people of God, through all time, that, according to his mind, it was essential to their salvation, and could never be dispensed with; to lay upon them the clear and permanent obligation to make ample provision for it; and to ensure that the gospel should be preached wherever the church should be organized. If no such office had been instituted, the natural inference would have been, that it was not of sufficient importance to require it. If the church should cease to regard this office as one of divine authority and obligation, should cease to maintain it, and its duties should be left to be performed by the people indiscriminately, or if the office, with its duties, should be absorbed by either of the others, what would become of the preaching of the gospel? And where the preaching of the gospel ceases to be faithfully performed, what becomes of the church? The answers to such questions are palpable in themselves; so that it is hardly necessary in confirmation of them to allude to the history and present condition of such denominations as the

Quakers, or Friends, as they prefer to be called, who have rejected the ministry of the gospel as a distinct office.

2. A similar view is to be taken of the ruling eldership, in which is embodied what is commonly regarded as the second immediate object for which the church was organized, viz., the maintenance of government, order, and purity, in the Christian community. The institution of a distinct office for this object, signifies that it is of such importance that it could not be left to the care of the members indiscriminately; gives it prominence and sacredness; and secures that it shall be attained. If this office should be abolished, or should be absorbed by either of the others, what would become of the government and purity of the church? Failing these, how could the people of God be saved?

3. The third specific object of the church is the care of the poor; and this is embodied and exhibited in the diaconate. All that has been said of the other two offices, applies, *mutatis mutandis*, equally to this. It was intended to manifest the grace and compassion of the Lord for the poor in their destitution and suffering; to exhibit the peculiar relation of himself and his church to them as a class; to give prominence and dignity, and sacredness to their cause; to ensure that systematic and adequate provision should be made for them in his church; by the supply of their temporal necessities, to gain their confidence, and win their hearts to him as able and willing to supply all their spiritual wants; to hold him up before the world as a most bountiful almsgiver of spiritual life and blessing; and to signify to us all that the sole claim we have upon him, which he can recognise, and to which he will always respond, is that of utter destitution and helplessness.

The peculiar relation of the church and her Head to the poor, is revealed in this fact, that no distinct office, with special relation to any other class of mankind, was deemed necessary; all others stand equally related to all the means of grace; whilst for the poor a distinct office has been created, and provision for their temporal and spiritual wants is made one of the three immediate objects for which the Christian church exists in the world.

With respect to these three offices, and to the objects for

which they were instituted, as compared with each other, it would appear that they are all essential to the true idea of the church, as this lay before the mind of the Lord when he caused them to be instituted; but it does not follow from this that they are all of equal importance. The office of the ministry for the preaching of the gospel, is certainly of paramount importance, inasmuch as upon it the very existence of the church depends. This is clearly indicated in the words of the apostles, when they called the brethren together to organize the diaconate. "It is not reason," they said, "that we should leave the word of God and serve tables." It might, also, be inferred from the fact, that the functions of the ruling eldership are purely spiritual, whilst those of the diaconate are partly temporal, that the former is of greater importance than the latter. But this inference is not a necessary one, for the reason that the spiritual object of the care of the poor, which is attained by supplying their temporal wants, may be quite as important as government and discipline in the church. The spiritual end gained by the miracles of Christ for the supply of the destitute and the relief of the suffering, cannot safely be regarded as of any inferior importance. And when we remember that he himself gave it as the crowning evidence of his Messiahship, that his gospel did reach the poor; when we remember that the organization of the diaconate preceded in the order of time that of the eldership; that the Spirit caused a full record of the institution of the former, but not of the latter, to be made for the instruction and guidance of the church; and that the number of persons, with their qualifications, of the first diaconate, was fully equal to any possible demands of the eldership—from these facts, and from the peculiar relation of the church to the poor, which has been already established, it seems more natural to infer that the office instituted in the church to symbolize this relation, and to provide for their wants, is, in its relative importance, second to no other, except that for the preaching of the gospel.

If, now, the above views of the church's relation to the poor be correct, it follows from them, especially from the fact that her divine Head regarded it as a chief evidence of his Messiahship that his gospel did reach the poor, that one of the strongest

proofs his church can give that she is truly his, constituted and living after his mind, fulfilling his will, and accomplishing her high mission, must be found in the fact that she also does reach the poor with her gospel, does provide for their spiritual wants, does attract and win their affections to herself, and make known to them the saving grace and compassion of their Saviour. Wherever, from any cause whatsoever, she is not able to say, with a large and full significance, "The poor have the gospel preached unto them," she has lost that evidence of her being the true church, without which it would seem that all the other proofs which our Lord gave of his Messiahship were incomplete, if not inconclusive.

A brief glance, from this point of view, at the history and present condition of the church, may serve to indicate that her power to convince the world of her divine mission, has risen or declined with the strength or weakness of this evidence.

And, first, at the time of our Saviour's advent, we know that the church had sunk into terrible declension, not to say total apostasy; and that, at the same time, the poor and lower classes of society had become generally alienated from the existing institutions of religion. Among the Jewish people every thing tended to make the profession of religion honourable and fashionable. The priests and Levites, and all the officers of the church, were, from their genealogy and offices, in the front rank of society. The government was a theocracy; their greatest monarch, whose memory was most dear to the national heart, had been an eminent prophet and saint; and all their hopes of temporal dominion and glory centred in the church. The three different sects among which all power in religious matters was divided, were composed chiefly of the wealthy and influential classes. The Scribes derived the honour they enjoyed, and probably a large pecuniary income, from their learning in the Scriptures. The Pharisees were characterized by a scrupulous legal morality, and by the highest social respectability. The Sadducees, though not numerous, were probably the most wealthy, and, in a worldly sense, the most cultivated and refined of all; and they, denying that any doctrines of a future life were to be found in Moses or the prophets, had given themselves up to an Epicurean enjoyment

of the present world. Hence it naturally followed that the rich, and cultivated, and honourable among men, had come to exercise almost exclusive influence and control in the church, and to be the most zealous and forward in all the rites and ordinances of Divine worship. Consequently, the church tended to exhibit the faith once delivered to the saints in forms more and more warped to please the carnal tastes of the rich, the cultivated, and the powerful, in forms less and less adapted to satisfy the spiritual wants of the illiterate, the poor, and the socially degraded. The lower classes of society became more and more alienated from the church and her ordinances, which, as administered, no longer satisfied their spiritual necessities, nor filled their craving hearts. Hence they fell into irreligion and immorality, and the opprobrious epithet of *sinners* came to be applied to all who were depressed and degraded in a social sense. The outcasts from society were cast out, also, from religious influences; and thus having sunk into the deepest ignorance and demoralization, they were regarded by the Scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees, as under the curse of God. Hence the proverb, which seems to have been currently applied to them as a class, "This people who knoweth not the law are cursed." To one of this class it was said by the Pharisees, "Thou wast altogether born in sin, and dost thou teach us?" This perverted relation of the church to the poor, at the advent, explains, in part, our Lord's marked severity to the Scribes and Pharisees; as, also, that extraordinary pains which he exhibited on all occasions to make his gospel reach the common people, and to lead back to his fold the outcasts of Israel.

Such phariseeism was no exclusive characteristic of the Jewish mind; it belongs to the depravity of human nature; and it tends to reproduce itself wherever circumstances furnish occasion and opportunity. In the primitive church these were not supplied, for the reason that the profession of the Christian religion could not be either honourable or fashionable, but, from the necessity of the case, it brought upon the first converts contempt and scorn from the higher classes, and exposed them to the most virulent persecution. Hence, during the first ages, the church was enabled to furnish to the world

the crowning proof of her divine mission, in that her gospel did reach the poor and miserable, with a fulness and strength, as before observed, which probably she has never since equalled. In accordance with this fact, her witnessing was given with almost irresistible power. Her career of spiritual conquest was upwards and onwards, until it had shaken the heathen world to its centre. The principalities and powers of darkness fell from their idol thrones before her, like the obscene fish-god of the Philistines before the ark of the covenant. Her converts were multiplied as the drops of the morning dew. It is even a matter of grave historic doubt, which has been raised by one of the most eminent historians of modern times, whether the number of professed Christians at this day is any greater than it was at the close of the third century of the Christian era. But as soon as this full tide of success had given a Christian emperor to the throne of the Cæsars, and made the profession of the Christian religion honourable and fashionable throughout the Roman empire, the church became shorn, to a great degree, of her spiritual power. This result, it is true, is not to be explained by the immediate loss of the formal idea of her relation to the poor. But the administration of the ordinances and rites of religion soon began to adapt themselves to the carnal tastes of the governing classes; the hierarchy of the Romish priesthood grew up, and consolidated itself; liturgical forms multiplied; vast cathedrals were built; the preaching of the gospel became almost a nullity; the cup was taken from the laity; divine worship came in time to be celebrated in a language which the people did not understand; and they were retained under the influence of the church rather by the charms of a sensuous idolatry, which almost universally prevailed, than by the supply of their spiritual wants. Such, openly and palpably, is the condition of the Romish communion at this day. They have indeed retained the poor, but not under the influence of the religion of Christ; and they have done this by influences precisely similar to those of Brahmanism, and of pagan superstition and idolatry.

In Protestant England of the present day, as is well known, the masses of the people, especially in the large cities, have become alienated from the ordinances of religion, and from Chris-

tianity itself, to a degree that is truly appalling. A few years ago it was estimated, that of the two millions of inhabitants of the city and suburbs of London, not more than three hundred and fifty thousand had ever seen the inside of a church. Causes analogous to those which had long been at work among the Jews at the time of the advent, have produced similar results in the English establishment. The union of church and state, the development of the hierarchal principle, the condensed and ponderous liturgy, the little participation of the laity in the control and spiritual activities of the church, and many other influences, have moulded the preaching, the ordinances of worship, and all the insitutions of religion, in adaptation, after a too exclusive manner, to the esthetic sensibilities and tastes of the rich, the cultivated, and refined. Hence they cease to attract the poor, and ignorant, and degraded; these are alienated from the church and from religion, and sink into infidelity and immorality. It was this state of things which gave rise to the Methodists, and some other dissenting bodies; which, however, have not been able to remedy, but only to mitigate the evil. At the time the above estimate was made, it is true, things were much worse than they are now; so alarming, indeed, that they called forth a vast missionary system for London and other centres of population, under the influence of which a very significant reaction is now going on, from which heart-cheering hopes are derived. But the great work of recovering her influence over the poor and the masses of the people, yet remains to be done by the Christian church in England.

In the other capitals of Protestant Europe the religious condition of the lower classes is probably not as bad as it is in London and Manchester; but it is still so bad, that infidelity, as represented in the *Westminster Review*, is now making one of its strongest points against the divine authority of the Christian religion, in the fact, that it so generally fails to reach the masses of the people in the great capitals and populous centres of the world. From the fact that it does not reach them, it is argued that it is not adapted to their intellectual condition and spiritual wants; whence, it is maintained, they are sinking deeper and deeper into the abyss of irreligion and atheism, far

worse than even pagan superstition. No doubt the evil is exaggerated by these deadly enemies of the cross of Christ; but yet it is well known to be sufficiently alarming; and the fact that it can be used by these accomplished writers as an argument against the truth of Christianity, is here adduced in evidence, that where the church fails to reach the poor with her gospel, she ceases to demonstrate her Divine mission.

In this country, a set of circumstances, in some respects similar, and in others different, is furnishing an occasion for precisely similar results. Here we have no union of church and state, no hierarchy, no civil barriers between the different classes of society. But in place of these, and exerting, it is to be feared, a stronger influence to alienate the poor from the church, than all of them combined, we have our American system of defraying the expenses of the church by renting the pews, or by annual subscriptions. For many years it has been assiduously inculcated among us, that every thing in the nature of a permanent church endowment is rather a curse than a blessing to any congregation; and we have been glorifying the voluntary system, as one of the grand distinguishing excellencies of the American church. Whilst the country was comparatively poor, and the distinction between the different classes of society had hardly begun to fall under the censure of the now prevailing doctrines of social equality, the evils of this system were kept in abeyance, and its numerous and striking advantages were developed and realized, so that its praises were in the mouths of almost all men. But as wealth has accumulated in the hands of larger numbers, as the less fortunate have become more distinctly marked in a class by themselves, as the doctrines of political and social equality have awakened and stimulated their discontent with their lot, and their jealousy of those from whose society they are excluded, the tendency of supporting the church exclusively by renting pews, and by annual subscriptions, to alienate the lower classes from the means of grace, has become more and more evident. This is already widely felt and deeply mourned by the more intelligent of our ministers and people, and they are not wholly unprepared for some change in a method of defraying the

expenses of our congregations which is attended by so disastrous a result.

The *modus operandi* of this system, by which it tends to alienate the poor, is not difficult of explanation. For where it prevails, no congregation can be provided with independent or permanent means of support; all must rely either upon the proceeds of the renting of the pews, or upon voluntary subscriptions, or upon a combination of these two methods. In any case, it is thus made the immediate and pressing interest of each church to attract to itself as many as possible of the rich, who are able to pay well, and as few as possible of the poor, who must have the gospel without money and without price, or they cannot have it at all; for a congregation composed chiefly of this latter class could not support itself, and must soon go down. The poor are not slow to see who are wanted in such churches, and who are not; and from this source we have a powerful and ever-active influence to alienate them from the ordinances of Christ's house. All experience, however, shows that the easiest, and most effectual, and surest way of raising the necessary means for defraying expenses, is by the annual renting of the pews at varying rates, according to their more or less desirable situation; whence it necessarily follows, that he who is able to pay the most money can always obtain the best seat in the house of God. Thus where a popular preacher attracts a full congregation, a high money value becomes attached to every sitting. Then the pews must be rented at public auction to the highest bidder, from which such prices are realized as to exclude effectually not only those who are unable to pay any thing, but also those of moderate means. The annual pew-rents of a single church in one of our large cities we have seen rise as high as twenty-five or thirty thousand dollars. It is not possible for any but those who may be called rich to obtain sittings upon such terms. Doubtless there is nothing unjust or unfair in all this, viewed as a business transaction; but justice is not our theme; rather something as different from justice as is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. The result is, that the poor are turned out of their Father's house. Nor can this result be obviated by setting aside certain pews, which they are allowed to obtain at a low rent, or to

occupy gratuitously; for the respectable poor have the same aversion to such pews that they have to poor-house charities, of which they cannot be induced to avail themselves except in the very last resort. They naturally shrink from being designated as a pauper class, and surely they ought not to be so stigmatized in their Father's house. But whether their aversion be well or ill grounded, it has now been proved, by ample and sad experience, that they cannot be attracted to such churches in any large numbers; but rather they will absent themselves from public worship, and alienate themselves from religious institutions altogether.

The influence of this system to exclude the poor and illiterate from the means of grace, propagates itself in other forms. For when, in this way, any congregation comes to be composed chiefly of the rich and educated, the preaching of the gospel tends to adapt itself more and more exclusively to their intellectual and esthetic tastes. It becomes over refined, loaded with nice logical distinctions and subtle processes, discursive, and rhetorically adorned, instead of being simple, direct, and unctuous. The preacher becomes an essayist, rather than a proclaimer of gospel facts and revealed truth. His pulpit exercises do not model themselves upon our Lord's discourses, which, by their sensuous forms, familiar and striking illustrations, are so admirably adapted to captivate the ear, and to reach the lowest capacity. Such preaching the ignorant and feeble-minded are utterly incapable of appreciating; it fails to satisfy either their intellectual or spiritual wants; it does not reach them at all. For example, in a sermon preached on a certain occasion, upon the nice points of distinction between the law and the gospel, the subject was illustrated, after the example of Paul in the seventh chapter of Romans, by reference to the laws of marriage and divorce. An ignorant person, who had been induced to attend, in the hope that he might receive some spiritual benefit, being afterwards questioned upon the sermon, replied, that "the only thing he had understood, was that a woman must not have two husbands at the same time." Another, in similar circumstances, having just listened to a discourse upon the Eternity of God, declared that he had not understood any thing: "he thought the preacher had been

speaking in Latin." Yet neither of these sermons was at all remarkable; both were such as we commonly preach and hear in our congregations of intelligent people. For this sort of preaching is sure to prevail wherever the audience, from Sabbath to Sabbath, is composed almost exclusively of the cultivated and refined; however conscientiously the tendency may be resisted by the faithful and godly men who fill our pulpits. Who would think of preaching to a rich and fashionable congregation a sermon of consolation and encouragement for those who are suffering from the trials of poverty? It would be quite as natural to address the inmates of a prison upon the duty of going out into the highways and hedges to distribute tracts.

Now, the prevalence of such preaching, adapted almost exclusively to the intellectual condition and tastes of the rich, the educated, and socially elevated classes, finishes the work of alienating the poor, and ignorant, and degraded, from the church, and the means of grace. These cannot be expected to attend where they can understand little or nothing of what is said; and where, consequently, they cannot be edified. And it is quite certain that many of our churches, not only in our centres of population, but also in our inland cities and thriving villages, are, from these causes, almost deserted by the poor. Nearly twenty years ago, a young man was ordained to the gospel ministry, and installed over one of our churches in a charming village of about three thousand inhabitants; where he found, to his great surprise, that there was not a poor or destitute person in the congregation. Having administered the Lord's supper for the first time, he announced the collection for the poor, which our "Book" prescribes. It was taken up in a hesitating manner; and after the congregation was dismissed, the ruling elders came around him, asking, "What did you do that for?" He replied, very innocently, "I only followed 'the Book.'" "But we never do so," they said. "And why have you departed from the order of the church?" he asked. They replied, "Oh! we have no poor." And it was true. They thought it was a delightful evidence of their thrift and respectability as a congregation; but the truth was, that the poor had long ceased to find their spiritual wants satisfied in that communion; and had either gone to other denomina-

tions, or fallen out from under religious influences altogether. It is to be feared that a greater number of our churches are in this condition, or in one approaching to it, now, than when this incident occurred.

From the prevalence of this evil, it seems to us that the greatest calamities to our beloved branch of the church are to be apprehended. The least of these is the rapid encroachment, and ultimate preponderance of other denominations, who do succeed, by whatsoever means, in reaching the poor with their gospel, more extensively at least than we do; whilst the degree of purity in which they hold "the faith once delivered to the saints," we cannot but think, is greatly inferior to that of the Presbyterian church. The great calamity to be feared by us, is barrenness and dearth in our own spiritual life, and consequent apostasy. For whenever the church comes to be generally deserted by the poor, not only does she fail to demonstrate her Divine mission to the world, but also, and no less to her own members. In order that there should prevail a true, and healthy, and self-propagating spiritual life in any communion, the rich and the poor, the high and the low, the learned and the ignorant, must meet together before the Lord in the worshipping assembly. The preaching of the gospel, the prayer-meeting, and all the ordinances of religion, must be adapted to the intellectual and spiritual wants of the lowest, or they cannot be adapted to the real wants of the highest, in social position and culture. The church that is abandoned by the poor, must soon come to be abandoned by the Lord.

The remedy for this great evil, which if not checked must continue to increase upon us, as wealth and worldly culture, and the expenses of our congregations increase, demands the most earnest prayers, and the deepest study of all the Lord's people. The true and adequate remedy cannot come from any other source than the great Head of the church interposing in behalf of his beloved poor. He, therefore, is to be sought unto for direction, with fasting and humiliation, with strong crying and tears. In the meantime we venture to recommend certain measures, which, however inadequate, we think could not fail to exert a beneficial influence in the right direction.

1. And, first, we would suggest that a column be added to

our general statistical tables, which should exhibit, for each congregation and for the whole church, the amount of money raised and expended for the poor; together with the number of our communicants who receive pecuniary aid. This, of course, would be a very inadequate exhibition, by reason of the vast amount of charities from our members in their individual capacity; but this difficulty is incident to the statistics of all benevolence. This measure would make known to the church what her actual relation to the poor is, to what extent her gospel reaches them, and to what extent they have become alienated from her ordinances. We greatly fear that such a statistical view would show that our gospel is generally confined to those who are able to pay for it; that our membership is composed almost exclusively of those who are well to do in the world. From such a report, we should hope for a great awakening of the mind of the church to the vital interests of this question. Presented annually to the General Assembly, it would keep the relation of the church to the poor before the minds of the people of God, and make it a distinct and specific object of their prayers. It could hardly fail to cherish a wholesome consciousness of our deficiencies, and to stimulate our efforts in this department of our work, which, as we have seen, is one of the three great objects for which the church exists in the world. A few years ago, such a statistical column was added to the tables of one of our presbyteries, with instructions to their commissioners to overture the General Assembly upon the subject; but for some reason or other, the overture was never presented. We hope that the matter will be taken up and fully discussed at the next Assembly.

2. In the second place, we venture to suggest that our ministers and ruling elders should endeavour to adapt the preaching of the gospel, the worship of the sanctuary, and the services of all social meetings, in a special manner, to the capacities of the illiterate, the ignorant, and the feeble minded. This modification in the manner and style of administering the ordinances of worship, would naturally follow the accession in large numbers of such persons to our congregations; it can, also, be made to attract them. But we would not be misunderstood here. It is not something of a lower and more common or vulgar charac-

ter, nor something much easier to do, than that which now prevails, which we here recommend; on the contrary, it is something more truly elevated, and vastly harder of attainment, as every minister of the gospel, who has ever tried it, well knows. But it is indispensable to this object that the preaching be such as to interest the minds and hearts of the ignorant and feeble minded, who are utterly unable to appreciate nice distinctions and subtle arguments; who cannot follow abstract and metaphysical disquisitions; who cannot understand a classical allusion; and who can see no beauty in fine-spun analogies and *recherché* metaphors. It is necessary that the words, images, allusions, and whole style of expression in the pulpit should be that of common life, and not that of a scientific treatise. It is, moreover, indispensable that the precious half-hour devoted to preaching be not taken up with the unfolding of doctrine, as if in its own interest, as if the end were gained when the idea is developed; but that the truth proclaimed be applied directly to men's spiritual wants, to their need of forgiveness of sin, peace with God, direction for the guidance of life, consolation in affliction, succour in temptation, and hope of immortality. We must go to the ignorant and degraded where they are, or they will never come to us. Nor need we be afraid that we shall thus fail to interest the most elevated classes of society. For it is certain that the preaching which is not addressed to the spiritual wants of men, can have no other than a lecture-room, or worldly interest for any class; and it is no less certain that what is not adapted to reach and save the poor and ignorant, cannot be saving to the rich and educated. Thus always has the preaching of the word been conceived of by the greatest preachers. Luther would preach so that the children and servants could understand and be saved; if Philip Melanchthon and Justus Jonas did not like it, there was the door; but we do not read that Justus Jonas or Philip Melanchthon was any less interested or edified by Luther's preaching, than were their children and servants. And who that has once heard the late venerable Dr. Alexander, the elder, can ever forget the adaptation and power of his discourses to interest and move all classes of his hearers, from

the most learned and cultivated to the most ignorant and feeble?

With respect to the prayer and social meetings, the same end, surely, ought to be kept ever in view. For when these services are governed by the idea of almost exclusive adaptation to the tastes of the educated and cultivated, they lose all interest for those who are incapable of appreciating such qualities; they become stiff and formal, and cold and dead; whence they soon cease to interest any class; and are deserted even by those whose tastes they are intended to please. For nothing in these meetings can compensate for the want of freedom and fervour. Criticism upon the manifestations of such feelings quenches utterly the flame of devotion; sympathy cannot flow, where the study of the nicest propriety undertakes to direct its currents. And we cannot but think that this fervour and freedom would be greatly promoted in our social meetings by the frequent singing of hymns from memory, so as to dispense with the use of books. This may seem to be a small matter, but its influence may also be far greater than would appear at first sight. We know it was in this way that the primitive Christians sang together the praises of their Saviour and ours, when their singing so struck the ears of the heathen that they commemorated it as a distinguishing trait of the new religion. The devotional music of our prayer-meetings would hardly have produced a similar effect. And this frequent singing of familiar hymns and tunes, without the formality and encumbrance of books, seems to be one of the sources of that influence which the Methodists exert over the uncultivated and ignorant. Why should not we avail ourselves of the same means if we are really in earnest to attract this class of society to our communion?

3. In the third place, it seems indispensable to the object in view, that the diaconate be restored in all our congregations to that position, influence, and efficiency, which belong to it according to our constitution, and which a strict conformity to the model of the church at Jerusalem would give it. And here it is to be observed, as significant of the wide departure of the church from the idea represented by the diaconate in her primitive constitution, that this office, as distinctly and exclu-

sively devoted to the care of the poor, has been systematically rejected by almost every denomination of Christians, except those of presbyterian order; whilst among us it is seldom found; and even where it has been retained in form, it has little significance or influence. In most of our congregations it seems to have been absorbed by the ruling eldership. This must be regarded as in part the effect, and in part the cause of that general alienation of the poor from our ordinances, which we deplore; and in so far as it acts as a cause, it goes far to explain the facts, that the object which the office was intended to represent and secure, has ceased to occupy that position of sacredness and importance in the minds of the people to which it is entitled; that the church has ceased to regard it as it is presented to her view, in her crucified Saviour; and that the poor no longer understand that one of the objects for which she exists in the world is to minister to their necessities. Hence it is, in great part, that they have ceased to recognise as their true helper, and merciful deliverer, Him whom they, more than any other class, did so recognise in the days of his flesh. Hence they have fallen out from under the means of grace, alienated themselves from religious influences, and sunk by hundreds of thousands, as in the great cities of Europe and America, into godless infidelity, far worse than pagan superstition. It could not be otherwise. For it is certain that the preaching of the gospel, and the healing discipline of the church would have shared a similar fate, if these had been left to take care of themselves, and the distinct offices ordained of God to watch over, and to be responsible for them, had ceased to exist, or had become a dead letter.

This cause of the evil we deplore, must therefore be removed, in order that an effectual remedy should be applied. The diaconate must be restored to its true position, power, and influence in all our congregations. There does not seem to be any good reason why there should not be, in each of our large churches, a body of "seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and of wisdom," appointed over this business, after the model of the church at Jerusalem. To these the cause of the poor should be solemnly committed, as the preaching of the gospel is committed to the ministry, and the go-

vernment of the congregation to the ruling eldership. They should have the care and responsibility of securing the funds, by frequent collections, private donations, and legacies, whether for immediate disbursement, or permanent investment, such as should be adequate to a great and blessed work among the poor. It should be their endeavour to interest the whole congregation in this work, as one of the three objects for which the church was organized; and by all lawful means to attract the poor and destitute to the church and her ordinances. It should be their special responsibility to see that the church, as such, embodies and exhibits that compassion and tenderness, that peculiar relation of her divine Head, to the poor, in virtue of which "the common people heard him gladly," and his gospel did reach them with saving power.

For the realization of this great object, the operations of the diaconate ought not to be confined to those who are already church members and communicants. For if so, in the present state of things, it would have little or nothing to do, and would continue to be without influence and usefulness. Christ, in the days of his flesh, did not limit the charity of his healing and comforting miracles to those who were already his followers. As we have seen, he first ministered to the poor the supply of their bodily necessities, which they felt most keenly, and thus he brought them into that relation to himself in which their hearts were opened to receive at his hands the supply of their spiritual wants. We have seen, also, that the primitive church followed his example in this particular; in which his wisdom must become our guide and law, if we would succeed in reaching the poor with our gospel, and in drawing them under the influence of the church.

Nor shall we be without high example in modern times. For it is well known that Dr. Chalmers, in the latter years of his pastorate, became so deeply impressed with the necessity of restoring the lost scriptural relation of the church to the poor, that he gave himself up almost exclusively to this work. He changed his style of preaching, and addressed all the powers of his great and cultivated mind, to adapt his discourses to attract and edify the illiterate and ignorant. Not satisfied with this, he called his people together, and solemnly laid the whole sub-

ject before them. Under his influence they took it up, in the spirit of Christ; and assumed the responsibility of the temporal care of all the poor in the district, or parish, in which their own church was situate. They found that the work could be done by the church at a far less expense, and far more effectually, than by the municipal authorities. Thus the poor began to learn that the Lord, through the instrumentality of his church, was indeed their Helper; they were attracted in crowds to the ordinances, and brought back under their saving influences; whilst, at the same time, this reawakened sympathy for them, and church activity for their relief, produced the happiest results upon the piety and spiritual comfort of the church members themselves. How could it be otherwise? And we have the happiness to know that there is at least one of our own churches which has been trying for years to do a similar work for the poor of its district, with similar results.*

* The following system is that of St. Peter's Presbyterian church, Rochester, New York.

A definite part of the city, in the neighbourhood of the church, containing, say, three hundred dwellings, is assumed as an appropriate parish. This is divided into twenty districts, and a visitor appointed for each. A general superintendent has charge of the whole work. Each visitor has a book, with which he visits every house in his district, and notes its number and street, the name of the householder, number of children, and their ages; whether the family are church members, or not; if so, in what church; if not, whether they attend church, and the children Sabbath-school, or not; if so, where; if not, he tries to secure their attendance; also, each change of residence is noted as it occurs, and the whole is reported to the general superintendent. Thus every man, woman, and child, in the parish becomes known.

The visitor distributes Bibles, tracts, and religious books, where these are required, and reports to the pastor such families as stand in need of a pastoral call.

In this way the visitor easily learns what families in his district are in want, as also what is the cause and extent of the destitution, and what assistance is necessary. If employment is needed, he endeavours to procure it. If the needy person is a communicant in another church, he reports the case to the officers of that church. If it is a case which falls under the care of any existing benevolent organization, *e. g.*, "The Society for the Relief of the Sick Poor," he reports it to the officers of that society. Sometimes aid is obtained from the poor-master. In every case, where relief can do any good, the visitor must see that it is supplied. Even where distress has arisen from imprudence or vice, relief is provided, unless there be evidence that it would be abused, and do harm rather than good, when it is withheld.

In many cases, relief is afforded in the way of small loans, which are known

To this whole procedure the objection may possibly be urged, that the offer of temporal relief and advantages would attract the idle and dissolute, and fill our churches with unworthy members. But this objection seems to lie with all its weight against the Lord himself and his apostles, and against the constitution of the church, as she came from their hands. It is safe—nothing else can ever be safe—to follow the wisdom of Christ. If he was not afraid of attracting followers by unworthy motives, we need not be. In fact, on one occasion, he pointedly admonished those whom he had fed by miracle, of the impure motives with which they followed him: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, ye seek me not because ye saw the miracles, but because ye did eat of the loaves and were filled.” Yet he did not cease to relieve their temporal wants on that account; but having attracted them to himself, and opened their hearts to his instructions, by supplying their bodily necessities, he seized upon this very occasion to deliver to them that ever-memorable discourse in the sixth chapter of John, which commences with the words, “Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life;” and in which he offers himself to them as “the living bread which came down from heaven.” Here is the great example for the church, if she would follow her Lord in this matter, which answers all objections. Let her attract the poor as he did, and then offer Christ to them, as he offered himself; and they will receive him unto their salvation. Aye, let the poor come in ever greater and greater numbers. God be merciful to them in their temporal destitution and sorrows! Unworthy church

to no one except the visitor and the superintendent. The person so relieved is anxious to maintain his own self-respect by repaying what he has received. Some very interesting cases of this kind have occurred.

In this way, several nests of sturdy, lazy beggars, have been broken up. They soon find a parish so visited, and in which the worthy are so carefully distinguished from the unworthy, to be no place for them.

The expense of these operations is about three hundred dollars per year; and the amount necessary is raised by subscription in the church.

It is estimated that this sum accomplishes more good than could be accomplished by one thousand dollars distributed by the municipal authorities.

The system affords admirable employment to the members of the church for the development of their own piety.

members will hardly be found more numerous among them than among other classes. If they can be gathered under the influence of the gospel, even by motives in them not altogether pure, let him who is without sin among us first cast a stone at them to drive them out of their Father's house. That blessed gospel which proves saving to the rich, notwithstanding, upon the authority of the Lord himself, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God," will also prove saving to the poor, if by any lawful means they can be brought under its influence. If the church fail to accomplish this, she can do nothing for them, and they must perish in their sins. Let us follow the Lord in this matter, and his blessing will follow us and our children through all generations. For "blessed is the man that considereth the poor; the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth; and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness."

4. But, in fine, we are persuaded that all other measures of reform must fail to reach the cause of this evil, and fail to restore the scriptural relation of the church to the poor, whilst the expenses of our congregations continue to be provided for exclusively by the system of renting the pews. It appears to us that there is no conceivable way in which this method can be prevented from exerting an irresistible influence to alienate and exclude the poor from the church. For, as we have seen, it offers the gospel to them upon no other terms than the payment of a sum of money, which multitudes are not able to pay; and it says, by a course of action, more significant and expressive than any words could be, to the "man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel . . . Sit thou here in a good place;" and to the "poor man, in vile raiment, . . . Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool." We have seen, also, that the respectable poor will not occupy, except in rare cases, free pews set apart for them in a church where this system prevails. For reasons similar to those which influence them in this case, they cannot be gathered in any large numbers into churches built and sus-

tained by the purest benevolence of the wealthy for their exclusive accommodation. Hence the failure of those enterprises which have been undertaken for this object, in some of our large cities. And if they could be gathered into separate churches by themselves, that would be to subvert the Christian idea of the worshipping assembly, which requires, as we have seen, that the rich and poor should meet together before the Lord; and thus the church, like the religious system of the Brahmans, would lend her influence to exasperate, and render perpetual, class distinctions in society, which her gracious Head lost no opportunity to mitigate and heal. Could this end in any thing short of apostasy? The poor Hindu cannot become a Christian until he has renounced *caste*.

Now the simplest modification of this system of defraying the expenses of our congregations, would be to raise, say one-half of the necessary amount, by voluntary subscriptions, thereby reducing the pew-rents to one-half of what they would otherwise be, and to equalize them throughout the church. This, if it were put in practice, would obviate many of the difficulties which the poor now encounter at the door of the sanctuary. But this method has been found to be so uncertain, and to produce a revenue so fluctuating in amount, that we think it can hardly ever be generally adopted. Nor would it diminish the temptation of the church to endeavour to attract to herself the rich rather than the poor; it might even increase it, inasmuch as it would render all the more necessary in each congregation, a goodly number of the wealthy who should be able to furnish large subscriptions.

It seems plain to us that in order to apply an effectual remedy to this evil, it is necessary either to take such measures as will provide a general sustentation fund for at least a partial support of the ministry, like that of the Free Church of Scotland, which has been so signally blessed, or to adopt the system of permanent endowments of our churches, to at least half the amount of their expenditures. Either of these measures, we believe, would be adequate, effectual, and entirely practicable. We are not ignorant of the general and strong prejudice which exists, nor do we undervalue the arguments which have been advanced, against these methods of support-

ing the institutions of religion. But we know, also, that nothing that is human, is perfect; and that every thing is liable to abuse in the degree in which it is good. The gospel itself could not be a savour of life, if it were not liable also to become a savour of death. But all the evils of such a fund, or of such endowments, taken together, do not seem worthy to be compared with the alternative, *i. e.*, the general failure of the church to reach the poor with her gospel, which seems absolutely inevitable under the present system. The benefits of such a measure could not fail to be enormous. For a congregation, so endowed, would be possessed of a permanent investment for the use of the poor to the amount of one-half its expenditure; and thereby it would be released from that subtle and powerful temptation to endeavour to attract to itself the rich rather than the poor, which arises out of the necessity of deriving its whole support from pew-rents and voluntary subscriptions. The pew-rents, reduced to half their present amount, and equalized, would come within the means of a vast population of the respectable poor, who now are virtually shut out from the house of God; and the man with the gold ring would have no preferred place in the sanctuary before him in vile apparel. The same results substantially would follow the support of the ministry, to the amount of half their salaries, by a general sustentation fund. We are persuaded that if either of these methods were adopted and put in practice, it would exert a mighty influence to bring back our beloved church into her true scriptural relation to the poor, and to that great class of our population who are not able to pay much for the support of religious institutions; and yet who will certainly alienate themselves altogether from the ordinances rather than occupy free pews, and be designated as paupers in the house of God.

Nor does it appear that there is any insuperable difficulty in the way of effecting such a change. The chief one is the prejudice which has so long been fostered among us, that our present system is one of the glories of the American church, and that any thing in the form of a permanent fund is rather a curse than a blessing to any congregation. But this prejudice ought to give way before the inevitable result of

our present method, *i. e.*, the banishment of the poor from God's house. And surely there is no dearer object to the hearts of our people, than that of providing for the wants of the destitute, especially of providing for them the means of grace and salvation. Whatever, as above exhibited, may seem to be inconsistent with this, is probably due rather to the influence of a wrong system, than to any lack of sympathy with the poor. If such a method of support for our religious institutions, as is here indicated, were recommended to the people by our ecclesiastical bodies, and urged upon them from our pulpits; if adequate pains were taken to convince them that it is the only way in which we can secure the preaching of the word to those who are not able to pay for it, the only way in which we can reach them with the gospel of Christ; and that all contributions for this object would be in effect permanent investments for the spiritual benefit of the poor—it is believed that there are large numbers in our congregations, who are already so interested in this object, that they would not be backward in furnishing, by collections, private donations, legacies, and otherwise, the necessary means. Rich congregations could be induced to aid feeble ones, in the form of such donations, because these would be investments to provide the poor with the means of grace. Incidental influences, hardly inferior to that of the immediate object, would aid the movement, and make it one of ever-increasing activity and power, until its end should be fully realized: as, *e. g.*, that numerous class of our ministers, who are now only half-supported, and whose miserable pittance is paid without regularity or promptness, would all advocate it, if for no other reason, because it would diminish the uncertainties of bread for themselves and their families. For these, and many other reasons, we might anticipate ultimate success for this great movement. Of course it must be the work of time; for the evil to be remedied is one of chronic growth; yet one which, if not remedied, but left to work itself out, as it is now doing, will, it is to be feared, one day leave our Presbyterian branch of the church deserted by the poor, and deserted by the Lord.