

## SYSTEMATIC BENEVOLENCE.

(The General Assembly, on the 12th June, appointed a Committee on Systematic Benevolence to take such measures as they may think best to attain the object contemplated, and particularly to prepare a pastoral letter on the subject, to be read from all the pulpits of the Church. The letter prepared by the Committee is subjoined. Ministers or Sessions wishing copies for distribution may obtain them by application to Rev. W. Reid, Toronto.)

DEAR BRETHREN,—The General Assembly of our Church, at its late Session in Toronto, appointed a committee to consider and bring before all our congregations the subject of systematic benevolence. In compliance with their instructions we ask your attention to a few thoughts on this important matter.

The duty of giving of our substance for religious and charitable objects is one recognized by all Christians, but how to give, or to what extent, is not well understood, and very few give according to any rule or system.

The great field for Christian effort is daily enlarging. It is estimated that about one thousand millions of our race are perishing without the knowledge of Christ and his salvation. All nations are crying "come over and help us." While there is a vast amount of wealth in the hands of Christians, which ought to be consecrated to the cause of God, many religious and benevolent schemes are allowed to fail for want of pecuniary support. We should remember that the earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof. He saith "The silver is mine, the gold also is mine." Throughout the Scriptures, giving to the Lord's cause is spoken of as a part of religion. The first recorded act of worship to the infant Saviour was rendered in "gold, frankincense and myrrh."

The apostle James tells us that "pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their afflictions."

1. It is the duty of *all* to give. "Let every one of you lay by him in store." Jesus commended the conduct of the poor widow, who gave only a farthing into the treasury of the Lord, and said, comparing it with the munificent gifts of the wealthy, "She hath cast in more than they all." "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver."

2. We are required to give in proportion to our income or ability, "As the Lord hath prospered you."

There is no positive rule laid down in Scripture as to the proportion we are expected to lay aside, much being left to our own consciences; but we infer, from the teaching of inspiration, that a tenth is the least that Christians should give. When Abraham, in returning from the slaughter of the kings, met Melchisedek, "he gave him tithes of all." Jacob, at Bethel, on his way to Padan-aram, vowed, "of all Thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee." In Leviticus xxvii. 30th we read "All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree is the Lord's; it is wholly unto the Lord." Malachi iii., 10, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse." The tenth is surely not too much to give to Him who gives us all we have, and who "so loved the world that He gave his only begotten son" for us. Many ought to give a much larger proportion. We should remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." There are many encouragements in the Word of God to the proper performance of this duty. "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase; so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat