

the Gospel. Had the world only known what illustrious visitants had honoured it with their presence, and how precious were the goods which it was their object to vend, it would not have allowed them to remain in the state of penury and neglect in which they often were, but would have exhausted their treasures to do them honour. Whenever religion began to be respected, then were its recognized office-bearers, as a necessary consequence, suitably provided for; and in proportion as a community becomes heavened with a religious spirit, will a disposition be manifested to contribute, as God has prospered each, towards the support of religious ordinances.

We might mention many other reasons why ministers should be adequately provided for. It is necessary for the efficient discharge of their duties. It will increase their influence, and therefore their usefulness. If you are to have men of education,—and no minister can be thoroughly efficient without this,—you do thereby create men of refined tastes and habits, for which some provision should be made. They ought, further, to be in such circumstances that they can command the constant use of books, and secure whatever other aids are necessary for the prosecution of their sacred calling. It is well, too, that they should be able not merely to provide things honest in the sight of God and in the sight of all men, but that they should have it in their power to respond to those many calls on their liberality which their constant intercourse with their people brings more especially before their notice. And if other men require to provide against sickness and old age, no less do they.

But it is chiefly on the score of justice that we would urge the claims of ministers. "The labourer is worthy of his hire." "If," says Paul, "we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" Labour is, in general, rewarded in proportion to the skill requisite and the previous education necessary. It is only just, then, that a profession like the ministry, requiring such a protracted and expensive training, demanding for its efficient exercise such an amount of learning and talent, and entailing a degree of anxiety and of mental toil such as can be said of few others, it is only just that it should receive a suitable remuneration; and unless it does, qualified men will choose other professions. This, indeed, is what is frequently occurring at present in Great Britain among the various dissenting bodies, and even in the Church of England. Finding that the return from the ministry is little better than starvation, in comparison with what is received from other occupations, young men are too much turning their attention in other directions: so that the want of labourers among the religious bodies mentioned is severely felt. No doubt this is a worldly view to take of the matter; but so long as we are human and not angelic, we must take the human element into our calculations.

But the text appeals to an argument which, with many, will have even greater weight. God promises a large return to those who are careful to attend to the duty inculcated in the text. "Prove me now, herewith, saith the Lord, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing till there be not room enough to receive it." Better rendered, perhaps, the original would be, "If I will not pour you out such a blessing that there be not enough," that is to say, "My liberality will be such that nature will hardly suffice to supply my demands on it—till there be no more to give."

We have here, then, a promise of the very largest description. God will almost, speaking humanly, exhaust His resources to bless us. That it is temporal blessings which are referred to here, is evident from the context. "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes," says the Almighty, in the very next verse. "and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before her time, in the field, saith the Lord of Hosts." Surely, my friends, if this is the case, we may well afford to be liberal in regard to religious objects. The present is especially an age of speculation. We are ever looking