

Papers on Presbyterian Topics.

GOD'S RULE FOR GIVING.

BY THE EDITOR.

It is one of the strange and startling facts of our day, that there are so few Protestant Churches that can boast of a sound and scriptural system of finance. Each Church has a system of doctrine, and a system of government, which it professes to find somewhere in the Bible, but where is the Church that ventures to assert that its system of raising money is founded on Divine authority? The fact is, that the great and good men who reformed the Church in the sixteenth century were so engrossed with illustrating and defending the fundamental articles of our common faith, the weightier matters of the law, such as Justification and Regeneration and Sanctification, that they were led to depreciate the positive ordinances of Christianity, such as the Sabbath, and more especially systematic beneficence, as dealing with money which they knew to be the root of many of the evils from which they laboured to deliver the Church. It is only lately and especially in connection with the call to extended missionary work, that the voluntary churches of Britain and America (roused also by the appeals and expositions of such men as Rev. Mr. Harris, Rev. Mr. Ross, and Rev. W. Arthur, the modern apostles of systematic benevolence) have turned to the Word of God for light on the relation in which gold stands to the gospel. This great truth is now therefore beginning to assert itself very generally (a new era for Protestantism) the truth, viz: that, in the Bible Christians can find, not only a complete system of doctrine, and a definite system of government, but also a *clear and comprehensive system of finance.*

EDEN.

It would be strange if God, who has fixed so definitely the proportion of time, should leave indefinite the proportion of substance. That some portion of our substance is demanded, is clear from the way God fenced in one tree in the Garden of Eden as belonging to Himself. One tree belonged to the Lord of the garden. It stood for God as evidence of His lordship over this earth; and to man it stood as evidence of his vassalage to his Creator and God. Unless God was prepared to abrogate His sovereignty over the earth and man, there must needs be some visible token of His claim, some share assigned to Him of the produce of Eden. For man to touch that tree was therefore not only to do a thing forbidden, but to rob God. And just as the Sabbath was enjoined on man after his expulsion from paradise, so also did God continue to claim a certain share of man's substance, as is clear from the words used in regard to Abel's worship: "He brought of the firstling of his flock." Why firstling? And what is the precise idea conveyed here? By firstlings, Deut. xiv. 23, compared with Num. xviii. 17, are meant tithes