# **TITHING**

**AND** 

# THE CHRISTIAN

BY

REV. PROF. ADAM LOUGHRIDGE

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THE PURPOSE OF THIS BOOKLET is to give a brief summary of the teaching of the Word of God on the subject of giving to the Lord's work, and to encourage Christians to accept their full responsibility in this important matter.

The day of Pentecost achieved two remarkable results in the lives of the first believers. It gave them a consuming passion to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and it awakened in them a new sense of responsibility in the use of their material possessions. We must acknowledge that whatever the nature of our possessions, whatever the form of our income, the ultimate giver is God. We are, therefore, accountable to Him for the way in which we use our money and particularly for the support we give to the work of His Kingdom. As we endeavour to discover our obligations in the matter of giving, we must not be guided by what others do, but by the teaching of the word of God. The Scriptures are the only rule, not only for doctrine, discipline and worship, but also for giving. When men and women acknowledge Christ as their Saviour and Lord, they must accept what the Scriptures teach about giving as well as about other principles of Christian service.

#### GENERAL PRINCIPLES

The general principle of giving laid down in Scripture is that we should give according to the Lord's blessing and our own ability. In Deuteronomy 16: 16, 17 we read: "They shall not appear before the Lord empty; every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord Thy God which He hath given thee." Ezra records that "the people offered freely for the house of God, and they gave after their ability to the treasure of the work." In Acts 9 we read that "the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea." And Paul's command to the Corinthian Church was: "Let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him."

#### A SPECIFIC STANDARD

But God did not leave his people to interpret these general principles of giving according to their inclination. He gave them direction by precept and example. Thus we read in Leviticus 27: 30: "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" The tribe of Levi were to serve in the tabernacle, and in return for this service they were to receive the Lord's tenth. "Behold I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel." There are those who say that we are not bound by these legal principles for supporting the Lord's work. But tithing is older than law. Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedek. (Genesis 14). Jacob promised the tithe to the Lord. (Genesis 28). Tithing was already common practice that was later embodied in the law of Moses. And the law of the tithe did not pass away with the passing of the types and shadows of the ceremonial law. There is evidence that when Israel observed this Godappointed method of giving they were blessed; when they failed to observe it, they missed the blessing. Nehemiah rebuked the people of his day for their failure to pay tithes and Malachi pleaded in God's name for the revival of the practice if the people were to enjoy God's blessing and favour.

# THE NEW TESTAMENT ENDORSEMENT.

In the New Testament, this system of giving to the Lord's work is commended. The Lord Jesus in Matthew 23 speaks of the hypocrisy of the Pharisees who are so meticulous in paying tithes but so careless about justice, mercy and faith. He commands that both tithing and godliness should be observed in the words: "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" He repeats the instruction in Luke 11: 42. In 1st Corinthians 9 Paul indicates the important place of the tithe in the New Testament Church. He affirms that just

as the tithe supported the Levites in the Old Testament, so should the tithe support the ministers of the gospel and the work of the Kingdom. And in Hebrews 7 it is asserted that as tithes were paid to Melchisedek, so should they be to Christ.

It seems clear then in the light of Scripture teaching, that the man who denies God's claim to a portion of his possessions is a rebel against His authority, and that the man who gives less than the tenth of his income or increase to the Lord is a robber. Indeed, if in Malachi's day the non payment of the tithe was robbery, can a Christian who witholds the tenth be counted honest towards God.

## THE BLESSINGS OF TITHING

Tithing leads to blessing in three different directions. First of all, there is blessing for the one who gives. The payment of the tithe puts God's claims before personal considerations and it promotes a new interest in the work of the Church and the things of God's Kingdom. To give Him the residue is to dishonour Him.

There is blessing for the whole Church. There is no longer the necessity to work on a meagre budget or to resort to third rate methods for raising money. When Paul commends the Philippian Church for its generosity

he mentions the fruit that giving produces. Philippians 4: 17 (Philips) reads: "It isn't the value of the gift that I am keen on, it is the reward that will come to you because of these gifts that you have made." Later on he says: "Your generosity is like a lovely fragrance, a sacrifice that pleases the very heart of God."

There is blessing for the whole community People outside the Church are given a true impression of the dignity of Christian service. When others see the Church supported in a realistic manner they are encouraged to believe that her message must be worth while. The promise of God in Malachi to those who fulfil their obligations, indicates not only personal blessing, but revival blessing in the whole community and nation.

## A CHALLENGE.

In conclusion it must be stressed that while the tithe seems to be a large proportion to those who have never considered the subject seriously, it is really only a beginning. It was when the Jew had given his tithe that his voluntary offering began. Gifts for the poor, the cost of the sacrifices, the expense of erecting the Temple buildings, were all in addition to the tithe. Shall we, as members of the Christian Church, be satisfied with a smaller proportion? Shall we not rather ask the question: "What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me?" A Christian has not discharged his obligation to the Lord when he has paid the tithe. He must be concerned with his responsibility for the remaining nine-tenths. The fact that everything we have is from the Lord should govern all our spending and lead us to do it all for His glory.

#### SOME SURPRISES.

Fred Mitchell quotes someone as saying that the man who begins to give in this way will have six genuine surprises. He will be surprised

- \* at the amount of money he has for the Lord's work;
- \* at the deepening of his spiritual life in paying the tithe;
- \* at his ease in meeting his own obligations with the nine-tenths;
- \* at the ease with which he is able to go on from one-tenth to larger giving;
- \* at the increased sense of stewardship over the nine-tenths that remain; and
- \* at himself for not adopting the plan sooner.

## AN EXAMPLE

John D. Rockefeller, the founder of the Standard Oil Company of New Jersey, better known to us as Esso, when asked about giving to the work of the Lord, replied: "I am a tither. My first wages amounted to one and a half dollars a week (then about six shillings). The first week I took my wages home to my mother. She held the money in her lap and explained to me that she would be happy if I would give a tenth of it to the Lord. I did, and from that week to this day I have tithed every dollar that the Lord has entrusted to me, and I want to say to you that if I had not tithed that first dollar I made, I would not have tithed the first million dollars I made. Train the children to tithe, and they will grow up to be faithful stewards of the Lord."

"He that is faithful in that which is least, is faithful also in much." Luke 16.10. Let us be faithful stewards of God's unfailing gifts.

## FOR FURTHER STUDY.

- CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP: The Scripture Gift Mission.
- THE STEWARDSHIP OF MONEY: Fred Mitchell. I.V.F.
- RICH ENOUGH TO BE GENEROUS: J. M. Neilson. Epworth.
- THE DIVINE ECONOMY: A. C. Conrad. Eerdmans.
- Wherein Have We Robbed God: G. Campbell Morgan. Revell.
- Money: Thoughts for God's Stewards: Andrew Murray. Revell.
- I TITHE JOYFULLY: A BOOK OF LETTERS FOR THOSE WHO Do. Moody Press.
- Money Talks: Tom Rees. Hildenborough Hall.
- THE WHOLE TITHE: P. W. Thompson. Marshall, Morgan & Scott.

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