

QUESTIONS ON GIVING.

We read of a Syrian king sending a vaunting message to one of the kings of Israel. "Thy silver and thy gold are mine, thy wives also and thy children are mine;" and the reply of the cowardly and hypocritical Ahab was,—“My lord, O king, according to thy saying, I am thine and all that I have.” But when the king of Syria sent to bring away a portion of what was thus in words declared to be his, the monarch of Israel showed that he had no idea of its being more than a mere acknowledgement of inferiority, and dared the consequences of a war with Syria, rather than lose any part of his property. How like many professing Christians of this generation! They read in the Word of God that their gold and silver are the Lord's, and they answer, “True O King.” They hear their obligation to use it for the advancement of His cause, and their consciences assent to the claim. They sit down at the Table, and there virtually say,—“We are not our own, but are bought with a price; we are the Lord's and all that we have.” But where is the evidence of their sincerity?

“With their mouths they show much love, but their heart goeth after covetousness.” Ezek. xxxiii.—31.

1. Let us ask—Is your admission that all that you have is the Lord's like Ahab's unsupported by what you give to his claim? “And he sent messengers to Ahab king of Israel into the city, and said unto him, Thus saith Ben-hadad. Thy silver and thy gold is mine; thy wives also and thy children, *even the goodliest, are mine;*” 1 Kings xx. 2. 3.

2. Are you not sometimes glad when you can offer to the Lord that which costs you nothing? Unlike David—“And the king said unto Araunah, Nay; but I will surely buy *it* of thee at a price; neither will I offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing. So David bought the threshing-floor and the oxen for fifty shekels of silver;” 2 Sam. xiv. 24.

3. Do you ever *grudge* comforts to yourself when the Lord's cause wants means? “Then the king said unto Nathan the prophet, See now, I dwell in an house of

cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains;” 2 Sam. vii. 2.

4. Or can you enjoy your comforts without a thought of what might be given to Zion?—“*Is it* time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?” Hag. i. 4.

5. Do you believe that the Lord is able to repay what you sacrifice at his call?—

“Give and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you mete withal it shall be measured to you again;” Luke vi. 38.

6. When you meet with a worldly loss, do you ever reflect that the Lord may be shewing you your sin in your punishment.—“Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes. Ye looked for much, and, lo, *it came* to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that *is* waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon *that* which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands;” Hag. i 6. 9. 11.

7. Have you never *proved* the Lord whether you might not become richer by giving than withholding?—“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour ye out a blessing, that *there shall not be room enough to receive it.*”

“Honour the Lord with thy substance and with the first fruits of all thine increase. So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst with new wine.”

“There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and *there is* that withholdeth more than is meet, but it *tendeth* to poverty. Mal. iii. 10.; Pro. iii. 9. 10.; xii 24.