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THE GOSPEL OF THE TITHE (Christian Stewardship)

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01 -- INTRODUCTION

THE GOSPEL OF THE TITHE is a plain, scriptural and interesting treatment of the financial system instituted by God for the maintaining of the religious service. It shows how beautifully the tithing system works in individual lives and in the church, and is a stinging rebuke to the false financial practices and cheap commercialism of the churches.

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02 -- CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP

"These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." Matt. 23:23.

What shall be said upon the subject of Christian Stewardship will be more especially in relation to the tithing system. If the tithing system is scriptural and practical for the church today, it is a much neglected theme. To such who may not care to be awakened and disturbed on this subject, the only apology to be made is, that it is not the mission of the ministry to tell people the things which they like to hear, but the things which the Lord desires that they should hear.

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03 -- THE LORD'S CLAIMS OF OWNERSHIP

In the writings of the Psalmist we read "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein?" Psalms 24:1. In the first epistle to the Corinthians, tenth chapter and twenty-sixth verse we have this text quoted by the Apostle Paul. Consequently both the Old and New Testaments declare, for the Lord, the ownership of the earth and all that it contains.

The Lord's ownership is based upon the royal right of creation and entitles Him, then, to the following: The produce of the ground, The labour of the beast, The skill of man.

It is evident that, from the earliest, God demanded from man a recognition of His ownership, having made him the keeper of His vineyard, the tiller of His ground and the Lord of His entire creation. In other words, the Lord furnished the capital with which man was to transact business, and demanded an interest for the use of the same. Waiving the question, at this time, as to what that interest was to be, there could be nothing more reasonable in the world than, that God should demand some such recognition.

God is a reasonable God, and it can be predicted, in advance of our investigation, that it will be found that, in His dealings with man, His terms are exceedingly liberal and His demands the most charitable.

The history of the institution of tithing is, like that of some other things, largely unwritten, but the first recorded recognition of God's claims of ownership, where definite statements are

made as to the amount of interest He expects, is that the tithe was given. The word "tithe" means a tenth part, and is translated from the Hebrew word mak-as-ayr and the Greek word dek-at ay. The Hebrew word is the one used in the Old Testament, and the Greek word the one used in the New Testament, and both mean a tenth.

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04 -- THE PATRIARCHAL TITHE

The first record of exact amounts paid to God, in recognition of His claims of ownership, was in connection with the patriarchs, and there are evidences that ever since that time God has expected the tithe from His people.

When Abraham organized his servants into an army and made a hurried march, rescuing Lot who had been carried away by the Kings of the North; on his return journey, he met Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of God. After Melchizedek blessed Abraham, in the name of "God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth," Abraham immediately recognized the claims of that God, in whose name he had been blessed, and by whom he had conquered, and immediately gave a tithe of the spoils of the recovered goods. Gen. 14:20.

A test of piety in patriarchal times was the faithful payment of the tithe. This fact is illustrated in the case of Jacob.

Having left his father's home, Jacob started for Haran. Night overtook him, and, with a stone for his pillow and the heavens for his canopy, he lay down to sleep. While here he had the beautiful vision, which we almost covet. He saw a ladder let down out of heaven, with its base resting upon the earth and its top reaching through the open skies. Angels were ascending and descending upon it, and the Lord stood above it and spoke to him. Whatever other significance this vision may have had, it certainly must have meant that the great chasm which had been made between earth and heaven, by sin, was successfully spanned, and heaven was again accessible to man. When Jacob awaked from his sleep he realized that God had given to him a revelation and had spoken to him, and he declared: "Surely the Lord is in this place... This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." He then took the stone which he had for his pillow and set it up for a monument. Pouring oil upon the top of it, he named it Bethel, which means, House of God.

Then, and there, he made a vow to serve the Lord; and, recognizing God's claims upon what he possessed or ever would possess, he said: "Of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth into thee." Gen. 28:22. Jacob did not wait until his Peniel experience, where his very nature was changed from that of a trickster to that of a holy man, and where his name was also changed from Jacob to Israel in testimony of his change of heart, to recognize God's claims upon what he had, but vowed to do so from that day, the day of his conversion. Whether or not Jacob always kept this vow we do not know, but sincerely hope he did. The vow which he made when he came face to face with God, however, evidences the fact that paying the tithe to the Lord, in recognition of His ownership, was a test of patriarchal piety. Let such who are inclined to criticize

Jacob examine themselves, and see whether their piety excels that of Jacob's in recognizing God's claims.

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05 -- MOSAIC TITHING

The command of tithing, is specifically given in Leviticus 27:30, which says: "And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land. or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord... And all the tithe of the herd or the flock, whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord."

The tithing system, when incorporated into the Law was not a new thing, but was simply a reconstruction of the patriarchal religion. All eras and dispensations have some things in common. There has never been a change of orders or dispensations in which there were not some things carried from the old order or dispensation into the new. So in the change from the Patriarchal age to that of the law, the tithe was carried over; was incorporated into the law, itself, and became a vital part of the new order.

In the Mosaic economy the tithe was evidently paid to God, through the Levites, for their support, so that they might be free to maintain religious worship. So far as we know, the tithe was not appropriated to any other use, not even to the building of places of worship, but to the support of the Levitical ministry, only. Later, when the promised land of Canaan was divided between the twelve tribes, the tribe of Levi received no portion. God intended that the Levitical ministry should not be bothered with such things as land, farming, stock-raising, horticulture, etc., but that they should devote themselves entirely to their sacred office, and be supported by the tithe of the other tribes.

Besides the paying of the tithe, in the time of the law, there were some other heavy demands and expenses. Religion in those days was quite expensive. The first of the fruits, the first of grain were the Lord's and were to be given to Him. It was unlawful to gather up the heads of grain which were scattered in reaping, but these gleanings were to be left for the poor to gather. Besides these, there were the numerous sacrifices which the law continually demanded. Further, some understand that a second tithe was required by the law for charitable purposes. This view is held by The Popular and Critical Bible Encyclopedia. Whether this second tithe was demanded or not, the other expenses of religion, under the law, made the cost no small consideration. Religion was, then, interesting from the financial viewpoint.

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06 -- HEZEKIAH'S REFORM

Under the reign of the wicked kings, Ahaz and others, the tithing system was neglected and religion declined. It may be difficult to determine which was the cause and which the effect, but tithing and religious worship declined together. This decline made it necessary for the priests to extinguish the candles, cease to burn incense, close the doors and leave the temple.

When good king Hezekiah came to the throne he re-established the tithing system, and, as a result of the bringing in of the tithes and offerings, the priests and Levites were enabled to return to the temple, and again to devote themselves to the services of the Lord. So abundant was the supply, when the people recognized God's claims and brought in the tithe, that additional chambers had to be built to accommodate the large store, and chief stewards, with a number of assistants, had to be appointed to take charge of the same.

After Hezekiah had set the tithing system into operation again, and sent the priests back to the temple to minister in holy things he went to the temple and questioned the priests as to the results. To his questions Azariah, the chief priest, answered and said: "Since the people began to bring the oblations into the house of the Lord. we have eaten and have had enough, and have left plenty: for the Lord hath blessed His people; and that which is left is this great store" 2nd Chron. 31:10.

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07 -- NEHEMIAH'S COMMAND

Another testimony of the close relationship of successful religious work and a recognition of God's claims, by systematic giving, or tithing, is found in the command of Nehemiah.

When Nehemiah, who had been carried away with many other Israelites to Babylon, heard the report that the gates of Jerusalem had been broken down and burned, he sat down and wept. Having obtained permission to return to Jerusalem he found that the priests had gone to the field to find employment, because they had not received proper support; religious worship had been practically abandoned, and the portion of the temple formerly used to store the tithe and offerings occupied by a foreigner. Having rebuilt the walls of the city and assembled the people together, instructing them in the law, he also reorganized the temple service and commanded that the tithe be brought in. This being done, he appointed treasurers over the large stores which resulted from the bringing in of the tithes. Neh. 10:37; 13:10-13.

There is probably no record of successful religious effort, in Old Testament times, when the tithes were withheld. As has been noted before, the practice of the tithe and acceptable religious service arose and declined together. God did not, He cannot recognize the worship and service of such who do not recognize His claims upon them.

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08 -- MALACHI'S CHARGE

The prophecy of Malachi occupies a unique place in the revelation of God. When the echoes of this last messenger of the Old Testament dispensation died away God spake no more to man for the space of four hundred years. It was a period of awful silence.

This prophet propounds the question: "Will a man rob God?" The robbing of a fellowman is a thing indeed very bad; but he answers his own question by saying: "But ye have robbed me." Imagining an effort on the part of the accused to intimidate him by saying: "Wherein have we robbed thee," he declared that "tithes and offerings" were the things of which Israel had robbed God. Mal. 3:8.

He further declares: "Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation" Mal. 3:9. If the withholding of the tithes and offerings, thus refusing to recognize God's claims upon men's property and income, was robbery in Malachi's day, how must the conduct of professing Christian men, who fail to scripturally recognize God's claims, be looked upon, today? If such conduct brought a "curse" in that day, there is no wonder that God's professed Israel is suffering under a blighting, stinging, withering curse, today, when God's claims are so shamefully slighted, and the church is practicing such false and unscriptural financial Systems.

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09 -- THE NEW TESTAMENT TITHE

Perhaps some one is ready to object to so many references to the Old Testament scriptures, declaring that we have nothing to do with them. "Give us," say they, "New Testament authority."

First, the Old Testament scriptures have more vital concern for us than we sometimes suppose. "The Old Testament is the New enfolded: The New Testament is the Old unfolded. The Old Testament is the New concealed: The New Testament is the Old revealed." This indicates the inseparableness of the scriptures.

Further, no moral law has ever been changed, nor ever will be. If the world should stand a billion years, and a million dispensations be passed through, no moral law, given by God, would ever be repealed. The only possible change which could be made would be in intensity, in accordance with or in keeping with God's revelation of himself. The law of recognizing God's claims is a moral law, based, as we have seen, upon God's ownership, or proprietorship; which, in turn, is based upon His creatorship. He may, if he chooses, emphasize His claims, increasing His demands, but never can, in keeping with His relation to the earth and man, withdraw such claims.

It is to be conceded, however, that no chain of argument is stronger than its weakest link, and if we should fail to find" some stamp of New Testament approval upon the law of the tithe, grave suspicions, as to the adaptability of it to the New Testament dispensation, would be justly aroused.

The words of our text: "These ought ye to have done," (Matt. 23:23) refer to the tithing practiced by those addressed, and appear to be a stamp of approval, placed upon the tithing system. Being spoken by Jesus Himself, they constitute a stamp of approval from supreme authority. Although he was addressing a class of people whom he characterized as hypocrites, because of their neglect of other things, He commends them for their faithfulness to the law of the tithe. Even hypocrites receive that which is just, at the hands of the Master. Jesus, instead of

excusing these people from the law of the tithe, by telling them that a new dispensation was being inaugurated, plainly and unmistakably declared: "These ye ought to have done."

Another evidence of the law of the tithe having the stamp of New Testament approval upon it is found in the fact, that no other standard is given for the recognition of God's claims; but systematic, regular and definite giving is enjoined. The financial system recommended to the Corinthian church, by Paul, was that weekly deposits should be made, into the Lord's treasury. 1st Cor. 16:2. Whether this "laying by" relates to placing an amount into the church offering each Lord's day, or a "laying by" for a less frequent collection, makes no difference; but a regular, systematic giving is required. There is another stipulation made in the requirement, which says that the "laying by" is to be in proportion, "as God hath prospered." Please note the definiteness of giving indicated in the clause: "as God hath prospered." No "left over," no "little to spare," no haphazard giving allowed. How then are they to "lay by"? Hear the answer again: "As God hath prospered." But by what standard of giving are we to be governed? There is only one standard of giving mentioned in both Testaments, and that is the tithe. Since the New Testament does not repeal the law of the tithe, but puts the stamp of approval upon it; and since it enjoins definite, systematic giving, without suggesting any other system, it is reasonable to conclude that the law of the tithe shall determine the amount to be laid aside, weekly, and in proportion "as God hath prospered." If God has prospered us -- giving strength, health and ability to earn ten dollars, one tenth or one dollar is to be laid aside for the Lord's treasury. If the Lord has prospered us twenty dollars, two dollars is the amount due His treasury. What a beautiful, faithful and God-honoring recognition of His claims!

Some one apologizes for his failure to recognize God's claims systematically by saying: "My all have I given to the Lord." True enough, an entire consecration involves the laying of all we have and are at the feet of Jesus for His use and glory; but, as a rule, it is His intention that we shall be stewards over His possessions. While He has a perfect right to demand the entire amount of the capital at any time, what He ordinarily desires is, "faithful stewards." The fact that we confess that all we have belongs to the Lord, does not exempt us, by any means, from a definite and systematic recognition of such claims.

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10 -- THE TITHE THE MINIMUM

Paying the tithe cannot be properly looked upon as giving, at all. It is simply paying a just debt, equal to the rental for another's house in which we live, or the share of grain due another for the use of his land. Giving God less is robbing Him, outright. The "offerings" were left somewhat to the people, and were measured partly by their religious devotion. Yet it was possible to rob God in relation to the freewill "offerings". The tithe is absolutely God's minimum requirement. A land owner furnishes half the seed, and requires half the increase. Certainly God is liberal when He furnishes every thing, to ask only a tenth.

Recalling the fact that God has required the tithe, even from Patriarchal times, besides the numerous offerings, how can any one ask of Him more lenient terms in this dispensation? God usually requires of men, in keeping with their light. God's revelation of Himself has been

progressive; the largest revelation which He has ever made to the world being in the person of His Son. Today we are living in the blazing sunlight of that revelation. Despite this, He still demands the minimum in recognition of His claims -- the tithe. The terms of his proprietorship are the same as when faithful Abraham, without law, without prophecy or without the historic Christ, paid to Melchizedek the tithe, and when absconding and tricky Jacob met the Lord and vowed to pay, at least God's required minimum, in recognition of His claims. The surprise is not that God demands, but that He demands so little. Not having changed His terms of proprietorship, still the tithe, it is reasonable that He should expect us, who live in this dispensation, to express our appreciation of our superior privileges by liberality in our free-will "offerings". None should look upon the tithe as sufficient. It is in relation to the "offerings" where latitude is given for the expression of our religious devotion. Since God, in His gift to the world gave the maximum -- the greatest possible gift, Jesus Christ, no true Christian should think of refusing God the minimum -- the tithe, without a blush of shame.

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11 -- GIVING GOD THE BEST

An example of religious devotion in the giving of offerings (not the tithe) is found in the following incident:

A Christian gentleman, of my acquaintance and related to my ministry, was, one day, driving his cattle to pasture. Among the members of his herd was a calf rather unpromising. Something seemed to say to him: "Give that calf to the Lord. His blessing upon it will cause it to grow and fatten." Honest in his conviction, he then and there resolved that it should be the Lord's. To his surprise, the calf became leaner and leaner, and after a while, died. God had taught him a lesson. The lesson was that He did not want the lean and sickly calves of his herd. The incident was related to the good wife, and both agreed that the Lord had taught them that He wanted their best. They then decided that all the gold coins, regardless of denomination, which came into their possession, should be laid aside for the Lord. They honored the Lord with their best, and God blessed them abundantly.

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12 -- A FINANCIAL BLESSING IN TITHING

Some years ago, when delivering a message on Christian Stewardship, there sat in my congregation, a good Christian woman whose husband was not saved. Her husband's earnings not coming into her hands, whatever, and she having but a scanty income from produce, had been giving but little to the support of the Lord's work. She became convinced that tithing was right, and resolved to honor the Lord with the tithe of her meager income, though she knew that even that would be against her husband's wish. Visiting them a year or two later, she recalled the sermon, and related what she had vowed to do, and what she had been doing; volunteering the information that her beginning to honor the Lord with her small tithe marked the day of better things for them, in their home. They had been having a hard time to clothe and feed their family, but from that time a remarkable change had taken place. God honors for faithfulness even in small things.

The above incident is in keeping with His promise: "Honor the Lord with the first-fruits of all thine increase: so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." Prov. 3:9. There is not the least doubt in my mind but that nine dollars, with the Lord's blessing upon it, will go farther -- will buy more clothing and food, and pay more rent and other necessary expenses, than ten dollars without God's blessing upon it. The skeptical may ask: "how can these things be?" I do not know whether I can tell "how," but the Lord who took a few loaves and a few small fishes and with them satisfied the hunger of five thousand men, besides women and children, can also bless the remaining nine dollars after it has been honored with the tithe, until it will purchase more than ten dollars selfishly spent, without recognizing His claims. Should the question "how" be still urged, just "how" He satisfied the hunger of a multitude, with five loaves and a few little fishes, is still a mystery, but nevertheless a fact. Whether the food enlarged in His hands as He blessed it, whether it increased as the disciples distributed it, or whether it swelled in the mouths of those who ate, we cannot say; but the miracle was accomplished, and after the multitude of people were filled, there were taken up twelve basket-fulls of the fragments. God can bless in a thousand ways which we know not.

A Christian gentleman in an Eastern city entered into business, incorporating into his business policy the tithing system. He was greatly prospered, and later decided to double his tithe. This he has done for some years, and, today, is one of the largest and most successful merchants in his line.

No one should decide to practice tithing with a motive of financial gain. To do so will result in disappointment, as that would be selfish, indeed. God, however, is a covenant keeping God, and will faithfully perform His promises in behalf of those who honor Him and recognize His claims upon them.

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13 -- AN ACCURATE STEWARDSHIP

Too many forget that they are accountable to God for their stewardship, and are very indifferent and inaccurate in regard to it. Some give haphazardly or just as they feel. Such a stewardship is not scriptural in any sense, and cannot be expected to bring the favor and blessing of God. Where have we license to deal more carelessly with God than with our fellowmen? Has God not a right to, and does he not expect treatment and stewardship of the standard of accuracy as is demanded by our fellowmen?

Let us suppose an illustration. A man of large wealth proposes to start you in business, furnishing all capital required. He places you in entire charge of this business, but makes, as a condition of so doing, that you pay to him a tenth of the increase, the amount to be paid annually. During the year, as he came around, you gave him small amounts at various times, but at the end of the year made no effort to settle with him, accurately, for the year's business. After a time he comes around and demands settlement. To this demand you reply: "Did I not give you five dollars at one time, twenty-five at another, and fifteen at another?" "Very true," he replies, "but what I want is the amount of one tenth of the increase of the business, and that accurately." You do not blame him for

demanding figures as to the increase of the business, and expecting an accurate payment of his share. With how much less courtesy and fairness should we treat Him who has furnished us all our capital, and who asks of us a tenth of the increase?

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14 -- A TESTED STEWARDSHIP

The ministry of stewardship is a probationary one like all other things connected with our stay here; consequently a tried ministry. There will be testings to face and difficulties to overcome. The same spirit which prompts to a robbing of God of reverence, worship, and service also prompts to a robbing of God of the tithe which is due him. Faithfulness in stewardship will be honored by God.

A well known Evangelist is responsible for the following incident, the truthfulness for which he vouches. A Christian man and his good wife were led to tithe their income. Although they were poor, and the income barely sufficient to meet the family requirements, the tithe was faithfully laid aside for the Lord's treasury. Before long the only cow, upon which the family supply of milk and butter depended, died. The father and husband scarcely knowing what to do, under the circumstances, discussed, with his good wife, the advisability of using the tithe money for the purchasing of another cow. This, they correctly decided would not be right. Having obtained victory over the trial, the husband went and skinned the cow; sold the hide and tithed the money he received for the hide. Such faithfulness is certainly to be praised, and cannot go unrewarded.

There are many illustrations of faithful stewardship, but there should be many more. Those who practice definite, systematic giving, for a time, by tithing, would not want to return to a haphazard way of giving. It is too uncertain, too unsystematic and too unscriptural. Personally, I have practiced the tithing system ever since fifteen years of age, and would not think of turning away from it now.

A minister, speaking upon tithing, who was not a very good mathematician, said, that he had enjoyed tithing so much that he had made up his mind that he would double up, and instead of giving a tenth, he would give a twentieth. He meant to say that he intended to give two tenths.

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15 -- WHAT TO TITHE

A legitimate question and one which is frequently asked is: "What are we to tithe?" The question seems to be whether the net proceeds should be tithed, or the income. In olden times the tithe was taken of all that remained after the first-fruits had been set apart, and not of that which remained after all expenses had been paid. There are some who argue that all that the law of the tithe requires is, that a tenth of the net proceeds be paid the Lord, after all the expenses of the year, living expenses and all, have been met, and the net proceeds are ready to be placed in the bank or invested. If this were true many good people would be exempted from recognizing God's claims upon them, and thus miss the blessings which accrue from faithful stewardship, because many good

people have nothing left at the end of the year, to put into the bank or to invest. The church, too, would seriously miss the help and support of these people. It is not the surplus which is to be tithed, but the income or increase.

In Old Testament times men brought the tenth of the grain, or of the fruit, or of the cattle, etc. If they chose to pay the tithe in money, and retain the produce or cattle, they were obliged to add one fifth to the value. Lev. 27:31. Even the Levites were commanded to tithe the tithe which was paid to them, and this tithe of tithes was paid to Aaron the priest. Num. 18:26-28.

To be more explicit, if a man earns ten dollars per. week, it is the ten dollars which is to be tithed, not that which remains after the expenses of living are deducted. A farmer who hauls his grain to market should tithe the money obtained for same. The farmer who hauls no grain to market, but who feeds the same to his stock, should tithe the selling price of the stock, to which untithed grain was fed. The law of the tithe provided no officers to compel the bringing in of the tithe, or to judge whether or not the tithe was justly paid. This was left to their individual consciences, they being required to solemnly declare in the presence of God, whether or not they had faithfully paid the tithe, at the end of every third year. Deut. 26:12-16. The practice of the tithe is not difficult to such as desire to honor the Lord by faithfully bringing the same to Him. We should always keep in mind that it is the Lord with whom we are dealing, not man.

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16 -- TO WHOM PAID

As previously noted, the tithe was originally paid to the Levites, for their support. They had received no land inheritance in Canaan; but the remaining tribes were to till the extra amount of ground and support them with the tenth part of the income from the ground, in order that they might devote themselves entirely to the service of the sanctuary, and be relieved from every anxiety concerning their temporal needs. If anything was paid out for any other cause, or for the support of any other persons, it was an extra offering and not deducted from this tenth which was to be paid into the treasury for the support of the Levites.

Many good men believe that the individual has no right to pay his tithe, or even a part of it, to individuals or causes outside of his church treasury. It is true that the cause of Christ is greatly hindered by men, who are good meaning and whose intentions are good, paying out the Lord's money haphazardly or to individuals, or causes independent of the church treasury. This is sometimes done upon the pretext of the "Lord's leadings," etc.; but the cases are exceptional when God ignores his regularly ordained channels of blessing, and consents to or prompts to spasmodic, haphazard or even independent giving. There are church treasuries into which prayerful, conscientious men cannot pay their tithes, because of a hireling, worldly ministry, high salaried secretaryships, or a backslidden condition in general. We would advise no one to pay a single penny into such a treasury: This, however, is not advising action independent of the church. The thing to do, in such cases, is to sever connections from such a church, and to become identified with a church where such conditions do not prevail. No man has any right to be identified with a church, into whose treasury he cannot conscientiously and joyously pay his tithe. God has a worthy people and a safe treasury in the world, despite much apostasy in these evil days. Money paid out

for special causes, and independently of the Lord's recognized treasury, should evidently not affect the tithe.

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17 -- CORRUPT FINANCIAL SYSTEMS

If the Holy Spirit and the bible had anything to do with the financial systems of some churches many false and corrupt practices would be abandoned. Giving, as an act of worship, is practically unknown. The church is educating people to a sort of a commercial trafficking of the cheapest and most beggarly kind. Supporting the Lord's cause by buying an oyster, a dish of ice cream, a piece of cake or a parcel of rummage is certainly a false and an undignifying practice, yet this is that to which the church is educating her devotees. In stead of educating her people to give systematically, scripturally and as an act of worship this false standard is endorsed by its prevailing practice. What a serious mistake! As a result of this system people give to God only. by a cheap commercialism, and never experience the joy of giving an act of worship.

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18 -- THE PROPHETIC CHALLENGE

Who can tell what would be the result in the professed people of God would accept the challenge of Malachi? "Bring ye all the tithes into the store house, that there may be meal in my 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." Mal. 3:10. Associated with this challenge is not only spiritual blessings -- the opening of "the windows of heaven" -- but also financial prosperity. The very next verse says: "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not "destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine east her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of Hosts."

Can God do this? Here is His challenge; try Him. Taking this challenge into account, and the indifference with which some men treat God's claims, it is not surprising that some do lint prosper better spiritually: the surprise is that they can prosper at all. Some of the cause of spiritual decline and even financial failure is. withholding from God the tithe -- that share of our increase which He claims.

As in olden times when people faithfully brought in the tithe, additional treasure rooms had to be built to accommodate the supply, so a faithful practice of the tithing system, on the part of the church of today, would necessitate the enlarging of the Lord's treasury to accommodate the ingathering. There would be plenty for home and foreign missions, plenty to support the ministry, to build churches and to carry on every legitimate department of the Lord's work. Instead of begging for funds to meet emergencies, departmental treasurers would have to he appointed to have charge of the various funds, and to make investigations as to needy fields and worthy causes for the most profitable investment of the Lord's money. The practice of the tithing system would revolutionize the affairs Of the church, and would make financially possible the evangelization of the world in a single generation. It would give those in the church, employed in cheap commercial

trafficking, time to go to prayer meeting, visit the sick, take proper care of their families, and do many other pious things which seem necessarily neglected under the practice of the false financial systems prevalent.

The church has nothing to fear, by the way of loss, in the practice of the tithe. A man once expressed fear that should he keep accurate account and tithe his income, he would give less, thinking that possibly he was now giving more than the tithe. There was no occasion for entertaining such fear in this man's ease, and not in many other cases. Usually people are surprised at the amount they have to give, when they tithe. Further, it is a joy to give, when giving becomes a real and vital part of our religious worship.

Let us, as Christians, adopt the scriptural method of definite, systematic giving. Having been faithful in our stewardship, having honestly and continuously recognized God's claims upon us, some day we shall receive the Master's plaudit: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things" enter thou into the joys of thy Lord" Matt. 25:21.

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THE END