

Many say, when such an example is imitated, "that is *irrational*, if not *fanatical*." We leave the sneer to be rebuked by Him who has had the poor widow's self-denial entered with His approval upon the pages of the sacred Oracles.

Let us remember, that, in the Divine judgment, our charities are estimated, not by the amount which we give, but by our *ability* to give. Thus did our Saviour measure the charities cast into the treasury of the Temple, on the occasion just mentioned. Hence, if we could look into the book of God's reckoning, we should find that his entries of charitable offerings differ widely from those found in the book of man's reckoning. It would be discovered that many of the names standing at the head of the page in that of *man's*, are at the bottom in that of *God's*. It would be seen that many of the poorest of earth have given more than the richest—judged by the standard of Him who accepts "according to that a man hath."

But there is another important feature of our benefactions, by which the estimate of Heaven respecting them is regulated. We refer to the amount of *self-denial* in which those benefactions are made. The poor widow, whose record we have noticed, gave more than the rich, because she *denied* herself in giving. The rich gave from their abundance; she, from her poverty. They were subjected to no inconvenience; they relinquished not a single comfort, nor curtailed a single luxury in giving. But the widow's gift cost much, for it was "even all her *living*." She had *little* to give, but how much of the Christly spirit of *self-denial* went with it.

How is it with our offerings when measured by the amount of our self-denial? Are they not *very cheap*—cheap to us—and consequently cheap in the *Divine estimation*? We scarcely sacrifice unnecessary comforts, to say nothing of real necessities. Some spend more in one month on the merest trifles, not to say injurious luxuries, than they give in a whole year to the cause of God. Let us examine our offerings in relation to the matter of self-denial. How much has our Christian Benevolence *cost* us? What real wants have been set aside? What reasonable wish has been sacrificed? Nay, rather, what vain wants and selfish wishes have we not gratified before counting out the offerings which we, as Christian disciples, *owe* to the cause of our Redeemer? O, how shameful is the record of our Christian Benevolence, not only in relation to our *ability*, but also to the spirit of *self-denial*! Is it not a wonder that God's patience toward us is not exhausted? Is it not a wonder that He does not strip us of every earthly good, and leave us to suffer, as we leave His holy *cause* to suffer by our penurious and reluctant offerings? Is it not a wonder, that He does not *spurn* from His altar the gifts we do bestow, when He compares them with our ability, and witnesses the *grudging spirit* in which we bring them to his altar?

We need more *religious principle* and more *systematic effort* in this sphere of christian activity. Too much of the limited amount done in the direction of pecuniary contributions for the support of religious enterprises is obviously and sadly lacking the essential elements of **CHRISTIAN BENEVOLENCE**. Many individuals and entire churches, it is feared, never think of stately and from principle contributing to the cause of Christ, and never would make a contribution except under some extraordinary emergency, or urgent solicitation. Such individuals and churches will be likely to regard every call made upon them for aid as a vexatious annoyance; and if they respond it will be with the merest pittance, and that only to purchase deliverance from the annoyance that irritates them. And then, others, if they give pleasantly and generously, do it spasmodically, the spasm of benevolent emotion being produced by a pressure of arguments and appeals that are frequently and lamentably destitute of the spirit that should always prompt and permeate the offerings brought to the treasury of Christ. Were we to adopt the apostolic counsel, given in 1 Cor. xvi. 1-2, there would be no need of the periodical appeals now made to pro-