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THE CONVERSION OF SILAS AND ELIZABETH JONES
Together With
GOD'S SYSTEM OF FINANCE

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01 -- THE CONVERSION OF SILAS AND ELIZABETH JONES

The early spring with its fresh new life had come, and Elizabeth Jones had been for a week busy with her house-cleaning. This particular day she hoped to do the front room. Very dingy and old it was, with its worn rag carpet and battered furniture.

When she had spoken about it some time before to Silas, he had said, "It is good enough," and had added a snug sum to his bank account.

Silas Jones and his wife were members of one of the churches at Springdale. Silas was penurious naturally, and his religion had done but little for him at the point of his greatest need. If called upon to do so he would probably have suffered martyrdom for the truths he believed, but he had never been filled with the "love that constraineth" to love."

The years had come and gone and the lines in his face had grown harder and harder and his life more and more isolated. Elizabeth, his wife, was an overworked woman, given to fault-finding and doing what was her "duty to do." The Women's Foreign Missionary Society she did not believe in. If the conference claims were a few cents higher than usual she "could not see what was done with all the money," and the \$25 doled out to the preacher on his \$300 salary was an unmitigated hardship to both Silas and his wife.

Their only child, Tommie, a lad of nearly sixteen years, hated the church and his parent's religion, and was away from home nearly all his spare time. His father had made up his mind that Thomas was of "no account," and his mother, although she loved him did not know how to help him, and made matters worse by constantly scolding him for his boyish doings.

Conference, the fall before, had sent to the circuit a Brother Briggs, with his wife and four children, and both Brother Jones and his wife had announced it to be a great mistake on the part of the stationing committee. The preacher they had before could barely live, and then to send a man with twice as many children -- it was "too bad."

When the preacher and his family came, Silas and his wife found that they had better clothes and better furniture than any preacher's family who had been on the circuit before, and they were afraid he had left debts behind him that would disgrace the work. Then, again, the preacher was doing and teaching some things that they did not believe in.

In the first place he had a singing school at his house once each week, and he was getting all the unsaved, as well as the church members, to take part in it, and they thought it encouraged worldliness. Silas spoke to the preacher about it, but he said that it was a disciplinary equipment. Silas had his doubts about it, but the thing that grieved him more than all else was, that the preacher taught a part of the "Old Levitical law" and told the people that it was binding upon them, and had actually induced all but two or three families to believe that they ought to tithe. Silas said he did not believe any such thing, for under the Holy Ghost dispensation you were required to "give all." Silas could not overlook this error on the part of the preacher, and Elizabeth was so surprised about Sister Briggs' good clothes and tasty sitting room that she had contrasted them with her own again and again, and it had become in her mind almost a personal grievance. She had fully made up her mind to ask the preacher's wife "how they managed to get so many fine things." And so the preacher and his wife had been made to feel that they were not endorsed and upheld by Brother and Sister Jones.

True, they could not deny that more had been done for the work in the time that Brother Briggs had been with them than for a long time previous. At the last official meeting the preacher had reported all the conference claims paid to date. (Brother Jones knew that more than once at Springdale the preacher had made up the deficiency out of his own pocket) Also, two hundred and fifty dollars had been received on the preacher's salary, and there were funds in cash for work and subscriptions to paint and paper both church and parsonage. Silas had so far only paid in on salary and claims \$15, and where the money had come from was indeed a mystery. He knew the singing had greatly improved, the Sunday night congregation had more than doubled. They had seen Tommie the last two Sunday evenings slip into a corner close to the door, the church had become much encouraged. Three new members had been received. But Silas Jones was not the man to endorse error, so he would not attend the Tuesday night Bible readings, to "listen to any new fangled notions," and this is how matters stood that bright spring morning of which we write.

Mrs. Jones had done up all her morning work and had gone into the front room to begin the work of cleaning. She had been all around the room removing the carpet tacks, when, hearing the sound of wheels and hastily going to the door, she saw the minister with his wife and the two

younger children, driving into the yard. She saw something else, too, that brought to her heart a vague feeling of comfort that she did not stop to analyze, and that was Thomas coming to meet them with a smile on his face. She instinctively felt that Thomas liked the new minister and that it was good for him to do so. At the same time, and on account of what she had seen, she felt more kindly toward the new minister and his family, so that by the time they came to the door she was prepared to give them a genuine welcome.

The morning passed pleasantly, and although Mrs. Jones had watched constantly she had found no opportunity to ask Mrs. Briggs the much desired question. After dinner, however, while Mrs. Briggs was wiping the dinner dishes for her, she suddenly and with evident embarrassment said, "Sister Briggs, I don't see how you can have so many nice things; your front room looks a heap better than I ever expect to see mine look, and such things cost money!" For a moment the minister's wife flushed, but the next she said with a happy laugh, "Thereby hangs a tale. Do you really think you would care to hear it?" The eager face of Mrs. Jones told more plainly than her words how much she cared to hear.

"Well, then," said Mrs. Briggs, "it all began about four years ago. Mr. Briggs had been in the ministry for ten years. He had been moved six times, our salary had been small, and our family was increasing. That year James had worked hard to supply the deficiency in our income, and so was necessitated to neglect the work of the circuit. The members, as usual, felt that they had cause and were inclined to find fault. Our furniture was old and there was little of it. James' clothes were very shabby and there was no money to get more. We were sure we had done the best we knew how to do, but looked forward to conference with heavy hearts, for there seemed no prospect of anything better.

"One day the latter part of July, James came home from a hard day's work. It was prayer meeting night, and after supper he said, 'Helen, I have no beaten oil for the service of the sanctuary tonight. It's almost time for the meeting and I am too weary in body and mind to be a blessing to the people.' When he returned from the church I noticed that his depression had increased, but I saw also a new look that I could not understand. After the children were put to bed he came and took the sewing out of my hands and said in a strange voice, 'Wife, I am going to locate.' [drop out of the Methodist ministry -- DVM] I sprang to my feet and said, 'Oh, no, James, you do not mean that!' He drew me gently back to my seat and then said, 'Yes, I see no other way. I have done my best and the work goes down on my hands. It looks as though a preacher of the Gospel ought to be a celibate or have a good income aside from his salary. We can no longer live without my working constantly. How then, can I study, visit, hold meetings and do the work that a pastor ought to do? One of our farmers or mechanics could be a preacher and tend to his business beside just as readily.'

I could not speak. I had seen all these things before, but had not dared to give them voice. Was I to blame? I could not see in what; I had tried to be economical. I had learned to make cake without butter or eggs, pie crust without lard, all the children's clothes out of old ones, and to make a dollar hat last for three years and look almost like new. One of my prettiest hats was trimmed with the lining out of the sleeve of James' overcoat. No ! I could not see that I was to blame. Then there were the children. I had always thought they were God's gift to us, and I was so glad just then

that it was written, 'Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord: and the fruit of the womb is His reward,' for then I felt justified about the children you see.

It was 12 o'clock before we retired that night. The situation was viewed from all points, our own needs, the needs of the work, the future, the past, James' call to the ministry, our own experiences, and from the promises of God. When we came to the promises of the Lord the outlook was very bright and we almost smiled through our tears. But as we looked over the past years they had not seemed, in many respects, to do what we felt we had a right to expect, and so we went to bed with it fully settled that we should locate that fall."

By this time the dishes were finished and Mrs. Jones said, "Now we will go and sit on the back porch and you can tell me the rest. I see Thomas has put up a swing in the barn for the children. Thomas does like children to beat everything. I guess he's lonesome, sometimes, but then he has work enough and he ought not to be lonesome, I'm sure. Silas and Brother Briggs are a talking about politics there in the front room. Silas is a great Prohibitionist, he is. Thomas says he's no 'Prohi,' but then he is young and isn't converted yet. I can't understand about Thomas; just seems as though he was dead set against everything good. Now you just go right on, for I'm dreadfully anxious to know how you got all those new things. Somebody must have died and left you some money, I reckon."

"No; Sister Jones, the Lord Himself wrought deliverance for us," said Mrs. Briggs. "Well." said Mrs. Jones, "Silas always has stuck to it that if a preacher was where he ought to be religiously, and would work as he ought to do, the Lord would provide for him. I think conference has sent us a poor lot of preachers, for the Lord has never seemed to do much for them and most of them had a hard time. Silas always says, 'They can't be what they ought to be or the Lord would provide for them,' and what you've just been saying proves it."

After a moment's hesitation, Mrs. Briggs said, "I hope, Sister Jones, that you will not take the remainder of my little story amiss, but it really will not prove what I am sure you have concluded from my saying 'The Lord himself wrought deliverance for us.'"

"One night about a month after the time that James concluded to locate," she continued after they were comfortably seated, "James read the third chapter of Proverbs at our family prayers. When he had read, 'Honor the Lord with thy substance, and 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,' he stopped and said, 'Why is that not true today, Helen?' I had not thought over the subject, and simply said, 'I suppose that promise was given to the Jews and held good only for that dispensation.'

"No more was said then, but the prayer that James offered that night I shall never forget. He told the Lord how He had called him to preach the gospel, how he had striven to obey Him how he had not cared for hardship or for sacrifice, how it was more than his meat and drink to do the will of God, and how he could go no further unless God should help him. Then he plead the promises of God for strength, for guidance and deliverance. I felt that God would answer that prayer.

For two or three weeks after this I noticed that all of James' spare time was spent with his Bible, concordance and books of reference. One day I asked him what subject he was studying. He

replied, soberly, 'Bible finances.' A short time after that he came to me with a very bright face, saying: 'I have solved the problem. I shall not locate. I am going out to preach all of God's truth, and I expect to see better days.'

"Then he told me how through close study of the word, he was convinced that tithing was God's plan as much today as ever, and that he should preach it and practice it. We went to conference, and James was so full of courage that he was made a great blessing to the brethren. True, they smiled at his enthusiasm over the tithing system, but to him it was God's truth, and he was unmoved. I did not share his confidence, for I was not convinced or ready to give up my former vague ideas -- and indeed they were vague -- for it would have been difficult for me to have said what I did believe, had I tried to make a definite statement on the subject. After conference we went to Meadow Brook, and kindly and persistently James taught tithing as one of God's requirements, binding today, and it was not long before we began to see some effects in our own home.

"There was one of our members, a Sister Giles, whose husband was an unconverted man. They lived on a farm, and she had the milk from the cows to furnish the table and to do with as she pleased. She was my husband's first convert to the tithing system, and she gave us the tithe of the milk. She had not been counted for financial help before this time. We had never been able to buy more than a pint of milk each day and what a blessing that pail of milk was to us. It was never less than two quarts.

"A lady lived a short distance from us whom the milkman had supplied very irregularly with milk, as she was somewhat out of the way, and (you may think I did strangely but I did it just the same) I went to her and offered to sell her a quart of milk each day.

She was very glad for the opportunity, and I equally so, for an idea had come to me that I was anxious to carry out. I said nothing to James about it, but I made a little bag and put that milk money into it. Besides that I put with it what we had paid for the pint of milk we had been in the habit of buying. It amounted to 52 ½ cents each week, and when I went to my little bag the next May at house-cleaning time I found that I had \$15.00.

"Oh, what a prize it was! How well I remember that afternoon. James was away from home. I took that precious money and went shopping. I found a pretty ingrain carpet at 55 cents per yard, and as it was the last of the roll and I was the minister's wife I got the twenty-two yards for \$10. Then I went to the furniture store and bought James a nice rocker, and that took my remaining \$5.00. It was evening when they were brought up, and what a happy time I had over James' surprise, but I did not tell him my secret until just before conference, when I had gone to town with \$12 and bought a couch for \$8, a center table for \$3, Hoffman's head of Christ in a neat frame for 75 cents, a 10-cent glass vase for flowers and a pretty piece of silkilene for the clock shelf.

"James was so puzzled, and I could see he felt just a little distressed, and so I told him. How he did laugh at what he called my 'scheming.' A few of the members had begun to tithe, but the system had not become popular by any means, and James said, 'We will use this next official meeting for an object lesson.'

"When Sister Giles had concluded to give us the tithe of the milk she said, 'I do not want this reported on the salary, as it is such a little thing,' and up to this time nothing had been said about it, but it had amounted to so much that husband did not feel right to let it go uncounted. So he reckoned it up at two quarts per day and called it \$36. When the night of the official meeting came James gave in his report from Sister Giles: 'Carpet, \$10; rocker, \$5; couch, \$8; center table, \$3; picture, 75 cents; vase, 10 cents; silkilene, 15 cents, and cash, \$9.' Sister Giles had risen to her feet in utter amazement, and was repeating after each item. 'There's a mistake; I never gave it.'

"When it was finally explained, she began to weep, finally to laugh, and then to shout: 'Oh, glory to God! I CAN do something for my Lord and Master. I always thought I had nothing to give, but I have. Oh, glory to God!'

"A Brother Brown, the richest man on the circuit, got up, threw his arms around James, saying, 'I am convinced, Brother Briggs; I did not like your tithing system, but here is Sister Giles with almost as much paid to the pastor as I.'

"Oh, how the blessing of God came down. It seemed as though we could not go home. We prayed and testified and praised God. Well, conference sent us back. The story of the milk tithe spread far and near. Every member of the church began to tithe. James received \$700 salary that year and all the finances of the church were in excellent condition. And now you know how we have been able to have our house and clothes fresh and tasty."

Mrs. Briggs arose as she finished and said. "I think I will go and have a little visit with Thomas and the children." As she went toward the barn, Mrs. Jones said, "Well, I'm dumfounded. I wonder what Silas will say."

Nothing was said in the Jones household on the subject until at the supper table, Silas said, "They are going to begin repairs on the church and parsonage tomorrow. I told Brother Briggs I would not have anything to do with putting any debt on the church, but he said, 'ample provision had been made,' and they have decided to build a prayer room onto the church and an entry. It beats me. He expects to hire a carpenter, too. I allowed he'd do it himself, but he said his hands were full with his pastoral work. You see I've been so busy all spring and I didn't go to the official meeting last night either, so I don't know how things are a moving. He never said a word is to how they'd raised the money."

"I can tell you," said his wife, "it's that tithing business." Then she told all the conversation between Mrs. Briggs and herself. Before she had finished Silas Jones had stopped eating and sat with his hands resting upon the table, his knife in one and the fork in the other. When she had concluded he made no remarks, but quietly resumed his eating.

Mrs. Jones glanced at him uneasily a number of times during the remainder of the meal, but she could not tell from the immobile face before her what his thoughts were. The next morning as she put the large pitcher of milk on the table she saw that he looked keenly at it, and as Thomas helped himself two or three times she saw that he was thinking. His own glass remained unfilled.

After breakfast she noticed that nothing was said to Thomas about the work, and as the boy hung about the door evidently expecting to get some order, she was startled to hear her husband say, "I suppose they'll be a hauling lumber today for the church, and if you want to go and help them, Thomas, you can take the gray team and go."

Thomas gave a half gasp and without a word went to the barn to get ready. Then turning to his wife, Silas said. "Elizabeth, you may as well go to town with Thomas. He can put on the spring seat, and here's some of the milk money I've been drinking, to get some of the fixings you wanted for the front room."

Elizabeth Jones took the crisp bill, too astonished to speak, and before she had recovered herself he had gone slowly out. She knew her husband well enough to be sure that it would be the best to do just as he had suggested, and by the time Thomas had the team fastened to the wagon, she was ready.

When they were fairly started she was trembling so from excitement that Thomas said, "What's the matter, mother? You act as though you had the palsy." "Well," she replied, "I feel as though I had the palsy, or something. Just see what your father gave me and told me to get the fixings for the front room," and she held up a crisp fifty dollar bill. A loud whistle was Thomas' response.

The strange actions of Silas Jones and the new position they found themselves in on account of it, formed a fertile theme for conversation between them until they reached the parsonage, where they already found many from different parts of the circuit gathered. Silas Jones waited until his wife and son had passed out of sight, and then like a man in a dream he went into the house and sat down.

He appeared outwardly calm, but deep in his soul there was a conflict such as his soul had never known before. He had prided himself on knowing the value of money. A dollar was something to live for, to sacrifice for, and to hoard when it was acquired, and yet through the simple story of a Christian woman driven by necessity, he had learned the value of money as he had never seen it before.

He had gone on year after year drinking at every meal, without one thought of thanksgiving to God, that which Sister Giles had prized, had thanked God for, [and by giving it as tithe to her pastor had] made it a blessing to herself, her family and the cause of God. At first the knowledge touched his pride, then aroused his covetousness, but after that came a revelation of his responsibility to God. If a simple quart of milk given to God each day could do so much, what about all the rest that was committed to his care.

In vain he tried to recall his self-approval. Thirty-five dollars was as much as he had ever given in one year and it shrunk into nothing in his eyes when he saw that was not two quarts of milk per day. Visions of hogs, stock, grain, butter, chickens and eggs passed before him like ghosts, and instead of making him more and more self-satisfied, they seemed to uncover the sophistry that had kept him blinded for, so many years. He remembered how many times he had repeated, "Under the new dispensation you are required to give ALL, not simply one-tenth," and in the case of Sister

Giles he saw that the title of the one article under her control had amounted to more than his boasted "all."

As the morning wore slowly on it seemed to Silas Jones as though the judgment had begun. His soul became bare to his own consciousness: his flimsy excuses to hold on to all that came into his hands vanished, his lack of love for God's cause, his littleness, his poverty of soul -- and he had made himself judge and critic for others. With a shudder of despair he fell upon his knees and tried to pray, but his mouth was closed. It seemed as though his heart was iron and his throat was dry so that he could not speak. He remembered how he had gone as a delegate to conference one year and said to the conference, "We want a preacher who will stand to the rack, fodder or no fodder." With that remembrance went his last hope, and he began to say, "God be merciful to me a sinner." As he spoke the words two big tears slowly rolled down his cheeks, followed by deep convulsive sobs. We leave him there with his God.

The day at the parsonage and church had been a busy one. Thomas had worked with a will, for the new minister had seemed to understand him and made him feel as though he believed in him and expected him to do right and he had a feeling as though he wanted to do right himself when he was with Mr. Briggs. It was so different with his father. When he thought of his father he felt as though he did not want to go home again.

Mrs. Jones had made her purchases and the day had come to an end, as all days will, and, just as the shades of evening were closing in, the team of grays with the new furniture came slowly into the farm yard. They could see Mr. Jones busy with the chores, and Mrs. Jones went quietly into the house and began preparing the evening meal. The events of the day had left her in a tender mood, and her eyes were full of tears at the thought of the many gifts she had received a God's hands.

As she placed the fresh white bread, the sweet golden butter and other articles of food on the table, she realized that she had not heretofore taken time to think that they were the gifts of God. She was so absorbed in her new line of thought that she did not hear her husband's step until he spoke her name. She turned quickly round, and as her eyes fell upon his face, she said, "Oh, Silas, what is the matter? Has anything happened?" "Happened? Elizabeth; yes, yes, I am a converted man. God has come to me."

With what followed we have nothing to do. Suffice it to say that new days, with a new life, came to Silas and Elizabeth Jones, and that Thomas the following winter joined the church on probation, and at the present is living a consistent Christian life. An account book also is kept that brings every item of business and every dollar of money under the eye of the Almighty. Do you wonder that God gets his share and that His cause does not go begging when it is presented to the Jones household?

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I want to make a plea for the article that is to follow before you read it. It has been wrung from me. It is the result of many tears, temptations, prayers and manifestations of the Holy Spirit, as many of God's saints could testify were the opportunity present. Many a time have I arisen in the night to pour out my heart to God for His laborers in the vineyard. As I have seen one after another "fleeing to his own field" and I have learned from their own lips the story of deprivation and finally debt, forcing them in order to keep the command of their own Lord and Master, "Owe no man anything." To take the step. I have cried from the depth of my soul. "O Lord, why? why? why?"

I myself have rung the changes of the old refrain so many times repeated to God's ministers, "Go out, and God will see that you are supported," "Keep full of the Holy Ghost and God will see you through," "Never mind what kind of a field you get, till it well and you will see success," etc. I myself have heard the veterans of the cross respond with, "Glory to God! Hallelujah!" I have seen them go forth to the battle with renewed enthusiasm, only to see them grow faint by the way, the sword fall out of their hands, their efforts almost futile, and I have learned that a half-truth becomes oftentimes a lie.

What do these begging letters in church papers mean? Men worn out in the harvest fields of God, with nothing to live on. Selling their books (to them almost like personal friends), compelled in their helplessness to separate themselves from one of their chief sources of comfort, their well-worn library. This is only a small part of what I have seen. Oh, God is surely not the author of this condition of affairs. Believe it, He has a more excellent way.

Are we willing as a church to face the situation, and the problem that is in our midst and see if there is a Biblical solution? I believe we are willing, and I as firmly believe there are better days before us as a people. We have tried our own plans long enough, let us find God's way.

Let us notice, first, the Old Testament system of finance. When God established the Jewish system of worship, with its many forms and ceremonies, He also provided a system of finances that abundantly provided for the expenses connected with it. He not only gave a system of finances, but saw to it that they had the means to carry it out. The resources of nature were called upon by God to minister to the ancient Jew in his efforts to meet the requirement laid upon him. Secular and sacred history give abundant proof that the law of tithes and also that of offerings had been in existence long before the Jewish people had been formed into a body and set apart by Jehovah for a special purpose. We know from the Bible that offerings had been made (see Gen. 4:3, 4, as to Cain and Abel: Gen. 8:20, as to Noah, etc.), and that the law of tithing had been practiced also by God's people prior to Moses' time. The Bible Encyclopedia says: "Abraham gave to Melchisedec, priest of the Most High God, a tenth of all the spoils he had taken from Chedorlaomer (Gen. 14:20; Heb. 7:4). The, incidental way in which this fact is stated seems to indicate an established custom. Jacob's vow (Gen. 28:22) seems simply to relate to compliance with an established custom; his words are literally: "And all that thou shalt give me I will assuredly tithe it unto thee."

Secular history shows that the people of Assyria, Persia, Phoenicia and Arabia, in the beginning of their history, were acquainted with the law of tithes. It is reasonable to suppose, from this wide observance, that it was received from a common source, and its incorporation into the

Jewish economy and its endorsement by the Almighty at that time, prove that source to be God Himself.

So, it did not appear strange to the Jewish people when they were told that to the Levites had been given the tithe (Numbers 18:20-24). The people knew that the Lord had given what He had always reserved as His portion, "The tithe is the Lord's," allowing them no claim to it. This did not invalidate His right to the nine-tenths that remained, and He had always levied upon it for sacrifices and offering as there had been need.

It would make this article too long to go into all the details of the provisions for the support of the priesthood and the worship of God under the laws. Suffice it to say that, in addition to the tithe, they were given forty-eight cities to dwell in, with one thousand square cubits, or more than three hundred and five English acres, attached to them, to serve for gardens, vineyards and pasturage. Then they [the priests and Levites] had a claim in the "second tithe," which was set apart for hospitable feasts, to which the priests and Levites were to be invited by command of the Lord. "This provision for the Levites was the compensation for the abandonment of their right to one-twelfth of the land of Canaan and as a remuneration for their services as devoted to the services of the sanctuary."

For the sake of clearness and for the purpose of comparison we want to state a few propositions that we believe to be legitimate deductions from the teachings of the Old Testament along the lines we have been considering:--

1. God gave the Jews explicit directions as to how much, and from what source they were to pay the Levites for service.
2. The support of the Levite was not incumbent upon his faith, but upon hire for service.
3. His wages were ample and were his by right. He was no pauper dependent upon the emotions, notions, or gifts of any constituency.
4. When his wages were withheld, those retaining them became thieves (Mal. 3:8, 9).
5. God dwelt with His people as a unit (not simply with the priesthood), and was back of priest and people becoming the responsible party, when obedience to His requirements was rendered.

Adam Clarke says: "As this mode of supporting the ministers of God was instituted by Himself, so we may rest assured it was rational and just."

The New Testament finances will now be considered. The questions that confront us now are:

1. Has God a system of finance in the new dispensation? If so,

2. Is it the old system or a new one? Some quotations from Ralston will help us in the consideration of this subject.

"It is an admitted principle in jurisprudence, that a law is not only binding when enacted by a power possessing authority in the premises, but that, when thus enacted without any limiting clause showing that at a given period, or under certain circumstances, it shall cease to be a law, it must remain in force till the same power that enacted it, or another power of equal authority, shall formally repeal it." "Now, as the Old Testament is the acknowledged word of God, given by 'holy men of God, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,' without any intimation that its authority was ever to cease or be diminished, it necessarily follows that it is still in force, except so far as it may be clearly shown from the teachings of Christ and His apostles that it has been superseded, has received, its complete fulfillment, or is inapplicable.

"To say that no portion of the Mosaic law is binding upon Christians, except what has been formally re-enacted, would not only be incorrect, but would be contrary to the teachings of the New Testament. We therefore conclude that the examples, the institutions, the regulations, and the instructions of the apostles are of divine authority, except when the Scriptures themselves plainly indicate to the contrary. Obligations in the Bible are often unfolded incidentally in connection with facts out of which they naturally grow."

Let us now turn to the New Testament and see from the incidental teaching, the example, the institutions, the regulations, and the instructions of Christ and the apostles what we may for the finances of the new dispensation.

In Matthew 10:10 we find a clear, definite statement by Jesus Christ Himself. "The workman is worthy of his meat." Look at the context a little and see what meat included in the mind of the Lord. "Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves, for the workman is worthy of his meat." All of these things are included in the word meat. This was when the twelve were first sent out. Then in Luke 10:7 we find almost the same thing in connection with sending out the seventy. "The laborer is worthy of his hire."

A very similar condition to the Levites under the law. Their support or hire was to come from those served. If they were not received or provided for they were to shake off the dust of the city for a testimony against them. Their responsibility ceased and they were at liberty to depart.

One thing more to be noticed in this connection. When they went to a house they were first to say, "Peace be to this house." "Peace among the Hebrews had a very extensive meaning -- it comprehended all blessing, spiritual and temporal. To wish peace to a family, in the name and by the authority of Christ, was in effect a positive promise, on the Lord's side, of all the good implied in the wish."

Notice the point of agreement between this and under the law. The people were to provide for God's ministers; God was to see that they were blessed temporally as well as spiritually in carrying out His will.

In I Cor. 9:7-14 we find Paul dealing with the same question of ministerial support. The church at Corinth was composed mainly of Gentile converts. Divisions had come in among them, and in answer to a letter from them, he writes this epistle of general advice and among many other things he lays down principles governing them in the matter of supporting the gospel. Now, if ever, we may expect to find if the old method has passed away and a new one instituted. But what do we find? An argument to prove the right of the gospel minister to his support, based upon the old law and its demands. Comparing the new with the old there is not a hint that the demands of God had changed in the least. "Who goeth a warfare at any time at his own charges?" Soldiers expect to be paid for their services. "Who planteth a vineyard and eateth not of the fruit thereof? Or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?" "Say I these things as a man?" Is this purely earthly wisdom? "Saith not the law the same also?" Is this not divine revelation as well? "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live [feed] of the things of the temple and they that wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?"

"Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn." "For our sakes no doubt this was written that he that ploweth should plow in hope" (not in discouragement). Paul does not hesitate to go back to the old Levitical law and claim the application of its underlying principles in the new dispensation, and at the close of his argument declares that even so hath the Lord (Jesus) ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

In chapter 16:1 we find him giving directions as to the collection for the "saints that there be no gatherings when I come." Upon the first day of the week they were to lay by them (set aside) as God hath prospered. Now this is positive with regard to system.

They were to set aside systematically on the first day of the week. It was to be as God had prospered them. This just as surely teaches proportionate giving. The little word "as" in this place means "similar to," "like." That given was to be "according to" what they had received. "To be in correspondence" with their own gift from God.

Then it included all. "Let every one of you lay by him in store as God has prospered him," and this order or direction had been given not only to the Corinthians, but to all the churches of Galatia. The poor as well as the rich were included.

So, we see here a positive system of systematic, proportionate giving ordered by the apostles. These people had been gathered from the pagans and surely needed especial teaching along new methods of supporting the work of God if new methods had been given. Instead of that there is a constant reference, where we have any record at all, to the principles of the old dispensation. The Phoenicians, who gave a tenth of their spoils to the gods, were in all probability the founders of the city of Corinth, and their descendants were familiar with the custom no doubt.

Turning now to the book of Hebrews, we find the system of tithing referred to and used as part of an argument in support of the claims of Jesus Christ. With that end, we have nothing to do, but is there in it any incidental lesson to be learned with regard to tithing? I know the reasoning is a little complicated, but we are told that we should seek for wisdom as for silver and hid treasure, and as a consequence we should "understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path."

Paul has been proving the superiority of the priesthood of Jesus Christ to that of the Levitical priesthood and shows that Melchisedec is a king priest, not of Judaism, but of Gentilism, universally. To this man, as a type of the priesthood of Christ, Abraham, and through Abraham his descendants, the Levites, gave tithes of all (we do not say that Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedec consciously as the type of Christ).

These tithes were accepted by Melchisedec as his right as a priest of the Most High God and in proving Christ to be the antitype, proves also Christ's right to the tithes of the people. When we remember also that his argument was addressed to the Hebrew mind, with no word of explanation or statement to the contrary, we must assuredly believe that when the greater truth was admitted (Christ's right to the priesthood) it included the lesser truth (Christ's right to the tithes).

If some new law or system was to obtain, would it not have been stated here? Taking with this (Matt. 23:23), Christ's reproof of the Pharisees for neglecting judgment, mercy, and truth, and His commendation of their carefulness to tithe even "mint, anise, and cummin," what conclusion in fairness should we come to?

"Those who have any doubt as to the obligation under the present dispensation to pay tithes are commended to the words of England's greatest Christian statesman, W. E. Gladstone. "To constitute a moral obligation," he says, "it is not necessary that we have a positive command. Probable evidence is binding as well as demonstrative evidence; nay, it constitutes the greatest portion of the subject matter of duty. And, therefore, a dim view of religious truths entails an obligation to follow it as real and valid as that which results from a clear and full comprehension."

Now let us not be afraid to draw some positive statements from these New Testament teachings, no matter what preconceived ideas of ours they may overthrow.

"Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar."

1. The priest or minister, in the new dispensation, is counted worthy of his hire the same as the priest under the old dispensation.

2. His support is not made incumbent upon his faith, but upon hire for service, and it is to come from those served, as under the old dispensation.

3. His wages are his by right. As under the old dispensation; he is no pauper, dependent upon the emotions, or notions, or gifts, of any constituency.

4. When his wages are withheld, those retaining them become thieves, necessarily so as under the old dispensation.

5. There is no evidence to show that the law of tithes has been superseded, received its fulfillment (it was not a type), or is inapplicable.

6. There is evidence according to the Scripture and the laws of jurisprudence, that is demonstrative to any candid mind, that the law of tithes is as binding today as in the patriarchal or Mosaic dispensations.

7. God deals with His people as a unit, not simply with the priesthood, and is back of priest and people, becoming the responsible party when obedience to His requirements is rendered.

Perhaps some one will say: "I don't believe in giving to God one-tenth; we must give all." Frances Ridley Havergal says: "There is always a danger that just because we say 'all' we may practically fall shorter than if we had only said 'some,' but said it very definitely. God recognizes this, and provides against it. For instance, though our time is to be 'all' for Him, yet He solemnly sets apart the one day in seven. God knows best, and that should be enough for every loyal heart."

Perhaps some one may say: "You take the faith element out when you say the preacher's salary is not incumbent upon his faith." Not so; I put the duty of faith upon people and priest alike, instead of one member of the church militant.

It is together, in loving obedience to His requirements, they are to act faith.

Perhaps some one may say: "Ought we never to give more than one-tenth?" Oh, yes, by all means. God loves a hilarious giver. What I am pleading especially for is that no one give less than one-tenth. There is all the ground on beyond [the tithe] for the voice of God, your own heart and the voice of need to lead you.

Perhaps some one may say: "I give more than one-tenth now." I have heard people say the same before, but when they came to keep a systematic book account with the Lord they have invariably said, "I was mistaken."

There are many considerations of utility besides the Bible argument that must be passed by, but I just want to call attention to our conference claims. What lengthy discussions they evoke! What a burden the preachers find it to be to raise them! How our leaders hesitate to add a few cents, for fear that the last straw might break the camel's back! Just look at those conference claims for a moment, from the tithing standpoint. The claims average perhaps one dollar per year. Just think when you spend a ten dollar bill. Your conference claim is paid, if you are tithing. If they were advanced to one dollar and fifty cents, instead of one dollar, fifteen dollars for yourself includes your claim. How quickly and readily do you spend fifteen dollars! How hard that conference claim!

Oh, this money that is in our midst that is God's, and we are using it for ourselves. A curse instead of a blessing. Oh, the tent-meetings, camp-meetings, evangelistic efforts that have not been held.

I am believing for a mighty forward movement in our Zion. Prove God and see. He invites you to put Him to the test. May God awaken us as a people, and may the wheels of the church be

all set in motion. They cannot go unless there is money to meet the expenses. If we adopt God's methods we shall have it.

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THE END