

ing no longer under the law, we have to do with voluntary devotions alone. Our only rule is the constraining love of Christ. His word, "Freely ye have received; freely give," ought, however, to make us feel that the duty is specially and strictly ours to perform. As His people, we are "not of the world," and one reason why He has instituted this ordinance is to teach us that lessons more clearly.

Selfishness has led men into two extremes of opinion with regard to worldly possessions: (1) that all we have is *our own*, and hence the maxim, "Keep all you get, and get all you can." (2) The doctrine of communism is that "Property is a crime." The truth, however, has been stated in this way that in relation to our fellow-men we may become the *owners* of property; but in our relation to God we are merely *stewards*. Ideas of *mine* and *thine* are perfectly consistent with this view. I have a claim upon a certain amount of property, because the Great Proprietor has entrusted it to me, and not to another. Recognizing such a right, the Scriptures allow us to use property in three ways: (1) For our sustenance and enjoyment,—Rom. xii. 17; Eccl. v. 18, 19; 1 Tim. v. 8. (2) In ministering to the wants of others, in the exercise of the grace of hospitality, or in the relief of the poor. (3) For the support and spread of the Gospel, &c. Property held and used in this three-fold way subserves its divinely intended end. The reason why many find it hard to get at the truth in this matter is because their judgment is too much influenced by their action. Property may be regarded as a "thing indifferent," and the Christian should be able to say, "Property is lawful for me," &c.—2 Cor. vi. 12. Most persons, no doubt, are ready to adopt the latter clause as the confession of their faith; but there are not so many who are able practically to assert the former idea, "Property is not profitable—not good for me." I am as well off and better without it.

Naturally the pursuit and possession of wealth divert and separate us from God, 1 Prov. ii. 15; Matt. xix. 23, 24; but employed as a means of devotion—instead of separating, our possessions become a con-

necting link between us and Him. By making our wealth the medium of beneficence, we change the curse into a blessing, Luke xvi. 9. We see then how well calculated the ordinance of giving is to remind us of our true relation to the world, 1 Chron. xxix. 14; and we might also shew how well-fitted it is not only to illustrate to us, but to develope in us "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." 2 Cor. viii. 9.

But the most impressive idea contained in the text (Lev. xxviii. 29) is this: that all objects solemnly dedicated to the Lord are *peculiarly and inviolably sacred*. To turn them to any common use is a *desecration*. We need not wait to notice or condemn the rash vows of which so many are guilty. There are vows that under special circumstances—we are accustomed to make deliberately—with solemn feeling and sincere intent, but which, alas, are not always performed. Many a one devotes a sum of money, a part of the proceeds of his labour, or a portion of his time, to religious purposes, and forgets that God holds him responsible for his vow. His money goes for some selfish gratification. His time is spent in some secular employment. Now all such allotments should be regarded as sacred. Such vows are, however, religiously paid by many. We frequently meet with incidents or hear remarks, which shew how deeply they realize the sanctity of devoted things. Extremely poor people have been found who have had laid by as special devotions sums of money which they could not be tempted to use in supplying their own wants. We often receive for religious objects, money which, we are told, has been sacredly stored for months and even years. And have we not an awfully striking illustration of the text in the case of Ananias and Sapphira. Here was a professed devotion of the whole of their possessions; but mark their sacrilege and the terrible punishment which it incurred. Surely the lesson taught is this: that to promise or to profess to give so much unto the Lord, and to keep back a part, is to lie, not to men but to the Holy Ghost. A remark quoted in the published Report on Systematic Beneficence, seems