

where thousands or even hundreds cannot be got for the support of the Gospel is a scandal, a blot on our professed and boasted civilization. And that is not all. In blunting the mental as well as the spiritual powers, and in opening wide the gate that other sins may pass through, it would be difficult to estimate the hurt that is done by it. The love of the world bulks up largely in the face of the Gospel. Time would fail to describe all the aspects that worldliness presents. It would be interesting were it not so terribly sad to observe the various phases it presents. We hear of families, and we have some knowledge of them that once were in moderate circumstances, and in those days a primitive and puritanic simplicity characterised the life which they led. Since then they have risen to comparative wealth, and one consequence is that the simplicity of deportment has given way to expensive and vicious indulgence, habits that once were regarded with horror are now the order of the day. If the parents still prefer the old ways, are still found in the prayer meetings and other places where the means of grace are enjoyed, not so the children, they have outgrown the old ways of serving their father's God, they have learned to serve God and mammon at the same time, they have negated our Lord's declaration, "Ye cannot serve two Masters." In the race for riches too there is a departure from honesty and truthfulness that is sad to contemplate in the light of an eternal world. The ordinary ways of amassing wealth are no longer sufficient, they are too slow, a royal road has been found out. The intense eagerness with which men, even professors of religion, grasp at speculations that are presented, whether habitually in the mercantile world, or occasionally in the lottery, the latter being dignified by a smoother and more captivating name, is a sign of the times in which we live. And if pastors and others raise their voice against such gigantic and iniquitous schemes, a flood of abuse is let loose upon them from various quarters, which amounts to a veritable persecution. The pulpit is brought into bondage, or if it asserts its heaven endowed freedom revenge is taken by emptying the pew. This is a favorite mode of punishing faithfulness. Ever literary men notice and comment upon the way in which faithful preaching is regarded in worldly and fashionable circles. Here are striking words which a minister is made to say: "How often have I thundered with all my heart and soul against the wicked extravagance of dress among women—against their filthy false hair, and their nauseous powders and paints? How often have I denounced the mercenary and material spirit of the age, the habitual corruptions and dishonesties of commerce, in high

places and in low? What good have I done? I have delighted the very people whom it was my object to rebuke. 'What a charming sermon!' 'More eloquent than ever.' 'I used to dread the sermon at the other church—do you know, I quite look forward to it now.' That is the effect I produce on Sunday. On Monday the women are off to the milliners to spend more money than ever; the city men are off to business to make more money than ever, while my grocer, loud in my praises in his Sunday coat, turns up his week-day sleeves and adulterates his favourite preacher's sugar as cheerfully as usual." Many of us know how true the picture is.

In the report of one of the Presbyteries there is reference to another evil tendency on the part of our people. It is as follows: "The lack of labourers is felt in this Presbytery, and in some districts it is all the more felt from the fact that the people seem to depend on the ministers for everything, as if there could not be worship on Sabbath or during the week without his presence. If our elders and church members were more alive to duty and privilege there would be no district without meetings for worship whether the services of an ordained agent could be obtained or not. We need the working power of our membership to be more fully developed before the work can be properly carried on among us." This is a tendency that we have been combating for some time, and progress has been made, but less than there might have been. Viewed in the right light this tendency is nothing but ritualism, a raising of the ministry to the position which the priests of old occupied, and which the Church of Rome and the High Church so called still claim.

And as pastors have we not to take blame to ourselves in the low state of religious life that now prevails? Have we all and at all times preached the Gospel in its simplicity, and in its directness, and with faith, in it being the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth? Have we never substituted the wisdom of men for the foolishness of preaching, have we always been free from the fear of men that bringeth a snare both in our public ministrations and in one private intercourse? Have we not failed to present as a witness for the truth such holiness and consistency of life as cannot be spoken against? Have we all made the work of the ministry the one object of our life, have we not rather turned aside from that in thought and in act, as well as in word? If we would have times of reviving from God's presence, do we not need to put away all strange gods out of our own hearts, as well as ask our hearers to put them away? If our thoughts be turned in such a direction as that, then it will not be in vain that a sitting of this