

vert sinners and edify saints that the Head of the Church has appointed for these ends, he has especially blessed the preached word; this treasure—the ministry of the gospel—is put into earthen vessels. If instead of multiplying these vessels the church is diminishing their number, and that through love of money, surely the congregations of the Lord hereby incur solemn responsibility. Covetousness in christians is thus seen to call down from heaven the same judgment, which God threatened against apostate Israel as evidence of His reprobation of that people, viz., “a famine, not of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the word of the Lord,” Amos viii. 11, 12. To behold the hand of covetousness raised up in order to prevent the candlestick from being put into its place, is surely a vision that should excite deep lamentation; and all the greater when we are assured that the hand so employed does not belong to a professed foe, as we might expect, but is the hand of the church itself. Or should the avarice of the church raise its shrivelled arm and wave away from the office of the ministry, both piety and talent, it has been successful in stripping Zion of its special ornaments and means of efficiency, and left a helpless and unworthy residue, as husbandmen, in the Lord’s vineyard. That such, however, is sometimes its effect, can be abundantly established. Said, on a particular occasion, a leading member of the Synod of Pittsburgh, U. S., “I once knew a young man of fine talents, whom I tenderly loved,” deterred from the ministry on the ground of inadequate support: again, he says, “one of the brightest young men I ever knew was stopped in his course” for the same reason. God in all ages of His church has blessed it with the inheritance of pious and talented teachers. The Bible itself, in point of literature, will compare most favorably with any book of antiquity; and Abraham and Moses, Joshua and Samuel, David and Solomon, Isaiah and Daniel, walk before the mind, not only in the solemn and attractive attire of piety, but beautiful also with the honors of superior talent: we are sure that Matthew and Luke, Mark and John are not only men of piety but of strong

mind also; while Paul’s splendid genius has commanded the admiration of friend and foe, of heathen as well as of christian.—From the decease of John the apostle to the present hour there have been always some,—always a fair share of the most richly endowed of men’s sons, who have consecrated their gifts to the pleasing duty of elucidating Holy Writ and the exposition and defence of heavenly doctrine. To sit at the feet of these men demands talent; the age, which witnesses efforts to scale the citadel of sacred truth by force of argument and parade of learning, demands it; the depths of the book, that some of the jewels which lie beneath its surface may be seen to the joy and edification of the children of Zion demands it; the Head of the Church demands it, for he demands the best, not the halt and maimed; and let his people demand it and provide for it, lest by their parsimony they be found in this particular even “fighting against God.” Let it be carefully noted when the Levites were driven from the house of God because their position was not given them; Nehemiah contended with the rulers and through them with the people as the cause of this evil.—Neh. xiii. 10-13.

(2.) Inadequate support lowers the social status of ministers. Said a professor of religion, and a trustee in a Presbyterian church, to a minister, “I have educated my son to be useful to me in my profession; and just when he has begun to be useful, he has abandoned me, and chosen the life of a beggar,” meaning the ministry. “Even the mother regretted the son’s career. She had pictured to herself a son, talented, wealthy, &c., and now, she said, he would be *nothing but a minister!*” Good position gives self-respect, leads to the cultivation of what is refined in taste and habits, and deters from that littleness or meanness in worldly matters, which is sure to ruin the influence of ministers who practise it. By lowering the status of ministers, you weaken their influence. This is felt by all. A sermon may owe much of its good or bad effect to the circumstances of the preacher. Like John, it might perhaps be possible for us to live on locusts and wild honey, and, so far as