

THE TITHING CUSTOM.

In God's dealing with "Israel after the flesh," a part of their law was that for collecting tithes. A *tithe* signifies a tenth, and all Israelites were thus taxed one tenth of their yearly income for the support of their religious government, etc.

Seeing the immense and constant flow of wealth which such a system of taxation secures, has led to various imitations of this Jewish custom among later religionists. In all countries where the Roman Catholic church holds political control, she exacts tithes; for instance, in France she collected tithes until the Revolution of 1790: and in some parts of Italy they continued to be collected until a few months ago, when they were abolished by the present king (who, however, provided for the living expenses of the Catholic clergy, whose income from private estates is insufficient, out of the national taxes). Against this abolition of tithes, Catholic journals here, whose publishers are not obligated by it, protest loudly, yet it is doubtful whether it is not a part of an understood arrangement between the king and the pope. Doubtless the growing civilization of the Italians makes these tithes yearly more meagre and more difficult of collection, and the shrewd Leo, foreseeing the end of this income, has preferred to see its collection taken from him, while at the same time the civil rule, by appointing for the maintenance of the clergy out of the general tax, has made its income more certain and reliable, both for the present and future.

Various denominations of Protestants, while not insisting on the *one tenth*, nevertheless often refer to the Jewish tithes, and without saying that the same *Law* is binding upon their faithful, they certainly often give that impression to their hearers.

Tithing is probably the secret of the success of the Mormons and "Seventh-day Adventists." The constant flow of money into their

treasuries – one-tenth the earnings of all their people – permits the prosecution of their proselyting work far and near, pays the salaries and traveling expenses of many missionaries, and engages talent in writing and publishing which otherwise would lie dormant.

But what – Are we under this law of tithes? Nay, verily! "Ye are not under the law, but under grace." (Rom. 6:14.) The tithing, like all other features of the Law, was given, not to the "new creatures in Christ Jesus" of this Gospel age, but to the Jews, who as minor children were under arbitrary, fixed laws, and not under grace. (See Gal. 4:1-7.) But what does it signify to be under *grace* in this matter of our giving to the Lord's work? It does not mean that there is less need of money than formerly, nor that the grace of God will provide the money in some other and miraculous manner. It merely means, *You* are no longer bound or obligated by command to give one-tenth of your income, but are left free in this regard that your grateful hearts may find opportunity for manifesting their love and gratitude to the Lord by liberality even when at the cost [R1029 : page 6] of self-denial. This is the grace or liberty bestowed upon us as matured children of God, over and above the servant or childhood estate of the previous dispensation.

Is this, our liberty, a reason for devoting *less* than one-tenth to the Lord's service, because he does not *command* it of us, but leaves us free to act for ourselves under the influence of love for the truth? Would not the command generally be the very *least* that would be reasonable? and indicate that proportion of our income as [R1029 : page 7] the Jew was privileged to give as much more than a tithe as he pleased.

In this as in all the features of the Law given to Israel, we find that the *letter* of it, as they understood it, is *less* than what would be our *reasonable* service under grace. When Bro. Adamson met us, after seeing some features of the truth and getting acquainted, we were pressing home upon his attention the Bible doctrine of full consecration, and he, supposing us to refer to money matters, at once replied, "For years I have given a tithe, a tenth of my earnings to the

Lord's service." We admired and loved the earnestness which this indicated, and told him so, but at the same time pointed out that *one-tenth* was only the measure or limit placed upon God's people under the law in the servant age. Bro. A. was surprised that any one thought one-tenth too little, well knowing, as we all do, that few give one-fourth of a tenth of their income. When, however, we pointed out that full consecration means *ten-tenths*, the whole, he saw it at once and began to do that. Now he sees with us that *entire* consecration of all we possess – time, talents, money, *all*, – is our "REASONABLE SERVICE." From that time on, he has been considering all that he has as fully and forever given up to the Lord, and he himself appointed of God the steward or executor to use all, according to his ability, to the glory and honor of him who called us out of darkness into this marvelous light. Brother Adamson, as you all know, considers that he can best use his time and talents to God's glory by selling DAWN, and he is doing with his might what his hands find to do.

So, it is for each one who has presented himself fully and entirely to God, "a living sacrifice," to consider how he can most fully and efficiently *use his all* in the great service to which he has consecrated it. Such, therefore, cannot decide their course by their likes and dislikes, their fears, preferences, or conveniences; it is their own preferences that they agreed to give up, their own wills that they agreed to ignore, and reckon as dead, – this was the "*living sacrifice*" (Rom. 12:1), which all the truly consecrated laid upon God's altar, to be consumed in the service of God, a sacrifice of sweet savor. It is well that the consecrated should each carefully scrutinize his own heart, and consider well whether he serves himself or God, whether he is a *living sacrifice* to God, or to business, to family, to society, or worst of all to selfishness and indolence.

Even aside from our covenant of entire consecration to the Lord's service, we should gladly and of willing hearts do if possible ten-fold more in the service of the truth, from love, than we ever did from fear, in the service of error. Nay, more; looking back and remembering what

we have unwittingly done in past years to spread *error*, to bind and blind God's children, and to dishonor and misrepresent our Heavenly Father's plan and character, we should, remembering that "*the time is short*," strain every effort to at least undo the mischief we helped to work, that perchance in the reckoning time when we give our account we may be able to see, as our works pass in review, that we have not more *dishonored* than honored our Lord.

His servants ye are to whom ye render service, is an evident truth. So we see that for a long time we, though like Paul honest, and verily thinking that we did God service, were *really* in a measure servants of the devil, forwarding error, ignorantly opposing truth, and dishonoring God and his Word. Oh! how glad we should be that we did not die while ignorantly fighting against God and blaspheming his holy name (by misrepresenting his character and plan), and helping to teach others to thus blaspheme. God knows that in ignorance we did it, and would have accepted of us through our dear Redeemer; but oh! what shame and confusion would have been ours, to find that life had been more than wasted, in opposing him whom we loved and sought to serve. See 1 Cor. 3:14,15.

But thanks be to God, though "the time is short" it is very favorable to us, that we may not only undo much of our past misdoings, but, besides, do more – do something to honor the Lord, do some good and acceptable work upon the good foundation, work which will abide and which our Lord will acknowledge and reward, saying "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joys of thy Lord." Yes, now is the most favored time, and this should encourage us. In the past, our efforts and expenditures of time and money in the service of error yielded but slight returns compared with what the same time, talent, and money used *now*, backed by the truth and the *love* of it, will do.

This should encourage us all, and time and talent and money should be spent as never before in the spread of the truth – in letter writing, in talking, in preparing, translating, printing, loaning, selling,

etc., reading matter; and in every way lifting up the truth, the standard of the Lord before the people – Isa. 62:10.

We are glad to note the sentiments of some of the brethren and sisters that 1888 A.D. shall be one of greater effort in the Master's service, in the service of the truth, than any before. We say, Amen! and trust it will be the sentiment of all the *saints*, the consecrated. We pray that God will grant us each the needed grace whereby to overcome the selfishness and smallness of our "earthen vessels," that our ambitions, hopes and affections may be lifted from the groveling, earthly things, to the heavenly things promised to such as are *faithful* to the end of life's race. How many will appreciate the privilege of laying up honors and treasures in heaven, at the cost of treasures and comforts and honors earthly? Some – the "overcomers," who delight to do God's will, and who count all things earthly but as loss and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord.

Ask yourselves, you who have tasted "the *good* word of God," How much better is it than the *error* which once beclouded love and hope with fear, and which, instead of real faith, gave ignorant, unreasoning, unsatisfying, blind credulity? How much (trying to put a money value on that which is more precious than rubies – yea, than much fine gold) – how much *more* is the truth worth than the error you formerly held? You paid liberally for the error, we all know. If you did not give hours of *time* and *thought* in preparing for and attending upon the fairs, suppers, socials, treats and what not, of some sect, you at least gave time to hearing the preaching of error, and money to pay for that preaching at home as well as in foreign lands. It is safe to estimate that if you were a member of any of the sects of "Christendom," *in good and regular standing*, it cost you not less than five hours of time (including time for dressing, etc.) and from fifteen cents to one dollar in money each week. (In this we include the usual collection taken at every Sunday service, besides the special collections for Home and Foreign Missions, and for Bible and Tract Societies; also pew rent and expenditures in connection with fairs and socials.) This calculation is

very moderate, many giving five times as many hours, and ten times as much money, yet this, our moderate estimate, shows that error and blindness and fear cost you, in fifty-two weeks of each year, 260 hours of time and from \$7.80 to \$52.00 per year in money.

Now ask and answer to yourself the questions – How much more is the truth worth than the error? and How much more time and money am I spending in spreading the truth in my own heart, and in the hearts of others? If you are not satisfied with your course in view of your own calculation, begin at once to show the Lord, yourself, and your family, how highly you appreciate the truth above error. Act at once, for "the time is short." – See Feb. '87 TOWER.

We are taking for granted, of course, that you have stopped your contribution of time, talent and money formerly given cheerfully to the spread of what you now see to be error, but which at the time, Paul-like, you "verily thought to be God's service." No doubt God accepted your good intention while blinded by error, but now you *see*, and now you are responsible as a steward of God's blessings – time, talent, money, etc. – and can neither waste them upon yourself, nor use them to spread error, without having in due time to plead *guilty*, as unfaithful servants. We have great light, and should remember that "Where much is given much will be required."

Instead, therefore, of being willing to transfer merely the *same* amount of money, and time and influence from the spread of error to the spread of truth, we all should feel as we sometimes sing –

"Truth – how precious is the treasure!
Teach us, Lord, its worth to know."
