

## SYSTEMATIC BENEVOLENCE,

OR

## A PLEA FOR THE LORD'S PORTION OF OUR INCREASE.

RELIGION is like the sheaf in Joseph's dream to which all the sheaves of his brethren bowed and did obeisance. To it all other interests must bend and be subordinate. As the soul is more valuable than the body, as eternity is longer than time, as the claims of God are higher than all other claims, and as the motives to religion are stronger than all other motives, it is plain that religion must be to every one the first and highest interest of life. To secure this pearl of great price it is wisdom to part with all that we have; and when we are in possession of it, we are required to use the same diligence to extend its blessings to others as we used to obtain it ourselves, for we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. It is the duty, then, of every christian to make the spread of Christ's kingdom his highest care, and to make interest, ease, and all other claims bend to this one great duty. No christian liveth to himself, he lives for others. Not only at his convenience, but to the utmost verge of self-denial and self-sacrifice must he employ his talents, influence, and wealth, to bless others.

There is at this time much religion which lacks the spirit of self-denial and self-sacrifice, and it will evidently be found wanting when it is weighed in the proper balances. Our divine Saviour has left us a pattern in this respect which we are required to imitate. He pleased not himself, but though he was rich yet for our sakes he became poor. He did not only empty himself, but he spent himself. The same mind and spirit must be in us, for if we have not the spirit of Christ we are none of his. His disciples had the same spirit, for they left all and followed him, gaining nothing but buffetings, taunts, persecutions, imprisonment and death! The apostle of the gentiles did not only endure all kinds of privations for Christ's sake, but what was gain to him that he counted loss, and his life he counted not dear to himself. The first converts were not only willing to expose their persons to danger and death, but they were ready also to offer up all their substance for the good of others; accordingly they "sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need—neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own!" The same spirit of self-denial and self-sacrifice is exhibited in the martyrs of all ages. They saw their goods confiscated, they



left their homes and fatherland, and when necessary, as it was in thousands of instances, they counted not their lives dear unto themselves. The same spirit is still required of those who will be Christ's disciples.

If the same spirit now existed would the benevolent operations of the Church be so crippled and feeble; would it be necessary for agents to traverse the land in order to arouse the Church to benevolence with stirring appeals; and would the pulpits and the papers of the different benevolent societies need, as they now do, to occupy the attitude of beggars? Certainly not. The treasures of the Lord, like the widow's barrel of meal and cruise of oil, would be filled silently and steadily, as by unseen hands. If a man is bound to offer up his life, if necessary, for the gospel's sake, it is certainly also his duty to offer up his property in the same way if needed. If a christian is bound to employ his influence and resources of mind for the spread of the gospel, he is certainly also required to dispose of his talent of property in the same way if God has prospered him. Taking it as settled then that the possession of property entails responsibility upon its possessor to use it for God, I will endeavour in this article to inquire how that responsibility may be discharged most agreeably to the will of God, and so as to secure the greatest amount of blessings to the individual, the church, and the world.

Let me then, my reader, call your attention to the divine direction of Paul: "AS I HAVE GIVEN ORDER TO THE CHURCHES OF GALATIA, EVEN SO DO YE. UPON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK LET EVERY ONE OF YOU LAY BY HIM IN STORE AS GOD HAS PROSPERED HIM, THAT THERE BE NO GATHERINGS WHEN I COME."

Here then we have a divine direction in regard to benevolent contributions, which it is our duty to understand and follow. The spirit of this direction is, that at stated times money shall be "laid by" intended for benevolent purposes. The sum shall be according "as God has prospered" us. If we have been prospered more, then we shall lay by more, and if less, we shall lay by less, but a certain portion shall be regularly given to the Lord. We shall not throw all our income into one purse, and when a call is made upon us, give what we may, at the time, feel able to give, but we shall keep a purse for the Lord, and according as the Lord has prospered shall the Lord have. This portion of the Lord shall be untouched, for it shall be "laid by in store." This plan shall be pursued, not only by the rich, but by all. "Let every one of you lay by in store, as God hath

prospered him." That this was a favorite plan of the Apostle is evident from the fact that he gave the same "order to the churches of Galatia" as he did to these christians at Corinth. Let it also be remembered that the Apostle does not only recommend this plan but he gives "order." He was authorized, by the Spirit of inspiration by which he wrote, to lay this upon the churches of Galatia and Corinth as a solemn duty. He gives also the reason why this plan ought to be adopted, it would save the trouble of gathering when he came to receive their contributions.

Let us now attend to some considerations which farther exhibit, illustrate, and enforce this duty.

#### I. THE ADOPTION OF THIS PLAN IS DUTY.

This can be shown in various ways; and if it can be shown to be duty this ought to be, to a christian, the strongest consideration, and a sufficient one, to induce him immediately to act upon this plan, in his benevolent contributions. Let us see whether it is duty.

1. We have divine order and *precedent* to enjoin and recommend this as a duty. Paul declares that he "gave order" to the churches of Galatia "to adopt this plan; and when he laid the same plan before the church at Corinth he said "so do ye."

We have also a precedent, the result of divine injunction, in the Jewish church. God required of the Jews not only regular contributions, but a certain fixed portion of their income. It is true that the Jewish law of tythes is not binding on us, but still it stands as a precedent to show that God has a right to require a certain regular portion of our income, and that He has, in the past history of the church, exercised that right. The fact that he claimed it of the Jews shows that it was his due, thus it serves at least as a shadow of duty under the new dispensation. In place of the shadow we ought certainly now to expect substance, and the substance ought certainly not to be less, nor less real than the shadow. Then it was duty, but ought not what was then done as duty, yea, and much more, now be done as privilege.

The regular portion which God required of the Jews was heavy. Few christians now give at the same rate; but why should not a christian give as regularly, and as much, because the love of Christ constrains him, as a Jew did, because the law made it his duty? If it was right for God to require so much of the Jews under a dark and imperfect dispensation, has he not a right to expect more from us to whom he has not only "given more," but "better things?" Certainly the attractions and con-



straints of bleeding Calvary ought to have as much power as the directions and terrors of smoking Sinai!—The Jew *must* give regularly a fixed portion; no hard times could excuse him; no coldness of feeling could justify neglect; he must not wait for a zealous impulse produced by a warm appeal; but he must do it regularly, in season and out of season. Now, ought not a christian to give as regularly from principle and privilege, as a Jew did from law and duty?

2. This is duty because the Bible requires that every talent, as soon as received, shall *immediately* be made to yield for the Lord. In the parable of the talents the Lord finds fault with the man who, instead of employing his talent, hid it in the earth, because He had part in the increase, of which He was robbed by the “wicked and slothful servant.” God then, has share in our increase, for which He looks. Not only is a part of our gain the Lord’s, but part of it is His just *as fast* as we gain it, and it ought so fast to be regularly laid by in store for Him, and appropriated to the promotion of His kingdom.

It is certain that every man, to whom God gives wealth, is bound to give according to his wealth. This is granted. Now, if I am worth ten thousand dollars to day, I am accountable for exactly that sum, but if I am worth five hundred more next week, then I am accountable for five hundred more next week, and duty to God demands of me immediately a gift, in exact proportion, to the increase of my wealth. How then have I a right to suffer my property to go on increasing for a whole year, or perhaps more, still retaining God’s part in my stock, and then if an appeal is made, give only as I may then have, or according as I may, at that time, feel able? Is not this keeping back God’s part of the increase, to increase with it my own capital? May not such a servant be accused, if not of wasting, yet of keeping his Lord’s goods!

This point is made still plainer by analogy. In an intellectual and moral point of view, every man is accountable according to his stock of knowledge. Just as fast, therefore, as his knowledge increases does his accountability increase. If he knows more to day than yesterday, then more is required of him to-day than yesterday. So exactly in regard to the talent of wealth. If a man is, at every point of his life, accountable for what he at that time has, it is evident that he cannot suspend or postpone that accountability any more than he can suspend the duties of one day to crowd them upon the next. If there is want, he is in debt to give without waiting for an appeal to warm his heart. Want is always. The poor are always. The heathen are al-

ways! It is then clearly his duty to give *as fast* as he is prospered of the Lord, with increase beyond his necessary wants. Or shall want continue while he holds the means to relieve it?

Here the question may arise, Is it not the duty of a parent to lay up for his children? It might be ultra to deny this claim entirely. Granting him the right to lay up for his children is not, however, granting him the right to lay up for them, that which God requires to be laid by in store for Him. If the question is whether he may lay up all his income for his children, the answer is clearly—no! A certain portion of his increase he is bound to give to the Lord. A reasonable and proper amount beyond doubt, it is right to keep as capital; it might even be proper for him, under certain circumstances, if it is perfectly clear that he could thereby more largely promote the glory of God, to apply part of his extra income to increase his capital. If one of his children is to be educated and started in business, he has no doubt a right to appropriate a portion of his increase to that purpose; but in all this he must conscientiously remember that he is only steward, that his wealth is the Lord’s, and that he can not go beyond the *actual* wants of himself and children without encroaching upon the Lord’s portion. The Lord’s portion of his increase must always be the prominent concern with him, for it would not do to make even the welfare of his children of greater importance than the welfare of Christ’s kingdom, for he that loves even his child more than Christ cannot be his disciple.

Several solemn and important considerations ought always to be before the mind of the man who is anxious to lay up wealth for his children. First of all he ought to consider well, that it is connected with great danger. The very knowledge that children have, while yet with their parents, that they are treasuring up an inheritance for them, and the expectation of enjoying it when once it shall fall into their hands, is often the beginning of their ruin. How often is it seen that the children of the rich care neither to acquire the knowledge of some useful business, nor to cultivate their mind in useful knowledge. Professors in the different colleges of the land can testify to the fact, that in nine cases out of ten, the children of the rich are careless students. Almost all our wealthiest men, and those most prosperous in business, have arisen out of obscurity and poverty, without entailed capital. The children of the rich stand in an element of fearful temptation, the power of which, few are found able to withstand! “The most rational, the wisest, the best portion



of mankind, belong to that class who possess "neither poverty nor riches."

Wealth heaped on wealth, nor truth nor safety buys;  
The dangers gather as the treasures rise!"

To these facts which observation furnishes of the dangers of wealth may be added the solemn and unerring testimony of the Scriptures. "They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts which drown men in distraction and perdition." How true! "The care of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word." How true again! "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" Blessed Saviour! how little are thy words regarded by those parents, who do not only themselves love wealth, but are keeping back God's part of their increase, to heap the same soul-destroying curse upon their children! Christian parent! the Saviour says, with holy earnestness, that they that have riches shall hardly be saved, and yet you are laying up in order to place your children in these circumstances, where it will be as easy for a camel to go through the eye of a needle as it will be for them to be saved. Oh! how cruel to your children are your tender mercies!

Again: parents who are laying up for their children ought seriously to ponder the fact that these children may not be proper stewards to receive their wealth in trust. The parent is not sure that his children will be disposed to use the wealth which they inherit for the Lord; on the contrary, there is a strong probability that the Lord may be less remembered in it by them than he was by the parent while it was still in his hands. If this is foreseen by Providence the parent will either not succeed in transmitting it into their hands, or if he does, it will not long remain there. The eye of God is on it, for it is his, and it must promote his glory. The father is opposing Providence, or at least he fails to see his will, in hoarding it for them, but God will succeed, in spite of his caution, prudence, or dulness, to get it into the hands of proper stewards. To effect this He may perhaps even find it necessary to make the wrath of man to praise Him! Thus—the children, by the very means of entailed wealth, may become high minded, profligate and wicked, as has a thousand times been the case, and it will soon be squandered; but while it is squandering the hand of God is on it. To the parent who lays by the Lord's part of the increase, and the children who are first made profligate by it and then squander it, the words of the wise man have a fearful application: "A

man's heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps." (Prov. xvi: 9) The parent may "devise" and plan the circumstances into which he intends to place his children, and to this end he may at death by will entail that upon them which in life he should have laid by him in store for the Lord, but God has a "*will*" too! "There are many devices in a man's heart; nevertheless the counsel of the Lord, that shall stand!" It is not a man's will, or any thing that his will can entail, that can make his children rich. "The Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich." (1 Sam. ii: 7) Let no one expect to make his children rich, by hoarding for them the Lord's part of the increase. Experience shows abundantly that very often it does not remain with them, and when it does, it is to them a curse instead of a blessing. That ill-gotten wealth—and that which is kept back from the Lord is certainly ill-gotten—does not pass to the third generation, has long ago become a common proverb.

3. This duty will become farther clear, when we consider every christian as a *steward* for God. So he is represented in the Bible. A steward is one who superintends the business and property of another. He does not own the property over which he presides, he has only that which is allowed him of the owner. He has evidently no right whatever to hoard up, or appropriate to himself the income; but as fast as it comes in, it is his for whom he is steward. God is the householder, for whom all men are stewards. The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof. We have our living, and he has the increase. What we need he kindly grants us as our wages, but what we do not need is not ours, and we must not keep it back, for "will a man rob God!"

It is required of a steward that he be found faithful, not only in presiding over the property of his master, but in regularly presenting him with the increase of his stewardship; but could a steward be considered faithful who would hoard up, or apply to his own use, the regular income, and give to his master such portions, and at such times, as he felt disposed, without any regularity. Yet this is the common way in which God is served by his stewards. Let such beware lest God take from them the stewardship, and pronounce them with righteous indignation wicked, slothful and unprofitable servants.

II. Even if it could not be shown from positive injunction to be duty, still if the plan is *IN ITSELF INNOCENT* and involves no violation of clear duty, and can be shown to be a wise plan to do good, we would be bound to adopt it. We are to be wise as serpents to do good, provided only that our wise plans are at



the same time harmless as the dove. God finds fault with the children of light, because they are not as wise in their generation to lay plans as the children of this world. God has endowed us with wisdom, that we may be wise to win souls and to do good. That this plan is innocent, is evident from the fact that the Apostle Paul recommends it, and ordered the churches of Galatia and Corinth to adopt it. That point then is settled. Now it only remains to show that it is wise to do good, and adapted to the end which benevolence seeks to reach.

This is a wise plan, because in this way any christian is enabled to give more, and feel it less, than if he give only from impulse produced by direct appeals. The man who pays a few cents each day for tobacco considers it as nothing, he scarcely feels the amount, but what a considerable sum does the aggregate make at the year's end. Families send a few cents, here and there, to shops and stores daily, for small articles, and they do not feel that it is of any consequence, but if an account were kept they would be astonished how it would run up in a year. So if a man will lay by him in store, but a small part of his income when he receives it, he would not much miss the amount, and yet at the end of the year he would find with joy that it far overran what he was enabled ordinarily to give by irregular impulse.

The plan would also have a tendency to check useless squandering of money among professing christians. To squander our income is just as much misapplying it, as it is to hoard it. This is at the present day a crying sin among professing christians. How much of what may be denominated "loose change" is wantonly spent on luxuries, to satisfy appetites that are self-created, and that grow only more hungry by being fed. If this plan were adopted, there would at every presenting temptation of this kind be a conflict excited in the mind. The question would be, whether a foolish appetite or religious benevolence has the strongest claims upon a christian's loose change. Thus habits of self-denial would gradually be formed, which is one of the first, the plainest, and most important duties of one who would follow Jesus. For this there is great need; for where is the spirit of self-denial? Do most of our wealthy christians deny themselves of any thing? Do they not procure all that their hearts can wish in the way of personal luxury and domestic convenience and comfort?—yea, and much is found both upon their persons, and in their dwellings, that is not even a convenience, but rather a burden and a care! But if a treasury of the Lord were thus kept open, would not conscience sometimes insist upon retrench-

ments and self-denials, and direct into the treasury what otherwise finds its way into the great world-market, where all the little self-created and imaginary wants of men are supplied?

By this plan too, the treasures of the church would be regularly and steadily replenished, and her operations would not be so fluctuating and uncertain. The expense of employing agents, and the unpleasant business of continual solicitation on the part of ministers and religious papers, would all be set aside. A fountain of benevolent resources would be opened up, the stream of which, like the waters of Shiloah, would go softly, but the heritage of God would smile in its course, and this desolate world of wants and woes, would be like a garden which the Lord doth water.

The benefits of this plan of regular contributions can be still more fully seen, when we look at the operations of the same mode, in substance, as it is employed in the state to replenish its resources. In the state, every individual is required to give regularly a certain sum according to his income. And what efficiency is here seen! What resources are at hand! What astonishing aggregates are raised! Its capitals are built, its national councils are supported at heavy expense; its officers are richly paid; its internal improvements are energetically carried forward; armories are built; navies are supplied with ships at great expense; wars are carried on, at the expense of millions on millions; penitentiaries, prisons, almshouses and asylums are erected, and a thousand nameless expenses are met, and yet plentiful resources are always at hand! Now, if the love of country will induce men to submit to such taxation, ought not the love of Christ and of souls have an effect still stronger. If the benefits of having a well-supported government are enough to recompense men to make such contributions, ought not the desire to have the enterprises of the church efficiently carried forward be stronger still; and if the amount is so easily gotten by regular contributions, why ought not the children of light, in this respect, be as wise as the children of this world? The church stands under heavier responsibilities, and has higher hopes to inspire to duty, and yet in the spirit of enterprise, she falls far short of the state! What is wrong? Has not the church forgotten the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich?

III. All ANALOGY proclaims the wisdom of this plan of regular benevolence, and is loud in urging to its adoption, both as a blessing to himself and to those whom he wishes to benefit by



his gifts. A spring that has a regular outlet has the purest and the healthiest water. A tree that is regularly pruned will be itself most flourishing and bear the best fruit. Machinery that is regularly and temperately used will be better, work better, need less repair, and require less expense, than that which is often stopped for a time only to run faster when it is started again. The physical system of man is healthiest and most efficient, when its energies are regularly replenished with nourishment and moved by exercise. Irregular and intemperate exercise or food are alike injurious to the body and the mind. The strength of the black-smith's arm is increased, not by laying up and saving its strength, but by a regular application of it. So it is in nature, and so it is also in grace. Rust is the consequence of hoarding silver and gold, and just so, rust and stagnation of spirit is the consequence of hoarding the resources of benevolence with which God has blest us. Coin is kept bright by being used, and it is just so with our benevolent affections. The intellectual well-being of the mind depends upon its stores being regularly put to use. By communicating regularly to others, our own stock of knowledge is increased. To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance, from him that hath not shall be taken even that which he hath.

Under this view, those paradoxical passages in Proverbs have strong and beautiful meaning. "There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches" (13: 7). "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself." (11: 24-26) This also explains "the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive."

The requirement which God made of the Jews to give regularly a fixed portion of their increase, was founded upon this principle—that regular giving is good for the giver. He required regular gifts of the Jews, not because He had absolute need of them, but because He knew it would have a good influence on them. The law ceremonial as well as moral, was disciplinary a schoolmaster to correct them, and to prepare them for coming blessings. Nothing can be plainer than that all God's requirements were designed for their good. His laws are laid in wisdom, and in complete adaptation to the nature and wants of man. He knew that requiring a certain regular portion of their increase, would restrain them from cultivating too strong a desire for gain, and make them feel at the same time that what

they had was only lent. Why should it not be so still? It is so. God could carry on the triumphs of his cross without the regular contributions of his people, but He makes this demand of them in love; to kill the aspirations of avarice, and to keep the benevolent fountains of the heart regularly and constantly open.

While this plan of regular giving is thus intended and adapted to bless the giver himself, it is no less adapted to bless those who share his regular contributions. It is a great advantage to the different enterprises of the church to have regular sources of supplies; and whenever these sources are irregular and spasmodic, more or less injury is sustained. The laws of life, in a healthy state, are always regular; whenever any action of an abrupt and phenomenal character presents itself, it is always a sign of derangement. So also in the law of the life of grace—for grace too is life, and is unfolded best according to the regular operations of life. The season in which the earth is blest with regular night-dews, and temperate but frequent showers, will always be more fruitful than a season of heavy deluging rain and intervening drought.

IV. One that gives regularly according to this plan gives from PRINCIPLE and a SENSE OF DUTY, and not from mere impulse of feeling. Those acts are always more valuable to the subject himself and to the world, which rest upon steady principle, than those which are the result of a momentary and abrupt impulse of excitement. A person, for instance, may attend a missionary meeting, where the forlorn case of the heathen is exhibited in glowing eloquence, and if he is a person of peculiar warmth of temperament he may be induced to give or pledge himself for a sum, which in his calm moments he will see was not in proportion to his means. He will therefore have to condemn his conduct, which is very injurious to his benevolent feelings. It is a true moral evil, when the feelings are thus made to be, or suffered to become, a trap for judgment, reason, and conscience. It is required of man to give *according* to his ability, and not *beyond* it; if he goes beyond his means he errs and sins as much as if he does not come up to them. That is the most acceptable gift—and indeed the only one truly acceptable—which is in exact proportion to the increase with which God has prospered us. A man's income may allow him to give a certain sum each year, where circumstances at the time when an appeal is made to him, would not allow him to give as much. This difficulty too, is prevented if he lays it down as a principle of duty to give a certain fixed and regular portion of his income,



and then conscientiously lays it by in store for the Lord. Religious benevolence at the present day lacks that steadiness which is instant in season and out of season, and the great cause is that our mode of making benevolent contributions rests on impulse and not on steady principle.

If giving were done from principle, the motive would not so often be wrong. There would be less of alms-giving before men, and less temptation to do it to be seen of men. It would destroy also the unholy system of rivalry in giving, so often resorted to in public collections. It would keep before the mind a continual conviction of duty, as well as a delightful sense of privilege. Thus the exercise of the benevolent affections being regular and unobtrusive, would have about them more of that loveliness, which while it blesses seeks its reward from the consciousness of having done a good deed, rather than from the praise of men. Thus silently but refreshing, like the dew, would gifts fall into the habitations of want. The blessing clearly seen, the cause of it secret! Like in meadows are often seen—

“rills that slip  
In matted grass, that with a livelier green  
Betrays the secret of their silent course.”

The bruised reed would be bound up by an unseen hand, and the smoking flax be fanned into a flame by a secret breath. In the lonely dwellings of want and wo, there would be joy and singing, where no trumpet of a passing benefactor was ever heard. What a lovely imitation would we thus have of the benevolence of Him who, scattered blessings in His way wherever He went, and yet did not cry nor lift up His voice in the street!

V. The man who adopts this plan, can PURSUE HIS BUSINESS WITH ZEAL, and yet WITH A GOOD CONSCIENCE. One who pursues his business merely for gain, must have, at times, more or less distress of conscience. There must ever be something of reproach before a man who toils for hoarding. It is impossible that it should not at times seem even to him a little business; but when a man adopts this plan, he can be diligent in the pursuit of increase, and yet he can do all literally, and with the sweetest propriety, to the glory of God. A high and holy object will be before him at every stroke of the hammer, and at every profitable purchase or sale. What he wins thus, by lawful economy, is so much won out of the world to be now certainly devoted to God.

He would labor also with a recompense of great reward before

him, which can inspire him to diligence in business, as no other motive can inspire. He who labors, knowing that the fruit of his toils must end at farthest in the grave, labors under cold encouragement. Not so he who knows that his works will follow him with their blessed consequences beyond this life. On the labors of such a man, too, rest the smiles of God; he need not fear that a curse is slumbering in his basket and store, to wake at some time with fearful fury upon him or his children. He honors the Lord with his substance and with the *first-fruits* of ALL his *increase*—mark the language, it plainly implies that he is to give regularly to the Lord as he is prospered—so shall his barns be filled with plenty (Prov. iii: 9-10). Besides all this the idea of being a regular fountain of supplies to some post of want in God's kingdom, can stimulate and sweeten toil, and bless the heart with a reward, which far surpasses any worldly luxury.

VI. Without adopting this plan it is impossible to escape the SIN OF HOARDING, which is so severely forbidden in the sacred scriptures. The rust of the treasures of such as hoard, shall be a witness against them in the last days.

We have already seen that as fast as a man's wealth increases, so fast a part is due to God, and ought *immediately* to be laid by in store for Him. If this is retained, it shows dishonesty towards God, an inordinate love of gain, a callous heart in regard to the wants of others, a want of trust in the providence of God for the future, against the wants of which he seeks to prepare by the wicked prudence of hoarding. This all is wicked, and God will punish it. Especially does He love an implicit trust in Him. It is reasonable to expect that His disapprobation must rest on him, who endeavors by hoarding to secure himself against future want, instead of trusting God and taking no thought for to-morrow. How foolishly wicked is it, to burden the present with the cares of the future, and to seek to secure supplies for us and our children against coming days, when we know not whether any of us shall live to see them! Has not the Saviour said, Sufficient to each day is the evil thereof; why then crowd future cares which may never come, upon the present, which has cares and evils sufficient of its own.

That God is displeased with such faithless people is shown, not only by scripture, but by observation and experience. Losses which persons often sustain prove that God is displeased with the use they make of their property. God's hand is in these losses; He takes from them a part of their property, because they did not make a proper use of it. Losses may be correctly defined *God laying His hand upon dead capital*. That God who



numbers the hairs of our head, and causes one to fall when there are too many, presides also over all our property, and takes that part of it away which is not in proper use.

God exercises over wealth, as over all other resources, a particular providence, and directs it to the place where it will do the most good. Whenever, therefore He sees dead stock hoarded, which the holder as steward will not be prevailed upon to put to usury, He directs His providence to turn it into another channel. Thus the one talent which the wicked and slothful servant had hid in the earth, was directed to be taken from him and given to the one who had five talents, because there it would be in hands that had proved themselves worthy of such a trust. To him that hath, and is faithful over it, shall be given that which is taken, by the providence of God, from him that had, but was not diligent to increase it. This taking away is done in various ways; often by breaks and failures, by which wealth is made to change hands, until it gets into the hands of a good steward. "The wealth of the wicked is laid up for the just" (Prov. 13: 22). It may thus even be taken out of their hands by wicked persons, and by dishonest means, but God presides over it, and while He punishes the wicked who do it, He makes their wrath to praise him.

"From seeming evil still educing good."

An instance will illustrate this. A man in one of the middle counties of Pennsylvania owned a farm, and four thousand dollars besides, which he had loaned out. He was miserly, for although he had no heirs, yet he gave nothing to benevolent purposes. He was at one time called upon by a person who was collecting money to liquidate a debt on a church, which had been erected in one of the villages in the county. He gave nothing. A short time after the man to whom he had lent the four thousand dollars failed, and all was gone! Was this chance? There was in the same county a man who was quite benevolent. He was in the habit of giving all he could give of his increase, to the Lord. He had for a long time eight hundred dollars in the same man's hands, by whose failure the other man lost four thousand. This was not dead stock, for the Lord received his portion of the increase. The failure was quite unexpected to all, yet strange to tell, several months before it took place, these eight hundred dollars, without any design on his part, without any suspicion of the break, and by a peculiar train of circumstances, were transferred into other hands and were safe. Was this chance? No! If we could see the secret history of providences, we could no doubt find many similar cases.

When Abraham journeyed from Chaldea to Canaan, he took all his substance with him, and he was "very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold;" and though he travelled among the Canaanites and Perizzites, yet his property was safely preserved. May not the reason be sought in the fact, afterwards mentioned, that he gave tythes of all that he had, and refused to take even a thread or a shoe-latchet which was not justly his own. Lot, who sought so ardently for wealth, and who settled in the wicked city of Sodom from pecuniary considerations, was robbed of all he had by some marauding chiefs who invaded the land, and would perhaps never have regained it, had it not been that Abraham interfered, who pursued the robbers, and brought back the goods of Lot, his brother's son!

We have seen how the providence of God, makes wealth, which is dead stock, change hands; but this is not the only way by which He takes it out of their hands. If dead stock is in the hands of any of God's people, and He sees that it hardens their hearts, as such wealth always does, He may, instead of passing it into other hands, permit it to be entirely destroyed. This may be done by flood or fire, by blight upon the field or pestilence among the cattle, and in various other ways, which are called by the thoughtless and faithless world accidents or misfortunes. If a man loses any property, in such a way that it is entirely destroyed, and is afterwards of no use to any one, as when a horse dies, barn burns, or ship sinks, it may be called *God demolishing men's idols!* For "shall there be evil in the city, and the Lord hath not done it." This is God's mode of taking reprisals of them that have robbed him, or kept back his part of the increase. In this way the miserly savings of years, often go in a moment. Riches literally take unto themselves wings, and fly away as an eagle towards heaven;—they take the direction of the voice which called them out of the hands of their unfaithful possessors! Let any man take a correct account of the losses of this kind, which he sustains in a year, and he will find that it is as large a tax, as if he laid by him in store regularly a considerable portion of his increase for God.

In conclusion, let me urge you, by keeping your heart and hands open in regular benevolence, to secure yourself against the hardening power of wealth. Still water will gradually and silently gather a sediment in the bottom, by which the whole will be made stagnant and foul. Be alarmed, for your soul is in danger! Not in vain did the Saviour say, how hardly shall they that have riches be saved. Not in vain did Solomon say, "Labor not to be rich!" With what lonely regret, and with what



deep significance, 'does Paul say, "Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world!" Lord save thy people from the "deceitfulness of riches!"

It is often said that riches harden the heart, but the declaration proves only a powerless cant phrase, unless we look at the reason why it hardens, and at the process by which this hardening is carried on. Yet it is plain on close reflection. The possession of wealth has a tendency to excite in the mind of its possessor a spirit of independence, which will soon degenerate into self-reliance and pride. It places him in a position where he may to some extent lord it over others; he is apt to feel that, in his circumstances, he stands over and above others, and this is something which the natural man, and even in the christian the remains of the natural man, loves. Here then it has a direct tendency to cultivate a spirit in direct opposition to the christian spirit—independence, self-reliance, and pride. Thus, a man as he increases in wealth is apt to lose gradually that sweet humility, that delightful sense of direct dependence upon God's providential care, and that daily implicit trust in Him from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift, which so much endears to the heart a kind heavenly Father. The man comparatively poor sits daily with childlike dependence at his father's table, and receives his bread directly from His hand, while the rich man eats in the house of a steward, getting all his mercies second-handed. From this sweet filial feeling every accession of wealth is a cold remove.

More evident still is the fact, that as wealth increases, cares also increase to the possessor. His attention is called to different points often at the same time. His business becomes more and more complex and intricate. At one point his property is exposed to loss in unfaithful hands; at another by the ebb of trade; at another, part of his stock is going to waste for want of attention; at another still, there is dead stock for want of moving. He has, it is true, his stewards, foremen, and clerks; but men are selfish and often unfaithful, so that he must still have an eye over all. Thus his spirit is divided, restless, and absorbed. In the evening, when he would give his last thoughts to God, the vexations of the day come plodding home *in mass* to be the companions of his fireside, and to haunt his pillow. At night "dreams come through the multitude of business," and his restless spirit enjoys not even in sleep a respite from care. In the morning, when he would send his first thoughts out to God, they are soon entangled in the webs of business, which are in a moment spun around him. He rises a slave!—to be held

again, under the task not of one but of many masters! Gradually the cultivation of his heart is neglected entirely, or made a secondary matter; his office of priest in the family is either laid aside or attended to in a cold, hasty, and distracted manner. In short, the spirit of the world has invaded first his own heart, then his closet, and last but worst of all, the sacred retirement of the family circle, where his children are bound in the spirit of gain to be offered as willing victims on the altar of Mammon.

Let the consequences be pondered. Oh that the following sentence, and the sentiment, true as God himself, which it contains, were written upon the heart of every rich man's heart, in letters of more fearful fire than those which once recorded Belshazzar's doom upon his palace walls:

THE MORE WEALTH A MAN GETS, THE MORE ARE HIS RESPONSIBILITIES INCREASED: THE MORE WEALTH A MAN GETS, THE LESS DOES HE BECOME QUALIFIED AND DISPOSED TO DISCHARGE THESE RESPONSIBILITIES!

Terrible and alarming condition! Who then, that is rich can be saved? Is there no remedy. None, except that which will keep us from getting unduly rich. Is it asked how this can be done? We answer, *as your wealth increases, so let the Lord's portion increase*, which you regularly lay by in store for Him.

Lancaster.

H. H.