

Lord to his disciples is, "Freely ye have received, freely give." If the free-giving be withheld, the free receiving is evidently to little profit. There is also that other saying of Christ, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Certain it is, that there cannot be a selfish enjoyment of Gospel blessings. The grace of God in the heart is a self-devoting power, prompting to love and good works.

What, then, should our religion cost us? The giving of *our own selves to the Lord*. We know how the Apostle Paul commended to the Corinthians the example of liberality on the part of the disciples of Macedonia, even "the riches of their liberality,"—how "to their power and beyond their power," even "out of their deep poverty" they willingly gave their contributions. And not as waiting to be asked and admonished of their duty,—there were no collection-sermons in those days,—but "praying us," writes the apostle, "with much entreaty, that we would receive the gift." The apostles and elders seem to have been beset wheresoever they went with the importunities of the people, that they would kindly take charge of their offerings. So that it was found necessary to make the regulation for all the churches, that the collections be laid by on the first day of the week, until the approved messenger should come to take charge of them. So have the weekly collections continued amongst us; only with a difference—that whereas these were appointed in full of all "gatherings," they now need to be supplemented by other gatherings.

With the former zeal, the old methods were best. And whence that zeal, the effect of which was so overflowing in liberality? One great gift drew forth all the rest. "They first gave their own selves to the Lord." Having begun with the best offering, they had nothing after that too good to give. So we, as members of the Church, do profess to give ourselves to the Lord. Our vows at the Lord's Table are a renewed self-dedication to Christ. And even in this we are reminded that "we are not our own; we are bought with a price." We but render to God what He has redeemed for Himself not with silver or gold, but with the precious blood of His beloved Son.

Yea, "the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." Ourselves and all we have are due unto the Lord; and He claims a tribute in acknowledgement of His right to the whole. Here it is that we are put to the test as to our religion. We have a struggle with selfishness, covetousness, and worldly cares. These tempt us to "rob God" of His due—to keep back part even of what we profess to offer to God. "Ye cannot serve God and Mammon;" "choose ye whom ye will serve." And the choice which our religion claims will cost us something. It costs the pain of self-denial; it costs a great measure of faith; it costs a trial of patience for the expected profit. Money, of course, it does cost. This may be the least expense of our religion. We give our money, and it is gone from us. But this expenditure of patience, and faith, and self-denial is always drawing upon our resources—it is a daily