

THE duty of consecrating money to religious uses is as clearly enjoined in the New Testament as is that of honesty or truthfulness. Both Jesus and the Apostles enforced it upon their converts by the highest sanctions. Its observance was deemed by them to be of the essence of religion. Under Jewish law the proportion of money to be so set apart was strictly defined. A faithful Jew gave to religious objects, a tenth of all that he possessed. The Gospel exacts no specified proportion. In accord with its free spirit, it leaves it to the Christian's conscience to determine how much of his means he shall surrender to the claims of religion. Let no man think that, by thus leaving it an open question, the New Testament sets up a lower standard of liberality under Christ, than had been observed under Moses. The spirit of the teaching in the Gospels points rather to a more generous outlay; and the instructions of the Apostles leave no doubt that they so understood the tenor of their Master's words.

A considerable portion of the Christian Scriptures is employed in illustrating and enforcing this duty. The Mission and Life of Jesus are at once the embodiment and the illustration of self-denying liberality: "For your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." The lives of the Apostles also, illustrate and confirm it. Both they and He were living examples of all that they spoke and wrote upon the subject. It accords with Christ's being our Pattern in the spirit and practice of unselfishness, that He uttered the command, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven." There is no way, indeed, to the rewards of heaven, but by a faithful use of the gifts of earth. Heavenly treasure is assuredly laid up by him who well and generously employs the earthly treasure which Providence bestows. The principles which will determine the retributions