#### CHRISTIAN VISITOR. THE

# The Visitor's Lulpit.

#### Christian Giving.

"Upon the first day of the week, let every one of on lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." Cor. xvi. 2.

difficult as it is generally unpopular. It is able service." Under his wise and just among the least understood, and the most administration, the universality of obligaconstantly neglected of all the duties enjoined by special Divine precept upon the obey. In this, as in every other duty, it followers of Christ. Undoubtedly too little will be found that "where there is a will prominence is giving to it in our regular there is a way." The grace of giving is What gives it peculiar pre-eminence is, pulpit ministrations. Except on special conferred as a privilege, with no intimation that it is God's method. It has its authority pulpit ministrations. Except on special occasions, when the claims of some popular that its blessedness is available only to the in New Testament precept, and its illus religious enterprise are pressed upon the attention of the people, but little is heard the offering is cast into the Lord's treasury New Testament church. This is our confrom one year's end to another on the duty its value is estimated, not by material fidence in arging its adoption by all our of Christians to "honor the Lord with standards, but by the wealth of self-sacrific- churches. If introduced and carried into their substance." And even then the timid ing devotion it represents. As one says : practical effect, it would become a source pastor may deem it prudent to call in the aid of the District Secretary and present pression of something interior and spiritual. while through them it would infuse fresh his appeal by proxy, under the ægis of We estimate by the visible expression- life into all our denominational enterprises, official authority. Or if, in the absence of Christ by the invisible verity behind it." now languishing for needed pecuniary that redoubtable functionary, he be forced This rule of reckoning was applied to support. to the front alone, he will address himself offerings both under the old and new disto his task in a half apolegetic strain, as if pensations. Under the law, the poor man's to press upon his hearers their obligation lamb-pigeon-log of oil, or pint of flour, for the cause of Christ were really a pre- was as acceptable as the costlier offering sumptuous overleaping the bounds of his of his more wealthy neighbor. authoritative commission to "declare the under the gospel the "two mites which whole counsel of God." And when the make a farthing" cast in "of her want," task is over, and the meagre offering is won for their widowed offerer a higher wrung from half-reluctant hands, the encomium by far than was bestowed upon benediction brings to all a sense of sweet the rich, whose larger gifts were cast in relief, unbroken by further mention of the from their abundance. All of which proves subject, till the time for the next annual that "in Christ's scale-beams, love is collection comes. Not a few have come to heavier than gold, and a warm heart outregard the missionary agent or district weighs silver," and that "devotion is the secretary as a sort of locomotive instrument alchemy that transmutes the baser metal of torture, under the pressure of whose of human want into the spiritual coin of merciless appeals, they part with their divine abundance." dimes and dollars very much as a sensitive patient yields an aching tooth to the wrenching grip of forceps in the hands of a dental operator. And judging from what we have heard from the victims of these operations respectively, the recollections are about as pleasant in the one case as in the other.

#### DEFECTIVE TEACHING.

Our churches have never been properly instructed in the matter of giving. It is seldom kept before them as it should be, with "line upon line, and precept upon precept." It is rarely so constantly and judiciously inculcated as to make it a part of their religious life, so that they will a duty, and in the practice of it be influenced by principle rather than impulse, and enter with alaerity into the true spirit of it, as an act of religious worship, rather than the rueful discharge of a burdensome obligation.

#### NEEDED REFORM.

Nothing in our denominational economy

be held under condemnation for non-compliance with a law, the requirements of which they have no means to fulfil? A sufficient reply to all this is, that the law in relation to giving is from above. Its divine author never made a mistake. He

enjoins no impossibilities. His require The continuous Sabbatic-offering system, The subject of Christian giving is as ments are all within the limits of "a reasontion implies the universality of means to rich. All are required to give, and when trious examples in the liberality of the "The outer material gift is only the ex- of strength to the churches themselves, And

#### A GOOD DEFINITION.

and beyond their power" they will "be respect to the time and manner, motive, with new hope for the future. So much he is able, according to the blessing of the for the universality of the obligation ; let us Lord thy God whichhe hath given thee." now notice,

II. THE RULE FOR ITS OBSERVANCE. calls more loudly for reform than our " On the first day of the week, let every method of beneficence. It is safe to affirm one of you lay by him in store as God hath that in most of our churches there is no prospered him." Here is the specific thoroughly organized system of giving. direction as to the time, as well as the measure of Christian giving. There is a fitness and propriety in the rule laid down, that commends it strongly to our judgment and our hearts. Giving will ever fall below efficient operation. The difficulty is not the Scriptural standard till it is brought up to take its place with the common acts of religious worship. It must become a devout habit, observed with the same unvarying regularity as prayer, praise, the breaking of bread, or the preaching of the gospel.

A RULE FOR ALL TIMES. The rule enjoined upon the churches of Galatia and Corinth, as indicated in the text, was undoubtedly intended to indicate the method of benevolence to be perpetuated among God's peeple through all time. however, like all God's plans, requires attention, energy and tact to ensure success. It will not run long, left to itself, any more than a clock will. It must be regularly wound up, and kept in good running order to preserve it from friction and failure.

III. Our third and last point is, THE MEASURE OF THE REQUIREMENT. " As God hath prospered him." And here, as always and everywhere, let us "to the law and to the testimony; if we speak not acco ding to this word, it is because there is no light in us."

### BIBLE LIGHTS.

The question may be asked : Does the Bible give any definite rule to determine the measure of Christian giving? Or does it leave the whole question in blissful uncertainty, and each individual to decide for himself as to how often or how much he will give? So some have thought, but the truth is, the Scriptures are by no means silent, or equivocal as to the measure of Benevolence has been described as a giving. It is involved in no more obscurity gracious disposition of the mind, capable or doubt than any other religious duty or of a high degree of culture, even among obligation. There are no presepts in the the poor. Its fevor will not be restrained, Old or New Testament, enjoining Christians or content itself with the mere expression to pray, to search the Scriptures, to be "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of thine increase, etc.' Such requirements are repeated in every variety of form through all the law and the prophets. Coming to the gospel, he speaks to us by his Son. "Give to him that asketh thee. . . . Give alms of such things as ye have. . . . Do not your alms before men to be seen of them. . . When thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth. . . . He that hath two coats, let him part to him that hath none, and he that hath bread, let him do likewise." By his aosptles he says: "He that giveth let him do it with simplicity; he that showeth mercy with cheerfulness. . . . Let every one of you give as God hath prospered him. . . . . As ye abound in In applying this rule, we do not under- everything. . . see that ye abound

in the wilderness were called for, the people gard? Should we not evince the sincerity of all classes responded by an illustrious with enlarged heat to and, by coming forward display of voluntary liberality, "They came, both men and women" (Exodus 35) as many were willing hearted, and brought . . an offering of gold unto the Lord." So eager were the people of all classes and of both sexes to participate in this work, and so numerous and profuse were their offerings that it was found necessary to issue a proclamation to restrain them (Ex. 36). "And Moses gave commandment and they were restrained from bringign, for the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much." What a sublime spectacle as exhibited in contrast with the excessively economical scale of benevolence so common among us! Would not such a response from our churches be a refreshing surprise to the weary solicitors for our various denominational enterprises! Fancy the officers of these societies embarrassed with an overflowing treasury, and issuing a pro-clamation to prevent all further contributions! But, alas, they are not likely soon to be startled from their propriety by the appearance of so unique a phenomenon in the moral heavens! Alas, that our boasted

Christian benevolence, displayed amid all the riches of Canaan, should fall below the standard of Jewish liberality given in the wilderness!

## OTHER EXAMPLES.

A still more illustrious example is furnished in connection with the preparation made for the erection of the temple at Jerusalem. From the record in Chronicles we learn that David, with the aid of his assistants and subordinates, bro ght forward offerings amounting to thousands of millions of dollars! And what is peculi-arly noticeable here is that these munifi-cent offerings were not doled out grudg-ingly but the people rejoiced for they of-fered willing and with perfect heart, and David the King also rejoiced with great iov and blessed the Lord before all the the so best of the beneficence whe shone so conspicuously in all the beneficence whe shone so conspicuously in all the actions of h eventful life? And does he not enjoin upon h followers by precept, what he so beautifully lastrated by example? Recall the passages a ready cited with others that might be adde and see how thoroughly he instructed his do ciples both as to the manner and measured their beneficence. millions of dollars ! And what is peculijoy and blessed the Lord before all the congregation and said : ""Who am I and of good wishes and anxious desires. It baptized, or attend the public worship of what is my people that we should be able will not render sternest pressure of want, the sauctuary more binding or specific to offer so willingly after this sort, for all and with marvellous ingenuity contrive than those which require them to give. things come of thee and of thine own have plans for contributing to the cause it loves. And as if anticipating the general reluct-Wherever this "gracious disposition of ance of Chriftians to fulfil the measure of be given if time would permit, reaching the mind" prevails, its subjects, however this latter obligation, in addition to certain down to the time of their return from Babpoor, will need no urging to give. Like well-defined general rules, there have been ylon when in their depressed and impove-the Macedonains of old, "To their power, given more ample and specific details in rished condition they distinguished themselves by an abundance of cheerful offerwilling of themselves." If this were more measure, object, and end of living, than in ings for the rebuilding of the temple, thus come to regard it as a privilege as well as generally realized our contributions would reference to almost any other test of our showing that whatever else they may have be sufficient for all purposes, the Lord's fealty and devotion to God, Is this put- lost by their long captivity, they retained treasury would be steadily replenished, ting the matter too strongly? Then for the spirit of generous liberality which they and his work now dragging so heavily on our hands, would move forward with ac-celerated speed, and prospects brightening the Lord empty. Every man shall give as the block of the spirit of generous interact, which they had displayed in their earlier, palmier days. But enough has been cited to prove that the spirit of voluntary benovelence developed under the Jewish economy was far in excess of what has generally been attained under the Christian dispensation.

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our devotion and desire, by coming forwar with enlarged hearts and more liberal offering thus indicating a readiness to receive the a swer to our daily prayer: "Thy Kingdo come?" And to what other purpose could portion of the wealth of Christians be devot that would procure honor and enjoyment of parable to this ? To be made co-God in the great work of evangelization, this not a distinction worthy of our highest bition ? Is it a privilege and honor lightly be esteemed, to know that God, when he ma known his will to his prophets, had us in mi as a part of the instrumentality to be employ in subjugating the world to the cross of o adorable Redeemer?

### NEW TESTAMENT LIGHTS.

But it may be asked, Is there nothing in New Testament to corroborate the theory beneficence constructed upon the basis of law and the prophets? What have we to law and the prophets? What have we tod with the Jewish economy? Has that not lon since passed away? The Jewish dispensation has passed away; but the law of God—the law of moral obligation—gratitude—beneficence in mains, unaltered and unalterable. "I am in come," says Jesus, "to destroy the law of it prophets, but to fulfil." "Behold the day come, saith the Lord, when I will makes. come, saith the Lord, when I will make a ne covenant with the house of Israel. I will p my laws in their mind, and write them in the heart." Now, of this new law, written in the hearts of God's spiritual Israel, Jesus Chr. was himself the most perfect and illustrious er bodiment, and nothing more conspicuously th in the infinite beneficence of his disposition in the infinite beneficence of his disposition and his acts. "Lo, I come" said he, "in the volum of the book it is written of me, I delight to delight thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is within a heart." And he did it by a life of obediene and self-sacrifice for the glory of God and the good of our fallen race. And did the work ever before or since witness so illustrious a example of beneficence as this? "Ye known example of beneficence as this? "Ye known grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though was rich, yet for our sakes he became poor, it we through his poverty might be rich." A are we not admonished and required to "let same mind be in us that was also in Chr Jesus?" How can this be in the absence the spirit and practice of the beneficence whi their beneficence.

## CHRIST LOVES THE CHEERFUL GIVER.

When Zaccheus stood before him and s Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give the poor, and if I have taken anything fro any man by false accusation, I restore him for fold," can anything be stronger than Christ approval of his munificent generosity, accepting it as proof of the genuineness of his conversi and holding it up as a pattern to be imitated b his followers through all time? When, ow against the treasury. he saw a poor wide throw in "two mites which make a farthing, he called his disciples and said to them, "This poor widew hath cast in more than all the which have cast into the treasury, for all the which have cast into the treasury, for all the did cast in of their abundance, but she of he want did cast in all that she had, cven all her he ing." And when Mary, of Bethany, as an er pression of her love and devotion; poured th box of precious ointment on the head of Jesu how warm and hearty was his appreciation of the act? Though the gift itself was a generou one, estimated by Judas to be worth "thre hundred pence," yet he prized still more th love that prompted it, and for the good wor she wrought upon him, he would cause he name to be embalmed in the fragrance of im mortal honor, and her deeds to be perpetuate in the sacred annals of piety and self-denia in the sacred annals of piety and self-denial Have these commendations any meaning for us Do they indicate anything in respect to the measure of Christian giving? Do they us show that Christ loves the cheerful giver, and that he looks for and resulting the sack the that he looks for and requires at our hands like tangible expressions of fidelity and devoti to his cause?

Here and there a feeble attempt has been made to introduce the "so-called-weeklyoffering," but the cases are few in which it has received the attention necessary to its with the system, but with the defective way in which it is usually carried out. The passage I have selected as the basis of this discussion furnishes the outline of a method of beneficence approved of God, and enjoined by authority upon the churches for all time. In relation to Christian giving we have here,

I. THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE OBLIGA-TION. "Let every one of you." There can be no mistake here. The language is as plain as the requirement is absolute. Every church member is included. There is no hint of exemption on account of age, sex or condition. There is no evading it without a breach of positive precept.

#### IGNORANCE NO EXCUSE.

Ignorance of the nature and universality of the obligation will not excuse its neglect. Christians are bound by the same law to is authorative? What time and place so a rule may not be made out to determine contribute of their substance for the spread of the gospel, as they are to believe in on the Lord's day, and in the Lord's house ? cult to see what more could be desired for Christ, to pray, or perform any other religious duty or act of worship. The Jew to appear before the Lord empty. have, "the first day of the week." As to religious duty or act of worship. The obligation to give arises out of a positive divine command, and not out of any ability on our part to perceive the connec-tion between our giving, and the end which is sought to be accomplished by it. It is sought to be accomplished by it. It is sought to be accomplished by it. It is not probable that Elishass the connection between throwing sail into the binter waters of Jericho, and the marvellous result that followed, or that the bitter waters of jerich, and the marvellous result that followed, or that the bitter waters of giving with the other parts of upplied to the cases the means and constring diving the end, shill be given of the general propriate the means. And so many may excess themselves for neglect of the ordinances and requirements of the gospel on the pless that they can perceive no rational connec-tion between believing and being saved, thet end the end, have been realized without the means. And so many may excess and requirements of the gospel on the pless that God intended it should be maintenances, giving world the the constant is out to full excess the means and constring and being saved, between believing and being saved, between prayers and spiritual growth, or inously as a cheerful and appropriate toom between believing and being saved, between prayers and spiritual growth, or inously as a cheerful and appropriate the means do divinely applied to the pless and requirements of the gospel on the pless that dod intended it should be maintenances, giving was fixed and regulated by un-places it in the lotter realm of the spiritual pointed ordinances and the ends they are to met to be looked upon in a very different to met to be looked upon in a very different the to rease and spiritual growth, or incously as a cheerful and appropriate appointed ordinances and the ends they are obligation to give arises out of a positive And is not the injunction as binding upon who shall give : "every one of you." As

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### NO CAST-IRON RULE.

standing it as being intended to restrict in this grace also. . . . He that soweth our giving to any particular time or place. bountifully, shall reap also bountifully; We may give anywhere, or to any object every man according as he pruposeth in worthy of our benevolence, just as it is right to pray, or preach the gospel wherever opportunity may offer. But what we do understand it to mean is, that giving should THE BURE MADE OUT. form a part of the public worship of every Lord's day. If it has any force of authority binding on us at all, it means this and nothing more, this and nothing less. And is not the arrangement as appropriate as it upon every phase of the subject in hand, At their solemn feasts, the law forbade any that purpose. As to the time to give, we

# THE RURE MADE OUT.

If from these passages, with nothing obscure or ambiguous as to their meaning or expression, and with an obvious bearing

### TYPICAL SIGNIFICANCE.

It can scarcely be doubted that the examples of liberality exhibited by the Israelites of old were intended as a pattern to be imitated by the New Testament church. May we not rather believe, as one says, that, "the offerings then made may be considered as typical or emblem-atical of the more splendid offering which would be exhibited by New Testament saints, when God shall appear in his glory to men, to build up the walls of his Jerusalem, and cause Zion to appear beautiful and glorious in the eyes of the nations?" Putting the amount contributed annually by every pious Israelite at only one tenth, which, as we have seen, is far below the truth, will any one assume that a less propor-tion ought to be devoted by Christians to analo-gous purposes? Is it possible that by adopting a lower standard, any Christian can satisfy his conscience, or fulfil the measure of his obliga-tion to God? The objects of Jewish benev-olence were all confined within the narrow lim-its of Judea. No missionary operations extend olence were all confined within the narrow lim-its of Judea. No missionary operations extend-ing beyond its boundaries were ever contem-plated under their narrow and restricted econ-omy. Whereas, the Christian field of labor is the world, and the Christian commission, "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." If, therefore, so large a pro-portion of the income of every pious Jew (a fifth or a third) was required to perpetuate the worship and diffuse the knowledge of God with-in such narrow limits, should not the standard of liberality in the Christian church be raised to a point more nearly commensurate with the a point more nearly commensurate with the greater magnitude and grandeur of the work to which she has been called ?

# A CONSUMMATION DEVOUTLY TO BE WISHED.

But is there anything in Scripture to warrant us to expect it as one of the results of the ad-vancing glory of the Redeemer's Kingdom ? Is it possible to interpret certain predictions of There it becomes what it ought to be, and and requirements of the gospel on the plea, that they can perceive no rational connection to the them internance of the maintenance of the courace of the of the course of the of the course of the maintenan

# APOSTOLIC DICTA.

We have seen how Christ himself regarded these things, but what of his apostles? The words of Paul sufficiently show that he strongly inculcated the duty of liberal Christian benefi-cence upon the churches both of Galatia and cence upon the churches both of Galatia an Corinth. Writing to the latter from Philipp he says: "Now concerning the collection in the saints, as I have given order to the churche of Galatia, even so do ye. On the first day the week let every one of you (give) as God hat prospered him." And the same in reference a the Macedonians, whose unbounded liberally he so highly commends. Speaking of it to the Corinthians, he says: "Moreover, brethrea we make known to you the grace of God be stowed upon the churches of Macedonia.... for to their power, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves, praying u with much entreaty that we would receive the gift." And that in connection with this exam-ple he might present the strongest possible mo-tive to the cultivation and exercise of a liberal systematic beneficence everywhere and always he adds, "But this I say, He that soweth spa-ingly shall reap also sparingly, and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully every man accordingly as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly or d necessity, for God loves the cheerful give." Corinth. Writing to the latter from Philip

### THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER.

THE CONCLUSION OF THE WHOLE MATTER. And now brethren, taking these passages to-gether I submit, that the theory of beneficence for which we plead, is built, not upon the law and the prophets alone, but upon the founda-tion of the apostles as well, the teaching and example of Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone. With scarcely more clearness do they inculcate the principle, than they indicate the measure of Christian giving. True, in the gospel there is an absence of the rigid arithme-tical rules which were binding under the law. Here, the principle is laid down, leaving the measure to be determined by the conscience of each individual. "Every man, according as he each individual. "Every man, according as h purposeth in his heart,"-i. e., his renewe heart in which the law of God has been writte purposeth in his heart,"-i. e., his renewed heart in which the law of God has been written taking it for granted that he will be influenced by it, and conform to the spirit of it in his we untary offerings unto the Lord, as in the di-charge of every other Christian obligation. If he "withold more than is meet," he cannot plead as excuse the absence of any adequate rule to determine the measure of his giving. Though nothing is said about a tenth, a third, or fifth, yet the rule is there, worked out in liv-ing characters upon the very warp and wool of the New Testament teaching, so plain that he who runs may read, and the wayfaring man. Are not the authoritative utterances of Christ and his apostles a thousand times more potent and satisfactory than any stiff arithmetical rule by which we could be bound? Could any figure more clearly indicate the measure of Christian giving? Is there anything in them or any where in the New Testament to indicate that the standard of beneficence under the gor pel should be lower than that which prevalled under the law? Does hot everything prove, or the contrary, that the measure of our liberality ought to be increased in proportion to the si

the contrary, that the measure of ought to be increased in proporti perior privileges we enjoy and the nitude of the work we are called measure of our Has the time not already come? Should not perior privileges we enjoy and the greater in the churches of this land begin to awake to a nitude of the work we are called to accompt for Christ? You ask for a rule fixing the pro-