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DUTY OF SUPPORTING  
THE  
GOSPEL MINISTRY.

AN ABRIDGMENT OF A  
SERMON

PREACHED AT SHEFFIELD, (ENG.) APRIL 25, 1821.



BY REV. JAMES BENNETT,  
Minister of the Independent Church, and President of  
Rotherham College.

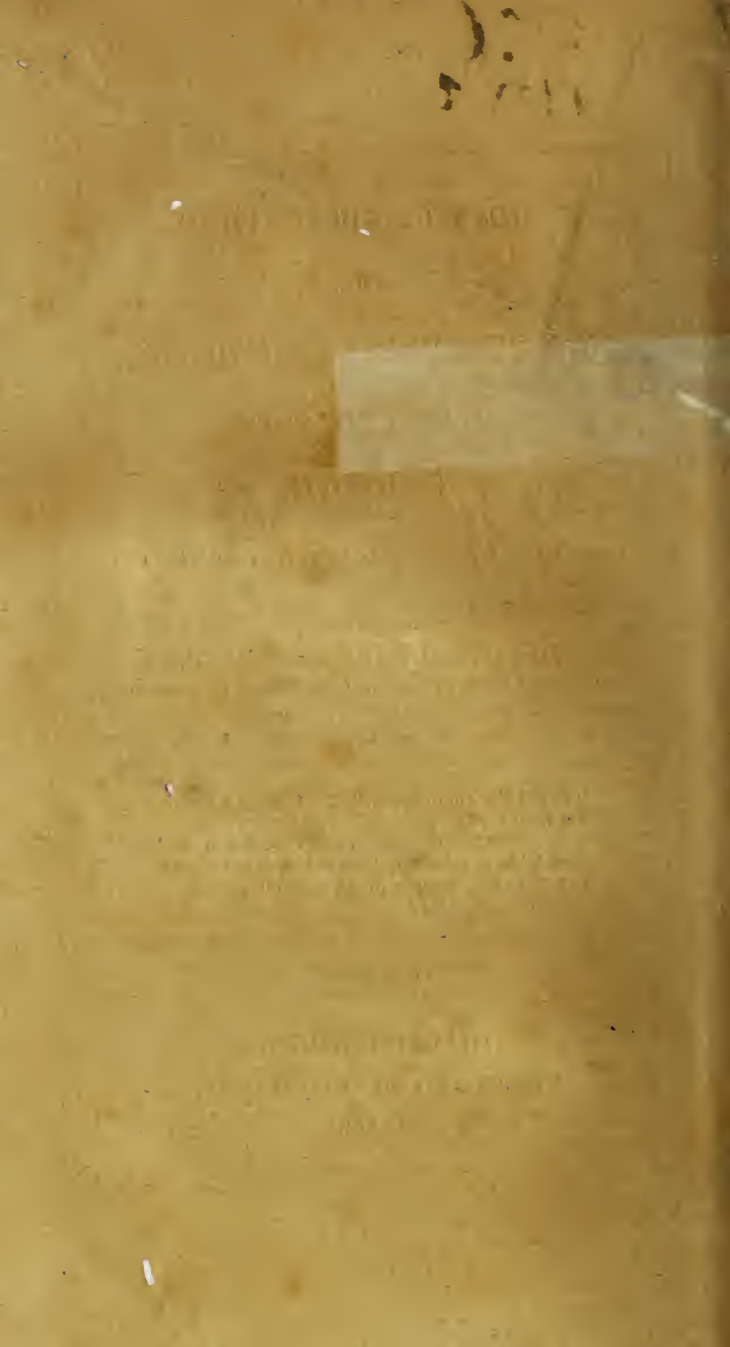


“Cruel the tenderness that whispers peace  
To men at war with their Redeemer, men  
Who scorn his clemency, and dare his wrath!  
And O! how false the friendship, that unites  
Preacher and people in the ruinous work  
Of mutual flattery.”



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*“If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?”—1 Cor. ix. 11.*

IT devolves on me, my dear hearers, by the appointment of others, and not by my own choice, to unfold and enforce the duty of supporting the ministry of the word. I am not unaware that the first mention of this subject will startle many, and awaken a thousand reflections on the delicacy, not to say the invidiousness of the attempt. But as I hope to give the most satisfactory proof that divine authority binds this duty on the conscience, I presume that you feel it would be an affront to your good sense, and a reflection on your christian principles, to waste your time in efforts to display the propriety of inculcating that which God has commanded, and of resolving, that neglect on this point shall not rob us of the right to say, “we have kept back nothing that was profitable to you, nor shunned to declare the whole counsel of God.”

If any shrink from this subject, not on their own account, but for the sake of others; lest the discussion should prove injurious to religion, by giving colour to the suspicion of mercenary motives; which some affect to entertain against the ministers of religion; I respect their fears, I sympathize with their delicate solitudes, and say, with

the apostle, it were better for us to starve, or to die, than that any man should make void our glorying, that we preach the gospel, "not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; and seek not yours, but you."

I would, however, remind such hearers, that the words I have chosen for my text are extracted from a passage, in which the same apostle who was so exquisitely alive to every thing that might commit the honour of the gospel, inculcates the duty of supporting the ministry, on an infant church, whom he might naturally be afraid of prejudicing against that religion which they had so recently embraced. Yet we shall soon see with what frankness and decision he who would sacrifice every right, or interest of his own, or even life itself, to the honour of the gospel, demands the recompense due to pastoral toils; without once betraying the slightest suspicion that he might injure the religion of Jesus, by pressing a duty which bears the impress of divine authority, and commends itself alike, to the coolest decision of the judgment, and the noblest feelings of the heart.

That those who live under the highest inspirations of religion, will welcome the consideration of this subject, I am satisfied; because I know that they grieve for the inadequate attention paid to that which so deeply affects the interests of the church; while those who would gladly lose sight of the grand christian duty, or blot it from the code of scripture and the christian's breast, are the very persons, for whose "correction and instruction in righteousness," we are compelled to unfold the duty; and urge to that obedience which Heaven demands, for its honour and their highest good.

On the coolest consideration, therefore, I feel myself entitled to all christian freedom in discussing this subject; not forgetting that, as I am often called to address young ministers on their duty to the churches, and can appeal to some present that I have endeavoured to discharge that delicate task with unsparing fidelity, showing all that the churches have a right to expect from us, I may be indulged with equal boldness, while I call upon christians to yield an adequate support to those, who "watch for your souls as they that must give an account."

I request, then, your candid attention to

I. *The divine appointment*, that the church of Christ should support its ministers.

To a christian audience, scarcely any thing more is necessary, certainly nothing is more conclusive and authoritative on any point, than to show that "thus saith the Lord." In the mode of adducing my proof of this, I cannot follow a better example than that of the inspired apostle, who shows, that the ancient dispensation enjoined the same duty; that Christ perpetuated it under the gospel; and that in fact, it may be termed a duty of natural religion, or, in other words, that it is but common justice.

1. Under the Mosaic dispensation, God enjoined that the ministers of religion should be supported by the contributions of the people.

Let no one take alarm at this appeal to the law, as if I wished to bring them under the Jewish yoke of ceremonies; for it should be remembered, that all that is most dear to our hearts as christians, was first announced to the world by Moses and the prophets, before Christ and his apostles proclaimed the fulfilment of the promised grace. The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head, said Moses in the law; Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, sang the sublime prophet Isaiah; while those psalms which kindle our devotion, and give utterance to the emotions they inspire, were penned by David for the service of the Mosaic tabernacle and the temple which Solomon built. If ever, therefore, we read the Old Testament with reverence and delight; if, at any time, it cheers our hearts with its consolations, or guides our steps by its counsels; we admit that the more ancient half of the inspired code may be our instructor; though it was given under a dispensation that has now yielded to one more glorious and complete. In fact, the very apostle who most strenuously contended that the law was but a "shadow of good things to come, of which the body is Christ," in that same epistle, which was designed and blessed to call off the earliest christians from doating upon that which was abolished, so fully displays the various and interesting modes, in which the legal rights unfolded evangelical truths, that he leaves no doubt of the propriety of

learning christian duty from the general principles of a dispensation, whose peculiar rites are no longer in force.

Justly, therefore, the apostle says to the Corinthian church,\* “ who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? For it is written in the law of Moses, thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, it was written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know, that they who minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they who wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel.”

This leads me to show

2. The same duty, of supporting the ministers of religion, is enjoined by Christ under the gospel.

Here, also, as in all other things, that Saviour, who is the Legislator, has made himself the model of virtue. He who wrought, as it is probable, at the trade of a carpenter, to support himself and the family in which he was born, previously to his coming forth to the public ministry, would not have disdained to continue that course of honest industry, however it might have shocked the pride of the carnal mind: yet he deemed it proper to discontinue it, from the time that he was anointed by the Holy Spirit, to preach the gospel of the kingdom. As he came not “ to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many,” we might have expected, that he would rather give than receive; and to him who wrought miracles to meet the exigencies of the starving

\* 1 Cor. ix. 7—14.



thousands who attended his ministry, it had been easy to create all that was necessary for him and his attendant band. He chose, however, to cast himself on the liberality of his hearers, to live upon the contributions of those whom he was serving; for, in addition to the entertainment he received, wherever he went, preaching the gospel, "certain women, who followed, ministered to him of their substance."

In harmony with the same design, and as a part of the same plan, when he sent forth the apostles for a short excursion, while he was with them; that these newly fledged eaglets might try their wings, before he should be taken from them and they should fly through the whole world having the everlasting gospel to preach to every nation under heaven; he gave them this charge, "As ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils; freely ye have received, freely give. Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves; *for the workman is worthy of his meat.* And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till you go thence. And when ye come into an house, salute it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return unto you. And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment, than for that city." He could have wrought miracles for them every day, and supplied all their need each moment. Or he, who raised money from the bottom of the sea, in the mouth of a fish, to pay the contribution required for the service of the temple, could, in a moment, have filled their purses with all that their journey would require. Nor is it improbable that this would have been far more gratifying to the feelings, I would not say the pride of the disciples, to pay for all they obtained, and openly confer, rather than seem to receive obligations. But the superior wisdom of their Lord and ours, determined that they should

go without script, and without purse; that those, to whom they ministered, should entertain and support them all their journey through; that they should inquire for the most worthy persons, and there abide, as putting honour upon their host; for, it is a maxim in Christ's kingdom, that he and his faithful servants richly repay their entertainment, since the labourer is well worthy of his meat.

When, therefore, the Spirit descended on them at Pentecost, the apostles gave themselves up wholly to their ministry; so entirely withdrawing from all secular concerns, that even the distribution of the alms of the faithful, was not sufficiently spiritual for their hands. They said, therefore, "it is not meet for us to leave the word of God, to serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you, seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and the ministry of the word."\*

In those letters to the ministers, Timothy and Titus, in which Paul portrays the character, and describes the duties of the christian pastor, he says, "*give thyself wholly to these things, that thy profiting may appear to all.*" "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."†

I know, indeed, that it is objected, that Paul himself is an exception to this rule. But this very objection admits, that the rule is, that ministers should be supported by the people of their charge. How strange, then, is the perversion which makes the exception their rule, and the rule an exception! And for what reason did Paul make himself an exception to that which he declared the Lord ordained should be the general practice? Because there were some, among the first churches, who being ill affected to his person, his ministry, and doctrine, would gladly have seized any opportunity to charge him with sinister motives. He determined, therefore, to cut off all occasion "from them who desire occasion, that wherein they glory, they may be found even as we."‡ Who, therefore, can require their minister to imitate the apostle, in thus

\* Acts vi. 2—4.

† 2 Tim. ii. 4.

‡ 2 Cor. xi. 12.

abstaining to receive support from those to whom he ministered, without making the unenviable admission, that they imitate the ill-disposed persons, who view the ministry and the gospel with an evil eye; whom it is therefore necessary to melt down by heaping coals of fire on their heads; to vanquish, by such a course of voluntary martyrdom for their welfare, as would stop the mouth of an infidel, and compel the bitterest foe to admit, we were their disinterested friend?

For this reason, our missionaries among the heathen are obliged, at first, to support themselves, or must be assisted by the churches at home: because, we cannot expect *idolaters* to contribute to the support of a religion, whose truth and value they have yet to learn. But shall we deal thus with the churches of Christ? The love of Christ forbids that we should treat you, brethren, as *heathens*.

But after all, it was only at certain intervals, and in particular places, that Paul labored, working with his own hands to minister to his wants. For we read most distinctly, of the contributions made to his support, by the disciples of Christ. One beautiful acknowledgment of their liberality may well suffice. "In Thessalonica, ye Philippians sent once and again unto my necessity. Not that I desire a gift; but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound; I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God; but my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Even in Corinth, where the apostle received nothing from the church he served, he was assisted by churches at a distance. "Have I committed an offence in abasing myself that ye might be exalted, because I have preached to you the gospel of God freely? I robbed other churches, taking wages of them to do you service. And when I was present with you, and wanted, I was chargeable to no man; for that which was lacking to me the brethren who came from Macedonia supplied." If the persons, to whom this was written, had any generous sensibility, how must they have been stung by this reflection on themselves, and how

must they have envied the churches of Macedonia their superior honour, in supporting the apostles of Christ!

3. It is the dictate of what may be termed natural religion; as it is but common justice that those who labour for others, should be supported by them. Had not God explicitly interposed his authority, nor regulated this subject in divine revelation; but had he only said, now judge of your ownelves; does not nature teach you what is right? would it not have been manifest, to every man of common sense and just feeling, that if one class of society give themselves to secular duties, and to provide what is useful for this life, and another devote their days to mental and spiritual pursuits, to promote the interests of the soul, those who derive the benefit of the spiritual man's seclusion and studies, should share with him the benefit of their labours and commerce?

To wish that it were otherwise, betrays such a perversion of mind, and such a destitution of all just moral feeling, as is utterly inconsistent with common honesty, apart from all consideration of the nobler impulses of christian religion. For the flock to desire the advantages of the minister's exertions, his mental solicitude and physical powers, while he receives no adequate support from their worldly gains, is as manifestly unequal and unjust, as it would be for the minister to be supported by their labors, and do nothing for them in return.

Let us now inquire into

II. The extent to which this duty should be carried.

If Christ has not prescribed how much we shall give, say some hypocritical pretenders to religion, we may assign the merest pittance, and not violate any express precept. Yet, replies the genuine disciple of Christ, are there not certain considerations, that furnish some clue by which we may judge of our duty to Christ and his servants? May we not consider, what measures will best answer the ends of justice; most fully accord with the language of scripture; most effectually promote the interests of the church, and provide for the salvation of the world? If we can ascertain these points, will they not furnish us with an imperative rule? To what extent then, should a church provide for the support of its ministers, so as

## 1. To satisfy the claims of justice?

I say *justice*, for so the scriptures speak, and I most strenuously deny that it comes under the head of *charity*, or alms. For who ever supposed, that when any one had laboured hard for them all day, it was mere *charity* to pay him at night? On this footing our support is placed by Christ, "the labourer is worthy of his hire," or "of his meat." What proprietor ever complimented himself for his charities, because he paid the steward who watched over his property, and secured to him his income? Did any rational man ever set down to the score of alms, what he gave to the instructor who taught him music or French?

Nor will that christian, who employs an unbiassed understanding on the subject, assign the contribution to the ministry, to any other class of expense, than the payment of just debts, recompense given for services performed.

The question arises, then, what sum is necessary to answer the ends of justice? To determine this, we must compare the services of ministers with those of others who benefit society by their talents and their toils. Mental services are adjudged worthy of a higher recompense than mere physical, or bodily powers; because they demand the exercise of the higher qualities of our nature, and are more difficult to be procured than mere muscular force. If then, the recompense given to physicians, counsellors, and others, whose intellect benefits their fellow men, be the standard, I ask whether ministers are justly paid? Are they not frequently put off with that which is given to the mechanic or labourer for mere muscle and sinew?

Our surprise and censure are increased when we observe, that the same persons who adjudge the lowest recompense demand the loftiest talent. They are never satisfied, without such powers in the pulpit as would, in any other place, secure a fortune, and yet refuse to allow the minister a mere living. Is this justice?

Others, while securing to themselves a fortune by the very habits of reflection, industry, frugality, and integrity, which the ministry first taught, and still cherishes, would be alarmed at the mention of such a salary for the minis-

ter as would enable him to make the slenderest provision for a future day. Is this justice?

Would not that venerable quality require, that if a man is placed in a certain rank of society, he should be enabled to support himself and his family in such a way, as will permit him to mingle with persons of that rank, without exciting, in their minds or his own, reflections on his poverty? Yet there are some persons who would be shocked at the appearance of degradation in their minister or his family, while the slightest reflection might convince them, that they had never contributed that which should enable him to spare their feelings or his own. Is this justice?

If others think it the duty of good husbands and fathers, to provide for their widows and orphans, should not a minister, who is equally subject to mortality, be a husband and a father, as tender and faithful, as any of his flock? Most readily I admit, that this care for a temporal futurity is often carried to guilty extremes, from which a minister should stand afar off. The same duty, however, lies upon his hearers. Covetousness and worldly care are sins in them as well as in him. And if there is any degree, in which it is lawful for a christian to provide for those who are dear to him, in the event of his death; in that degree it is lawful for a minister. Yet, how few are the preachers of the gospel who can, from the income of their ministry, provide both for their family while they live, and for the widow and orphan they may leave at death? That our income ceases at our death is well known; and should *they* be cast upon the charity of the churches, who have been identified with him that had a claim in equity for himself, and the wife of his bosom, and the children of his care? Is this justice?

Christians declare, with equal truth and warmth, that the ministry so demands the whole man, that no employment will less admit of a divided heart; they are quick-sighted to perceive when a minister gives but a moiety of his powers to their edification, and yet they leave him to be distracted by all the solitudes attendant on a straitened income. Is this justice?

A minister's salary is often so inadequate, that, unless he

could work miracles to multiply the loaves and fishes, they will not hold out; if he is not a man of criminal insensibility to the claims of justice he must be distracted with solicitude to devise the ways and means to meet his creditors; or he must employ the larger part of his time in secular labours for his support. His hearers know he is not endued with the power of working miracles; they insist upon his being a man of high sense of justice; they will have all his time; and will not increase his income. Is this justice?

I turn to show to what extent ministers should be provided for, in order

2. To accord with the language of scripture.

The Lord has ordained, that "they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel," not *starve* of the gospel, but so live by it, as "they who served at the altar of old lived by the altar." For the fair construction of this inspired passage is, that *such* a remuneration as the tribe of Levi enjoyed, under the ancient dispensation, the christian ministry should now receive. What this was, we may learn from what has already been said, that a twelfth part of the population had a tenth of the produce of the land, besides cities with their suburbs, and certain parts of the offerings of the Lord. From this, and from the ancient sacred history we may learn, that the ministers of religion were not intended to be depressed to the rank of paupers, but were enabled to live about as comfortably as any of the ordinary inhabitants of the land, neither pining in poverty, nor rioting in wealth.

Nor can any thing less than this, accord with the duty of ministers of the gospel, who are enjoined to be "ready to every good work," and to be "examples to the flock" of all that is useful and benevolent. Is it possible that this can be a duty in ministers, who are to be provided for by you, and that it should be your duty only, to provide for them so scantily, as to make it impossible for them to do more than pay the debts, necessarily contracted to procure food and raiment for their own house?

Are they not enjoined to be "given to hospitality," that they may entertain the strangers, who will often apply to the pastor as to a common public friend? Have not they,

therefore, mistaken their duty, who think they make up the minister's support by inviting him often to their table? Can they have studied that bible, that commands a minister to have a hospitable table of his own? In consistency with this injunction, Paul teaches Timothy by what principles a christian church should be guided, in their choice and treatment of a bishop, by saying; "let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn; and the labourer is worthy of his reward." A niggardly spirit towards ministers may be learned from the Koran or the Shasters, sooner than from the blessed volume of inspired truth.

Again, my friends, I entreat you to consider to what extent you should provide for your ministers, in order

3. To promote the highest interests of the church.

As the spirit of inspiration charges a young minister to "give himself *wholly* to these things, that his profiting may appear to all; for no man that warreth, entangleth himself with the affairs of this life, that he may please him that hath chosen him to be a soldier;" we are taught that an *undivided attention to the ministry* is essential to the edification of the church, and the approbation of Christ. In fact, our Lord, whose laws are our mercies, ordained that ministers should be supported free from worldly labours, in order that you might have the full benefit of their undivided attention, and their utmost elasticity of mind. And when there are several hundreds of persons collected in one christian society, it is manifestly to their highest interest, to determine to maintain their minister entirely free from all temporal cares and pursuits, that they may enjoy the full benefit of his time, his talents, his thoughts, his heart. But, when the support they allow is so scanty, that he cannot live without adding to his income the profits of some secular employment; or when, in attempting to avoid that which he fears will eat out the heart of the *minister*, he is so entangled with the difficulties of making his pittance hold out, that he is haunted with anxious cares; they cannot possibly receive the full benefit of his labours, but are robbed of the pleasure and



the profit they might have derived from the unobstructed spring of his mind, and the generous flow of his soul. In worldly professions, men are enabled to rise superior to this pressure, by the direct hope that professional exertions will extricate them from pecuniary embarrassments. But wo to the pastor and the flock, where the fires of the pulpit are of that unhallowed kind that are kindled by the mercenary desire of earning a morsel of bread. The church, therefore, is left without remedy; and if the evil arise from want of inclination, rather than ability to support their minister, *it is aggravated by all the weight of the Saviour's anger, who will call them to answer for their sin, when pastor and people shall be judged at his bar.*

I am not ignorant of the wretched apologies that are sometimes urged. 'It is dangerous for a minister to be rich!' And is it not for the hearers too? And are you not afraid of increasing the hazards of your *own* soul, by adding to *your* wealth all that you withhold from him? And have you sincerely risen to that exalted height, of loving your minister better than yourself; so that you would watch for his security from the snares of wealth, at the price of increasing your own danger of being found among them that shall "hardly enter into the kingdom of God?"

But 'troubles are good for ministers, who preach better under the rod!' Thus the epicure torments the creatures of God, that they may afford him a more delicious treat! As if the world and the devil would not furnish ministers with troubles enough, unless the flock for whom they labour add *starvation* to the list! But 'we preach better for affliction!' A broken heart, I know, is good for prayer, but it is bad for preaching. In the pulpit, the *joy* of the Lord is our strength. Then we reign and triumph over your hearts, when you reign and triumph over ours. If we preach better under the rod, it is when that rod is in the hand of God, not in yours.

But to turn from cavils, which scarcely admit of serious replies, I ask again; if a minister's wife be afflicted, and he be obliged to nurse her himself, because he cannot afford to pay one for giving her the attentions that are her due; can the hearers hope that he will come from the

incessant watchings of a sick chamber, like a giant refreshed with new wine? Or when his children need education, and he is compelled to teach them at home, because the bills of a school would swallow up his whole income; *how can he come from the horn book, the grammar and the slate, on fire with sacred meditations, to pour forth the full tide of hallowed eloquence, and give to uncient, well-known truths, all the charms they may derive from novel and surprising illustrations?*

When, again, the apostle says to the young evangelist, "give attendance to reading," he supposes that he has books, and these demand money. But I have unhappily known a fine mind, athirst for information, that would have poured forth the treasures it might have acquired from reading, into the hearts of his hearers, stunted in its growth for want of the resources which a library would have furnished, and which a generous people would have afforded, and *doomed to chastise their covetousness by a repetition of old things.* No punishment is severer than that which is inflicted by the reaction of our own sin.

Consider too, my friends, that the church of God is bound to have ministers, who enjoy a good report of them that are without. This, however, in a great measure depends on yourselves. I once heard a person speak of the usefulness of a minister thus, "If he were doing much good to that people, they would give him a better coat."

If it be objected that we should not attach too much importance to the opinion of the world; for our grand concern should be, to know what is Christ's estimation of our conduct; I most readily grant the truth. And are we not assured that an apostle under infallible inspiration, was delighted with the generosity of a certain church towards him; because it redounded to their high advantage before the throne of Heaven. "I desire not a gift, but fruit, that may abound to your account. But I have received that from you, which is an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice well pleasing to God. My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

And is that which is given to his servants, a grateful odour to their Lord? And must we not wish, that Heaven

may smell such perfumes from you? Who can refrain from tears, when he thinks of those from whom Christ never receives these odours, but is insulted with the nauseous stench of their covetousness and injustice? Alas, that he should have to look down and blush to know, that these persons are called by the sacred name of him, who impoverished himself to make us for ever rich!

But here again, we see a re-action in the moral, like that which prevails in the physical world. For that Saviour who is pleased with all that is like himself, generous and kind, rewards this spirit in the flock, by kindling in the breast of its pastor that affection for their persons, and solicitude for their souls, which give to his thoughts all the beauties of the bow of heaven, and to his voice all the sweetness of angelic tones. But how can this be expected by a people, whose ungenerous treatment renders it difficult for their minister to do much more than forgive their wickedness! It is reserved for a *liberal* congregation to hear strains like those which Paul addressed to the Philippian church.

To the last consideration that may show us the extent to which ministers should be supported, I now advance. We should consider

4. What may best promote the conversion of the world.

The church should consider itself placed in the earth, as a golden candlestick, to hold out the light of divine truth to a benighted world; that, from this centre, the rays of heaven may dart forth in every direction, till the whole earth shall believe on him whom the Father hath sent. No clime, no class, no character, should be excluded from our benevolence. A minister, therefore, should be enabled to gain admittance into every rank of society. He should not be so exalted as to be beyond the reach of a poor man, nor so depressed as to be beneath the notice of the rich; but should stand in that happy mediocrity, that will permit him to lay his hands on both extremes. I plead not for great wealth. If, however, ministers are so poor as to be unable to gain access to persons of wealth, who have souls to be saved or lost as well as others; how can we be said to do our utmost for the salvation of men? A minister should be rich enough to give a shilling, or, if

needful, a guinea to a case of distress. In fact, the men of the world, both rich and poor, do expect a minister to give; and they will very much esteem, or despise him, according as they find him generous or covetous.

But a minister should be enabled to show a generous spirit, by having a liberal income. On the conversion of the world he should set his heart, and for this he should "devise liberal things." Poverty, however, shrivels the soul. Let, then, your ministers find access to every class of society; be men of general science and literature, who can mingle in conversation on every subject, to turn it to good account; and, by the stimulus of their own example, teach the world the love of God and man.

A person, with a large and generous heart, will often think of the handsome manner in which a whole people ought to support that one man who is, (or who wishes to be,) incessantly labouring for their good. *He spurns at the thought of clogging the wings of an angel, or pressing down to earth one who would bear others with him in his flight to heaven:* and he, who has just views himself, will aim to inspire them in the minds of others; for, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak."

Some, however, sooth themselves by saying, 'but our minister is contented.' How do they know? 'Because he does not complain.' What then, must a minister's delicacy always be tried, by being left to suffer until he is compelled to complain? Is this generous? Ought not his people to think it their duty to consider, whether he has not *reason* to complain, and, if they are conscious that he has, should they not determine to spare his feelings, by never leaving him to ask for that addition to his income, which they feel to be his due?

The mischief sometimes done by want of liberality among the rich, is incalculable. It is a blight that withers the fruits of all around. For a plain, and even poor man, would willingly give his proportion: but he says, if such a rich man gives only five dollars, five shillings or even five cents are as much as can be expected from me. But the rich man replies, 'I have so many other expenses which you do not know.' 'True,' says the other, 'I give you credit for them; but then, you support all the other

expenses, and think you must, in order to maintain your station in society. Why is this which you owe to a minister, the only expense you throw off from your shoulders? Or is it only in religion, that it is genteel to be shabby? But as, when wise people find their expenses beyond their income, they begin to reduce them, we must suppose that you are doing so, and have begun with religion, as that for which you care the least. But you have begun there many years ago, and we have not seen the reduction in other things yet.'

O Thou, whose omnipotence can accomplish, what to us is impossible, and cause even a rich man to enter thy kingdom; make them to whom thou hast committed ten talents, faithful over many things; and inspire in their hearts, the language of thy servant, "Lord, deliver me from men of the world, who have their portion in this life; who are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes. As for me I shall behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake in thy likeness."

There are, however, many who would not be placed among the rich, but are persons of very comfortable incomes, whose expenditure is several hundreds a year; who get their own praise, at the marvellously cheap rate of giving one guinea every year, to support a minister to whom they profess to be attached. Were I to speak as a man, I should pour the full torrent of indignant contempt on their beggarly benevolence. But as a christian and a minister, I had rather drop the tear of bitter regret and deep commiseration;—regret, for the religion of Jesus, that it should be burthened with the disgrace of such names; and commiseration for the men, who had not learned, even from such a master as Christ, how blessed it is to give.

But I should hope, that these persons have erred, in a great measure, through inconsideration. They have never reflected, what proportion their expenses for religion bear to all their other expenditures. They have never once thought, that they give to a minister one seventh part of what they pay to a maid servant; and perhaps they keep two or three of these. It is not, indeed, the

thirtieth part of the cost of a domestic servant, if to the wages we add the board. To this some will object, that our servant is our own, who spends all her time for us alone; while the minister serves many others, every one of whom ought to contribute.

This I do not forget. But you say, that from the gospel you receive more delight, and expect more benefit than from any earthly service; and all we wish is, to bring you, and every other person who enjoys the sound of the gospel from the minister's lips, to contribute in such proportion, as will produce a comfortable income.

As we come down to the lower ranks of life, we are reminded of what a shrewd person once said, 'I pay more for the lowest article of my dress than for my soul.' It costs multitudes much more for insuring their houses, than for instructing their souls. We are also compelled to say, that the very persons who are excused, through mere poverty, from contributing at all to support the man by whom they are taught, often spend as much on their pleasures, as others give for the pastor's support.

Many excuse themselves from making an adequate recompense to a minister, because, they say, 'he is a man of fortune, and does not need it.' To this I have two replies. First. Are you sure that this is true? I plead for ministers with more earnestness, because I can declare, before heaven and earth, that I believe they are often the most liberal subscribers to the cause of religion, which the church of God contains. Many of them, who cannot be considered rich men, but may rather be called poor, yet contribute with a spirit that may put others to shame. They who go to associations, and missionary meetings, at an expense which they can ill afford, because they know that these useful objects would, without them, languish and die; while some far richer persons stay at home, not merely to gain money by attendance to business, which it is often their duty to do, but sometimes, also, because they do not choose to afford the expense of travelling. I see on the lists of subscriptions, the guinea of a minister, when the names of far richer men are attached to no greater sum. If you judge by these signs, you may conclude the minister to be rich, when it is not his property, but his liberality which is thus proved.

But a second reply demands notice. If it should be true, and a minister should be rich, what can that have to do with your payment of your just debts? If you enter the shop of a tradesman, you never inquire after his private property before you pay your bills. When a medical man has given you his time and talents, you would not think of refusing to reward him, because he was a man of fortune.

And by what rule of righteousness, is a minister to be the only person whose services are to be unpaid, because he happens to be rich? When Christ says, the spiritual "labourer is worthy of his reward," he does not add, 'except he should be rich;' and why should you add this exception? But you say, 'he does not need to receive it.' To which I reply, *but you need to give it.* Do your duty, and let him judge for himself concerning his. But you think, that if Providence has blessed him with abundance, he ought to *give* away as much as his salary will produce. Well let *him* give it away. But do not assume to yourself the right to give it for him. And if you do not pay it to him, do *you* really give it away to the poor, or to the heathen? Are there not instances in which it is retained for *yourselves*? What, then, are *you* the poor persons whom he is to relieve, because he is rich? The very persons who, perhaps, are, after all, richer than himself.

But supposing him to be able to labour without receiving his full recompense, to whom should he give that advantage? To a rich and covetous people? Not if he values his accountability to Him who entrusted him with property, who has said, "he that robbeth the poor, and he that giveth to the rich," are alike guilty in his sight. No: if I spend my life and labours for nothing, it must be to benefit a people who cannot repay them; not those who will not. And he is not worthy of the name and office of a christian minister, who would not esteem it a high privilege, to be able thus to preach to a flock, who could not otherwise enjoy the gospel of Christ. Yet even there, he would be their best friend, who would see that they did all they could to pay their minister, though he should give it back among them an hundred fold.

I cannot close, late as the hour is, without recurring to the solicitude with which I commenced. Some may har-

den themselves in their sins, by pretending to think, that this has been a mercenary sermon. But I would most tenderly warn you, my friends, that you will find at the last day, that many a pious youth has sacrificed the prospect of a fortune, and many a minister endured severe poverty to devote their lives to win you from that love of the world to which you are sacrificing your soul. But how precious must be your soul, and how desirable your salvation, for the sake of which others will endure that poverty which you would rather lose your soul than bear!

Nor can I sit down, without reminding my brethren in the ministry, that though I have endeavoured to prove our claims on the liberality of our flocks, no pen of man, or tongue of angel, can declare all that intensity of mind, or fidelity of labour, which we owe to the souls committed to our care. Let not any mercenary attention to your temporal dues, shed a blighting mildew over the pasture to which you lead your flock. You can scarcely ever say, or do, much about your own income, without injuring yourselves and your charge. Consecrate yourselves to serve Christ's interest, and trust him to take care of yours.

For the liberal friends, whose hearts have echoed, as I know some do, to all that I have said on the minister's behalf, I return to Heaven our grateful vows, that the generous sacrifices you have made for our support, may be abundantly repaid.—“But this I say, he who soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; and he who soweth abundantly shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart so let him give, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound towards you; that ye always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.”





