

the amount of our property, the object would be accomplished, and no one would be overburdened. The rich and the poor would share alike the consciousness of having done their duty.

Our obligations begin at home—first in the family circle, then they extend to the church with which we are connected, then to the Church at large and to the world. Expansive benevolence is well, but our home duties have the first claim upon our hearts. Next to the spiritual welfare of our own families, we should regard the spiritual welfare of our particular church and congregation; and next to the proper care for and support of our own families, comes our obligation to take care of and support the pastor who breaks to us the bread of life, and spends his strength in our service. He ministers to us in spiritual things, and we should minister to him in temporal things—measuring our services not by what others do for him, but by his need and our ability.

It is here that the voluntary system has its weak point. The poor can do but little, and the rich are not willing to do much. It is hard to impress upon the heart the truth that he who distributes his talents among his servants expects ten times as much for the ten as he does for the one. Still, as in the time of Christ, the rich man turns from his duty sorrowfully, because he has great possessions. Men, esteemed in their congregations as the rich men, think they do liberally if they pay the largest pew rent, or the largest assessment. But the real test whether they do liberally or not, is not whether they do more than others, but whether they do all that ought to be done.

We hear constantly of poor churches; of churches not able to support a pastor adequately; of churches in which pastors with families receive four, five, or six hundred dollars a year, while their neighbours in good circumstances, and economists too, spend fifteen hundred; and the plea for this injustice is—inability. In one sense the plea is true. There is a kind of inability which is an effectual bar to action—the want of a will to do. When that is removed the inability is removed. This plea may abide the test of the popular judgment, but will God receive it as valid? It may quiet the conscience. It is astonishing how easily we persuade ourselves that that is true which we wish to be true. But the end is not yet.

I can point to whole Presbyteries in which not a church supports its pastor fully, and yet in every one of them there is abundance of individual wealth to enable its possessors to supply the deficiency without feeling any inconvenience or denying themselves a single luxury. Are these cases rare examples? Let the reader look around him. How is it at home?

These plain and earnest words may pass unheeded. Hundreds of poor pastors may struggle on in poverty, and labour still for people who, in starving their pastors starve their own souls; thriving worldly Christians may harden their hearts, and draw tight their purse strings, but I have faith that here and there a heart will ponder what I say, and respond to it with true Christian sympathy.

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When we endeavour to estimate the worth of an immortal soul, we are utterly lost in the attempt. The art of spiritual computation is not governed by the same principles and rules which guide our speculations concerning earthly objects. The value of gold, silver, merchandise, food, raiment, land, and houses, is easily regulated by custom, convenience, or necessity. Even the more capricious and imaginary worth of a picture, medal or statue, may be reduced to something of systematic rule. Crowns and sceptres have had their adjudged valuation, and Kingdoms have been bought and sold for sums of money. But who can affix the adequate price to a human soul? "What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"