

of their means for the support and spread of the Gospel, and for the relief of the wants of the poor of the flock. One would think that a duty having such holy incentives to its proper performance could be in no danger of degenerating into a formality, especially since it is one of those duties particularly specified in the vows taken by all who make a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ. Nor is this all.

Early in the history of the Church, that man and woman who agreed together "to keep back part of the price of the land" were smitten with death; being driven away in their wickedness, as a warning to those who should follow after.

Experience, however, that stern monitor, clearly demonstrates from week to week, and from year to year, not only that there is danger of formality in this regard, but that lifeless form is almost all that is now left of what was once so full of life and vigour, that under its influence men and women sold their possessions and brought the price of them to the Apostles' feet, no man counting aught that he possessed his own, the love of Christ constraining them.

"He that giveth, let him do it with simplicity;" in the margin it is "liberally." It cannot be that any very considerable proportion of church members now-a-days ever carefully weigh the importance of this duty, or its relation to the prosperity of the Church, or that they meditate much on their own vow after it has been entered into. Fewer still there are, who regard it in such a manner and degree as that by it they regulate their industry, their expenditure, and their liberality, though on a little reflection it must manifestly appear that such should be the case. We have no right to expect a *blessed* increase without industry, and if we expend lavishly upon ourselves, upon trifles, or, as the Apostle James expresses it, "Consume it upon your lusts," liberality in such a case, if it exists at all, must necessarily be very limited. The Christian lives by rule, not by accident, by impulse, or caprice.

One of the opportunities for the exercise of this duty in all our congregations is the collection taken up at the time of public worship, and, let it be observed, always before the benediction is pronounced, hence manifestly a part of the public worship. These collections are sometimes, ostensibly at least, for the poor. Many worshippers, alas! very many, manifest that their interest in and sympathy with the poor, not one poor person, but *the poor*, amounts in a pecuniary point of view, to one cent; or, if there be two collections in the day—two cents in the week, provided they be regular in their attendance. His income may be \$5 a week, or \$10, or \$20, or more, it matters not; when the plate comes around he gives one cent. He may be hoarding up money, or he may be living above his means, it matters not, he gives the stereotyped collection; *one cent*. One cent has become so orthodox a contribution on such occasions, that I have heard of one who, on discovering that he had given a quarter of a dollar when he supposed he had given a cent, declared that he would not give anything for the next twenty-four collections.

The congregation may just now have united in singing such high and holy resolutions as,

"I'll of salvation take the cup, on God's name will I call,  
I'll pay my vows now to the Lord, before His people all;"

the collection is taken up, one cent is deposited, and thus this much of the vow is paid to the Lord before all his people. Is this worship? Is it the solemnity of paying a vow?

On other occasions there are what are called "special collections," for missions, for building a house of worship, or such like. On these occasions one would naturally expect something like giving from principle—conscientious giving. But here again it is evident that conscience is not consulted—that principle is never thought of, for still the convenient contribution *one cent* satisfies all demands.