

cases, which we regard as still more dangerous, there may have been such a measure of success, that those who have had recourse to such pursuits at first merely under what they regarded as the impulse of necessity, come to be pleased with the arrangement, and are willing that their people should be satisfied with that measure of ministerial duty which they can extend to them, after the calls of a lucrative business have been answered.

We do not pretend here to discuss the merits of particular cases in which ministers, not receiving adequate support from their people, endeavour to make up the deficiency by some secular pursuit; nor do we venture to say with respect to any such cases, how far the example of the Apostle Paul may warrantably be pleaded in justification of them. Our object is to remind those who have practically to dispose of such cases, that the Bible has a voice upon this subject to which they ought to listen; and that, according to its announcements, it does not follow that all is right merely because a minister may be able to subsist without burdening the flock among whom he labours. We believe few of our congregations would feel greatly flattered in being relieved from the burden of supporting their ministers, on the same ground which induced the Apostle Paul to say to the Corinthians (2 Cor. xi. 8, 9), "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 which came from Macedonia supplied: and in all things I have kept myself from being burdensome unto you, and so will I keep myself." We are not sure either that even the poorest of these congregations—and we are not indifferent to what may be their trials in this respect—would venture to take up the position that in these matters they have given to the Lord according to his kindness to them. It is very evident that the work of the ministry requires the full and devoted attention of him who is put into the office—that nothing but a case of the most urgent necessity can warrant the abstraction of his time to any other pursuit; and as the people must be the heaviest sufferers from an inadequate supply of his services, they are the parties most concerned to make every effort in order to secure the full benefit of his labours.

It is not, however, from the mere necessities of the case, and from a regard to the evils that result from an inadequate provision for the support of the ministry, that we would press our congregations to a more earnest attention to this subject? The giving to which they are called is a part of that moral and spiritual training whereby God is pleased to exercise, to strengthen, and to mature the graces of his people, and so to ripen them for glory. With whatever feeling of derision the idea may be contemplated by some, it is nevertheless true, that an honour is conferred upon those whom God is pleased to employ as his instruments in communicating of his goodness to others. In the right discharge of the duty they will find that there is also the enjoyment of a privilege; for "it is more blessed to give than to receive." It was no selfish feeling that prompted the Apostle to say to the Philippians (Philipp. iv. 10), "But I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity;" for he immediately adds, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." He was not indifferent to the benefit thus communicated to himself, but he especially rejoiced on their account, as he states in the 17th verse, "Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account." These contributions are fruits which he describes as constituting "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God."—The believer knows well that the only ground on which he, or any thing that he does, is acceptable before God is Christ our passover who is sacrificed for us; but he may also rejoice in knowing that, being accepted in the Beloved, the efforts which he makes in the service of God—in promoting the interests of religion, are graciously accepted as offerings of thanksgiving, as sacrifices of praise, according to the language of the same Apostle, in the epistle to the Hebrews, xiii. 16, "But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

No one at all capable of thinking will for a moment imagine that God is dependent upon the liberality of the most devoted of his people for the means of supporting the ministers of his word. It is he himself that formed the heaven as his throne, and the earth as his footstool. It