

How to Give.

How much should I give to God? The answer depends on circumstances.

Some give one-tenth, following old tithe usages. Some give one seventh, following the Sabbath division of time. Some give one-fourth; and some few consecrate their entire nett profits to charitable and religious uses.

Or turn over the dark side of the leaf on which you find, alas, the great majority, you read against their names such entries as these:—An unfelt trifle carelessly given under the impulse of the moment. A paltry sum just to be equal to Mr. Screw. An odd quarter grudgingly given to get quit of that odious collector. Or it may read in this way against the names of men who are ever ready to call upon ministers for baptisms, visitation of sick, funeral services, humorous soiree speeches:—Not a member of any church, lest he should need to pay anything.

To those who may want both to know and to do their duty, we would say the New Testament sets forth a simple and easily understood law, it is this, "Lay by in store as God hath prospered;" and should this not be plain enough, then the best commentator we know of on the passage is, conscience on Sabbath blessings and Sabbath claims.

If every man had a stated income and expending, then it would be very easy regularly to consecrate a stated sum; but as comparatively few in Canada have this, still giving as God hath prospered is flexible enough to meet every variation. The responsibility of God-given prosperity is seldom thought of by many, but, if this is not made the measure of giving, you may give little or you may give much, you only give by customary not by scriptural benevolence. Being a flexible rule, it is no doubt liable to gross abuse, and what Bible command is not. But give us the man who is not afraid to balance his stock account, who has a truth-enlightened conscience, and a truly benevolent heart, and we have very few fears of such a man abusing this too much forgotten Bible law.

We value men's liberality not by what they give, but by what God has given them. Taking this as our standard, we would look at the case of one man, a sample of thousands. See yonder backwoodsman heaving out a home amid the giant monarchs of the forest; toil and poverty must be his lot for years; his small clearance can spare little for market, and that little, whether by trade or cash, must be sold at a low price; every thing to be bought must be paid for at the highest rate; and yet, despite these and many other disadvantages, that man gives say five dollars a year to support gospel ordinances. Let us also look at that man twenty years afterwards, everything has changed, his family has been brought up and well provided for, evidences of comfort and prosperity are seen everywhere, he is worth at least ten times more

than when you saw him in his log shanty.—But as God hath prospered him, does he now give ten times more than in bygone days; if he could spare five dollars from his deep poverty then, can he spare fifty now? Ah, how few do.

Let the means increase five, ten or twenty times, very many never increase the use and wont sum given in olden days; many add one or two dollars, some few may perhaps double the old sum, and a very few may give as God hath prospered. These easily proven facts apply not only to our hard working farmers, they also apply to every other class in the land.

Then ask any such representative man, did you not give too much in these bygone days of poverty? and he would promptly answer, no, of course not. But ask him, do you give now as God is prospering? and how very few could truthfully say, yes, certainly I do.—Many well-to-do in the world, were such a question put, would never seem to hear it, but at once begin to tell you a long story about hard times, low prices, expenses of living, overpaid ministers, etc., etc. But such a stereotyped rigmarole certainly adds no dignity to a consecrated child of God; it is simply the forerunner to a practical application of the old saying, "If providence would only keep our ministers humble, we will take good care to keep them poor."

If God's word is our authority, then weekly, monthly, or yearly, as the case may be, the question will be put, how much has God prospered me? And as this may be easily known by almost every man, then some proportion of that prosperity will be consecrated to God, and laid aside to meet future claims. If there is increase in ability, the sum consecrated should certainly be increased. If little is given, little will of course be expected; or if nothing should be given, then nothing will be demanded.

What proportion of God-given prosperity should you then set apart to the schemes and charities of God's church? If the heart is filled with love and gratitude to God, it will be a noble one. If you have lost the fervour of first love, it will be a customary one. If you are only a hearer and not a doer of the word, it will be a sorely begrudged one. The purse is not the worst thermometer to apply to test the sincerity of high sounding religious professions. As we have in a previous paper stated, every God-fearing Israelite gave at least one-third of his income to religion and charity. Now, granting that such a proportion would ruin us poverty stricken Canadians outright, what proportion do you then give? and we would say it with sadness, that the majority of church members, instead of one-third, do not give one-twentieth. This to many may only seem a bold assertion, but let a quiet calculation be made, and perhaps figures will plainly show that we have given a high average.