

CORRESPONDENCE.

SUPPORT OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

To the Editor of the Wesleyan.

SIR,—I have, for some time, seriously thought that Christians, generally, fall far short of performing the duties obligatory upon them, especially in the important article of providing adequate funds for the extension and maintenance of Christianity in the earth. The little knowledge I have of the awful state of mankind, of the design of the Almighty in the constitution of his church, and of the comparatively little which that church does financially towards the universal diffusion and establishment of true religion, induces me to ask you the following plain and simple, but important questions:—1. Is there, in the Old Testament, any command of God which requires his people to support his ministers and worship; and if so, what amount is required of each person? 2. If this be the case, has such command been abrogated? 3. Does the New Testament give such a command, and what is the ratio per person? You will perceive, Sir, that the point upon which information is desired, is precisely this:—what is the proportion of our property which God demands of us individually for the support and extension of his gracious kingdom, including land, building repairs, salary and incidentals; and excluding all legal taxation?

Hoping, Mr. Editor, you will answer these questions at your earliest convenience.

Yours, very respectfully,

A SUBSCRIBER.

Mount Decimation, Jan. 11th, 1839.

ORIGINAL COMMUNICATIONS.

SUPPORT OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

By the profession which every true Christian has made to our holy religion, he has pledged himself to take Christianity with its cross, as well as its crown; he has renounced the world with all its lying vanities, and put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him. He is crucified with Christ; hence it is, that he liveth not after the flesh, but after the spirit; his life is hid with Christ in God; and he is journeying unto the place, of which the Lord hath said, "I will give it you."

But by his profession, he has not only declared his purpose to aspire after a better country, but he has bound himself to the faithful discharge of all the duties incumbent upon him, according to the ability God hath given. Now the Christian duties are both various and numerous; duties are assigned him in the domestic circle, in his intercourse with the world, and also, in his connection with the Church of Christ. Among the many duties that devolve upon him in his relation to the church, is that of supporting the Gospel by contribution or pecuniary aid; this is the more necessary, as God has made his ministering servants dependant upon the Church for their subsistence. This doctrine is not peculiar to Christianity; it was observed and inculcated in former dispensations. We find (Gen. xiv. 20. Heb. vii. 2.) that Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedec, who was priest of the most High God. In the Mosaic ritual the Levites were disallowed any inheritance among their brethren; Num. xviii. 21—24. Deu. x. 9 and xii. 12, but they were allowed a tithe, which amounted to a tenth of their brethren's annual increase. Num. xviii. 21. To use the Apostle's language, "Even so hath the Lord ordained, that they who preach the Gospel shall live by the Gospel." 1 Cor. ix. 14; and our Saviour, Christ, observed while on earth, "The workman is worthy of his hire." Matt. x. 10. Luke x. vii.

But observe, the performance of this duty is founded in equality and justice. Here I shall quote the language of an eminent writer: he says, "A minister must be very mean spirited if he regards his

salary as alms or benefactions from his people. What they give, they more than have out in services; and the "labourer is worthy of his hire." Has not God ordained that they who preach the Gospel, should live of the Gospel? And is not this law founded in equality and justice? Would not the same talents, the man devotes to the service of the sanctuary, provide for himself and his family, if employed in secular concerns?"

We owe this duty to our fellow-men; we are bound to its performance, by the precept, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." As it regards ourselves as Methodists, we have no ground to fear that our liberality will be abused; all our ministers are bound by wholesome discipline to certain allowances; and when the receipts of any circuit are more than sufficient to meet the allowances of one preacher, a second is sent to that circuit, to repay the liberality of the people, by his labours of love, in the exposition and diffusion of the word of life; and also, in the zealous discharge of all the duties connected with his high office. Thus by the discharge of our duty, we give those men, whom God hath qualified for, and called to the sacred work of the ministry, an opportunity of coming out fully into the vineyard of the Lord; and we increase the number of the ambassadors of Christ, and consequently, the probability of more abundant good being done. Let it be observed, that while our preacher has to travel round a circuit from forty to sixty miles long, it is not owing to the scarcity of preachers, but to the want of means; many are ready, whom God hath called, and whose hearts are influenced by yearning piety for their perishing fellow-men, to obey the call of the church; and they would hail the arrival of that hour, in which they should receive the call with joy and gratitude. And at the same time, are there not congregations in many of our circuits, who do not hear a sermon but once in three weeks, and some not once in four; what a necessity then for the discharge of duty, and of liberality when it is in our power.

Every individual who has obtained the justification of his person, and the regeneration of his nature by the grace and spirit of God, is bound by the most sacred obligations to let his light "shine before men," and to avail himself of the opportunities afforded, to evince his gratitude to God, for the rich display of his mercy, in the salvation of his soul. And how can we better give a demonstration of our gratitude to God, than by obeying the precepts he hath given? "If ye love me," says Christ, "keep my commandments." We may, in a pecuniary way, aid in the multiplication of the heralds of the cross in the actual field of labour, in bringing sinners to God; in extending the Redeemer's kingdom, and in hastening the glorious period, when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea; and when none shall have need to say to his neighbour,— "Know ye the Lord? For all shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest." Therefore, "whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest."

One of the charges which God brought against the Jews, was that of withholding from the priests and the altar what was their due. "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings." Jehovah, to prompt them to the faithful discharge of what he had enjoined, gave them many encouraging promises: such as,— "Bring ye all the tithes into the store-house, that there may be meat in thine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. Mal. iii. 10. "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine."