

tice proves at once convenient and just to ourselves, generous to men, and pleasing to God; while every human expedient proves deficient, both of material supplies and of gracious influence on the heart. See the following testimonies to this practice:—About 140 A. D., Justin Martyr wrote, "Of them that are wealthy and willing, each gives according to the purpose of his own heart." In the third century, Tertullian wrote, "Each of us, if he be able, deposits a moderate contribution . . . voluntarily. Thus is formed a trust-fund for pious purposes." In the fourth century Chrysostom wrote, "Consider our church, though it have but the revenue of one of the richer sort among us, of how many widows and maidens it supplies the daily needs—nearly 3000—and after that the prisoners, the sick, the maimed, and such as come to her day by day; and for all this her substance is not diminished. These are the ministrations wherein we ought to be engaged; these are the precious heritages of the church; and this is the kind of treasury which it befits her to possess." "Laying up as a treasure, 'for these are the true riches laid up in heaven,' intrusted to God, to be compensated with the amplest interest, both in this world and the next, though not of their own value, but of his mere liberality."—*Beza*. "The custom of bringing with them to their solemn assemblies gifts or offerings for the use of the community in general, but more especially the poor, and publicly presenting them previously to the celebration of the Lord's Supper, is of the highest antiquity among Christians, and one which universally prevailed in all the churches."—*Mosheim*. "Worldly men, at certain times, augment the treasure which they have laid up, by adding their clear gains to it: let Christians then imitate them, by laying up on the Lord's day for their poor and distressed brethren, according 'as God hath prospered them;' and let them account this their treasure."—*Scott*.

Had not the New Testament supplied some rule on this momentous subject, were it not a serious oversight? Is it possible that the God of order, whose regard to law is everywhere so conspicuous, has, in this weighty case, given no trace of rule? In science and art, the embellishments of life, man is left to discover truth by experiment. In religion, the *essential* of life, instruction is given concerning both faith and practice. Man's part is obedience. To attempt improvement is to assume to be wiser than God. Every successful organization must have its appropriate arrangements. Christianity, a new system, superior to Judaism, required new modes of operation. Simplicity marks superiority. Sublimely simple itself, Christianity employs simple methods. Abounding with great principles, its defined

rules are few, but capable of application alike to the vast and the minute. Finding, then, a single rule for any given purpose, is it not equally intended for every similar purpose, its success in the minute commending it for the greater? All divine injunctions are authoritative, remaining universally binding till countermanded or superseded. This rule is positive and repeated,—"As I have given order to the Churches of Galatia, even so do ye." The plans of Infinite Wisdom are suited to every age, and can be adapted to every condition. Were it not wise to adhere to this method till a better is given by the same authority? Is it not high time to return to it, as human expedients fail to realize required means, while claims become continually more urgent? Has not this injunction the sanction of the great Lord of the Church? Man's moral weakness is palpable in his reluctance to part with much even for the most approved objects. Frequently he cannot safely do so, consequently, his offerings rarely reach a due proportion. Did not the Divine Spirit enjoin the habit of a *weekly* dedication as the best corrective? *Is not its neglect every way unsafe and pernicious?*

Rules of conduct and forms of law are essential to order and efficiency. If, for the purpose of higher moral development under more gracious economies, forms be placed in abeyance, their obligations continue in force so long as the relations exist which originated them. Silence indicates that, under higher cultivation, the requirements of formal rules should be anticipated by a willing spirit. *Christianity is a system of loving constraint, rather than of positive command.* Its obligations are implied, rather than formally demanded. It leaves to the ingenuity of love to infer what Judaism plainly prescribed. The Jew might devote as much more than the stipulated offerings as he pleased. Can the affluent Christian, under a system of grace and holy willingness, present less than he can justly spare from needful expenditure?

The Apostle Paul seeks to establish this practice at Corinth, by its manifest success in Macedonia (2 Cor. viii. 1-6.) He animates to a similar devotedness from holy emulation, and as unquestionable evidence of sincere piety (7, 8). He urges it from the infinite condescension and love of Christ towards them (9); he advises it as the most advantageous mode of accomplishing their convictions and purposes (10-15). In chapter ix. 1-7, he presses it as the only likely means of reaching that high standard, of which their condition and promises had excited hope, and of furnishing indisputable proof of real subjection to the claims, interest in the grace, conformity to the spirit, and cordial appreciation of the love of God (8-15). What higher authority could a