

pend money upon worldly objects, we receive a tangible equivalent for what we give; but when we lay out a portion upon the service of God, it seems to disappear and to bring nothing back. This paralyzes the hand of benevolence, and causes us, when times of hardship and lessened income occur, to retrench or to cease to give what we had been wont to bestow for the support and the extension of the gospel. Now, it is obvious that this would not be the case, were we persuaded that what we grant to God is profitably expended; that it will be returned to us with ample interest; and that recognising God's claim upon us as the first and the strongest, is the way to obtain the divine blessing for our property, our business, and the labour of our hands. During the Mosaic dispensation external prosperity uniformly attended careful obedience; that religious economy was expensive, and the Lord provided the people with the means of meeting fully its demands; and, though the New Testament dispensation is more spiritual in its nature, and its best blessings relate to the soul, yet, as the extension of Christ's kingdom, which he has committed to the members of the Church, is a vast and costly enterprise, we are of opinion that the Lord has connected with the proper exercise of Christian liberality, the promise of literal and ample compensation.—Let us look at this matter as it is set forth in the divine word.

Compensation or recompense seems to be a principle of the divine government. All that we get from God is matter of favour: none merits any benefit; even wealth, much or little, is God's gift. But the Lord is so rich in mercy, so kind and benevolent, that he has pledged himself to recompense those who faithfully serve and obey him. In the keeping of each of his commandments, there is a great reward; and that reward, graciously conferred, and as the fruit of promise, corresponds to the duty done. Thus our Lord says, Luke vi. 37, 38, "Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven; give, and it shall be given to you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom." Here are four examples of recompense, in each of which the benefit received resembles the service performed;—"Judge not, and ye shall not be judged; condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven; give, and it shall be given unto you." And then follow words which we regard as embodying a statement of the general principle or rule of the divine administration: 'For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.' We are not to restrict this statement to the manner in which men are to treat us. It intimates also the law of the divine procedure. So prominently, in fact, is this principle of compensation presented as a rule of Providence, that it has found a place in the brief model prayer which our Lord taught his disciples: "Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors;" or, as it is expressed by Luke, "Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us."

Just as in the preceding cases there is a correspondence between the benefit conferred and the service rendered; so, we believe, does a similar rule hold with regard to religious contributions. God 'loves a cheerful giver,' and to him he will repay what he has granted to his cause. Christian liberality, properly guided, secures increase of wealth, whilst sinful parsimony in regard to God entails poverty and want. 'There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.' In proof, therefore, of our assertion, that the Lord has promised to repay literally what men from right motives give to his cause, we present four passages of Scripture.

The first passage is Proverbs xix. 17: 'He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth to the Lord, and that which he hath given will he pay him again.' These words are very explicit, and declare in the plainest terms the doctrine of repayment; for it is said that the person who has pity upon the poor, and contributes for their relief, 'lendeth unto the Lord;' that God considers himself as that person's debtor; and that he 'will pay him again what he has given.' It is not merely stated here, as in the 41st Psalm, that the Lord will deliver the man who 'considers the poor,' 'preserve him and keep him alive, and bless him on the earth;' but it is expressly said, 'that what he hath given will he pay him again.' Let these words stimulate the liberality of those who feel compassion for the poor and the perishing heathen.