

covetousness is of the earth, earthy, and only rises into the devilish when it takes to itself the name of godliness, as it does when it defrauds the Christian Ministry of its just dues under the pretence of a fear of hurting its purity and usefulness. But this pretence is, I believe, felt to be a pretence by those who make it, and deserves no more than a passing notice. Covetousness is proverbially deaf or very dull of hearing on one side of the head. Now, if the parties, who are to give, can satisfy themselves that it is enough if they give when called upon, and that it is no part of their duty to enquire for themselves and so by careful examination ascertain what ought to be given, while those, on whom the duty is imposed of ascertaining the want and demanding the supply, are expected to fix the amount required at the very lowest possible sum and make the demand in the most modest and least obtrusive way that can be devised, and in the lowest possible whisper, how often must it happen that covetousness will not hear or will not heed claims so feebly soliciting its attention. But it is just in this way that the pecuniary concerns of voluntary Churches are treated. The Minister cannot urge his own claim very strongly, nor plead it loudly. If any pious Elder or Deacon undertake zealously the office of pressing his claims. Instead of being thanked by the Congregation for undertaking this duty, he is regarded as one who intermeddles in other people's matters. Perhaps he will be told, "The Minister does not complain, and why should you trouble either us or yourself?" There is something, I fear, radically wrong in most voluntary bodies in connexion with this subject. It is not regarded as of that importance which belongs to it, nor treated as a vital object of their Church union and communion. It is left very much to adjust itself as it can, as a matter entirely between Ministers and Congregations, to be settled in any way they like best, without any decided interference of the Church at large, to see that it is either wisely and equitably arranged or duly observed. If any thing like erroneous doctrine show itself in the denomination, and appears to be spreading,—if any departure from the standard of sound words, from the prescribed form of discipline or order of worship is heard of, the whole body is astir, as about a thing that deeply concerns the whole,—and this is right. But the most gross and undeniable dereliction of duty in one or even in many Congregations in the matter of the support of the Ministry is not viewed as a circumstance that should excite any lively alarm for the cause of truth and godliness, or call for any united testimony against it, or any marked disapprobation of the conduct of the offending parties by the whole Church. It is viewed as a mere private matter interesting

chiefly to the parties concerned; in some cases as a good Minister's trial, in others as a careless or imprudent one's just punishment. Meanwhile the evil may be sapping the religion and morality of the whole denomination, as in many instances, I am persuaded, it is, poisoning the whole relation between Minister and people, and between Congregation and Congregation, wealthy and liberal paying Congregations buying up from the poorer or less liberal ones the best, or such as are considered the best and ablest Ministers in the connexion. In the Congregation thus deprived of a Minister, the poor feel themselves despised, and the proud feel themselves affronted. The Congregation, which thus gets a Minister, feels as if it had bought what it ought not to have bought and which ought not to have been sold. In many cases the Minister feels he has been both bought and sold without his almost having a word to say in the bargain, necessity leaving him little room for choosing. If good men feel constrained to countenance such things, there are others acting from very different motives who shelter themselves under their example. The evil effects arising from the want of proper arrangements for the support of the Ministry, between the Minister and his people, are still more deplorable than those between Congregation and Congregation. Covetous grudgings, and evil surmising on both sides too often cause the preaching of the Gospel to seem little better than a mockery or empty form to both preacher and hearers. The Minister, smarting under the sense of injustice, of which he is not permitted to complain, feels, while he addresses his Congregation as men professing Christianity, he could better bear their injustice, if they were professed heathen. The people, on the other hand, are ready to interpret every murmur that escapes from the Minister on this subject, as a proof that, while he preaches against covetousness, he is himself covetous;—that, while he warns them to beware of setting too high a value on the things of the world, he is himself very anxious about the same things of the world. Much of this there might be under any system of supporting the Ministry; but the evil is unspeakably aggravated when there is no system but that of leaving the matter in every case to be settled between the covetousness of the people on the one hand, and the necessity of the Minister on the other. This is a matter which it belongs to the whole body to consult and decide upon and to take order for, and make some general arrangement with regard to, as well as the doctrine that is to be taught, and the discipline and Church order that is to be observed. It is vain for men to unite into Churches, and as it were, pledge themselves to stand by one another in maintaining and promoting the same spiritual objects, while in the matter

of the support of the Ministry, which lies at the foundation of all their efforts, every one is left at perfect liberty, no one asking an account of it at his brother's hand. But it is vain to separate what God has joined together. While Congregations affect to seek union and communion in heavenly and spiritual things, and neglect these earthly things, they labour but in vain. While they affect with united voices to speak the same things, with united prayers to ask the same things from God in behalf of his Church, to ask his blessing upon their united efforts to maintain that form of sound words, that purity of worship which they have agreed upon, but do not unite their money efforts, what blessing is to be expected? When Congregations stand aloof from one another with cold carefulness in temporal difficulties, extend help when needed only upon sore pressing, as a matter of great grace, and do it even then very ungraciously as if they would rather it could be avoided, what confidence can they have in one another's sincerity, and zeal about spiritual things? They will please neither God nor man. The little help that is given, and the way in which it is given among Churches in temporal things, is not as becometh Christians. The very dog is much more attached to his benefactor by little shows of kindness than by the food he receives, and greatly prefers, I am persuaded, and much more enjoys the bit from the hand than the crumbs that fall from the table. A little less pride and show of patronizing and display of benefiting, and a little more brotherly kindness and charity in bestowing without seeming to think, still better without thinking of the superiority of the giver over the receiver; O! what wonders would it work in the Church!

The whole tenor of Church history would, I feel certain, if investigated with an impartial desire to ascertain the fact, confirm the principle which I stated at the beginning of this letter, that there is an intimate and influential connexion between the liberality or penuriousness with which funds are contributed, and the wisdom or folly with which they are distributed and applied, and the accomplishment of the great ends of all Christian fellowship.

To come to Modern times. For various reasons I do not wish particularly to consider the case of the Free Church of Scotland. But all the leading men among them have given unequivocal testimony that on this hinge of a wise and vigorous system of finance they consider the success of all their other efforts mainly to turn,—and they are right; and it is to be hoped they will give no ear to covetousness cloaking itself under a false spiritualism, calling upon Ministers to be content with the smallest pittance on which soul and body can be kept together in order that the people may enjoy more of