

THE CHRISTIAN'S STEWARDSHIP OF MONEY.

By Rev. W. E. Smith.

In America today the Church is giving large attention to the matter of Christian stewardship, and is making earnest appeal to the membership that has so rapidly increased in wealth to bring their tithes into the storehouse, and prove that God will deal as generously with his people in the new dispensation as He did with his people in the old.

Some, however, take exception to the rule of the tithe, saying it was an old Jewish law and like many other rules was abrogated in the dispensation of grace. We are not going to plead and argue for the law of the tenth as a hard and fast principle, but we will contend that God expects us to do as liberally for his cause in the dispensation of grace as the Jews did for their religion under the stern demand of the law."

I find also that those who take exception to the principle of the tithe are invariably those who give in a haphazard fashion, and came very far from giving God a tenth of their increase. And these make the argument for their exemption from hard and fast rules but a cloak to hide their littleness of soul and selfishness of spirit. There are some who profess a high state of grace who instead of giving largely to the support of the local church and Christian missions, as their means would allow, dole out a small portion, at the same time singing "I'm glad salvation's free."

We have always believed that the genuine work of grace that destroys carnality invariably fills the soul of the individual with the benevolent and sacrificial spirit, and in all our experience we have as a rule found the generous givers of their material substance. We have seen a man working by the day, the supporter of a large family, and a mortgage on his house, laying \$1.00 a Sunday on the contribution plate to support the preacher, and giving largely besides to missions and incidental expenses. I have seen a woman who took in washing and cared for fresh-air children, giving a similar amount. Both these were hilarious givers and made the social service a time of praise and gladness by their unctuous testimonies. And they are only two among many I have met whose very spirit of sacrificial devotion attested the genuineness of their profession, and their burning desire to further the Redeemer's Kingdom.

But what must be thought of the profession of holiness on the part of those who have broad and fertile acres free from debt, mortgages on other farms, with bank accounts besides, whose total yearly contributions to the service of the Lord fall far below \$50.00 and perhaps would be less than \$25.00. I am sure that such parsimonious souls do rejoice they are not under the law but under grace. But they excuse themselves and say "I belong to the Lord and when I feed and clothe myself I am giving to the Lord; when I buy my wife a dress and my children food and clothing I am giving to the Lord, and when I buy some more land and put more money into the bank I am doing it for the Lord." Well, according to that argument

the millionaire who builds a palatial home and loads family with luxuries is a most benevolent creature.

But such an argument never was inspired by grace; it springs from carnal desire that makes self and not Christ the center of devotion. When we think of the vast needs of the heathen world, and the great opportunity for home missionary enterprise how can those with large means keep adding to their wealth, at the same time robbing God, and saying all they have belongs to him. We contend that the giving of a tenth is not the standard for a true Christian. It is only a good starting point and when one begins to give a tenth he soon goes beyond it. **The principle of sacrifice is the rule that must govern the Spirit-Baptized Christian.** God will not be satisfied with merely a tenth from some when they might well give more. When Mr. Wesley received 28 pounds sterling he gave two pounds to the Lord and lived on the remainder; when his income had increased to 50 pounds a year a year he still lived on 26 pounds and gave the rest to God. He said, "If I die leaving more than enough to bury me decently let people call me a hypocrite and a fraud." Though hundreds of thousands of pounds came into his possession John Wesley would not hold on to it. He said, "I must pass it on lest the love of money find a place in my heart." That very sacrificial spirit made him the mighty man of God he was and compelled even his enemies to confess that he lived to bless mankind. But think of the little souls that quote Mr. Wesley's theology and doctrine and still manifest nothing of his sacrificial spirit—giving just a few dollars to the local church and less for the propagation of the gospel in heathen lands. Yet with considerable wealth at their disposal.

A man may save all his days and then at his death leave his fortune to build memorial schools, and the same schools be but monuments to perpetuate the memory of the old man's parsimony when he was alive. Carnal selfishness may find great delight in the thought of a big institution to perpetuate the name after death, but be strong to resist the appeals that arise from the needs of sin-cursed humanity in the present.

Many a man has held back more from God than he should, has accumulated considerable wealth, to have the same squandered by profligate children, or to be misappropriated by fraudulent lawyers.

One thing is sure, the seeming prosperity of a Christian who robs God will be turned into a curse. He will see the money-loving spirit in himself perpetuated in his son who will have little place for the sacrificial view of life. The more such a man gets the poorer he becomes, because he shuts up his bowels of compassion to the needs of suffering humanity. When a true Christian sees that the grace of God has saved him from or restrained him from those habits that involve great financial expense he can easily give a tithe and still be ahead. He pays no money for tobacco, snuff, opium or alcoholic stimulants. He pays nothing for theatre tickets, movies, circuses or shows. He buys no dandy adornments, and lives the simple life that conserves health, in-

spires industry and makes for material prosperity. There are so many things he doesn't have to have and is better off without. Surely such a person can afford to give liberally to God. A tenth is a good starting point but sacrifice is the limit. "There is that which scattereth and yet it increaseth. There is that which withholdeth more than is meet tendeth to poverty." "The liberal soul shall be made fat."

The sanctified child of God finds giving quite as much a means of grace as praying. The proverbial old deacon found he could pray far more effectively with the poor widow and for her when he had carried to her home a well filled bag of potatoes from his abundant store.

But right here let me say, we have no sympathy with the doctrine of merely giving with the idea of getting more, the same as we prime a pump with a quart of water to get two pails full. Those who go into the giving business with such a selfish motive will be disappointed. We must first give ourselves fully to God—all we have, are and expect to be, and then see that God gets His full share. Be our means great or small what is left will give us more real satisfaction and do us more permanent good than were we to put God off with little and shut our ears to the cry of the world's great need.

IT NEVER PAYS.

Many are tempted to lower their Christian principles to win their friends to Christ. But it never pays and tends to work harm in two ways: -It will cause disrespect for your Christian principles from the one you would win to Christ and from others, and thus lessen your influence; it will also stultify your own conscience and blacken your character. The Christian Witness gives some instances in point:

"A woman once said to us when we were her pastor: 'I shall go to the circus. I know it is wrong; but my husband has commenced going to church, and I fear if I refuse to go with him to the circus, he will quit going to church. Don't oppose me; I am determined to go.' She went to the circus, and we do not remember seeing her husband at church again. We disgust men when we let down to please them.

"On the other hand, we knew a woman whose husband tried to keep her from attending and joining the church. She said to him, 'If you are determined to go to hell, you can do so; but you can not take me along with you.' He said afterwards that he never had a thing so shock him; but it led to reflection and conviction, and finally, his conversion.

"Let us not forget that God will stand by us if we are true to Him in principle. Compromise is death to the experience of holiness. Better die a thousands deaths than let down and lose our souls, for all compromise is of the devil. The worthies of Hebrew II. preferred death by the sword, fire, or famine to compromise. Had they not been firm and steadfast, we should never have heard of them."—Sel.

The thirtieth annual meeting of the Reformed Baptist Alliance is only nine short busy weeks in the future.