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THE
RIGHT AND LEFT HAND
BLESSINGS OF GOD.

DESIGNED

AS A CURE FOR COVETOUSNESS.

BY THE
REV. NATHANIEL WEST, SEN. D. D.

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"Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand, riches  
and honour." Prov. iii. 16.

"Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." Matt. vi. 3.  
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PHILADELPHIA:
PRESBYTERIAN BOARD OF PUBLICATION,
No. 265 CHESTNUT STREET.

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THE
RIGHT AND LEFT HAND
BLESSINGS OF GOD.

IN discussing any subject, there is nothing like Wisdom. On the topic of Christian benevolence, I will begin with Wisdom. Of Wisdom, Solomon says, "Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour." Prov. iii. 16.

By consent of all sound interpreters, Wisdom here means the Son of God. Paul calls Christ "the wisdom of God," and asserts, that in him are "hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." 1 Cor. i. 24; Col. ii. 3.

Wisdom is sometimes commended for beauty; but in the passage cited, it is her *bounty* which forms her attraction. "Length of days is in her right hand, and in her left hand riches and honour." God's blessings from both his hands are here set forth. The blessing of his right hand is for time and eternity, therefore the longest; the blessings of the left are for time only, therefore the shortest. I will consider both kinds of blessings, but will so order my arrangement as to take the longest blessing *first*, and dwell shortest upon it, and the shortest blessings *second*, and dwell the longest on them. This must needs be the way, for that in which we cannot imitate God needs only a short but explicit statement, while that in which we may follow his example, requires some discussion. I will begin with

I. GOD'S RIGHT HAND BLESSING,—
“LENGTH OF DAYS.”

Length of days is here promised to those who obey God. This blessing is from his right hand. The right hand is here preferred, both for its own worth, whereby it excels, and the worth of the treasure it contains. The right hand has ever been honoured with both dignity and dexterity. The blessing it holds is “length of days.” This cannot be meant only of this mortal life, although the sense will stand partly good with such interpretation. Wisdom is the mother of abstinence, abstinence is the nurse of health, and good health promotes length of days; whereas voluptuousness and intemperance, as the French proverb has it, dig their own grave with their own teeth. Hence, Wisdom says, “By me thy days shall

be multiplied, and the years of thy life shall be increased." Prov. ix. 11. Obedience to God then tends to long life in this world. "Let thine heart keep my commandments, for length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee." Prov. iii. 1, 2.

But "length of days" for time only, is not the end of the blessing held in God's right hand. God's days extend to eternity. The day of time is short and sharp. "My days have been few and evil." Gen. xlvii. 9. They are few, *short*; they are evil, *sharp*; so that if the day of life be sharp, the comfort is, it is short. Misery is born with life, and with the good, ends with life in this world; but to the wicked, remains in and after death. Like the twins of Hippocrates the misery of the wicked is inseparably connected, in beginning, process, and end. Nevertheless Augustine sweetly sings in his

notes on the thirty-third Psalm, *Semper mali dies in seculo, sed semper boni dies in Domino*, i. e. the world has evil days, but the Lord has always good days. The days of God's right hand have two properties—Clarity, and Eternity.

The day of entering upon the eternal inheritance will be clear and long; that will be the day of glory to the redeemed. There will be no need of the sun there; the glory of God will lighten it. No cloud shall ever throw its veil of obscurity over it. Our being for this glory had a beginning, but shall have no end. God's mercy in providing the inheritance, and the length of its possession, has neither beginning nor end. It is "from everlasting to everlasting." Psa. ciii. 17. Eternity alone can make anything perfect. Nothing short of eternity can make either the joys of

heaven or the miseries of hell perfect. Were all the riches, and honours, and pleasures, and glory of this world ours, and for all time, yet let death but step in, and a stain is marked on them all; they are all at once rendered imperfect! Only, then, can eternity give absolute perfection to joy or sorrow, or anything else. Thus God's days are in kind, clear and cloudless; and in length, eternal.

In this blessing we cannot imitate God. He appoints our days and their continuance. In all our giving we cannot give life or time to ourselves or to others. He is "the Lord and giver of life," and he has "determined our days and the number of our months, and appointed our bounds that we cannot pass." Job xiv. 5. Therefore "all the days of our appointed time we must wait until our change come." Verse 14.

II. GOD'S LEFT HAND BLESSINGS—

“RICHES AND HONOUR.”

I have been short on the long part ; allow me then a little longer on the short part. We have several things to observe. Riches and honour are God's gifts, therefore in themselves not evils. A rich man may be good, a poor man may be wicked. So a rich man may be wicked, and a poor man good. Christ sanctified both poverty and riches in his birth, life, and death. He sanctified poverty in his *birth*, when his presence-chamber was a stable, his cradle a manger, his robes hay and straw ! In his *life*—when he would ride, he had to borrow the colt of an ass ; when he had to pay tribute, he must fish the money out of the sea ; and when he had to repose, it was found, “that the foxes had holes, and

the birds of the air had nests, but the Son of man had not where to lay his head!" In his *death*, where he had neither shroud nor grave, but for both was beholden to another.

In birth, life, and death, then, he sanctified poverty. And so did he sanctify riches. At his birth, he received from the wise men, "gifts, gold, frankincense, and myrrh." In his life he called Zaccheus a wealthy publican; raised Lazarus a wealthy citizen, and like a prince feasted thousands at the same banquet. In his death, he accepted the kindness of Joseph, whom the evangelist Matthew calls "a rich man," and Mark, "an honourable counsellor." Matt. xxvii. 57; Mark xv. 43. He also was honoured by Nicodemus, with his costly unction of "an hundred pounds weight, mixed with myrrh and aloes." John xix. 39. Thus he

sanctified riches in his birth, life and death.

A rich man may be a good man, for wealth is not bound to wickedness; neither is righteousness bound to poverty. One of Cyprian's twelve abuses was *pauper superbus*—a poor proud man. Poverty in itself cannot exclude from heaven, neither can riches of themselves save the soul. "Not my wealth, nor my blood, but my Christianity makes me a noble."* The philosopher's answer to the inquiry as to which he preferred, *wisdom or riches*, is not always the best. He preferred riches for this reason; "I have often," said he, "seen poor wise men at the doors of rich fools, but never have I seen rich fools at the doors of poor wise men." Wealth may be and often is joined with wisdom; and goodness may be

* The saying of Romanus the martyr.

in conjunction with greatness. Good Mary and rich Martha may be sisters; and poor Lazarus and rich Abraham are very near each other in heaven.

Chrysostom discriminates thus on Matt. vi. 24, "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." He observes, "he doth not say ye cannot HAVE God and mammon, but ye cannot *serve* God and mammon." Riches and honour, then, are God's gifts. But objectors may say, if riches and honour are God's gifts, then he gave wicked Ahab his riches, and wicked Haman his honour. Perhaps the objector wishes to know whether his riches and honour come from God or not. The wish is reasonable, and an effort shall be made to give satisfaction. We say, then, that although riches and honour are God's gifts, yet is he not the giver of them to all who are said to possess them. This shall be proved by

certain *test marks*. These marks shall be applied *first* to riches.

The *marks* are—If riches be honestly obtained, justly dispensed, and patiently lost. (1.) If they be *honestly obtained*, then they are the gifts of God. There are many who will have riches on any principle.

They will have them if they have to fish for them in every sea and every sink of pollution. They will angle with Amos's hook; or drag with Habakkuk's net in every available channel; they *will* have riches. Amos iv. 2; Hab. i. 15. But God is not the patron or giver of ill gotten gains. He can bless a man very well without the help of the devil. If riches are drawn from the life blood of the poor by means of extortion, over-reaching, or taking unjust advantage of their ignorance, then they are not of God's giving. It is

easy for a man to become rich who makes his conscience poor. He who will swear, perjure, defraud, bribe, oppress, use and abuse all men and things, and perpetrate any wickedness he can accomplish, heedless of conscience, what riches he may thus accumulate are not God's gifts, but products of his own felonies. "Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house." Hab. ii. 9.

We often think that the wickedness of avarice is evil, only to the injured; but God says it is worse to the injurer's own house. Riches obtained by spoiling others shall spoil their possessor. "Because thou hast spoiled many nations, all the remnant of the people shall spoil thee, and thou shalt be booties unto them." "When thou shalt cease to spoil, thou shalt be spoiled." Isa. xxxiii. 1; Hab. ii. 7, 8.

Like the large and voracious fishes in the sea, as one devours another, instantly another greater devours that devourer. All property so gotten is like quicksilver; it is ever running. It runs from the covetous father to his prodigal son, and perhaps the son will scatter with the muck-fork what the father hath gathered with his muck-rake! No man by honest industry becomes rich suddenly. If my sudden rising must be the sudden fall of others; if my joy must cause them sorrow, and my prosperity must be their adversity; then I had rather be a poor saint than a rich sinner. All honestly obtained riches are God's gifts, but if otherwise obtained they are attended with his curse. "I will curse your blessings, yea, I have cursed them already; ye are cursed with a curse, for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation." Mal. ii. 2; iii. 9.

If riches honestly obtained, be *justly dispensed*, it is another *mark* that they are God's gifts. He to whom God gives riches, makes a return to God of his part, gives man his part, and keeps his own part. He gives God *his part*; God is the first and greatest creditor. It is reason that he who gives all should have part of all, and the *first* part and the *best* part, unless he interdict the offering. And this is right, for it teaches dependence on God, keeps up the knowledge whence temporal blessings flow, teaches self-denial in the most effectual manner, and cultivates the spirit and practice of real benevolence.

God challenges a part as his; but as we are prone to grudge, he asks only a small part. He claims a *tenth* of all we have, and of all our increase. This was Jacob's resolution—"of all thou shalt give me, I will surely give

the *tenth* to thee." Gen. xxviii. 22. It may be said, that this was only a ceremonial arrangement, and that the gospel has no laws for tithes. But without law, and before the law, Jacob gave God his part. His good grandfather acted in the same way with God's priest, Melchisedek; therefore as these illustrious patriarchs performed their duty, in this respect without law, and under nature, it is unnatural to withhold from God his part. We can find no law in the gospel commanding our payment to God's cause, of a precise sum; but we can find a law in that very gospel to condemn for non-payment; therefore, "honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase." Prov. iii. 9.

Our riches have come from God. David acknowledged this when he saw the grand display of benevolence on the

part of the princes and people of Israel toward the erection of the temple.

“For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.”

1 Chron. xxix. 14. The Hebrew reads,

“Of thy hand have we given thee.”

Of all which God's left hand gave them, they with their right hands and liberal hearts returned him a large portion.

When God gives us ten shares with his

left hand, our right hands must be very closely shut, and our hearts be next

door to hardened infidelity, if we refuse to give one part to Him who gives us

ten! But the righteous, if they know

their duty, will give God his part, and man his part also.

We owe duty to each other as well

as to God. We have no ground on

which to believe we are the people of

our Lord Jesus Christ, if we detain

from others what is their due, while it

is in the power of our hand to discharge the obligation. What we owe to others may be either debts or promises. Debt is not a deadly sin when a man has no means, but only when he has no *meaning*, to pay it. God reckons that as done which a man faithfully would, if he could, accomplish. There are some willing to pay part, but not all that they owe. But this *retention* of a part of what they owe, if the dealing is not honest, will prove their *detention* under the curse of God. Acts v. 4, 5. A debt of a mite is still a debt, just as certain as the debt of a million. "He that is unjust in the least, is unjust also in much." Luke xvi. 10. Promises are debts.

If the righteous promise, they will perform if they can. Most men are rich in promises, but poor in performances. The unjust will present *evasions*

as substitutes for performances, or they will state some reserve, or if urged, plead forgetfulness. The truth is, their memories are better than their consciences. Even a Pilate could say, *Quod scripsi scripsi*—"What I have written, I have written." Why cannot a Christian say, *Quod dixi faciam?*—"What I have said, I will do." How is it that the proverb, "*fast find, fast bind,*" has obtained? If confidence could be placed in promises, this adage had not had currency. There is more trust put in the seals appended to written deeds than in words uttered by immortal souls. There is more awe of a judgment from a civil court, than there is of a sentence from the court of heaven! Some will perform their promises according to the rule of reserve they held in their hearts, when they uttered the promise. They will put forth *base*

things for good. The prophet Amos speaks of some who sold "the refuse of their wheat," to pay what they promised. Amos viii. 6. This is the rule with some; they dispose of their basest things, and try thus to appease God and satisfy man. But although the refuse wheat and the refuse wares shall not lie on their hands, the guilt of cheating shall lie on their consciences! Real Christians, however, will withhold no good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of their hands to do it. Prov. iii. 27.

A righteous man will dispose of his riches *justly* by keeping a part *himself*. God allows his own people to keep a portion of his gifts to themselves. "Every man to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to *take his portion*, and to rejoice in his labour;

this is the gift of God." Eccles. v. 19. A man may take from himself this comfort by abusing the gifts of God many ways. He may abuse God, himself, and others, by applying his riches to sustain *superstition*. To support superstition with God's gifts is high ingratitude. This is abusing God with idolatry, self with deception, others with destruction. This conduct is like Israel's, to whom God gave ear-rings and jewels for ornament and comfort, but they turned these gifts into an idol, and thus abused God, corrupted themselves, and carried ruin to thousands! Riches may be employed to minister to *malice*. To feed malice with God's gifts is the depth of wickedness. This is done very often by unnecessary contention of law. Great expense attends these quarrels. Great evils also attend them.

The peace of God and our neighbour's welfare are frequently hereby destroyed. When a man will willingly put out one of his own eyes, to put out two of his neighbour's, it must needs be wicked. Many millions of dollars are thus wickedly spent. To employ one hand thus to beat the other is unnatural. Both hands in law-suits "keep the shell; it is well known who carries off the kernel!" By riot and lust, for fashion and sinful pleasure, God's gifts are often turned against himself. On the tavern, the theatre, on balls and on superfluous dress, and foolish and hurtful amusements, more money is spent than on the cause of God. To this the wicked answer, as in Psalm xii. 14, "Our tongues are our own," &c. Our money is our own, to spend it as we like; our feet are our own, to dance when and with whom we please; and

our eyes, our ears, our hands are our own; and our time is our own, to employ it as it suits us; "who is lord over us?" Alas, those will find one day, that nothing was their own but their sins. All the rest foolishly wasted are God's, for which he "will bring them into judgment." Eccles. xi. 9.

By *miserable niggardliness* to self, in forbearing to live righteously and joyfully on the portion God allows of his own gifts, many make that portion their consumption. The miser who starves himself will starve others. Other vermin feed only themselves, but the miser, the worst of all vermin the earth bears, starves himself, and others of his kind, while his hoards of grain and other goods are employed in feeding thousands of vermin of another kind, called rats and mice.

How can such miserable beings, who

starve themselves, starve others, starve souls out of the bread of life, slander heaven, and belie God with the constant cry of scarcity, ever find an entrance into the kingdom of heaven? O! the millions upon millions of dollars, which by superstition, malice, riot and miserable niggardliness, are kept from the treasury of God! The money thus ruinously employed, or kept locked up, if devoted to the diffusion of vital Christianity, would spread joy and gladness over all the spiritually benighted portions of our world. O the ways which Satan devises to make riches drown men in perdition!

The *third* and last mark to prove that riches are the gifts of God, is if *they be patiently lost*.

When God gives riches to the good, he gives them hearts also to trust in himself; they "trust not, therefore, in

uncertain riches, but in the living God.”

1 Tim. vi. 17. When God takes aught from the righteous, he only recalls his own, but does not take theirs. They know the Lord gave, and that he has taken away. Job i. 21. God being the confidence and supreme good of the righteous, they esteem his favour “better than thousands of silver and of choice gold.” They know that can never be perfectly good in this world which may be lost. But riches may be lost, therefore they are not to be trusted. God in Christ alone is to be trusted, whose mercy the righteous can no more lose than God can lose his mercy. Psa. lxxxiv. 7; Isa. xlv. 17. To the godly, then, riches are never so dear, but they can patiently lose them.

We see it is thus with riches; and so it is with the other left hand gift of God, called *honour*.

God is not the giver of all the honour claimed by those the world admire. He is the author of "every good gift, and every perfect gift." James i. 17. It is true honour which God confers, and they must be the truly good, on whom he will confer this honour. "Them that honour me, I will honour." 1 Sam. ii. 30. True honour among men is found where dignity and desert, blood and virtue meet together. Among fools, dignity without desert is enough; among the wise, desert without dignity is preferred, if they must be separated. Virtue with content is better than promotion and contempt. The manner of rising to dignity is not always of God. The way Richard III., of England, and Pope Alexander VI., came to the crown and to the Popedom, was not of God.

It is not by blood and murder, and

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by selling one's self to the devil, that God will have us rise to dignity. Some strive to rise by making others fall, and while in the attempt, fall themselves, and the others rise; yes, and sometimes they fall into such shame as to rise in infamy for ever! This was dignified Haman's fate. He sought to rise higher, by making Mordecai fall, but in the attempt, Mordecai rose and Haman fell into shame, and rose again *fifty cubits* higher than he ever thought of. Esther vii. 9; and viii. 7. The righteous have dignity and desert, blood and virtue, all met together, and, therefore, true honour. They have dignity; they are the sons of God. They have desert; they are precious, "comparable to fine gold." They have blood; they are brethren to Christ, their elder brother, who redeemed and washed them in his own blood. They have virtue,

by having the spirit and grace of Christ dwelling in them. Here then dignity and desert, blood and virtue, all of the best kind, meet in every true saint; "This honour have all his saints; praise ye the Lord!" Psa. cxlix. 9.

We have two or three short cautions yet on this head, and that mainly for the guidance of the godly.

Let the good take honour in this world if God sends it. Let them not seek it from men, but if they find it while after their lawful business, let them not despise it, else they will be despised for slighting God's gifts. This was the case with Saul. He was seeking his father's asses, but while obeying his father, he lighted on a kingdom. This was his honour, yet he despised it and lost it. If God gives his people honour in this world, let them live worthy of it. The honour God gives

his own they ought to keep securely. Honour cannot be safely trusted in vulgar hands, nor confided to popularity; virtue alone can keep it. Without true virtue, sumptuous tombs and monuments cannot perpetuate honour. Only a noble and Christian life can make honour durable after death. This alone will make to the righteous a sepulchre in every man's heart, and turn every tongue into a pen with which to write their deathless epitaphs.

Thus we see that all riches, honestly obtained, justly dispensed, and patiently lost, together with all true honour, are the gifts of God. This may give satisfaction to those who wish to know if their riches and honour came from God.

We shall now employ a few discriminations on this part of the subject to point out differences. The main dif-

ference between the right and left hand blessings of God is, that he gives real blessings with his left hand, but does not settle them irrespective of reverses in this life, upon either the good or evil. The gift of his right hand being "eternal life," is settled on the good for ever. This is free from all fatal reverses. It is "sure to all the seed." Rom. vi. 23; iv. 16. Again, in the donations of God's left hand, Solomon couples "riches and honour," as if these two for the most part were inseparable companions. "God gives to a man riches and honour." Eccl. vi. 2. Riches and wealth are the stairs by which a man climbs up to dignity and power in this world. They are the oil to keep the lamp of honour burning. Honour is looked upon as a bare robe, if riches do not embroider it with lace and jewels. Riches, on the other hand, form but a

dead carcass of honour, if a soul is not found to quicken it. Fitly, therefore, do riches and honour bear each other company.

But, although there is a double benefit in God's left hand, and only a single one in his right hand, yet does the latter exceed the former even in this life, and in the life to come; exceeds it as far as everlastingness exceeds mortality. But both God's hands are giving. He has, as one observes, *manum plenam, extensam, expansam*—hands full, extended, open. This shows that however much God gives, he has nothing less, and however much we receive, we have no cause to fear diminution in his future giving. From the grand Mediator of our requests, our blessed Saviour, we are assured, if our suits only reach his ear, we shall always receive what we ask, or what we should have asked.

Let us then humbly and gratefully accept God's gifts. Let us take his clothing to clothe us, his fire to warm us, his bread to feed us, his water to quench our thirst, his riches to enable us to answer all lawful claims, and his honour to elevate and give us influence. But let us beware that we return his left hand gifts with our right hand benevolence, and that, with the hand full, stretched out, and open as far as our means will allow; lest by not making a proper response to his goodness to us, his anger withdraw our clothing and leave us naked, his fire burn up our substance, his water sweep it away or drown us, his bread choke us, his riches fly from us, and his honour be transferred from us to others; and we be left in ruin and degradation! It is easy with God, by the turn of the wheel of his providence, to turn all our blessings

upside down; all our wealth, and honour, and comfort into a curse. His true service is our only policy.

Thus far in doctrinal instruction, to open the mind and impress the conscience with the righteousness of God's claim to our benevolence in sustaining every proper object, to the extent of the ability his own gifts confer on us. We shall now look at God's claim upon his own people, as defined and regulated by law. Under the Jewish levitical ritual, the offerings of the Hebrews were of *two* kinds; they were called "gifts and sacrifices." Heb. v. 1. Gifts were offerings where no life was destroyed; sacrifices were offerings wherein the life of the victim offered was taken away. This is the distinction.

I. GIFTS.

1. *Meat-offerings.* — Meat-offerings were always to attend burnt-offerings, and peace-offerings, and sin-offerings, and trespass-offerings. The materials of meat-offerings were fine flour, oil, frankincense, and salt, in prescribed quantities; the sheaf, or omer of barley, at the passover, and the cakes or loaves at pentecost. Lev. ii. 1-16; xv. 15-23.

2. *Drink-offerings.*—These were to attend the meat-offerings. Their parts were equal proportions of oil and wine. Num. xv. 1-16.

3. *Firstlings.*—The first-born, the firstlings of cattle, and the first-fruits of their ground, were all dedicated to God, that his acceptance of them might secure his blessing on all the rest. When the law was first promulgated, the first-born, amounting to twenty-two

thousand two hundred and seventy-three, were divinely ordered to be exchanged for twenty-two thousand levites. The two hundred and seventy-three odd ones were redeemed at five shekels per head. Num. iii. 44—51. Compare verses 39—53.

4. Vast *amounts* in the way of *gifts* were given for the purposes of commemorating certain events, and the consecration of certain persons, houses, and things. The destruction of the first-born of Egypt was commemorated. The priests, levites, tabernacle, temple, and all the sacred furniture were consecrated. Ex. xiii; Num. i. 49; iii. 10; and vii. and viii; 2 Chron. ii. 4; vii. 9; Ezra vi. 16, 17. The Jews dedicated their houses and the walls of their city. Deut. xx. 5; Neh. xii. 27. Joshua dedicated the Gibeonites, and the silver and gold of Jericho. Joshua vi. 19.

The Nazarites consecrated themselves. Num. vi. 13—21.

Many dedicated their money, fields, and cattle to the Lord. Lev. xxvii. 1—27. Part of the spoils taken in battle were dedicated. Num. xxxi. 27—54; 1 Chron. xxvi. 26—28. When Judas Maccabeus purged the temple, he solemnly appointed its dedication to be observed yearly. John x. 22, 23. Many and splendid were the gifts offered on these occasions; and very grand were some of the ceremonies performed.

5. *Tithes*, or tenth parts. God doubtless suggested to the ancient patriarchs his claim to the tenth part of their grain and other products. When Abraham returned from his victory over Chedorlaomer and his allies, he gave to Melchisedek, the priest of the most high God, the tenth part of his spoils.

Gen. xiv. 20. Jacob dedicated to God the tenth part of his gains in Mesopotamia. Gen. xxviii. 22. Multitudes of Greeks, Romans, and other heathen, devoted the tenth part of their income to the service of religion. The measure of manna in the wilderness was a tenth-deal or omer. The Jewish tithes were regulated by divine appointment in the following manner; after the first-fruits, and attendant offerings were dedicated, the tenth of their remaining corn, cattle, &c., was assigned to the Levites. Of this the priests had a tenth part to their share. Of what still remained to the proprietor, another tithe was levied in value, and sent for the service of the tabernacle and temple, and the ministers thereof during their solemn feasts. Another tithe was taken every third year for the Levites, the fatherless, the widows, and the strangers,

to be eaten at home in their cities. The Pharisees tithed their "mint, and anise, and cummin, and rue;" nor did our Lord condemn them for this, but only for neglecting "weightier matters" at the same time. Now, as the patriarchs before the law devoted the tenth part to God, and as the law subsequently regulated this duty as to times, materials, proportion, and quality, it is but reasonable to suppose that Christians under the gospel would voluntarily devote the tenth part *at least* of their property to the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, in sustaining his purposes and instrumentalities in carrying on the salvation of the world.

6. *Money-offerings.* Every male, arrived at manhood, had to give yearly half a shekel for the ransom of his soul. No man, whether rich or poor, gave more, and less could not be accepted.

The shekel was about two shillings and three pence, British. The half of this would be about twenty-eight cents, U. S. currency. Ex. xxx. 12—16; xxxviii. 25—28.

II. SACRIFICES.

An offering to God involving the loss of life, is called *Thusia*, a slain sacrifice. Gen. iv. 10; Heb. xi. 4. Of these sacrifices there were four kinds among the Jews.

1. *The burnt-offering.* This sacrifice consisted of a bullock, a he lamb, or kid; or if the offerer was poor, a turtle dove, or a pigeon. The burnt-offering was the chief oblation. Every burnt-offering, except that of the turtle and pigeon, was attended with a meat and drink-offering. Besides what was voluntary, the Lord required burnt-offerings at various stated times, namely,

at all the daily, weekly, monthly, and annual feasts; and in the different occasional cases of consecration of priests, defilement of Nazarites, leprosies, child-bearing, &c. Lev. i. 1—17; ii. 13; vi. 8—13; and xxii. 19—24; Num. xv. 1—16. Compare with these passages, Exodus xxviii. and xxix.; Lev. xii. xiv.; and xv.; Num. xxviii. and xxix.

2. *Peace-offerings.* By this sacrifice the offerer thanked God for mercies received, paid vows, and sought future favours. It was common for every Hebrew, who was head of a family, to offer a peace-offering at each of the great feasts, i. e., the passover, the pentecost, and the feast of tabernacles. The thank-offerings at the consecration of priests, and at the expiation of the Nazarite's vow, were reckoned among the peace-offerings. Every animal offered, whether male or female, must be

unblemished; and every other offering must be of the best kind required. Lev. iii. 6—11; vii. 11—31; xix. 5—8; xxiii. 20; and Deut. xviii. 3.

3. *The sin-offering.* This sacrifice was diversified in its matter, to point out the different degrees of crime and guilt, and to meet the ability of the offerer. It was offered for the sins of priests, at the consecration of Levites, by private persons, and for the occasional sin of the whole congregation; but especially for sins of ignorance. A bullock, a male or female kid, a lamb, or two turtle doves or young pigeons, as the law prescribed in the nature of the case, were the victims admitted. Lev. iv. 1—35.

4. *The trespass-offering.* It is not easy to distinguish this sacrifice from the sin-offering. Some think they are the same, or that one is included in the

other. But that they were really different, is manifest in the case of the leper, as recorded in Lev. xiv. 10—20; where both are conjoined. The leper's trespass-offering was ordered precisely as the sin-offering. Lev. v. 5—19; vi. 1—7. The trespass-offering atoned for knowledge of touching an unclean thing being concealed, for sacrilege, and for various other offences. All these gifts, sacrifices, and observances, when typically considered, were "shadows of things to come, but the body" or substance to which they pointed, "was Christ." Col. ii. 17. They also set forth the surrender of the saints and their services under the gospel, to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to his church and cause in the world.

SOME QUESTIONS ASKED AND ANSWERED.

By this time the reader will be prepared to ask the following questions: Why did the all-wise Jehovah call for such an immense surrender of persons, property, and time to his service under the law? Why did he impose this heavy yoke upon the neck of the Jewish nation? Why did he not sum the whole up in one tax to each responsible individual, and order payment semi-annually or annually, and no oftener? To the first of these questions we reply: That God called for the immense surrender named, because both under the law and under the gospel, all that both they, and we had, or have, together with our persons and time, are God's property. We are not our own. 1 Cor. vi. 19. It is, therefore, righteous for him to demand, and for us to surrender

cheerfully, the amount of that demand, whenever he makes it. Besides, it establishes the fact that God is our creditor, our constant, *greatest creditor*, to whom we owe the most; and to keep up the knowledge of this, and by this our acquaintance with him in all his ways. He made those demands then, and still makes them upon us, and although not in the same form, yet, to say the least, to the same amount. "Every man as the Lord prospers him so let him give, not grudgingly, or of necessity, but willingly; for the Lord loveth the cheerful giver."

But why did God impose this heavy yoke on the Jewish nation? Acts xv. 10. The answer is plain. It was to teach that nation what his will was; that they should be separate from all other nations—that they should not be allowed a senseless system of will-worship, but have their system of worship

from God; that they might be prepared by such a costly and burdensome yoke, to embrace in the fulness of time the easy yoke of Christ, Matt. xi. 28; and that they were to understand themselves always as God's people. Isa. i. 3.

But why did he not sum the whole up, and divide it into semi-annual or annual payments? He did not do so for various reasons; and those reasons apply as substantially to the support of the cause of God under the Gospel, as they did under the legal economy; the mode of giving only differs. The true reasons of systematically offering gifts and sacrifices under the law, and of systematic benevolence under the Gospel for the support of religion, appear to be—

1. That the expenses of religion are current expenses.
2. That these expenses ought to be

provided for *beforehand*, so that God's cause might not be degraded by running it into debt, and injuring thereby those who advance money on that account, and that religion in its operations might not be crippled, and its character degraded. All the expenses of the Jewish religion, and of building the temple, were provided for beforehand. Those who did not comply with this arrangement were "cursed with a curse." Mal. iii. 9, 10.

In distributing to the poor, the means must be possessed by the donor, before the benefit can be conferred on the recipient. This is God's way in his gifts to us. He holds out a full hand loaded with "riches and honour." It should always be the way of God's people in their gifts to his cause. They should fill the storehouse of the treasury first, then let the work commence and go forward with vigour, and

every expense incurred on account of the Gospel be met, and discharged as it occurs. "Owe no man anything." Rom. xiii. 8. "Provide things honest in the sight of all men." Chapter xii. 17.

3. That a principle of justice might be taught. It is just and proper that every one receiving the benefit of the labours of others should sustain those labours according to his ability. The labours of religion and of propagating the gospel are great and expensive. Religion and the gospel confer the highest and purest benefits upon our world. Every man in the whole world ought, therefore, to sustain religion according to the gospel, and to the extent of his ability. "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts." Hag. ii. 8; 2 Cor. viii. 11, 15.

4. That God is constantly giving to us, and we should therefore constantly be giving to God. This is the reason why it is "more blessed to give than to receive," because it is more blessed to imitate God than any one else. Matt. x. 8; Acts xx. 35.

5. That an abiding sense of the righteousness of God's claim upon the time, substance, service, and persons of his people, might be confirmed in their hearts, and maintained in their practice. Titus iii. 8; ii. 14.

6. That the souls of God's people might never be indurated by the love of money, or of the world. Systematic and constant benevolence accomplishes this. "The liberal soul deviseth liberal things." Isa. xxxii. 8. It is in the nature of moral evil to propagate itself, and it is so in the nature of moral good. Benevolence will increase bene-

volence. What an effectual preventive to heartless covetousness is hearty benevolence!

7. That the young might have the grand example set them by their parents, of real self-denial for the sake of God's cause; and thus be saved from covetousness and "the love of money which is the root of all evil." 1 Tim. vi. 17—19; compare verses, 9, 10.

8. That the practice of constantly, and systematically giving might secure to the giver the blessings of the increase of *property* and of *grace* through Jesus Christ, which God has promised; and thus prove to the world that giving our substance to God in the way he commands, is the way to increase it. Prov. xi. 24—29; Isa. xxxiii. 8; 2 Cor. ix. 7—9; compare verse 6; Gal. vi. 6—10; Heb. vi. 10.

9. That the practice of benevolence

in the spirit of the gospel, might appear, as it really is, God's grand argument to bring the world to believe on and glorify him. "Let your light so shine," &c. Matt. v. 16. But if this argument be carried on in a grudging and irregular manner, it will never produce the effect designed. Therefore benevolence must be systematic as well as constant in its acts. This was clearly the principle of arrangement in regulating the gifts and sacrifices under the law, to meet the ability of the offerer; and also in gathering the manna. The rich must make up for the lack of the poor, but every man must do according to his ability. There was a system, and that system was constantly practised. See Ex. xvi. 16—18; 2 Cor. viii. 11—15.

10. That God's method of benevolence might prove his mercy and love

to man. Giving to objects of benevolence as God has arranged the matter, oppresses no one. He has fixed the amount whether by the law or the gospel, as ability to give affords the means. Under the law every gift and oblation was defined in cost to be equal to the ability of the offerer. Under the gospel it is the same. "It is accepted according to that a man hath." 2 Cor. viii. 12. This arrangement is benevolent, wise, and just, on God's part. No man is bound to give beyond his ability. Every man is morally bound to be benevolent as he has ability. No principle but that of sheer covetousness or infidelity could object to such an arrangement. And this very arrangement of giving would, if acted upon, meet all the demands of the gospel, and of destitution in the world. These reasons sufficiently justify the wisdom

of God, in ordering that system and frequency should be the rules to guide benevolent action; and not so much for each person once or twice in the year. The former way—often and systematically—prevents covetousness, and meets the current ability of the giver, and the current expenses of the cause of God; the latter—*seldom* and in large sums—forms a plea for covetousness and grudging, and besides renders the payments doubtful and precarious, owing to frequent changes in circumstances, and the intervention of death.

CONCLUSIONS ARRIVED AT.

1. God's right hand blessing is "length of days;" this means long life in this world, and eternal life in the next. Psa. xci. 16. In this we cannot imitate God. We cannot give life.

2. God's left hand blessings are "riches and honour."

(1.) Riches and honour are God's gifts. Therefore,

1. A rich man may be a good man, a poor man may be wicked; and a poor man be good, and a rich man wicked.

2. Christ sanctified both riches and poverty in his birth, life and death.

3. Wicked men will have riches if they can on any terms, fair or unfair.

4. The *proofs* that the riches we enjoy are gifts of God, and not the productions of our own felonies, are—if they be *honestly* obtained, *justly* dispensed, and *patiently* lost. My rich Christian readers, examine your hearts here—ask your consciences, Have I honestly obtained my wealth? Do I justly dispense it, by giving God his part, man his part, and by keeping my own part? When losses occur, do I

bear them patiently and bless God? These are solemn questions, and must shortly be solved at the bar of God.

(2.) Riches and honour are the two steps to dignity and power in this world.

1. Only *virtue* can preserve honour. Riches form the embroideries of honour. Honour may exist where riches are not, and riches may be possessed by the *dishonourable*.

2. The true Christian has all the elements which constitute true honour; these are dignity, desert, blood, *virtue*.

3. God's left hand is full of blessings at all times. It is also extended to us, and open.

4. These blessings when given, are not exempted from reverses. Right hand blessings are settled for ever on their recipients. "The gift of God is eternal life."

5. Our true policy toward God is,

therefore, freely to bestow upon his cause the part due to him. To this policy on our part, his promise of abundance to us is *tied*. Prov. iii. 9, 10; Mal. iii. 10. The Christian reader will please to ask his heart these questions—What has been *my* policy toward God? *Have my losses exceeded the part due to God?* if so, why is this? Are there promises of divine protection against temporal losses, if we obey God? There are, or else the reasons of losses to the righteous are given. Psa. xci. 1—12; James v. 11.

(3.) God's claims upon the Jewish church were many and heavy.

1. *Gifts*. Meat-offerings—drink-offerings—firstlings—vast amounts for commemoration and consecration of events, persons, and things—and for the ransom of souls.

2. *Sacrifices*. Burnt-offerings—sin-offerings—and trespass-offerings.

3. *Tithes.* The tenth part. All the foregoing were in addition to the *tenth part* of the clear income. All God's claims on his people were founded on his right to all their persons, all their services, all their substance, and because all were his by the right of sole ownership, and the right of covenant agreement on the people's part.

(4.) All the claims of God are regulated for his people, in amount, according to ability. This is true under both law and gospel. This regulation reaches where there is only ability to give a mite, i. e. the *fourth* part of a farthing, or the sixth of a cent; and when there is no ability at all to give anything, the regulation reaches the *will* to give, if the ability were not possessed. "A man is accepted according to what he hath." But, "first, there must be a willing mind." Therefore ability is the

scriptural measure of benevolent effort. We now give some explanations.

1. As to tithes. No one will deny that the tenth part of our income is at least due to God's cause. It is granted that there is no gospel precept for this. But this alters not the obligation. The first day of the week is the gospel's Sabbath day. The seventh was the Jewish Sabbath day. The day has been changed, but the Sabbath remains from the beginning of the world. It is so with God's claims upon our substance. The manner of giving is not the same by any divine injunction as before the law or under the law, but the measure is the same, namely, the ability of the giver.

All sound expositors are of this mind. Dr. Gouge, of the Westminster Assembly of Divines, believed this doctrine. So did Lord Chief Justice Hale, Dr.

Annesley, Baxter, Howe, Archbishop Tillotson, Bishop Hall, Dr. Owen, Dr. Hammond, Dr. Watts, Dr. Doddridge, the Hon. Robert Boyle, Matthew Henry, and a vast number of others of the highest consideration for learning and piety. My Christian reader, (if he be rich) will now perhaps ask—If this be true, how have I acted? How do I stand before that God to whom I must account for all he gave me in this world? Have I done my duty in this respect? Have I given freely and cheerfully, at least the *tenth* part of all my income to the cause of him who gave his only Son for me?

2. As to God's *returns* to his people for their benevolence to him. The doctrine that God returns in worldly blessings to his people vastly more than they expend upon his cause, and because they thus sacrifice for his sake,

has been denied. This denial is an erroneous conclusion. God does give those who sacrifice for him vastly more of this world's goods than they give to him, and just because they do so. This is the true doctrine. Examine the proofs.

(I.) PROMISES TO THE JEWISH CHURCH.

“And all these blessings shall come upon thee and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the Lord thy God.” “Blessed shalt thou be in the city, in the field, in the fruit of thy body, of thy ground, of thy cattle, of thy kine, of thy sheep, in thy basket, in thy store; when thou comest in, when thou goest out; and in thy storehouses. The Lord shall establish thee, shall make thee plenteous in goods, shall open unto thee his good treasures, the heaven to give thee rain unto thy

land in his season, and bless the work of thine hands; and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and shall not borrow." Deut. xxviii. 2—12. "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase, so shall thy barns be filled with plenty," &c. Prov. iii. 9, 10. "He that hath pity on the poor *lendeth* unto the Lord, and *that* which he hath *given* will the Lord *pay* him again." Prov. xix. 17. "Cast thy bread upon the waters, for thou shalt find it after many days." Eccles. xi. 1. The "waters" mean the nations of the earth. Rev. xvii. 15. "The liberal soul deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand." Isa. xxxii. 8. "Bring ye all the tithes into my storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts; if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you

out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Mal. iii. 10.

This promise is often applied spiritually, but temporal abundance is its meaning. The way of the carnal heart is, "Give us plenty, Lord, and try us, and see if we will not give thee thy tithes." "No," says God, "I am the first; try me, by giving me mine first, and prove me herewith, and then see if I will not make you a return of plenty." This is certainly the spirit of the passage. We must take God on trust. His is the *credit system*. He will be trusted because he can *pay*. But man must pay because he cannot be trusted. "Try me, prove me," &c.

(II.) PROMISES TO THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH.

“Give, and it shall be given unto you; for with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.” Luke vi. 38. “He who soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.” 2 Cor. ix. 6. “Whatsoever a man soweth, that also shall he reap.” Gal. vi. 7. “God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.” Heb. vi. 10. Thus the gospel, as well as the law, makes the promises of plentiful returns from God, *for the life that now is*, inducements to liberality; and as a greater inducement to giving to the cause of God, the gospel adds to the life that now is, “the life that is to come.”

3. As to *threatenings* for withholding

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from God his due, the covetous and grudging are cursed of God, in all respects in which the liberal are blessed. See Deut. xxviii. 15—20.

“There is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty.” Prov. xi. 24. “Will a man rob God? yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse, for ye have robbed me!” Mal. iii. 8, 9. “He that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly.” 2 Cor. ix. 6. “Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap.” Gal. vi. 7. Numerous other passages might be cited to prove this point, that God will bless or curse us in our persons and substance, just as we deport toward him with respect to liberality or penuriousness.

4. As to *motives* in giving to God's

interests in the world; what should be our motives in giving? Our motives should be *free from sinister* considerations. Left hand gifts from man to God are sinister gifts. *Sinister* means left. *Dexter* means right. No gift offered to God with a sinister motive can be accepted. "Let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth." Matt. vi. 3. Dexterity and cleverness, honour and dignity, should be stamped on all we do for God. Nothing should be given to him in a left-handed way.

Our motives should be free from any hope of worldly gain. "Hoping to receive as much again," is the sinner's motive. But to do good, hoping for nothing again, is the true Christian motive. Luke vi. 34, 35.

Our intention should be pure, and rightly directed. God's glory ought to be our grand aim in this and all we do.

1 Cor. x. 31. This was the poor widow's motive, when she put in her two mites to the temple's treasury; and this was *all she had*. Luke xxi. 2. Our blessed Lord takes notice of our motives. verse 5.

5. As to *manner* in giving. Our manner in giving ought to be modest; not to boast, nor trumpet our own fame, which would rank us with hypocrites and Pharisees, who "love glory from men." Matt. vi. 2. Our manner should be cheerful, and not grudging. This happy disposition is very pleasant to God. When we repine, and complain, and grudge, and preface our gifts with a shower of excuses, it grieves his Holy Spirit. "Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him, because that for this thing the Lord thy God shall bless thee," &c. Deut. xv. 10.

“ Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to-morrow I will give, when thou hast it by thee.” Prov. iii. 28. “ God loveth a cheerful giver” 2 Cor. ix. 7.

6. As to *amount*. This is measured by our ability to give. “ Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren who dwelt in Judea.” Acts xi. 29.

7. As to *prudence*. Every man ought to manage his estate or income, so as, if possible, to be provided for the calls of benevolence beforehand. “ Make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready,” &c. 2 Cor. ix. 5. Thus, as it respects Christian benevolence, the gospel directs as to promises, threatenings, motives, manner, amount, and prudence. Nor is there anything

seen to conflict with the conclusion that God will surely make a return in worldly substance, to those who, in the spirit of the gospel, contribute to promote his glory in the world. Yea, so large is the interest which he pays on what is cheerfully laid out for him, in extending the knowledge of Christ, that it often reaches "an hundred fold now, in this time," exclusive of "eternal life in the world to come." Mark x. 29, 30. The real Christian makes his offering, "hoping for nothing again;" but God will not take that offering, so cheerfully given, without returning much more than he receives.

I will close with an application.

I. DISCRIMINATIONS.

Many persons in our churches have thousands of dollars coming in annually, the *tithes* of which would augment the Lord's treasury immensely.

The church is continually increasing in numbers, and therefore in wealth; hence the increase of the treasury of the church ought to be in proportion. Notwithstanding all that is given, our people generally increase in property.

My readers will remember that the Jews paid four tithes annually, exclusive of meat-offerings, drink-offerings, firstlings, numerous voluntary gifts, money-offerings, burnt-offerings, peace-offerings, sin-offerings, and trespass-offerings; "they gave tithes of all they possessed." Luke xviii. 12. Every kind of produce and income was tithed, for all came from God's bounty to them. Our *yoke* is very easy, and our burden very light, compared with theirs. Matt. xi. 29; Acts xv. 10. And our religious blessings and privileges are far "more glorious." 2 Cor. iii. 10. 11.

II. APPEAL TO CONSCIENCE.

My dear reader, as the apostle says, "I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice, for I stand in doubt of you." Gal. iv. 10. I wish to appeal to your conscience now, as if I was pleading face to face with you, with all the solemnity the Bible inspires.

1. You who have \$500 of yearly income, your twentieth part is \$25; your tenth part is \$50. Questions—ask your conscience—Have I only \$500 of yearly gain? Have I more? How much? Am I willing, heartily willing, as in the sight of God, to give to the cause of my glorified Redeemer, who *shed his precious blood for me*, even his *heart's blood*, to secure my eternal life, his full share, according to my full ability? Chris-

tian reader, when you ask your soul these questions, be still, and listen to the answer of conscience.

2. You who have an annual income of \$250, your *twentieth* part is \$12.50, your tenth \$25; put the questions above to *your* soul, and listen to conscience for the answer.

3. You who have yearly \$150, your *twentieth* part is \$7.50, your *tenth* part \$15; urge the same questions to *your* soul, and understand well the answer of conscience.

4. And you who have only \$100 a year coming in, are you willing to give the Lord Jesus his share? Your *twentieth* part is \$5, your *tenth* part \$10. Speak honestly to your soul, are you willing?

Can you trust in a gracious promise from a promising God, and a gracious Providence, and *do it*? Will you do

this *first*, and not after you serve yourself? Will you do this in preference to all other claims? Will you give the claim of the blessed Jesus the first and best place in your heart? If you will, then mark from the moment you begin, and as long as you faithfully perform this duty, this promise—"The Lord shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto." Deut. xxviii. 8.

Look, my worthy reader, at the church of your choice; see how she has "lengthened her cords, and strengthened her stakes," even with limited, very limited means. See if you, that is every responsible church member, would give annually even the *twentieth* part of what God sends you, how soon she would treble her extension, and astonish the world!

The great sin of the professed church

of Christ is wealth-loving. It is not wealth-seeking, but wealth-hoarding, and wealth-loving, which shows the destitution of the true riches. Rev. iii. 17.

Self-denial is a Christian duty most solemnly and impressively taught by our Lord. If we exhibit this virtue for Christ's sake, it is a mark of true discipleship; if we do not, we are not his disciples! Self-denial is a *daily* duty. Where this is wanting, there is no decisive, practical proof given by professors of Christianity, that they are the true followers of Christ. Matt. xvi. 24; Luke ix. 23.

This is an awful decision. It is not, however, more awful than true. Self-denial is the denial of self. The denial of self for Christ's sake is something to be felt, it is something to be experienced. No one denies that professors

of religion possessing wealth *give* a great deal, and amongst denominations none more in the aggregate than the Presbyterian Church. But with all their giving they get *rich*. How comes this? Is self displeased at such a result? No, it is not; it is pleased, and very much so. Does any one, as a consequence of giving to the cause of Christ, grow poorer? Has Christian benevolence ever made a man a bankrupt? Does any one eat a worse dinner, or wear worse clothes, or live in a worse house, because of his Christian liberality? If so, self is denied; if not so, self is not denied; it suffers no pain, takes up no cross, and feels no loss for Christ's sake! Self-denial is a thing to be felt. There is a cross in it, there is suffering in it—there is humility in it—there is love for Christ in it—there is love for his cause in it—there is

sympathy for Christianity in it—there are a great many other things in it to make one happy, and to make one rejoice.

Finally, let me persuade you, my fellow Christians, in closing, to *remember* that you are individually responsible to God for the use you make of his gifts to you. Let me press upon you the fact, that if you are comparatively *poor*, you are not excused from giving according to your ability, because others may possess more wealth; you can give as you are able. *Ability to give is the measure of the quantity.* Remember this! He that has much must fill the measure of his ability. Give then by ability, not by comparison with each other, and O give *heartily*, for “God loveth the cheerful giver.”

Thus act, whatever is your income. And thus acting, pray that God may

accept your *gift* through Jesus Christ, and bless it in its application to the end designed. Then will we shortly see our Boards of Missions, Domestic and Foreign, our Boards of Education and Publication, all our Sabbath-schools, churches and institutions, flourish and bloom, and bear fruit, like the garden of the Lord !

Then shall our beauteous churches rise,
The spreading gospel shine,
While light and glory from the skies
Attest its power divine !

THE END.