

*E.*—You are right, Duncan, and I thank you for reminding us of that. However, I do not think that our conversation, so far, was a mis-spending of time.

*D.*—Donald and myself were talking about it as we came along, and, I am sorry to say, we could not agree.

*Don.*—I wonder what men will be ad next. The idea of thinking that our poor congregations could raise upwards of £200 every year to support a missionary, shews that some who get money very easily themselves, have very little sympathy for poor people, who must work hard for every shilling they have.

*E.*—There is no intention nor desire to lay any burden on you, Donald. Those who wish to enter on this scheme will not attempt to force one shilling from you. You will always be at liberty to refuse giving one half-penny, if so inclined. So you see there is no reason to be afraid of this scheme. If supported at all, it will be by the contributions of those who think it a privilege to give for such a holy and blessed object. Although you will not give yourself, you will not find fault with others for doing so, if disposed.

*Don.*—It is always the same cry—money, money! Scarcely a Sabbath passes, but we hear that we must give money for this or that object; and now, instead of being satisfied with less than formerly, which should be the case after getting so much, we are to be saddled with an additional burden. One would almost think, from the way some of our ministers speak, that to give as much money as possible was the surest path to get to heaven.

*E.*—It grieves me very much to hear you speak in that way. You know well enough that your minister does not get one penny of that money into his own pocket, and you ought to know, just as well, that God enjoins on you to give as He hath prospered you, and that therefore your minister, when urging this, is only telling you what God commands. It is not true that by giving you can gain a title to heaven, but it is true, and you will one day know it to be so, that if you have no heart to give as liberally as your means will allow to aid the cause of Christ, you are in the way, certainly, not to heaven. But I see no reason why you should complain, for you are not compelled to give. You are your own master in the matter, so far as ministers are concerned. But remember you will give account to God, and that, perhaps, very soon, respecting your doings.

*D.*—I have heard it said, that the more an individual gives to the cause of Christ, the more willing he becomes to continue giving; and I have also heard that, invariably, those who do so, assert that their contributing in this way, instead of keeping them back in their worldly circumstances, is attended with the very opposite result. If that is the case, it will account for what I have often noticed, that the persons who complain most when asked for contributions, are those who are in

the habit of giving the least. Indeed, I have sometimes heard persons who never gave at all, louder in their complaints than any other.

*E.*—That is quite true, and as our neighbour here thinks it so hard that his minister continues to ask so often for money, and as he seems so much afraid of any additional burdens, I would like to hear how much he contributes. Now, Donald, will you tell us how much you generally give at the different collections?

*Don.*—I pay all my just debts, and the stipend I promised my own minister I generally pay before the end of the year, and that is more, perhaps, than even some of the Elders themselves can say.

*E.*—Well, Donald, we will not dispute about that. I have no doubt that you try to pay your just debts, and I am glad you pay your stipends. From the way you speak, I suppose the amount you pay the minister is pretty large.

*Don.*—I pay between 10 and 15 shillings a year.

*E.*—That is about 3s. 6d. a quarter. It seems, then, you give to support ordinances, every quarter, about the value of one day's work. It costs you about the same that you pay for a lb. of tea. For that amount, just what a lb. of tea costs you, you get the services of a minister of Christ, who spent the best years of his life and several hundreds of pounds in preparing for his holy office. He preaches for you every Sabbath, baptizes your children, visits and catechizes your family, and attends on you and on others when in sickness and trouble. Now, one would think you would consider all that worth a great deal more than a lb. of tea. That is all it costs you, however. Surely you will not call that a contribution. It is giving nothing. It is only paying a just debt. But besides stipend, which certainly, at the rate you mentioned, will never make you much poorer, I suppose you give a good deal towards the Schemes of the Church.

*Don.*—I must confess I don't often give much at these collections. At the last one, the Young Men's Scheme, I gave seven pence half-penny.

*E.*—So that is the amount of the burden of which you complained. Now, Donald, you will allow me to ask you just one other question. Do you really believe the Bible to be the word of God, and that what is contained there is the voice of God speaking to you?

*Don.*—It seems you suspect me of being an infidel, when you ask if I believe the Bible to be the word of God. I thought religion made men charitable.

*E.*—I do not think it is a breach of charity to doubt your belief in the Bible. I hope and pray that you may come to believe that it is indeed God himself who speaks to you there, but it is evident you never yet regarded it in that light. Had you done so, you would believe your entire dependence on God.