

The liberal man deviseth liberal things ; and by liberal things shall he stand."

But God not only blesses his people here, for their adherence to his precepts, but he will bless them in the world to come. John heard a voice from heaven, saying, in reference to the pious dead : " They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them." In the day of final retribution, God will say to his people, Come ye blessed of my Father. I was hungry, and ye fed me, &c. And to every faithful servant, " Well done, thou good and faithful servant : thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things : enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.

29th Nov. 1838.

Murray Harbour, P. E. I.,

J. B.

THE WESLEYAN.

HALIFAX, JANUARY 28, 1839.

SUPPORT OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY.

UNDER the head of "Correspondence" and Original Communications" * will be found two articles on the above subject—the last of which invites our attention to the solution of his queries. We have hesitated in doing this, alone for the purpose of arousing the dormant energies of several of our numerous and well qualified Correspondents—we invite them to a reply, and we content ourselves for the present with the following extract from the New York Christian Advocate and Journal.

It is one of the peculiarities of Methodism that its ministry is supported by the voluntary contributions of the members of the Church. We rejoice that such is the fact. We think that this mode is much more consonant with the spirit and practice of early Christianity, and much better calculated to promote feelings of affectionate and reciprocal dependance between the ministry and laity, than a system of compulsory taxation. On this point we recognize the far-sighted wisdom of our founder ; and we conceive that in the establishment of this plan of ministerial support, he has bequeathed to the Church a system as efficient in its results, as it is uniting in its character.

In the apostolic age there was but one fund for the support of the ministry and the poor members of the Church ; and of this the deacons were the curators and distributors. It would seem, however, that this fund was soon appropriated to the relief of the poor and the afflicted exclusively ; and that the ministry was supported solely by the free and grateful contributions of those to whom they ministered the words of eternal life. It does not appear that the ministers of the Church had then any regular salary, but received from the Church a supply of their wants, just as those wants occurred ; and when the poverty of one Church required the aid of others, that aid was freely and liberally afforded. Thus St. Paul, when in Thessalonica, mentions the liberality of the Philippian Christians, as a " sacrifice well pleasing to God." This liberality of soul is the natural result of the Gospel of Christ. The heart becomes expanded toward all, and especially toward those who have been instrumental in causing the change from "darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God." The voluntary system continued in operation till the reign of Constantine, when, by the influence of the emperor, it was unhappily changed for the plan of compulsory taxation. Not to insist upon the unhappy effects which this change produced, in rendering the ministry secular and worldly, we may be

* We may just observe that the last named article was received some weeks prior to the letter of our correspondent on this subject.

allowed to remark that its natural tendency is to dissolve the unity of affection and design which ever ought to exist between the Church and ministry—to render the latter sordid, and the former suspicious.

But while we admire the plan of voluntary contribution, we must be permitted to observe, that without a hearty co-operation of the whole church, it will be comparatively inefficient. Nay more, it will subject a few to the pressure of an intolerable burden, and that few, precisely those whose liberality and conscientiousness prompt them to make almost any sacrifice, rather than be served by an unsupported ministry. It is indisputably owing to a want of this universal and hearty co-operation that we are so frequently called to listen to the distressing tale of ministerial embarrassments and poverty, and that at every returning conference, the question,—*"What amount is necessary to make up the deficiencies of those who have not obtained their regular allowance on the circuits ?"* meets with an answer which too frequently tends to sadden the hearts of the faithful ministers of the cross. This lamentable deficiency surely cannot arise from the general remissness or unfaithfulness of the ministry. We have no hesitation in saying that the ministry of the Methodist Church will lose nothing by comparison with the ministry of any Church on earth. If a faithful discharge of duty—an all-absorbing love to perishing souls—a fearless spirit of sacrifice—and an unparalleled success in "turning many to righteousness," can constitute a claim on the affection and gratitude of the Church, then is that claim possessed by our ministry. And we are not disposed to think that the deficiency in question arises from the covetousness or ingratitude of the Methodist Church, as a body. We rather believe that, as a body, the Methodists are a liberal and generous people, and sincerely love and esteem those who labor among them, and are over them in the Lord. Whence, then, it may be asked, arises the deficiency complained of ? We answer,—From the want of understanding what is duty in this respect ; and from the want of a hearty and general co-operation in the performance of that duty. We are fully aware that in our Church, as well as in every other, there are those whose covetousness leads them to grudge what they give, or to withhold altogether. We do not write for such. We have no hope that any argument of ours would soften a heart that can look unmoved upon the sufferings of the man of God who is spending his strength and life for his benefit. We regard such indurated and contracted souls as leprous spots on the fair form of the Church of God ; and on behalf of a perishing world we rejoice that "they are not as other men are." We believe that the great mass of the members of our Church only need to be fully and kindly informed of their duty, to perform that duty with promptitude and pleasure.

In reference to the duty of supporting a Gospel ministry, the language of Scripture is clear and explicit. St. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, points out not only the duty, but the manner in which it is to be performed. "Upon the first day of the week, let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." Upon this passage Dr. Clarke remarks, "Every man was to feel it his duty to succour his brethren in distress. He was to do this according to the ability which God gave him. He was to do this at the conclusion of the week, when he had cast up his weekly earnings, and had seen how much God had prospered his labors." Dr. Macknight paraphrases the passage thus :—"On the first day of every week, let each of you lay something by itself, suitable to the gains of the preceding week." Thus the duty is not left to us to do it when or how we please ; nor is it optional, but imperative.

As every member of the Church of Christ is called upon to do something for the cause of God, he is also directed by what rule he ought to act, viz., *"As God hath prospered him."* Here, then, is a rule of duty