

PRACTICAL PAPERS.

GIVING AS AN ACT OF WORSHIP.

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There is no practical Christian duty of our day that is less understood and more neglected than the duty of giving as an act of worship. Men give considerably, to speak after the fashion of men, to religious and benevolent objects, but they give by fits, they give because others give, they give for the sake of the man that asks, or because of the good singing by the choir or because of the tea and cakes, they give as a man tosses a piece of money to an unfortunate beggar who wears and shames one by his importunity. For such giving there is no praise or reward, no encouragement in Scripture. Let our readers ponder well the words of the Rev. Mr. Gibson, D.D., Chicago, on this subject.

There are three ways in which the grace of Christian liberality is commonly presented and commended: as a matter of *duty*, as a matter of *pity*, and as a matter of *profit*. It is well that the subject should be presented in all of these aspects; but there is another, and very important one, which is much overlooked, viz: giving as an act of *worship*. It is especially important that we should consider the duty in this, its highest aspect, on account of the general tendency in our times to degrade it. It is not a very common thing to look upon the collecting of money for charitable and evangelical purposes as nothing else than a necessary evil? "If our Christian work could only be carried on without that continual appeal to the purse of the Christian community how much better would it be; if we could get rid of this constant *begging* for religious purposes, how much more smoothly and comfortably would every thing go on." So many seem to think. They see the beauty of praise and prayer in the House of God; but

they see no beauty, nothing but stern, secular, hard necessity in the bringing of an offering. The vessels used in the communion service are sacred in their eyes; but the collection plates are common, if not unclean—secular, if not profane—something of the world brought from dire necessity into the Church.

Such ideas as these would have no place if giving to the Lord's cause were looked upon in the light in which it is presented from first to last in the word of God, viz: as an act of worship, a *sacred* duty, a devotional exercise.

It could very easily be shown that giving is a very *natural* way of expressing many of the feelings which enter into our devotions, such as reverence, gratitude, love. But, not to be tedious, we present at once the *scriptural* testimony, or such portions of it as we can find space for.

Taking up the Old Testament, the very first act of worship of which we read was an offering: Gen. iv. 3-4. Passing on to the father of the faithful, we find him giving tithes to Melchizedek, as priest of the Most High God. When Jacob at Bethel suddenly found himself, before he knew it, in the House of God and at the Gate of Heaven, he hastens to bring an offering with him. No funds were needed to build that temple or keep it in repair or maintain its ministers; and yet the solitary worshipper brought a princely offering to the Lord.

The entire Mosaic economy might be appealed to as a proof that God desires to be worshipped by offering. A very large part of the service consisted in the presentation of offerings to the Lord; and besides the offerings pre-