

FOREWORD

(By Dr. T. T. SHIELDS, Toronto.)

I have read with interest and great pleasure the manuscript of the booklet by Pastor W. Weir, entitled, "Money: its Use and Abuse." I am delighted with Mr. Weir's presentation of a very important subject, and believe that its publication will, by the blessing of God, accomplish great good. The truth herein set forth is vital to the health of every Christian; and I heartily commend this treatise to all who would grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

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Ballymena,

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“WILL A MAN ROB GOD?”

Money: Its Use and Abuse.

by Pastor William Weir

“Honour the Lord with thy substance”.

“What doth the Lord Thy God require of Thee?”

CHAPTER I

A GREAT EVIL AND ITS ANTIDOTE

“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth, fornication... and covetousness which is idolatry” - Colossians 3:5.

“Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal” - Matthew 6:20.

In Colossians 3:5, Paul tells us to put to the death our members which are upon the earth, and then gives us a long black list, adding at the end “covetousness,” as a fit companion for the others; and lest we should mistake the true nature of this evil, he adds, “which is idolatry.” We must deal with this sin in a merciless fashion. The old Saul within us would spare this Agag, while we might be zealously pursuing many other sinful Amalekites; but God has appointed this great king of evils to utter destruction. This foul vice can sometimes masquerade under a pleasanter name, such as “Eagerness-for-prosperity,” but we must allow God's word to search us if we would be saved from self-deception, and be able to detect the true character of this subtle error. The Lord gives us a method of carrying this battle against covetousness to a successful issue, “Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt” (Matthew 6:20).

Few seem to realise the tremendous effect that money and possessions exert on life and character. Whether our possessions are large or small, they can have a far-reaching influence. This is no trivial subject, and to regard it as such is to display a strange ignorance of God's word with its repeated warnings and exhortations. There is a tendency to think of this subject, in terms of the passing temporal affairs of life; but there is scarcely any more potent influence than this, either for good or ill, on our spiritual state now, and our outlook for eternity.

Riches may become an effective barrier to prevent the sinner entering eternal bliss. “How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the Kingdom of God” (Luke 18:24). Earthly treasures do not need to be accumulated to a great store in order to accomplish this evil end, they only need to become the heart's real

treasure, so that the soul counts it too great a sacrifice, or being absorbed in other interests forgets, to be “rich toward God.”

Even for the Christian, this subject has a meaning for the life beyond. “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth or rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal” (Matthew 6:19-20). By the right use of our money here, we can lay up treasure in heaven. That is clearly the meaning of these words, and this truth is emphasized in an unmistakable way in the New Testament.

Think of the power for evil in money and worldly possessions. The earthly treasure, like the wrongly stored manna, may become corrupt and corrupting. It is not without good reason we read: “If riches increase set not your heart upon them” (Psalm 62:10). God warned His ancient people “Beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God lest when thou hast eaten and art full... and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied” (evidently a time of special danger) “...then thy heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God” (Deuteronomy 8:11-14). There is the danger of the ‘muck-rake’ depriving us of the ‘crown’. As Christiana - Bunyan’s pilgrim - said, “Oh deliver me from this ‘muck-rake’”, the interpreter replied “That prayer has lain by till it is almost rusty.” “‘Give me not riches’ is scarce the prayer of one of ten thousand”.

We do not seem to be afraid of becoming too rich; we scarcely see any danger in prosperity. But if we are blind in this respect, it is in spite of the repeated warnings of God’s Word. We must take to ourselves the words of our Lord: “Take heed and beware of covetousness” (Luke 12:15). Jesus Christ grouped riches with the cares and pleasures of this life as being effective in choking the spirituality of a Christian so that there is “no fruit to perfection” (Luke 8:14). In 1 Timothy 6:9-10, we read “They that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition, For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.” After these arresting, solemn words we read: “But thou, O man of God, flee these things”. Is it not this ‘will to be rich’ that prevents many Christians from giving to the Lord’s cause as they ought? This ‘love of money’, how common it is. Grace may have done much to counteract this evil, but we should search our hearts to see if this root cause of every kind of evil is not lurking within. How much is sacrificed for that which has meant the downfall of so many. Some sacrifice honesty in business, some spiritual growth, some friendships and family ties, and when these things are gone, then we find that wealth has cost us too much, having robbed us of real riches that money cannot buy. But time would fail me to tell of indifference amongst Christians, powerless churches, the deadness of pastors once aglow with spiritual life, hardened consciences, ruined lives, broken hearts, and premature graves, all through this awfully deceitful root - “the love of money” - from which spring all kinds of evil.

Now let us consider something of the manifold blessings that may be derived from riches. We read “Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God; for it is He that giveth thee power to get wealth” (Deuteronomy 8:18). If prosperity and wealth are gifts from God, we may be sure they were never intended to drag us down.

Man can prostitute God’s rich blessings until they become a curse. But that which can be such a snare when wrongly used or abused, can be a means of untold blessing if rightly used.

Some of God’s choicest saints have been blessed with great riches. Abraham - the friend of God - was “very rich”; David - the man after God’s own heart - died “full of days, riches, and honour”; Job was the “greatest of all men of the East” in riches. It is no special mark of God’s favour to be poverty stricken. Indeed, such a state might often be a mark of unfaithfulness on our part, with that which God has already entrusted to us. “Honour the Lord with thy substance... so shall thy barns be filled with plenty” (Proverbs 3:9-10); or to quote from the New Testament, “He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly, and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully” (2 Corinthians 9:6).

We are not going to consider specially the blessings that flow to others through the right use of our money - hearts and homes cheered and encouraged, heathen darkness with all its suffering giving way to the gladness

of gospel light, and we might continue the list indefinitely. Here truly is geometrical progression extending to infinitude, beyond the power of man to reckon. It is like the pebble dropped into the lake causing a ripple that grows and expands until it laves another shore for beyond our vision. Who that could see this aspect of truth could resist the impulse to give to the Lord's treasury, even to the point of self-denial?

This aspect of truth is often stressed, but there is another we must not forget. About to leave the Ephesian elders, and coming to the close of the last words of counsel, as if to underline with importance a truth we are so apt to forget, Paul said: "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, it is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). If it is true that actions are a truer indication of our hearts than mere words, then a very small percentage of professing Christians really believe these words. Who of us rejoice over what we are able to give more than over anything we may gain? Or who of us rejoice over our gains principally because we are in a position to give? This last thought is suggested in 2 Corinthians 9:8-11.

Riches can be a greater blessing or bane to the possessor than to any other, according as they are used or abused. What we may give may mean a blessing for the recipient, but a greater blessing for the giver.

C. H. Spurgeon said: "It is well to feel that whatever good your gift may do to the Church, or the poor, or the sick, it is twice as much benefit to you to give it."

It has been said that one verse out of every six in Matthew, Mark and Luke deals with the subject of money, and that sixteen of our Lord's parables show the right or wrong use of money.

Why does the Bible - both in the Old and New Testaments - stress so much this subject of giving of our substance to the Lord and His cause? Is it that we may enrich God? The thought is foolishness. Is it even primarily for the sake of the cause we support? No, it is first of all for our own benefit. We cannot afford to ignore or neglect God's claim upon our substance. Such a claim has been made primarily for our own good, and we need to recognise it whether our possessions are great or small. Riches need never become a curse to the possessor, and they never will, if we are wise to take God's preventative. The man who thinks he can trust himself here, and can afford to despise Scriptural rules governing the right use of money, may one day prove the folly of his presumption by experiencing something of the truth of 1 Timothy 6:10: "The love of money is the root of all evil; which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Then the tragedy is that the soul seldom places the blame on the right cause. Having taken his own way in preference to God's way, his sin subtly blinds his mind to the true cause of his backslidden condition, thus making it very difficult to get back to real fellowship.

God's great safeguard against the evils lurking subtly behind our possessions is 'giving', and giving in a particular manner. It was so in Old Testament times, it is so in the present age.

It is evident that in the Old Testament, the matter of giving to the Lord's cause was of vital importance to the wellbeing of God's ancient people. Joy and prosperity seemed to go hand and hand with the willingness of the people to give of their substance according as God required. Why should this subject be less important in this age? The Lord's cause needs support now as then, and that we should recognise God's claim on our substance is as vitally important now as ever it was. The New Testament abounds with teaching on this subject. In 2 Corinthians, two chapters - 8 and 9 - are devoted to it. In the First Epistle to the Corinthians, Paul had dealt with the matter, but considered it essential to write again, and this time at greater length. Ponder the arguments and exhortations used. Amongst other things; (1) he mentions the liberality of others as an example for them; (2) he looks for this liberality as a proof of the sincerity of their love; (3) he says if they sow sparingly, there shall be a poor reaping, and if they sow bountifully, they shall reap a bountiful harvest. As we give of our possessions to the Lord's cause we are sowing; have we any cause to expect a good harvest? Let us not forget that in this, rich and poor alike can have a harvest. It is not the size of the offering alone that counts with God. "If there be first a willing mind it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not" (2 Corinthians 8:12). God expects us to be faithful just with that which He has entrusted to us,

CHAPTER II

“THAT YE MAY BE READY”

“Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him” - 1 Corinthians 16:2.

Seeing this subject is so important, it is unthinkable that there should be no guiding principles as to the manner or extent of our giving. Such a thing cannot be left to personal feeling or desire on our part. First Corinthians 16:2, gives us a few clearly defined principles to guide us. The object for which this money was required is a secondary matter. The method suggested, is to guide us, so that we may be in a position to respond to God’s call at any time. Could anything be more definite than the words of this verse?

In his little book “The Lord’s Portion”, Mr. J. Ross writes: “What language can indicate universality in giving more clearly than ‘Every one of you’ - each of you? What can define proportion in giving better than ‘as God hath prospered him’ - according to that he hath? What terms can more distinctly constitute it a sacred Sabbath act than ‘Upon the first day of the week’ - every Sabbath? How can certain provision and preparation for future needs be more positively taught than ‘lay by him in store’ - lay apart in a treasury? The spirit of these four lessons was contained in earlier financial measures”.

First. We see universality in giving - “every one of you,” or, as in 2 Corinthians 9:7, “every man”. None are deprived of the privilege, and none can escape the responsibility, rich and poor alike are included. If it were only a matter of supporting God’s cause, the very poor might possibly have been excused, but since our own spiritual lives are affected, and only by this method can we maintain a proper relation to our possessions, we must all know something of the grace of giving; for our own sakes the rule is of universal application. Even children should be taught God’s claim on their possessions, that they are not absolute owners of anything entrusted to them, but only stewards.

Second. There is regularity in giving - “upon the first day of the week.” That this system of regular giving has many advantages over any other, can be affirmed by all who have adopted it. Not merely does giving become easier, though often increased by this method, but in this way we are constantly reminded of God’s claim upon all we have. That He is owner and we merely stewards, is a truth of utmost importance to our well-being now, and our rewards in eternity; and systematic giving will be a constant reminder of this truth. Worldly wisdom may suggest some other plan as more convenient, but no amount of reasoning should ever persuade us to adopt anything in preference to the clear teaching of Scripture.

Third. Here is provision for future needs - “lay by him in store,” or as Weymouth translates it, “put on one side and store up.” The point stressed is setting aside a portion every Lord’s Day, that we may have to give when necessity arises. How this storing is done (whether by keeping accounts or storing past the amount) is unimportant, but that it should be done is important. When the call comes it is easy, even a pleasure to draw from the Lord’s store for His own cause.

Fourth. Here is proportionate giving - “as God hath prospered.” Surely this suggests not only that each should regulate his giving according to his income (if income increases giving should increase accordingly), but also that the giving of different individuals when compared should have a very close relation to the income of these individuals when compared - some should give more, some less, “according as God hath prospered.” This is reasonable; we should expect the rich to give much more than the poor, and the poor to do their share with the rich. This idea does not seem to be carried into practice generally in church life. Statistics have often shown how appalling may be the sense of obligation on the part of very many church members. Some while professing Christianity give practically nothing for its support, others give a mere fraction of what they ought to give, and the work in many places is left to be supported by a very small minority.

CHAPTER III

THE TENTH

Malachi 3:7-10.

“Will a man rob God?” What a thought! “Yet ye have robbed Me”, says God. This worst of all robberies was committed in the days of Malachi, and doubtless is being repeated every day, and that by some who, with no sense of guilt, would ask: “Wherein have we robbed Thee?” “Bring all the tithes into the storehouse... and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it.” How often these words are quoted without any reference to the real meaning. There is the idea that God is willing to bless, if His people are ready to fulfil the conditions, but the one condition definitely stated here is often ignored, and possibly some other substitute put in its place. What is the condition? Simply this: pay God one tenth of your income. That was God’s challenge to the Israelites to fulfil their duty, and see if they would not experience blessings, temporal and spiritual, as a result.

It was not that these people brought nothing to the Lord. They still brought their offerings, the trouble was that their offerings were not up to the Divine standard, and failing to bring enough they were robbing God of His own.

Judging by the shortage of funds in so many branches of Christian activity, we cannot think that the Church today can be altogether freed from this charge brought against Israel so long ago. There must be something radically wrong with the present system, or lack of system, adopted by so many professing Christians. Why is God’s work hampered for lack of funds? Have God’s stewards become too poor to give the needed support, or are they unfaithful in their stewardship? That is the question for each of us to face as individuals before God.

One great evil connected with this subject is that there is no proper sense of obligation. We do not feel that we owe anything, that we have a DEBT we ought to pay. Whether we give much or little, there is no consciousness of robbing God. The Lord said to His people, “Ye have robbed Me,” and they were astonished at such a charge. Oh, that we could have this true sense of obligation - a responsibility to pay a debt; then presenting the needs of God’s work would no longer be called begging, but we should feel guilty of robbery if we failed to respond to the need. If we are not responding as we ought, we are guilty of robbing God. “It hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem, and their debtors they are, for if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty also is to minister unto them in carnal things” (Romans 15:26-27). There may have been no special law demanding such a thing, but there was a moral obligation which Paul calls a “debt,” and “their duty” was to pay it.

Conscience seems so easily satisfied here, that one would think there must be some error in the general feeling of right and wrong if, indeed, we think there is any right and wrong about it. How often an extremely small proportion of income is devoted to the Lord’s cause, amongst both rich and poor, and yet there is no consciousness of any crime or having wronged God. Christ said, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and unto God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21); which clearly implies that, just as something rightly belonged to Caesar and should have been given to him, so something belonged to God, and should have been given to Him. It is not after it is given merely that it belongs to God, but even if never given, we are keeping that which rightly belongs to Him and again we have the thought of robbery. It is often said that all we have belongs to God, but it is evident our Lord did not mean that when He said, “Render... unto God the things that are God’s.”

Are there any rules to guide us so that we may know if we are meeting God’s requirements in this particular? First Corinthians 16:2 has helped us a long way in this respect: “On the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him.” We have noticed, (1) the universal application; (2) the regularity; (3) the provision for future needs; and (4) the thought of proportion. Only one

thing might seem vague: what proportion does God expect? How are different individuals to give proportionately to their incomes, if some definite proportion is not fixed? Second Corinthians 9:7 establishes the law of free-will offering, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart". This forever eliminates the thought of compulsion; whatever is given must be because there is a mind to give: "As God hath prospered" - the poor from their little store, and the rich proportionately from theirs. No definite sum is demanded or even suggested in the verse. This is left to be freely fixed in the light of God's demands in the past. But as to proportion, how many never stop to think what proportion of income they really do give! This verse surely suggests that we should make our giving a matter of earnest thought before God, and then set aside a definite proportion.

The late George Muller, whose character and Christian experience lend weight to any testimony he may give, says: "Fix even the smallest amount you purpose to give of your income, and give this regularly... if you neglect an habitual giving, a regular giving, a giving from principle, and upon scriptural ground, and leave it only to feeling and impulse, or particularly arousing circumstances, you will certainly be a loser... it is well you should fix this lowest amount, lest you should do nothing at all, or scarcely anything."

God expects a great many things in the life and walk of the believer, but everything must be gladly and willingly rendered because of the impelling power of Divine Love. The necessity imposed by law, such as is experienced in the Income Tax of the realm, cannot be thought of in our relations to our Lord. The question is not: 'What does the Lord demand?', but 'What does He expect?' And if we conscientiously face this question in the light of God's word, starting with 1 Corinthians 16:2 and going on to consider the teaching of Scripture as a whole, we shall not be found guilty of shirking our duty in this matter.

Let us notice some false guides often suggested:

(1) Let a man be guided by conscience, and give just as he feels he ought. Dr. W. Graham Scroggie said, "the principle of free-will offering is sound, and is successful when the conscience of the people is sound." Our consciousness of right and wrong must be educated here as in other things. Thousands of Christians have no uneasy conscience although their giving is a positive disgrace. Some will spend more money on needless luxuries for themselves, some even on injurious luxuries, than they give to the Lord's work; but after spending thus freely on themselves, it is all they have left to give to the Lord, and they imagine they are giving according to ability, and have therefore no uneasy conscience about it. There is something dangerous about this test.

(2) Let a man give until he feels it. it will be a sacrifice then, and his duty will surely be performed. Such a suggestion would be a great relief to the miser; who can feel it as he does, as he grudgingly gives a very little of his hoarded store, and truly thinks himself liberal? But he has not fulfilled his obligations simply because he feels the pinch of giving. Mr. Thomas Kane said this reminded him of the story of an old deacon who had been listening to a missionary sermon. "He had the usual dollar ready, and wanted to give it," wrote Mr. Kane. "He also had a five dollar gold piece in his pocket which his conscience kept telling him he ought to give. Finally, as the collector came to his pew, he thrust the gold coin in the basket, exclaiming mentally: 'There, old nature, squirm'. If you want to give until you feel it, don't become a tither. To tithers giving is a joy."

(3) Let a man give his share when duty calls. This seems so often the guiding principle in giving, and yet the Scripture sets before us a much higher standard. The different causes worthy of support, and the extent of giving should be a matter between the soul and God, and should not be regulated by comparison with others. There should be a longing to contribute something, whether there is any need at all. There seemed to be no need for Mary to break the alabaster box of spikenard very precious on the head of the Lord, in fact some thought it a great waste. But it was the expression of a heart of worship, a heart that was too full to be kept concealed, it had to find an outlet and all our giving should be of such an order.

"Bring ye the whole tithe into the storehouse," said God to Israel. We want to have some guiding principle as to the extent of our giving; would not this at least suggest a starting point? The Jews gave one-tenth of

their income; is there any reason why we should not begin with the same rule? We are not to regard this as the maximum, but the minimum.

Mr. J. Ross gives the last part of a sermon by C. H. Spurgeon: "I knew a lad in Christ once who adopted the principle of giving a tenth to God. When he won a money prize for an essay on a religious subject, he could not give less than one fifth of it. He had never after that been able to deny himself the pleasure of having a fifth to give. God had wonderfully blessed that lad, and increased his means and his enjoyment of the luxury of luxuries - the luxury of doing good." Mr. Ross adds: "Was not that youth Mr. Spurgeon himself?"

There are many reasons why every Christian should seek to give at least one tenth of his income to the Lord. Some of these we shall consider:

First. Our obligations under grace are not less but greater than if we were under law. We are told that the system of tithing was law, and we have been forever delivered from that, since we are under grace. That leads us to ask the questions: what is the relation of the believer to law? and what is the difference between law and grace as explained in God's word? Paul says, "Ye are not under law but under grace" (Romans 6:14); and the meaning of this seems to be two-fold. (1) The Christian is liberated from the righteous demands of the law as a means of acceptance before God. He is given his perfect standing of justification not through observing the law, but on the ground of grace through faith. (2) He is liberated from the penalty which the law inflicts on the transgressor. "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law" (Galatians 3:13). In these two senses the Christian is not under any law, either ceremonial, moral, or any other; he is absolutely free. Other things naturally flow from this, but this is foundational, as it gives the saint his position before God on the ground of free grace and not on the ground of merit.

It is true we have been delivered from Jewish rites and ceremonies - circumcision, and carnal ordinances, and such things - because these things have given way to something more glorious, and are no longer necessary. But that is a minor detail compared with this of which Paul speaks, when he says that we are not under the law but under grace. This is something of vital importance to our faith since Paul used such strong, even extreme language about it. There can be no difference of opinion about it; anything other than Paul's teaching here is called in Galatians 1, a perversion of the Gospel, another gospel which is not another.

If this is a true interpretation of Paul's arguments, then the difference between law and grace is not so much a difference between dispensations, as a difference in standing before God. No man in any age was ever justified before God by the works of the law. Human nature being what it is, that is impossible. "If there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law." If righteousness before God could have been obtained through law observance, that would still be the way of life, but Paul says that could not be. In any age men needed grace, and could not be saved on any other terms. Salvation cannot be of works "lest any man should boast." The sinner in this age is still under the bondage of the law, and shall yet answer to it, and bear its penalty. Little wonder that Paul contends so earnestly for this liberty that Christ has purchased for the believer, since it affects the foundation of his standing before God.

This liberty which we are exhorted to maintain, does not give us licence to disregard the righteous demands of the law. Our obligations to God and our fellows are none the less because we are under grace and not under law. "What then?", asks the apostle, "shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace?" "God forbid". "Sin," we are told, "is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). If we transgress the law then, it is sin - no matter what our privileges may be; therefore this new liberty into which grace has brought us, cannot free us from the moral and spiritual obligations of the law. Why should the saint wish to be freed from God's law? We cannot find anything better to guide us in daily walk. Romans 7:12: "The law is holy and the commandment holy and just and good"; v14, "We know that the law is spiritual." One writer says, "The Father's will is then the rule of the believer's life," and he gives this as taking the place of the law of a past dispensation. But where can we find the Father's will expressed better than in the law? The commands of the law were not unnecessary impositions for a time, they were the perfect expression of God's will for man; His holy character could demand no less. The real meaning of it all is condensed for us by our Lord in Matthew 22:37-40: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God... thou shalt love thy neighbour... On these two

commandments hang all the law and the prophets.” Are these less binding for the Christian of today than they were for the saints of a past age? The details of the law are simply the working out of these great principles which should characterise the saints of all ages. We are under grace that we might the better fulfil, and not escape the righteous demands of the law. “The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death... That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit” (Romans 8:2-4).

Since the Lord’s cause still needs support, and more especially since we need to recognise God’s claim on our substance, it seems most unlikely that the law of the tithe should be relegated to a past dispensation. Surely the one who makes our position under grace, a reason for giving less than the law demanded, has a very low conception of the true meaning of grace.

Second. Another reason for tithing, we should note, is that this law seems to be for all time, and not for a period merely. It was for man’s highest good, and the reasons for it surely exist today. If there is not some Scripture very clearly setting it aside, may we not safely regard it as a duty and privilege for every Christian? Tithing belongs to the age of the law we are told, but not more than the command to devote one seventh of our time specially to God, and the commands prohibiting stealing, murder and other evils. These things were incorporated in the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, but existed long before that event. In Genesis 28, we read Jacob said: “Of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give a tenth.” Where did he get the idea? In Genesis 14 we read that Abraham gave a tenth to Melchizedek, the priest; where did Abraham get the idea? And why was this idea incorporated in the law? Was it not that God had required this from earliest days, as essential to man’s wellbeing? The Sabbath too, is mentioned in Exodus 16 before the giving of the law. These two laws - the seventh of our time and the tenth of our income - seem to be essential if we are to remember God’s claims upon us. They are not designed for any particular age; man’s nature requires them in every generation.

That tithing has been practised from the very foundation of the race is strongly supported by the fact that it has been very generally accepted even by nations outside the Jewish race. Mr. J. N. Rayzor said: “We learn from history that the Arabians, the Babylonians, the Carthaginians, the Phoenicians, the Egyptians, the Greeks and the Romans were familiar with the law of the tithe.”

He quoted the following words of Dr. Adam Clarke: “There is no difficulty in finding ancient nations that did not observe the law of the sacrifice, but not so with regard to the law of the tithe.”

When the subject is mentioned in the New Testament, it is not so much discussed as taken for granted; discussion was unnecessary since its acceptance was so general. The one thing that Christ seems to have commended about the Pharisees was their tithing, and He Himself must have observed this law, since we never read of the Jews accusing Him of breaking the law in this particular. The early Church would naturally accept the tithing system, and we are told that it was endorsed by the Church Fathers of the first five centuries. Many of the most eminent leaders in all branches of the Christian Church, in more recent years, might be quoted as added testimony, but space forbids.

Third. Tithing places God first, and recognises Him as Lord of our possessions. No other system will do this equally well, we are so inclined to give business, or friends, or possibly self the first place, that we need the constant reminder, that our duty is to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.” The general practice is to attend to our own needs, and then if anything is left the Lord gets a share; if nothing is left, we feel relieved of all responsibility. This cannot but have an injurious effect upon our spiritual outlook. Mr. G. Muller speaks of some who “do not give even the tenth part of all the Lord is pleased to give them back again to Him. They can readily lay out £5,000 in the purchase of a house, £200 a year upon the education of each of their two or three sons, keep many servants besides, and live in other respects in proportion to this, and spend, strictly speaking, not £100 directly for the work of the Lord... What is the consequence? As they live more for themselves or for their children than for God, so they are not really happy in God, as one real end for which God has left them here on earth is lost... But this has not merely to do with the rich or the middle classes of the children of God, but even with the poorer classes.” God’s plan in all ages has been, reverse the order; before taking anything for self set aside the Lord’s portion, and then regulate living

according to what is left. Such a habit once formed cannot but have its influence for good upon the whole outlook of life. Commenting on the words of David: "Lo! I dwell within cedar, and the ark of the Lord dwells within curtains," Dr. Alexander MacLaren said "Whose fault was that, David? Did you not build a house of cedar before you thought about a house for God?"

Most of us build our own houses, and, if there are any stones left over, are good enough to spare them for building some altar for God. We give Him the superfluities. We allow Him a second place, thinking about self first; and so losing all the blessings of thorough consecration and noble surrender, and of yielding up what is highest to Him Who is the Highest. Give God the best - that is the minimum of duty; for unless we do we give Him nothing. It is not so much the offering God wants, it is the first place in the heart, and to recognise His claim in the tithe will carry us a long way to this goal.

We might add here that under the tithing system, the right motive in giving will be fostered. Offerings will be given not so much to some good cause as to the Lord Himself, and such a thought will put a new joy into giving, making it an act of worship. Whether we respond to the call of the mission field, or work at home, or the poor, or whatever it may be, we shall hear behind them all a call from God, and gladly respond. It has been related of Andrew Fuller that he went into his native town to collect for the missionary cause. One of his old acquaintances being asked to help, said: "Well, Andrew, I'll give five pounds seeing it is you." "No," said Mr. Fuller, "I can take nothing for this cause seeing it's me" - and he handed the money back. In a moment the man, who felt reproved, said, "Andrew, you are right - here are ten pounds, seeing it is for the Lord Jesus Christ." But all our giving should have this thought behind it; we should give "seeing it is for the Lord Jesus Christ," and anything given from any other motive should not be regarded as an offering to the Lord at all. Such offerings will mean laying up treasure in heaven, and tithing will help in this respect. How much of our offerings are robbed of their real value in God's sight, because of some unworthy motive.

Fourth. This law was made for man's highest good. Concerning the Sabbath our Lord said: "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath." That seventh part of time was set apart for man's temporal and spiritual good, and it cannot be altogether ignored without serious consequences. The same may be said of the tenth of our income, it was because God saw what human nature most needed, and knew the best way to meet that need, that He instituted such a law. He longs to enrich us, and paradoxical as it may seem, His plan of enriching us is that we should give gladly and liberally to Him. The few loaves and fishes grew and multiplied when they were given into the control of the Lord to be broken and used as He would. There was no loss in such a surrendering up to Him, but a great gain, and this is but a parable of all life.

We are enriched spiritually by recognising God's claim on our substance. We often hear it said: "Get a man right spiritually and his giving will be affected," and no doubt this is true. But it is equally true that if we can get men to deal rightly with their possessions, it will be a great force helping to lead to a proper spiritual condition. This is plainly stated in Malachi 3:10: "Bring ye the whole tithe 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 you out a blessing that there shall not be room enough to receive it." It is possible to withhold God's hand in blessing, because we withhold our hand in giving. Someone has said; "Few things so lower the tope of Christian life practically as illiberality. It is self-indulgence, or self-enrichment through robbery of God." Niggardly Christians are a serious hindrance to the blessing of God in any Church, not because the Church is deprived of their money - that is a secondary matter - but because God, and eternal interests, are getting a secondary place in such lives. That is why this subject is of utmost importance to the churches or the individual Christian. God says, "Prove Me," give me the tenth of all, see if I will not pour you out a blessing in response. Thousands have given testimony that God has always responded where this challenge has been accepted and the tenth faithfully given. As I thanked a church member once for a large offering she had given for certain renovations she said: "You need not thank me, it is simply the Lord's money, not mine at all," then with evident feeling and the mark of joy on her face, she added, "Thank God for the tithing." One man wrote concerning tithing in his church, "It would be worthwhile to the church, even if the money we raised should be taken out and burned." Here the revival of giving meant also a revival of spiritual life.

Tithing means temporal as well as spiritual blessing. That is certainly included in Malachi 3:11: "I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field saith the Lord of Hosts." It would seem the Lord can entrust a tither with an abundance of this world's goods more easily than any other; at all events the fact remains that for thousands in all parts of the world tithing has meant increased prosperity. C. H. Spurgeon said: "We cannot expect to prosper if we are dishonest with God. He can easily enough measure back to us as we measure out to Him. Hence, happy are they who, being saved by grace, bring Him all their tithes, for peace and prosperity shall be their portion."

A few years ago Mr. Thomas Kane - a business man of Chicago, U.S.A. - published millions of copies of a pamphlet in which he had the following: "My belief is that God blesses in temporal as well as in spiritual things those who honour Him by setting apart a stated portion of their income to His service. I have never known an exception - have you? Please give any facts within your personal knowledge on this subject. Especially give the facts if you know any exceptions."

"During more than forty years" (during which time the pamphlets were being distributed), Mr. Kane says, "I have received thousands of replies... how many I have little idea. I am sure, however, that less than a dozen have written me that they thought there were exceptions. I wrote at least half of these to know the circumstances and in every case found that their lack of prosperity was due to other causes than tithing. In most instances the writers seemed to think that tithing was a kind of insurance against even temporal financial loss." Again, during the years 1913-14, the following question was published in a large number of religious newspapers in U.S.A. and Canada: "Have you ever known anyone who was less happy, less generous or less financially prosperous from being a tither?"

Mr. Kane says: "A total of more than 10,000 'No' replies were received; not one 'Yes.' Only a small proportion of those who replied were satisfied to give a mere negative. In very many cases something was added in the way of emphasis." In his question, Mr. Kane mentions happiness in connection with giving; is it not significant that in the Bible, liberality in giving to God's cause is so often connected with joy? "Then the people rejoiced for that they offered willingly to the Lord" (1 Chronicles 29:9). "The abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality" (2 Corinthians 8:2). Many other passages might be quoted in this connection.

Having said so much, let us note a warning: we should never adopt the system of tithing for the sake of becoming rich, or even to become more prosperous. Any who do such a thing deserve to become paupers. The one seventh of our time is devoted specially to the Lord, not from any selfish motive, but because we believe it to be right. We are prepared to suffer loss for this principle, but as a matter of fact we are better for observing the Lord's Day, and to give this up we feel would mean serious loss, So it is with the tithing system; no selfish motive should induce us to adopt it, but if we see it to be God's plan, then because of principle, we should set aside one tenth of our income for Him, trusting Him with the consequences. One man commenced tithing that he might become more prosperous in business, but it proved a sad failure, and he had to abandon the idea. Later he saw his error and started again, this time in order to obey God's voice, seeking to glorify Him. The result was that he was blessed both temporally and spiritually, and found it not only possible but a joy to give the tenth to God.

Objections to this system have frequently been urged, but it is a striking fact that objections come generally, if not always, from those who have never honestly tried to deal with their possessions in this scriptural way; any who have honestly tried, have no fault to find.

It has been said that it is an unfair system, and too exacting for the poor. This objection is scarcely ever given by the poor, but by those in comfortable circumstances, and often, it would seem, so that they themselves might hide behind it. But this will never become a burden to the poor, the Lord will see to that, and thousands of poor tithers have testified to this fact. It is generally much easier to lead the comparatively poor to become tithers than it is to lead the rich. But if such a system is unjust to the poor today, it was equally unjust to the Jews in a past age.

Some tell us it is impossible to know exactly what their income is, this may be true in many cases, but it is wonderful what can be done when we must. Even the large farmer must furnish an account of his income for the Income Tax returns. But the principal thing is not the exact money, but a heart that honestly seeks to meet God's requirements. Let us come as near as possible to the truth, and if there is any doubt, and we should happen to give a little more than one tenth to the Lord, the extra will not be lost, it will lie deposited in a safe bank.

Some tell us they cannot afford to give one tenth to the Lord. This indeed seems to be the chief objection; but before giving it, we should search our hearts, and examine our manner of living, to see if it is honest. It is necessary to urge this, since the objection is given by the rich as much as the poor. Many a girl thinks more of some Picture Show than the Christian of the Lord's work. Many a man thinks more of football than the respectable Christian of the Lord's Day worship. The poor will spend more on these worldly things than many Christians in comfortable circumstances will spend on the spread of the Gospel. Why is it so? Many living in unnecessary luxury will say, "I cannot afford to give one tenth." What is to be said of the man who lives in luxury, incurring unnecessary expense, while unable to meet his just debts? Why, he is a thief - a robber, and the Lord applied this very thought to the Israelites in Malachi 3. I am sure that God would still say to this generation, "Ye have robbed me."

But many honestly feel that this is the great barrier to tithing. It is very difficult meeting present demands, and to increase subscriptions for the Lord's cause seems impossible; they cannot afford to give "the whole tithe." I suppose the Jews felt this, they brought their offerings but not the whole tithe. Their crops were not yielding properly, and the caterpillars and other pests were doing their deadly work, so that they could not afford to bring all the tenth to God. Possibly they hoped to give more as prosperity returned. But God said, in effect: "your withholding the tenth is the cause of your poverty - bring the tenth to Me" then "I will rebuke the devourer for your sake." This is always God's plan. The widow of Zarephath could not afford to make a cake for Elijah, as she had scarcely enough for herself and her son, but Elijah said, "Make me a little cake first" (1 Kings 17:13). Leave God out of the question and the procedure was utterly unreasonable, but it was God's plan, and He wrought the miracle. It is a strange way of thinking, to become prosperous by giving up one seventh of our time, or one tenth of our income to the Lord. It is unreasonable, but it is God's plan, and therefore works out in daily life. The amazing paradox is still being proved every day. "Whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it." Such a principle is not confined to any age, but is for all time, and operates everywhere, if we had only eyes to see. No Church or individual is going to be the poorer ultimately for practising tithing from a pure motive. Dr. H. Clay Trumbull gives us the following, as an extract from a sermon by an old coloured preacher: "I hab nebber known a church killed by too much gibbing to de Lord. If dere should be such a church, and I should know about it, I tell you what I'd do. I'd go down to dat church dis bery night; and I'd clamber up its moss cobered roof, and I'd sit a-straddle of its ridge pole, and I'd cry aloud, 'blessed am de dead which die in de Lord'."

"Dying for duty-doing" adds Dr. Trumbull, "starving to death for tithe-paying to the Lord, is a good way of dying; but there is less danger of death in that line than in any other that the writer knows of."

The acid test is: does it work? Theories can have no weight as against facts. This idea has been put to the test under every conceivable circumstance, by Christians with all shades of opinion and outlook, in every part of Christendom, and in all ages, and the fact so far discovered is that God sets His own seal of approval on the tithing system, wherever conscientiously adopted; by giving His own marked blessing. No age so abounds with such testimony as the one in which we live. The work of Mr. T. Kane and others has brought to light the testimony of thousands of tithers, that God still honours the challenge of Malachi 3:10, and 2 Corinthians 9:6. Many arguments have been used against this system, but such arguments cannot overturn the facts to which thousands have given their glad testimony.

Dear reader, what is to be your attitude to God's claim upon your substance? In the light of God's word, and so many witnesses, why not commence just now, pay God one tenth of your income - whether large or small - and trust the Lord to lead you on, and enable you to carry out His appointed plan.

Copies of this booklet may be had from the author, Mr. W. Weir, B.A., B.Sc., Belle Vue Manse, Tobermore, Co. Derry; or from the printer, Mr. Thos. Johnstone, 75 Gt. Victoria St., Belfast. Single Copies, 2d. post free. Quantities - 50, 7/-; 100 13/- carriage paid.