

every Christian, is bound to live and labour for the conversion of sinners, and the advancement of the glory of God—Loud and affecting are the calls which are addressed to us from almost every part of the world, to send the heralds of the cross, and save souls from death.—Dare we then refuse compliance with these calls, and suffer immortal souls to perish for lack of knowledge, while we have it in our power to send them the knowledge of Christ, whom to know is eternal life? Shall we shut our ears and our hearts to the cry of perishing millions,—"Come over, and help us," and coldly and selfishly say like Cain, "Am I my brother's keeper?" We could not stand by, and see a brother dying of hunger, if we had bread to give him. The feelings of our nature would revolt from such a spectacle. And is it nothing then for the *soul* to die eternally, of spiritual hunger,—“a famine of the Word of God?” and shall we, who have it in our power to send the bread of life, shut up our bowels of compassion, and refuse our help to those who are living without God and without hope, and hastening onward to a miserable and undone eternity? “How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?”

2 The rule of giving.

The rich man must give “out of his abundance,” and the poor man out of his poverty,—each according to his means, and in proportion to his ability. Both classes alike are bound to support gospel ordinances in our own land, and missionary operations in foreign lands; and for the prosecution of these “works of faith and labours of love,” the rich and the poor must “meet together,” in friendly and active co-operation. “The Lord is the Maker of them all,” and the Giver of all they possess; and they are bound to give back to God a portion of his own, to spread the gospel, and save souls from death. No one has a right to say, “I can do what I will with my own.” Nothing is our own, with respect to God: but all we have is his property, and we are merely his stewards, to whom he has given the solemn charge, “Occupy till I come.” No man indeed is expected to give according to what he hath not, but every man is expected and commanded to give according to what he hath. This rule of proportion is obviously accordant,

not only with reason, but also with Scripture. A man to whom God has given much, ought plainly to give much to God;—not an unmissed mite or a trifling contribution, such as might be expected from a poor man, but a contribution bearing a fair and just proportion to his means and ability. This rule was laid down by Moses, when he said, “Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God which he hath given thee” (Deut. xvi. 17). And the apostle Paul says to the same effect—“Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him” (1 Cor. xvi. 2).—But while the rich ought to give largely and liberally “unto the offerings of God,” the poor are not exempted from the obligation. Even the poor widow must not be deprived of the luxury of doing good; but if she has the ability and the desire to share in the work, she is encouraged to put her hand to it. And the working man, whose lot is a life of toil, is not only to provide for his own subsistence: but he is also enjoined by the apostle to “labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have is given to him that needeth” (Eph. iv. 28); “remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts xx. 35).

In acting according to this rule, the poor man has no reason to be ashamed of his small offering, and the rich man has no reason to be proud of his costly offering; for if they give in proportion to their respective means, then they are discharging their several duties, and there is a perfect equality between them. For example, if a generous friend gives me £100, and gives my neighbour only 100 shillings, and commands us both to devote a tenth part to the promotion of his interest;—then, if I give my £10, while my neighbour gives only his 10 shillings, I have no reason to glory over him, but in that case he stands on a footing of perfect equality with me. It was on this principle, that our Saviour approved so highly of the conduct of the poor widow. He had seen the rich contribute large and magnificent offerings; but they had made no sacrifice in doing so, and they had not given to God in proportion to what God had given to them; and therefore he bestowed his commendation, not on them, but on the poor widow—“Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in MORE than