

for the maintenance of public ordinances. Churches cannot be built and repaired without means. Ministers cannot live on air more than others. What the temple, what the priests and Levites, were to the Jews, our churches, our ministers, are to us. By their means are the worship and service of the Most High celebrated and upheld among us. The little that is necessary for their maintenance is all the acknowledgment that God requires us to make for the many blessings, temporal and spiritual, which we enjoy at His hands; and when men are niggardly or backward in regard to this, the very same words may be addressed to them that were addressed to the Jews, "Will a man rob God? Yet have ye robbed me." God regards this, you will perceive, as not so much a sin committed against man, as a sin committed against Himself.

There is, indeed, this difference between our case and that of the Jews. The precise portion of our substance which we are to set apart to the service of the sanctuary has not been specified. It has been left to our own discretion and sense of propriety. Those under the Old Testament were under tutors; as Paul expresses it, were in their minority, and their duties were strictly defined. We are treated as those who, having reached maturity, it is sufficient to specify the duty and to leave minute particulars to our own good sense and our feeling as to what is right in the circumstances. This remark, which is true of the Gospel generally, is especially true of that department of Christian obligation which the text enjoins. Here God loveth a cheerful giver. He expects that our liberality will not be reluctantly wrung from us, but that a conscientious consideration of the facts of the case, as well as a regard to our own interests, will dictate the degree in which this liberality should be extended.

It is certainly proper that with us, as with the Jews, the edifice in which we worship God should at least be such as is suitable to the purpose, should be kept in decent repair, and that everything necessary for the due celebration of Divine worship should, as far as possible, be provided. It is no less becoming that those who labour in spiritual things should be properly supported.

To this last matter—the support of the ministry—let me refer more particularly.

The degree of this support should, we have said, be estimated by a due consideration of the circumstances of the case.

A proper respect for God's ambassador will lead us to provide suitably for him. As we honour an earthly sovereign by providing in a becoming manner for his acknowledged representative,—as we offer an indignity to such sovereign by treating his representative with neglect,—so it is in some measure as regards our treatment of him who is held up to us in Scripture as the messenger of the Lord of Hosts.

Or do we look for a moment at the value of a minister's services. How trifling are the benefits which we derive from the exercise of any other calling, in comparison with those which we derive from a preached Gospel. These may serve to provide nourishment for the body, or add to the comforts of life. It secures those whom it savingly influences all that is really valuable in this life—the Divine blessing and protection, peace of mind, and it does what nothing else can—it provides for those who sincerely embrace it, happiness beyond the grave. In proportion to our estimate of these blessings should be our readiness to contribute towards the maintenance of religious ordinances.

It may, indeed, be argued by some, that our Saviour and His apostles were by no means treated in the manner pointed out here, but were too often left in a state of poverty, and that those who profess to be their followers should be content to be in the world as they were. It should be borne in mind, however, that their circumstances were widely different from those of the minister now. They came to a world steeped in heathen darkness, bitterly opposed to the Gospel, and they would look for nothing else but neglect, if not positively bad treatment. The minister, now-a-days, labours among those who profess to receive and value