

Revised Edition

TITHE AND GIVING *in* **THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH:** **SETTING THE RECORD STRAIGHT**



A BIBLICAL EXPOSITION
ON THE DOCTRINE OF **TITHE AND CHRISTIAN GIVING**

ABIODUN JEMILOHUN

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Revised Edition @2021

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Comments on the Book

“This book is a well-researched material that promises to enlighten anyone who wants to know the truth about the tithe and giving in the Church of Christ. An objective study of the book invites every reader to make an intelligent decision as it concerns their financial contributions to the wellbeing of the body of Christ. Without any doubt, it is the truth that sets free.” - **Dr. Jayeola F. Opadiji**

“This book is a must-read for every sincere believer in Christ and His finished work of redemption for mankind. It is rather unfortunate that the body of Christ today has shifted her focus from the original plan and intention of God to less important and obsolete issues. Like the author, I have held tenaciously to this erroneous doctrine of 'paying my tithe', until recently, when I began to ask the same questions the author mentioned in the epilogue.

Reading this book has opened my eyes to the truth I have been searching for. The truth indeed

liberates! I have never seen a more balanced, insightful expose on this subject. I encourage everyone who GENUINELY seeks to know the mind of God regarding 'tithing' and 'giving', to please read this book FROM COVER TO COVER; but please before you do, strip yourself of all preconceived notions, opinions, 'spiritual ego' and 'defense apparels', and prayerfully go through the pages of this book with the Holy Spirit. After this, trust me, you will be transformed from the coerced, grudging, self-righteous and obligated giver (or so-called 'tither' who claims an 'entitlement' to God's blessings because he has 'paid' his tithe), to a cheerful, willing and generous giver. God bless the author, and may this truth spread like wildfire throughout the body of Christ!"

- Dr. Temitope Odunleye

"When I saw the title of the book, I asked myself, 'What does the author want to posit?' When I eventually started to read the book, I began to sense a 'bias,' possibly another 'heresy,' within the first few pages (maybe I already had a bias myself). I was ready to 'attack' anyone who speaks against my cherished 'tithing'. But opening my mind to the step-by-step exposition of the Scripture as demonstrated in the book and the convicting power of the Word of God, I saw a new

light! I read the book like the Berean Christians.

The issue of tithe is a controversial one in the Church today and more saddening is the unfounded fear Christians live with because of the possibility of default; all these brought about by various preachers.

The book addressed the subject from both biblical and secular history perspectives. It is interesting to know that 'the tenth' popularly known as 'tithe' predates the commandment God gave to the children of Israel. The evolution of the tithe from the Old Testament to the Church today was clearly exposed. The principles of giving in the New Testament were well elucidated to encourage people to give because Grace is available for them to do so without being forced, harassed, threatened or coerced. There is no curse on those who don't tithe!

The book demonstrated clearly that it is unscriptural to teach and insist that a Christian is not qualified for God's blessings and would be cursed until he gives 10% of his income to the Lord since he has been redeemed by the sacrificial death of Christ. There is nothing wrong in a Christian dedicating a portion of his income (as purposed in his heart) to God willingly but he

needs to resist the temptation of becoming legalistic or self-righteous about it.

I encourage every child of God to read the book carefully with an open mind. If you are convinced after reading the book that the thoughts expressed therein are true, be kind enough share with others so as to liberate them from the yoke of the law.” - **Dr Adekunle O. Egbewole**

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Epilogue: My Struggles

Bibliography

Would You do Me a Favour?

Other Books by the Author

Dedication

This book is dedicated to the Almighty God, the author of wisdom, knowledge and understanding who gave the grace to write it. To all the children of God worldwide who serve Him faithfully and desire to know His will. To my wife, Morenikeji, and my younger brother, Yemi, who act as the sounding-board on which I test my thoughts and Ideas.

Acknowledgement

I acknowledge all that have written clearly on this subject before me, whose writings God used to enlighten my darkness. I found David A. Croteau's work very useful in this regard.

I give due recognition to all the brethren that I cannot now mention by name, who contributed to the initial discussion through which the seed that became this book was sown.

A special appreciation to Dr. Jaye Opadiji who graciously read the initial manuscript and gave valuable suggestions.

I acknowledge all the brethren that read the draft manuscript and gave useful suggestions.

God bless you all.

Prologue

The Church needs sound Bible teachers to function according to the divine design. The inability of the handlers of the holy writ to divide it accurately and separate the precepts of the New Testament from the dead works of the Law, as the scripture enjoins, is often the cause of the confusions and doctrinal errors in the body of Christ.

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Tim 2:15)

There are fundamental biblical interpretation principles a Bible student needs to comply with in order not to misinterpret the word of God. Lack of awareness and the resultant violation of these principles by the handlers of the Holy writ have caused undue controversies and divisions in the body of Christ. I believe many of these doctrinal controversies would cease to exist if we allow the Holy Spirit to teach us without adding our

prejudices and presuppositions to the Bible. The Word of God is self-explanatory and simple to the meek.

This book is a genuine attempt to set the record straight regarding the subject of tithe and giving in the Christian Church. It was not written to discourage the Christian from giving generously to the propagation of the Gospel of Christ, without which no man can be saved.

There are divergent teachings, shades of opinion, and practices concerning tithe and giving in the Church. While some believe a believer must give a tenth of his income to God regularly to secure His favor and escape His curse, others believe that this is not necessary since Christ died to make us inherit the blessing of Abraham and deliver us from the Curse of the Law.

What then is the position of the Bible regarding this subject? Should a Christian tithe? Is tithing a requirement for accessing the blessing of God? Where is the place of the redemption we have in Christ? Is the redeemed subject to the Curse of the Law? Why were the apostles of Christ silent about tithing? Do we need to make pledges and vows to obtain God's favor and blessing? What about the firstfruit? Do we need to pay to obtain

God's blessing? Are there guiding principles concerning giving in the New Testament? These and other related questions have been answered in this book. The book was written in an easy-to-read manner. Scriptural passages were cited copiously to allow the Bible to speak for itself. The truth is always self-evident. The Word of God can defend itself. Important historical records were also cited to unravel the origin of tithing in the Church.

To whom was this book written?

Everyone who is interested in knowing the truth

Those who want to know the position of the Bible on the subject

Those who accept the Word of God as the final authority in life and doctrine

All who prefer the Word of God to the traditions of men

I encourage the reader to make all effort to read the book from the beginning to the end because every chapter is a very important part of the whole. This is the only way to get the complete message.

We are instructed by the Word of God to investigate all things before believing, but how

many do this on a regular basis?

**“Test all things; hold fast what is good.”
(1Thess 5:21)**

Interestingly, many believers and handlers of the Word of God haven't deemed it necessary to conduct a personal search of the Scripture on a topic that is this important. We have based our convictions and practices mostly on unverified teachings and instructions that were passed down to us without subjecting them to the scrutiny of the Word of God and the searchlight of the Holy Spirit.

The central message of this revised edition remains the same as that of the first edition (2016). However, the historical account in Chapter 1 has been finetuned to represent the existing records more accurately. The book has been expanded, in general, for a better understanding of the subject.

I humbly urge the reader to cast aside all preconceived opinions and allow the Holy Spirit to speak to him through the words on the pages of this book.

“12 For the Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged

sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13 And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.” (Heb 4:12-13)

Happy reading!

Chapter 1

How Tithing became a Church Practice

There is clear scriptural evidence that the first-century believers in Christ supported the poor and ministers of the Gospel solely by voluntary financial and material donations (Acts 4:32-35, Acts 11:28-30, 1Cor 16:1-4, 2Cor 8:12, 2Cor 9:7). We have no scriptural record that Christ or any of His apostles coerced anyone to give.

**“33 ...And great grace was upon them all.
34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold,
35 and laid them at the apostles’ feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.” (Acts 4:33-35)**

In the Early Church, a vigorous debate ensued on circumcision and the keeping of the Mosaic Law in general. The question was whether Gentile

Christians needed to observe these for salvation. The Church leadership conveyed a meeting at Jerusalem where the apostles and the elders were present to resolve the issue. After an extensive deliberation, they unanimously decided against incorporating the Mosaic Law into the Gospel. They wrote an epistle to all Gentile churches on the essentials, among which there was no mention of tithe.

“23 They wrote this letter by them: The apostles, the elders, and the brethren, To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings. 24 Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, “You must be circumcised and keep the law” - to whom we gave no such commandment - 25 it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. 28 For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no

greater burden than these necessary things: 29 that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.” (Acts 15:23-29)

The Church possessed no property or exerted tithe or any obligatory giving throughout the apostolic age. The general rule of giving at that time was freewill (2Cor 8:12, 2Cor 9:7).

Evidence from the Ante-Nicene church fathers' (100-325 AD) writings also shows that for 225 years, they practiced voluntary giving to support the poor and ministers of the Gospel like Christ and His apostles taught and practiced. None of the prominent early church fathers such as Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, Polycarp of Smyrna, Justin Martyr, Hippolytus, Irenaeus of Lyon, Tertullian, and Origen taught tithing as a Christian ordinance.¹

The early church fathers espoused the principles of voluntary giving like the apostles of Christ. Though they cited scriptural passages that mention tithe in some of their writings, the focus was not tithing. For example, Cyprian, a Bishop of Carthage (the Tunis Governorate in today's

Tunisia) wrote that the brethren ought to support ordained ministers out of their possessions like the eleven tribes of Israel supported the Levites in the Old testament.² Although this statement could be misconstrued that he taught tithing, a closer look at it shows that he was merely drawing a parallel between the support of the Levitical priesthood and the New Testament ministry just like Paul did in 1 Corinthians 9:13-14.

Below are samples of the thoughts of the early church fathers on giving:

“We who valued above all things the acquisition of wealth and possessions now bring what we have into a common stock and share with everyone in need.” ³ - Justin Martyr (100 - 165 AD)

“And for this reason did the Lord, instead of that [commandment], “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” forbid even concupiscence; and instead of that which runs thus, “Thou shalt not kill,” He prohibited anger; **and instead of the law enjoining the giving of tithes, [He told us] to share** all our possessions with the poor; and not to love our neighbours only, but even our enemies; and not merely to be liberal givers and bestowers, but even that we should

present a gratuitous gift to those who take away our goods.”⁴ – Irenaeus (130-202 AD)

“And for this reason they (the Jews) had indeed the tithes of their goods consecrated to Him, but those who have received liberty set aside all their possessions for the Lord’s purposes, bestowing joyfully and freely not the less valuable portions of their property, since they have the hope of better things [hereafter]” ⁵ - Irenaeus (130-202 AD)

“There is no buying and selling of any sort in the things of God. Though we have our treasure-chest, it is not made up of purchase-money, as of a religion that has its price. On the monthly day, if he likes, each puts in a small donation; but only if it be his pleasure, and only if he be able: for there is no compulsion; all is voluntary. These gifts are, as it were, piety’s deposit fund. For they are not taken thence and spent on feasts, and drinking-bouts, and eating-houses, but to support and bury poor people, to supply the wants of boys and girls destitute of means and parents, and of old persons confined now to the house; such, too, as have suffered shipwreck; and if there happen to be any in the mines, or banished to the islands, or shut

up in the prisons, for nothing but their fidelity to the cause of God's Church, they become the nurslings of their confession. But it is mainly the deeds of a love so noble that lead many to put a brand upon us. See, they say, *how they love one another*.⁶ - Tertullian (155-240 AD)

Tithe teaching crept into the Church and evolved gradually over a long period. It appears the evolution occurred in four stages.

The first stage in the evolution began after Emperor Constantine merged the Church with the State in 325 AD. Although Constantine himself did not decree tithing, some Christian leaders such as Basil of Caesarea⁷ (330 -379 AD), Jerome⁸ (342–347 to 420 AD), Ambrose the Bishop of Milan (340–397 AD), and John Chrysostom⁹ (347 – 407 AD) began to advocate tithing as a means to support the clergy.¹ While some writers have said that Hilary of Poitiers¹⁰ and Augustine of Hippo^{11, 12, 13} taught tithing, a closer look at the documents upon which this assertion was based shows that they did not teach tithing as a law that must be obeyed. Rather, they made reference to tithing to challenge their audiences on the necessity of benevolence and giving to support the poor and the ministry of the Gospel.

It appears these Nicene and Post-Nicene church fathers (325-604 AD) appealed to tithing because the Christians of their day were unwilling to give freely to support the ministry of the Gospel. This is not farfetched because many of the professors of the Christian faith at that time were unconverted. They merely assented to the faith mentally because it had become the religion of the State. It should be noted also that those who practiced tithing at this time did so voluntarily without legislative coercion.⁷

The second stage in the evolution entails using ecclesiastical laws to enforce compliance in the late 6th to 7th century AD. The earliest ecclesiastic legislation on tithe appears to have occurred in the Second Council of Tours and the Third Synod of Macon in 567 AD and 585 AD.¹⁴ The Council of Macon charged the clergy to teach tithing as a Christian duty and to threaten defaulters with excommunication.⁷ However, this remained an ecclesiastical law and not a State legislation.

“In the Christian Church, as those who serve the altar should live by the altar (I Cor., ix, 13), provision of some kind had necessarily to be made for the sacred ministers. In the beginning this was supplied by the spontaneous offerings of the faithful. In the

course of time, however, as the Church expanded and various institutions arose, it became necessary to make laws which would insure the proper and permanent support of the clergy. The payment of tithes was adopted from the Old Law, and early writers speak of it as a divine ordinance and an obligation of conscience. The earliest positive legislation on the subject seems to be contained in the letter of the bishops assembled at Tours in 567 and the canons of the Council of Macon in 585. In course of time, we find the payment of tithes made obligatory by ecclesiastical enactments in all the countries of Christendom.”¹⁴

In the 7th and 8th centuries, it was a common practice for European landholders to demand a ten percent rent-charge from their clients (farmers).¹⁵ As the Church gained more control over the land across Europe, this 10 percent charge invariably shifted from the secular landholders to the Church. Since Church leaders were then in control of the land, the 10 percent charge took a new meaning - it became an ecclesiastic obligation that was supported by the Old Testament Law.

Charlemagne, the Holy Roman Emperor, in 778 AD made tithing compulsory in his jurisdiction.¹⁶

This marked the beginning of the third stage in the evolution of the doctrine. Charlemagne decreed that tithes collected from the people should be used for the maintenance of church edifices, the support of the bishop, the clergy, and the poor. With this enactment, tithe became a religious tax that must be given compulsorily by every working citizen of his realm just like the civic tax.

In the passage of time, the clergy and the secular governments of various European realms collaborated to use the coercive instrument of government to collect tithes from the people.^{16, 17} This collection was met with civil unrest in various parts of Western Europe because of its oppressive nature. Despite the initial resistance, several Western European governments continued to collect tithes or church taxes from their citizens.

Although some countries like France (1790), England (1836), and Ireland (1869) have abolished the practice, governments of other European countries like Austria, Denmark, Finland, Germany continue to deduct varying percentages from the income of professed Christians as church tax to their respective denominations till date.

It must be observed at this juncture that the support of religion was taught as a religious duty not legally enforced in the Eastern Orthodox churches.⁷ It was the Western Church (Roman Catholic Church), out of which the Protestants and Pentecostals emerged that enforced tithe payment with both ecclesiastical and civil legislation.

The 4th stage in the evolution of tithing in the Church came with the advent of the “prosperity gospel” in the 1950s. Just like the Catholics and traditional Protestants, Pentecostals initially taught tithing as a Christian obligation. The prosperity gospel preachers, however, took this further by teaching that tithe payment is an absolute necessity for financial prosperity. They also threaten defaulters with the curse of the Mosaic Law, reiterated by Malachi 3:8-9. They teach that whoever does not pay tithe is under a closed heaven. He cannot prosper financially. A popular Nigerian Pentecostal preacher took this teaching further that tithe defaulters cannot make heaven.

A curious mind will ask, “Why didn’t the founding apostles of the Church give tithing the required degree of emphasis in their writings if it is as important as we are now being made to believe?

Why didn't any of the apostolic Epistles address the subject in clear terms?"

Again, an inquisitive mind would reason, "If it is correct that anyone who does not pay tithe is cursed by God, it should be true that such a person will spend eternity in hell after death." We know no one who is cursed by God can make heaven. It is, therefore, safe to say that all the apostles of Christ, their successors, and the Christians who lived before 325 AD, who neither taught nor practiced tithing, are burning in hellfire now! How true can this be?

From the foregoing, we can see that the theology of tithing in the Church needs to be thoroughly investigated. We shall attempt to examine the Holy Scripture in the subsequent chapters of this book to ascertain the veracity of the doctrine.

Chapter 2

Principles of Biblical Interpretation

Before we proceed further in our discussion, it is important to mention that doctrinal errors and heretic teachings often occur due to inaccurate scriptural interpretation. Certain principles without which doctrinal errors are inevitable need to be observed strictly to interpret Scripture accurately, as we are enjoined.

Biblical interpretation is part of a field of study called hermeneutics. Though it may sound complicated to the layman, its underlying principles can be grasped and applied by anyone interested. In short, biblical hermeneutics entails the principles that guide biblical interpretation.

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15)

While an exhaustive discussion of biblical hermeneutics is beyond the scope of this work, it is important to state that the general principle of Protestant biblical hermeneutics is the grammatical-historical Christ-centered principle. This principle seeks to unravel the original intent of the writer of the scriptural text. Besides, it seeks to make Christ the focus of biblical interpretation. Here are some of the important principles of biblical interpretation without which doctrinal error is inevitable:

The Genres or Styles of Biblical Writing

First, the interpreter must acknowledge that the Bible is literature that contains a diversity of genres or styles of writing. These include historical writings in both the Old and New Testaments, the overtly poetic writings such as the Psalms, the prophetic writings, wisdom literature like the proverbs, instructional books like the apostolic epistles, apocalyptic literature like the book of Revelation etc.

Understanding the style of the passage we are dealing with will help our interpretation a great deal. The question of whether to interpret the Bible literally or figuratively comes in here. Both are valid approaches since they are sensibly

employed. While historical records have to be interpreted literally, certain passages that are clearly intended as figurative have to be interpreted as such. Mistaking figurative language for literal language, or vice versa leads to erroneous biblical interpretation.

Context in Biblical Interpretation

This is probably the most important principle of biblical interpretation. Contextual interpretation implies deliberately putting aside personal opinions, prejudices, and presuppositions concerning a text while paying due attention to its grammatical, cultural, and historical backgrounds to arrive at the intent of the author.

It is not uncommon for Christians to quote scriptural passages to support or refute a point but ignore the entire context of the scriptural passage in reality. The interpreter needs to always bear in mind that the Bible is intricately interconnected despite having many books authored by different persons from various works of life.

Each Bible passage is a part of both its immediate context and the broader context. Hence, it is wise to avoid citing Bible passages selectively to buttress a particular point without keeping the

context in mind.

All effort should be made to avoid building elaborate doctrines on ambiguous portions of the Scripture, isolated Bible passages, or select passages that apparently agree with our pet doctrine while we deliberately disregard other significant passages that stand clearly against our position.

Some important questions that need to be asked to interpret the Bible in context include:

- Who wrote the passage or who spoke the message?
- To whom was the message addressed?
- What does the passage say? The intrinsic meaning of the passage without embellishment must be borne in mind.
- Are there any words or phrases in the passage that need to be examined and clarified? A Hebrew or Greek Bible dictionary may be necessary to clarify the meaning of some words.
- What is the immediate context concerning the verses before and after the passage?
- What is the broader context in the chapter and book of the Bible?

- What are the related verses to the passage's subject in other parts of the Bible, and how do they affect the understanding of the passage? That is, we need to compare scripture with related scriptures for proper understanding. **Unclear Bible passages must be interpreted in light of clear passages.** The whole counsel of God in the Scripture must be put into perspective to get a clear understanding of any passage that seems contradictory or confusing.
- What is the historical and cultural background of the passage?
- The original cultural backgrounds of proverbs, idioms, and parables need to be borne in mind. They should not be colored by the reader's cultural background.
- What is the dispensational dealing of God with man in general at the time the scriptural event occurred? Was the passage written during the patriarchal, Mosaic, or grace dispensation?

The Explicitness of Scripture

The Bible is always explicit in communicating the essentials of faith. There are no "hidden messages", "great secrets", or "mysterious

interpretations” that will grant us additional understanding regarding the essentials of the Christian faith. The simplicity of the Gospel should always be preserved in scriptural interpretation.

“But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ.” (2 Cor 11:3)

The Old Testament is a Shadow of the New

The Old Testament should always be interpreted in light of the New Testament and not vice versa because the former is a shadow of the latter.

“16 So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, 17 which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.” (Col 2:16-17)

“For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, make those who approach perfect.” (Heb 10:1)

Christ-centered Interpretation

This principle is an extension of the previous one. The primary focus of scriptural interpretation is Christ. Any scriptural interpretation that negates the spiritual significance of the death, burial and resurrection Christ should never be accepted as valid.

“39 You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, 40 yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life.” (John 5:39-40; ESV)

“And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.” (Luke 24:27)

Personal Experience is Subject to the Scripture

The essence of Bible study is not to make the Scripture agree with our subjective opinions or experiences. Our emotions and experiences are fleeting. The Bible is given to us to shape our lives and experiences. We need to study the Bible with an open mind and invite God to conform us to his will.

“6 The voice said, "Cry out!" And he said,

"What shall I cry?" "All flesh is grass, And all its loveliness is like the flower of the field. 7 The grass withers, the flower fades, Because the breath of the Lord blows upon it; Surely the people are grass. 8 The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever." (Isa 40:6-80)

The Place of Faith and the Holy Spirit

The Bible does not make much sense to the unconverted person; faith is needed to understand it. The Bible was written through the inspiration of the Spirit of God. It is only the Holy Spirit (the writer) that can appropriately interpret it. Therefore, we need to humble ourselves and seek the help of the Holy Spirit to understand it. Only spiritual people can truly understand the Bible because it is a spiritual book.

“16 All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.” (2 Tim 3:16-17)

“For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of

God except the Spirit of God.” (1 Cor 2:11)

While we are responsible to understand the grammatical meaning and the textual, historical and cultural contexts of scriptural passages, we can only appreciate the spiritual significance of the texts by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. This is why we need to depend absolutely on the Spirit of God for illumination as we study. Otherwise, our effort would not amount more than an academic exercise.

Exegesis versus Eisegesis

While hermeneutics deals with the principles of biblical interpretation, exegesis relates to the practical application of the principles in day-to-day scriptural interpretation. It entails studying and interpreting a biblical text to draw out its intrinsic meaning. It is the appropriate way to interpret scriptures.

There is another method of biblical interpretation called eisegesis. It implies reading into the text what is not there. Many people who are not schooled in scriptural hermeneutics use this method. The interpreter of the biblical text forces his prejudice, opinion, or presupposition on it. It is what the Bible calls private interpretation.

“20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation, 21 for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:20-21)

Therefore, exegesis is the correct approach to the Bible as we seek to understand the intent of the author (God), objectively looking at the text to see what it says. On the other hand, eisegesis is often the cause of error because the interpreter approaches the Bible with assumptions or presuppositions that are non-existent in the text.

We need to admit the reality that we are fallible. Our biblical interpretation mistakes do not mean that the Bible is flawed or invalid. Therefore, we should allow the Bible to shape our theology and resist the temptation to shape the Bible with our theology.

As we shall see in the chapters following, all the hermeneutics principles highlighted above have been violated by those who teach tithe. I admit that I was also guilty of this in time of ignorance but I have since retraced my steps.

Chapter 3

Abraham's Tithe to Melchizedek

From chapters 3 to 7, we shall examine the scriptural references and the attendant misconceptions that are often used to support the argument that Christians are under obligation to tithe.

Because we shall adhere strictly to the principles of biblical interpretation highlighted in Chapter 2, what you are about to read here may differ substantially from what you already know. I believe the best interpreter of the Bible is the Bible itself. The reader will do well to read with an open mind and put aside his preconceived ideas at this point to make meaning out of this chapter. Objectivity is the watchword here.

“18 Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. 19 And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven

**and earth; 20 And blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tithe of all."
(Gen 14:18-20)**

This Bible passage is often used to support the notion that since the practice of tithing existed before the enactment of the Mosaic Law (because Abraham paid tithe to Melchizedek) Christians also need to tithe. Some even say that Abraham must have obeyed a specific command from God.

We need to put into proper perspective that Abraham wasn't obeying any specific commandment of God by giving a tenth of his spoil of war to Melchizedek. There is no such command clearly stated in this Bible passage or anywhere in the Bible. To say such a thing is to impose an unfounded personal opinion of scripture.

A search of the historical background to this event shows that Abraham was only observing the prevailing custom in the Middle-East at that time.^{14, 18} Customarily, Army General donated a tenth of the spoil of war to the Monarch and kept the remaining ninety percent for themselves and the army in antiquity. The evidence of the practice

of giving a tenth to either the god(s) or the sovereign of the land abounds in the history of gentile nations.^{14, 18, 19}

“TITHES, a form of taxation, secular and ecclesiastical, usually, as the name implies, consisting of one-tenth of a man's property or produce. The tax probably originated in a tribute levied by a conqueror or ruler upon his subjects, and **perhaps the custom of dedicating a tenth of the spoils of war to the gods led to the religious extension of the term**, the original offerings to deity being "firstfruits." The custom was almost universal in antiquity; for Greece and Rome, see Pauly-Wissowa, Real encyclopedia, iv. 2306, 2423; for Babylon, M. Jastrow, Religion of Babylonia and Assyria, p. 668; for China, J. Legge, Chinese Classics, i. 119; for Egypt, G. Maspero, Struggle of Nations, p. 31 2. 1 The general notion of tax or tribute often prevailed over that of “the tenth” part, so that in Dion Halicarnassus (i. 23) and Philo (De mulat. nom.i. 607) ἀπαρχαί and δεκάται are synonymous, and in Mahommedan law. The “Tithe” is sometimes only – 1/20th or 1/40th.”¹⁹

“The custom of giving tithes reaches back into unknown antiquity. **It is mentioned in Gen.,**

xiv, without anything to indicate that it was something newly instituted.” “It is to be noted that the custom of paying sacred tithes was not peculiar to the Israelites, but common to all ancient peoples. In Lydia a tithe of cattle was offered to the gods; the Arabians paid a tithe of incense to the god Sabis; and the Carthaginians brought tithes to Melkarth, the god of Tyre.” ¹⁴

“A 10th part of one’s income consecrated to God. The separation of a certain proportion of the products of one’s industry **or of the spoils of war** as tribute to their gods was practiced by various nations of antiquity. **The Lydians offered a tithe of their booty (Herod. I, 89).** The Phoenicians and Carthaginians sent a tithe annually to the Tyrian Hercules. These tithes might be regular or occasional, voluntary or prescribed by law.” ¹⁸

This explains why Bera the king of Sodom asked Abraham to keep the remaining ninety percent of the spoil of war but release the men of war to him in the conversation that ensued between him and Abraham in Genesis 14:21-24.

**“21 Now the king of Sodom said to Abram,
"Give me the persons, and take the goods**

for yourself." 22 But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the Lord, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, 23 that I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich'- 24 except only what the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men who went with me: Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion." (Gen 14:21-24)

Although Abraham refused Bera's offer to take his portion out of the ninety percent of the spoil of war, it was his (Abraham's) right to have it according to the prevailing custom of his day. The reader will notice in verse 24 of the Bible passage that the portions of Abraham's confederates (Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre) were duly given to them, according to custom, despite his refusal to take his portion of the spoil.

Again, what Abraham gave to Melchizedek was not his possession. There is no single record in the Bible that he tithed of his belongings to Melchizedek or any other priest all his life. What he gave to Melchizedek was a tenth of the spoil of war, which he did this once in his lifetime. This

observation further supports the fact that Abraham merely conformed to the prevailing custom of the land where he lived. He was not obeying any specific command from God.

Moreover, several other practices existed before the Mosaic Law that Christians do not practice. Ordinarily, male child circumcision ought to rank higher than tithing. Why? God specifically commanded Abraham to practice circumcision but He did not command him to tithe at any time. Other ancient practices that predated the Law include animal sacrifice, giving of maids in marriage to husbands by wives (Abraham and Jacob were involved in this), marriage to a deceased relative's wife etc. If tithing is required of a Christian because it antedates the Mosaic Law and was practiced by Abraham, then the Christian also needs to practice these other norms and customs. Yet, we all agree that none of these customs (including circumcision) is necessary for our salvation. So, why single tithe out?

Chapter 4

Jacob's Vow

The prosperity preachers also use the story of Jacob's vow in Genesis 28:20-22 to teach that Christians must tithe. They believe Jacob must have obeyed a specific divine ordinance.

“20 Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, 21 so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the Lord shall be my God. 22 And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You.” (Gen 28:20-22)

Again, this is a misinterpretation of Scripture because there was no single evidence in the Bible that God gave such a command to Jacob. Jacob only made a voluntary conditional vow to God that if he returned safely from his journey, he would

give a tenth of his possessions to God. This is not God's command but a conditional vow made by Jacob to God.

It is easy for any diligent Bible student to see that there was no record anywhere in the Bible that Jacob ever fulfilled this promise he made to God despite that God kept His side of the bargain. There is also no biblical record that Jacob ever paid tithe to any priest at any point in his lifetime.

We need to observe here that the misinterpretation of Scripture in the examples of Abraham and Jacob may have stemmed from a lack of understanding of the dispensational dealings of God with man by many of the people handling the subject. During the patriarchal dispensation under which Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived, the head of the family (the father) was essentially a priest who usually offered sacrifices to God and stood between his family members and God. This is why it was recorded of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and other pre-Mosaic Law patriarchs in the Bible that they built altars and made sacrifices to God. There was no need for them to go to any priest to serve as an intermediary between them and God. Can you remember the story of Job and how he used to offer sacrifices to God on behalf of his children?

This is a classic example of what we are saying. It is, therefore, inaccurate to teach from these Bible passages that God gave an eternal commandment to all men, whether Jew or Gentile, to tithe to receive His blessings.

Chapter 5

Malachi's Injunction is also for the Church?

Prosperity preachers often cite Malachi 3:8-12 to support the notion that New Testament believers who refuse to tithe would incur God's curse.

"8 Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. 9 You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation. 10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house, And try Me now in this," Says the Lord of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it. 11 "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the

field," Says the Lord of hosts; 12 "And all nations will call you blessed, For you will be a delightful land," Says the Lord of hosts." (Mal 3:8-12)

It is not uncommon to hear this Bible passage quoted on the pulpit from time to time to either influence or scare the brethren into submission. However, if we apply the biblical interpretation principles stated earlier, we will see that this argument makes no scriptural sense.

A casual reading of Malachi 3:8-12 could give an impression that God gave a new command to Israel. However, a closer look at the passage shows this was not so. God was merely reminding the children of Israel, through prophet Malachi, an important term of the covenant He made with them in Deuteronomy 28. He was reminding them of the repercussions of disobedience and the benefits of obedience to this ordinance. The curse and the blessing in the Bible passage were not new to the children of Israel. They were essentially the ones in Deuteronomy 28 (let the reader refer to the Bible passage).

I will leave the other aspects of the passage until we get to the chapter on the comprehensive interpretation of this Bible passage.

If the curse of Malachi 3:9 is the same as the Curse of the Law in Deuteronomy 28 that Christ abolished by his death, is it appropriate to continue to preach or teach that a believer in Christ would incur a curse for not paying tithe?

“13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), 14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” (Gal 3:13-14)

“Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.” (Col 2:14)

Does it make any sense for Christ to take away the curse of the Law by His death on the cross only to rise from the grave and put us right under the same curse?

I leave the reader to supply answers to these questions.

Chapter 6

Jesus said to Tithe?

“23 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint (an aromatic herb) and dill (an aromatic oil producing seed) and cumin (an aromatic seed), and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.” (Mat 23:23; NASB; additions mine)

“42 But woe to you Pharisees! For you pay tithe of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and yet disregard justice and the love of God; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.” (Luke11:42; NASB)

The prosperity preachers teach that since Christ says to tithe in these Bible verses, the New Testament believer ought to do so. Again, it becomes evident that Jesus was not saying that a

New Testament believer ought to tithe if we apply biblical interpretation principles to these texts.

First, Jesus operated His entire earthly ministry under the Law of Moses (the Old Covenant). The New Testament did not begin until He died on the cross.

“20 And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood.” (Luke 22:20; NASB)

“17 For a covenant is valid *only* when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives.” (Heb 9:17; NASB)

Jesus had to comply with the tenets of the Mosaic Law to be able to fulfill His ministry.

Second, the audience Jesus was addressing consisted of the Jews who were still under the Old Covenant (the Mosaic Law). He had no other alternative than to ask them to obey the Law since He had not died to establish the New Covenant. Therefore, it is wrong to interpret these Bible passages to mean that Jesus was commanding Christians to tithe.

Third, Jesus' earthly ministry was meant primarily for the Children of Israel. Since they were still

under the Law it was appropriate for Him to tell them to obey it.

“24 But He answered and said, “I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” (Mat 15:24; NASB)

“5 These twelve Jesus sent out after instructing them: “Do not go in *the* way of *the* Gentiles, and do not enter *any* city of the Samaritans; 6 but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” (Math 10:5-6; NASB)

Fourth, Jesus endorsed other practices under the Mosaic Law during His earthly ministry, apart from tithe. He told the leper who received healing to go see the High Priest for a cleansing ritual and participated in the Jews festivals where animal sacrifices were offered to God at Jerusalem. If a Christian is not required to keep these, why single tithe out?

“4 And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them." (Mat 8:4)

If we agree that the other injunctions of the

Mosaic Law Jesus endorsed are no longer necessary to get God's approval and blessing, it is wrong to insist that a Christian needs to tithe to receive God's blessing. Why? Tithe also belongs to the Mosaic Law that has been abolished.

Lastly, Jesus came to fulfill the requirements of the Law. No one apart from Him could do it. He did this to obliterate the need for anyone who believes in Him to do so. Therefore, He needed to teach and obey the Law to accomplish this task.

“Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.” (Mat 5:17)

“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (Cor 5:21)

Chapter 7

Melchizedek and Tithe

The prosperity preachers cite Hebrew 7:5-10 to say that the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews, which some people believe was Paul the apostle, endorsed tithe payment by Christians. We shall extend the scriptural reference to verse 12 for clarity in this discourse.

“5 And indeed those who are of the sons of Levi, who receive the priesthood, have a commandment to receive tithes from the people according to the law, that is, from their brethren, though they have come from the loins of Abraham; 6 but he whose genealogy is not derived from them received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. 7 Now beyond all contradiction the lesser is blessed by the better. 8 Here mortal men receive tithes, but there he receives them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives. 9 Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through

Abraham, so to speak, 10 for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him. 11 Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? 12 For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law.” (Heb 7:5-12)

If we limit our examination to verses 5 to 10, a casual observer may think the author was discussing tithe. However, if we include verses 11 and 12 in our examination, we would see that the writer did not endorse tithing. He merely showed the superiority of Christ's priesthood to the Aaronic priesthood.

God's eternal decree concerning the priesthood of Christ in Psalm 110:4 which the writer of Hebrew cited in Hebrew 5:6 is about similarity and not about sameness. In other words, Christ's priesthood is similar to that of Melchizedek's but they are not the same. Grammatically speaking, "In the order of" means similarity and not sameness.

“As He also says in another place: “You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek”. (Heb 5:6)

If we examine Hebrews chapter 7, in general, critically, we would see that the writer had two main objectives - to show the similarities between Christ's priesthood and that of Melchizedek, and the superiority of both of them to the Aaronic priesthood.

As highlighted in Hebrews 7:1-4, Christ's priesthood similarities to Melchizedek's include:

“1 For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, 2 to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated “king of righteousness,” and then also king of Salem, meaning “king of peace,” 3 without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually. 4 Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils.” (Heb 7:1-4)

1. Superiority to the Aaronic priesthood.
2. Having no beginning and no end. This doesn't mean that Melchizedek was not born or did not die. It simply means the record of his birth and death is not available. The fact that another king reigned in Salem (Jerusalem) at the time of Joshua's conquest (Joshua 10:1) is a clear indication that Melchizedek ceased to be the king of the city. We have no record of how he gave way to other kings. It could be that he died or he was taken up like Elijah and Enoch, though the Bible does not say this explicitly. Note that we do not also have a record of Elijah's birth.
3. Having no father or mother. This does not mean Melchizedek was not born of a man and woman. It simply means there was no record to support his parentage. Again, we have no record of Elijah's parentage. This is simply a type of Christ's eternal existence since He is God. Only God is eternal.
4. Having no genealogy. Again, this does not mean Melchizedek has no genealogy in the real sense. It simply means the record is not available. Elijah also had no recorded genealogy. This, again, is typological. Christ has no genealogy in the real sense since He

is God, though there is a record of His natural genealogy in the Bible.

5. Melchizedek was a king and a priest at the same time as Christ. He was king of righteousness because the name Melchizedek means "king of righteousness" by interpretation. This is the title of the kings of Salem. Salem is the same as Jerusalem as we stated earlier. The title of their kings remained essentially the same even at the time of Joshua's conquest of Canaan land. There is a time-gap of about 690 years from when God initiated the covenant with Abraham and the conquest of the promised land. The title of the king of Jerusalem at the time of the conquest was Adonizedeck, a variant of Melchizedek. Adonizedeck means "My lord is righteous" (Joshua 10:1-3). Melchizedek was also king of peace because the city "Salem" means peace. This title and name are similar to the titles of our Lord Jesus Christ who is both King of Righteousness and Prince of Peace.

Essentially, Hebrew 7 is about 3 priesthoods-Christ's, Melchizedek's, and Aaron's. Christ's and Melchizedek's are similar and superior to that of

Aaron.

Taking the typological (figurative) text literally, some people say that Melchizedek is Christ to teach that Abraham paid tithe to Christ. This can't be true since the writer did not say the priesthood of Christ is the same as Melchizedek's.

Because there are several typological or allegorical passages in the Bible, care must be taken not to take these scriptures literally in order not to fall into error. The Old Testament prophets made judicious use of typologies and allegories to convey their messages to their audience. The apostle Paul also did so in some of his writings as we find in the cited scripture. For example, he used the story of Hagar the bond-woman and the two sons of Abraham (Ismael and Isaac) as an allegory to illustrate the relationships between the Law and the Jews on one hand, and Grace and the Christian on the other hand in Galatians 4:21-31. He did the same in Romans 11:16-24 where he used the wild Olive and the Olive tree to describe the relationship between the Gentile Christians and the Jews with Abraham.

If we begin on the premise that only the Godhead is eternal and Melchizedek is not Christ because the Bible never said he is Christ, it stands to

reason that he was a man. Since every man has a beginning and an end, then that Bible passage can only be figurative, as we have stated. A literal interpretation of the passage would mean that there are other eternal beings, without beginning and end, apart from God. We know this is contrary to all scriptural evidence.

The Jews of old had a custom of recording their genealogy in detail. Anyone whose genealogy could not be traced to the ancestors was not considered a proper Jew. This was very important for the Aaronic priesthood as no one whose genealogy could not be traced to Aaron was permitted to serve as a priest, much less the High Priest.

Therefore, it was confounding for some of the Jewish Christians of the first century to hear that Christ is a High Priest considering that his genealogy can't be traced to Aaron. This is why the writer had to refer them to God's decree in Psalm 110:4 that Christ is a PRIEST AFTER THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK. Notice that he did not say that Christ is Melchizedek. He then had to speak typologically comparing the non-availability of Melchizedek's birth record, death, parentage, genealogy, and the non-Aaronic origin to the eternal attributes of Christ.

The Syriac Version of the Bible renders Hebrews 7:3 thus: "Whose father and mother are not written in the genealogies."

Several Bible commentators such as Adam Clarke, Albert Barnes, John Wesley, John Gills, Jamieson-Fausset-Brown, Finis Jennings Dake etc. agree that Melchizedek was human, a figurative type of Christ and not Christ. A renowned Jewish historian by the name of Josephus stated in his writings that Melchizedek was a Canaanite king (Salem was in Canaan). Also, well-recognized rabbinical authorities never considered him as a divine being. They acknowledged that he was a human king of Salem (Jerusalem).

Some say Melchizedek is Christ because Jesus in John 8:56 said **"Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it and was glad."**

I will like to say again, we need to pay attention to the genre of the particular Bible passage we intend to interpret lest we fall into error. This is clearly a figurative expression that describes the faith of Abraham in the promised seed which is Christ. He saw it in that he was persuaded by God's promise and believed it. For this reason, his faith was counted to him for righteousness. This

scripture can't be explained by Abraham's encounter with Melchizedek since he is not Christ but a Canaanite king.

Others say Melchizedek is Christ on the ground of the phrase **"witnessed that he lives"** in Hebrew 7:8. Having stated that the Bible never said Melchizedek is Christ, this could only be a figurative expression making an allusion to the non-availability of the record of his death as an archetype of Christ. There are other archetypes of Christ such as Adam, Moses, and Joshua who all died.

We know that Christ existed with God the Father from the ageless past as the Word.

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.” (John 1:1-3)

We know that the Word (Christ) manifested in the flesh once to save humanity from sin.

“14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,

full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14)

We also know that the high priesthood of Christ did not begin until he offered himself as a sacrifice for sin on the cross. This is why the Aaronic priesthood had to be abolished at the cross, as indicated by the rending of the temple veil (Mat 27:51). Jesus could not have entered the High Priest office while the Aaronic priesthood was still in place.

Therefore, it is sacrilegious to teach that Melchizedek is Christ because it amounts to saying Christ manifested in the flesh as the High Priest twice. This seems to be the most important evidence that Melchizedek is not Christ.

Chapter 8

Biblical Definition of Tithe

We took time in Chapters 3 to 7 to examine the common scriptural passages usually employed inappropriately to teach that Christians need to compulsorily tithe to obtain the blessing of God (God's approval) and escape His curse.

A good Bible student will observe that these are not the only scriptural passages that referred to the subject of tithe. Indeed, there are more scriptural passages that talk about tithe that are often neglected or ignored by the tithe advocates than the popularly quoted ones. It is in these scriptures that we will find the keys to the proper understanding of the subject.

I need to reiterate that the deliberate selection of Bible passages that seem to agree with our pet doctrines while we deliberately ignore other significant passages that stand clearly against our position is a clear violation of a cardinal principle of Biblical interpretation- interpreting the Bible in

context.

The common definition of tithe in the modern Church is like this, “Tithe is the ten percent (10%) of a person’s income”. There is a debate as to whether the 10% should be that of the net income (income after tax) or the gross income (income before tax), but it seems many are now shifting towards 10% of the gross income.

There is also an argument in some circles that a defaulter needs to add twenty percent (one-fifth) to the tithe before the payment can be accepted in obedience to the injunction given to the children of Israel for tithe redemption (Leviticus 27:30-31).

But what is the biblical definition of tithe? I will let the Bible speak for itself regarding this.

“30 ‘Thus all the tithe of the land, of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the *Lord’s*; it is holy to the *Lord*. 31 If, therefore, a man wishes to redeem part of his tithe, he shall add to it one-fifth of it. 32 For every tenth part of herd or flock, whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the *Lord*. 33 He is not to be concerned whether *it is* good or bad, nor shall he exchange it; or if he does exchange it, then both it and its substitute

shall become holy. It shall not be redeemed.’ (Lev 27:30-33; NASB)

“You shall surely tithe all the produce from what you sow, which comes out of the field every year.” (Deut 14:22; NASB)

“37 To bring the firstfruits of our dough, our offerings, the fruit from all kinds of trees, the new wine and oil, to the priests, to the storerooms of the house of our God; and to bring the tithes of our land to the Levites, for the Levites should receive the tithes in all our farming communities.” (Neh 10:37)

“5 And he had prepared for him a large room, where previously they had stored the grain offerings, the frankincense, the articles, the tithes of grain, the new wine and oil, which were commanded to be given to the Levites and singers and gatekeepers, and the offerings for the priests.” (Neh 13:5)

“10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be FOOD in My house, And try Me now in this,” (Mal 3:10)

“23 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees,

hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint (*an aromatic herb*) and anise (*an aromatic oil producing seed*)and cumin (*an aromatic seed*) ...” (Mat 23:23; additions mine)

From the above biblical references and several others that are not cited here, it is evident that tithe, according to the Mosaic Law, consisted of a tenth of agricultural produce, plants and animals, and not money. Even on the occasions when Christ mentioned tithe, it was about agricultural produce and not money (Mat 23:23, Luke 11:42).

Therefore, only farmers (those who were into crop farming and animal husbandry) were required to tithe according to the Mosaic Law. Those who engaged in other vocations such as fishing (like some of the disciples of Christ); craftsmanship such as carpentry, goldsmith, and blacksmith like our Lord Jesus Christ and Joseph His earthly father; trading; skilled workers such as masons and builders; and agricultural laborers who did not own farm or cattle were never required to tithe by the Law. They were only required to give free will offerings to God.

“16 Three times in a year all your males shall appear before the *Lord* your God in the place which He chooses, at the Feast

of Unleavened Bread and at the Feast of Weeks and at the Feast of Booths, and they shall not appear before the *Lord* empty-handed. 17 Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the *Lord* your God which He has given you.” (Deut 16:16-17; NASB)

Those who could complain that their places of abode were too far from the national worship center (Shiloh initially and then Jerusalem) were enjoined to sell their tithes and use the money realized to buy agricultural products for consumption on their arrival at the national worship center.

“23 You shall eat in the presence of the *Lord* your God, at the place where He chooses to establish His name, the tithe of your grain, your new wine, your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and your flock, so that you may learn to fear the *Lord* your God always. 24 If the distance is so great for you that you are not able to bring *the tithe*, since the place where the *Lord* your God chooses to set His name is too far away from you when the *Lord* your God blesses you, 25 then you shall exchange *it* for money, and bind the money in your

hand and go to the place which the *Lord* your God chooses. 26 You may spend the money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen, or sheep, or wine, or strong drink, or whatever your heart desires; and there you shall eat in the presence of the *Lord* your God and rejoice, you and your household.” (Deut 14:23-26; NASB)

People who desired to redeem a part or the whole of their crop tithe were allowed by the Law to pay the standard price and an extra 20 percent charge in monetary value. The tithes of animals were not redeemable, they could not be bought.

“One-tenth of all the produce of the land, whether grain or fruit, belongs to the LORD. If a man wishes to buy any of it back, he must pay the standard price plus an additional twenty per cent. One out of every ten domestic animals belongs to the LORD. When the animals are counted, every tenth one belongs to the LORD. The owner may not arrange the animals so that the poor animals are chosen, and he may not make any substitutions. If he does substitute one animal for another, then both animals will belong to the LORD and may not be bought back.” (Lev 27:30-33;

GNB)

Isn't it interesting that tithe advocates in the modern Church constantly harass Church members who are mainly paid employees to pay tithe?

Some people argue that God did not ask the Israelites to pay tithe from their wages because they were all farmers who did not have money to use as a medium of economic transaction at the time the Mosaic Law was given. Nothing can be farther from the truth than this submission. This is because the use of money as a gift and a medium of economic transaction was recorded in the Bible right from the book of Genesis. Moreover, the Law of crop tithe redemption says to pay in monetary value. God would not have asked them to do this if money was nonexistent.

“To Sarah he said, “Behold, I have given your brother a thousand pieces of silver; behold, it is your vindication before all who are with you, and before all men you are cleared.” (Gen 20:16; NASB)

“Abraham listened to Ephron; and Abraham weighed out for Ephron the silver which he had named in the hearing of the sons of Heth, four hundred shekels of

silver, commercial standard.” (Gen 23:16; NASB)

“If the ox gores a male or female slave, the owner shall give his *or her* master thirty shekels of silver, and the ox shall be stoned.” (Exo 21:32; NASB)

“But if *they are* from a month even up to five years old, then your valuation shall be five shekels of silver for the male, and for the female your valuation shall be three shekels of silver.” (Lev 27:6; NASB)

There are many other instances where money was used or recommended as a medium of exchange in Israelite antiquity but I believe the above references are enough.

It is also not correct to say that all the children of Israel of old were farmers because we see evidence from the Bible that some of them were craftsmen, builders, masons, fishermen, and wage-earning laborers who did not own farmlands etc. God never instructed these categories of workers to pay tithe.

Why then did God say that the children of Israel should tithe?

First, it was customary in the ancient time for

farmers to give a rent-charge or tribute to the king, gods, or ruler of the land and this was often 10% of their farm produce. This was mentioned in 1Samuel 8:15 & 17. No one can tell exactly why this practice started.

“15 He will take a tenth of your seed and of your vineyards and give to his officers and to his servants... 17 He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his servants.” (1 Sam 8:15 & 17; NASB)

Since God was Israel's king and He was the one that gave the occupied land to them, it was just logical that they had to pay the rent or tribute (tithe) of the land to Him. Hence, only those who got their earning or increase directly from the land through crop farming and animal husbandry were required to tithe. Those who did not earn a living directly from the fruits of the land were not required to tithe.

Second, tithe was a reward for the spiritual service the Levites rendered to Israel. Moreover, the Levitical clan received no joint division in the Promised Land like the other tribes. They were only given designated cities out of the inheritances of the other tribes to live.

“To the sons of Levi, behold, I have given all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they perform, the service of the tent of meeting.” (Num 18:21; NASB)

“For the tithe of the sons of Israel, which they offer as an offering to the *Lord*, I have given to the Levites for an inheritance; therefore I have said concerning them, ‘They shall have no inheritance among the sons of Israel.’” (Num 18:24; NASB)

From the foregoing we can see that it is wrong to teach that people who do not derive their means of sustenance from farming the land of Israel should tithe.

Chapter 9

Types of Tithes and their Uses

Looking at the ways God commanded that tithes should be used it appears that there are at least three different types of tithe in the Bible. These include:

- 1. A yearly tithe for the maintenance of the Levites**

“Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacle of meeting.” (Num 18:21)

- 2. A yearly festival tithe brought to Jerusalem for the Lord’s feasts**

This was meant to be eaten by the owner! He was also encouraged to share part of it with the Levites at the feast.

“22 You shall surely tithe all the produce from what you sow, which comes out of the field every year. 23 You shall eat in the presence of the *Lord* your God, at the place where He chooses to establish His name, the tithe of your grain, your new wine, your oil, and the firstborn of your herd and your flock, so that you may learn to fear the *Lord* your God always. 24 If the distance is so great for you that you are not able to bring *the tithe*, since the place where the *Lord* your God chooses to set His name is too far away from you when the *Lord* your God blesses you, 25 then you shall exchange *it* for money, and bind the money in your hand and go to the place which the *Lord* your God chooses. 26 You may spend the money for whatever your heart desires: for oxen, or sheep, or wine, or strong drink, or whatever your heart desires; and there you shall eat in the presence of the *Lord* your God and rejoice, you and your household. 27 Also you shall not neglect the Levite who is in your town, for he has no portion or inheritance among you.” (Deut 14:22-27; NASB)

3. A third-yearly tithe (given every 3 years)

meant for the poor!

This was to be feasted upon at home with the Levites and the less privileged.

“28 At the end of every third year you shall bring out the tithe of your produce of that year and store it up within your gates. 29 And the Levite, because he has no portion nor inheritance with you, and the stranger and the fatherless and the widow who are within your gates, may come and eat and be satisfied, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hand which you do.” (Deut 14:28-29)

“12 When you have finished laying aside all the tithe of your increase in the third year--the year of tithing--and have given it to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat within your gates and be filled, 13 then you shall say before the Lord your God: 'I have removed the holy tithe from my house, and also have given them to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, according to all Your commandments which You have commanded me; I have not transgressed Your commandments,

nor have I forgotten them.” (Deut 26:12-13)

The reader will notice here that the Levites were categorized among the poor. This is because they were not given inheritance among the children of Israel.

From these Bible passages, it is evident that one needs to give at least twenty percent (20%) of his annual farm produce for two consecutive years and at least thirty percent (30%) every three years to comply with the requirements of the Mosaic Law. These translate to about twenty-three one-third percent ($23\frac{1}{3}\%$) per annum of the total income. Assume it is correct for non-Israelite and non-farmers to pay money as tithes, how many Christians give up to $23\frac{1}{3}\%$ of their annual income strictly as tithe?

Interestingly, the Catholic Encyclopedia also agrees that there are three different types of tithe payable by the Israelite farmer as we highlighted above.

“In paying the tithe, the Hebrews divided the annual harvest into ten parts, one of which was given to the Levites after the firstfruits had been subtracted. This was partitioned by them among the priests. The remainder of the harvest was then divided into ten new parts,

and a second tithe was carried by the head of the household to the sanctuary to serve as a sacred feast for his family and the Levites.” “At the triennial tithe, a third decimation was made and a tenth part was consumed at home by the householder with his family, the Levites, strangers, and the poor. This triennial year was called the year of tithes (Deut., xxvi, 12).”¹⁴

The other point evident from the cited scriptural passages is the instruction on how to use tithes, that is, to be eaten by the Levites, the priests, the poor, the stranger, and the tither!

Why are the tithe advocates not talking about all these?

Regarding how tithes were to be collected, we have no other authority on which we can rely than the Bible. We can see from the cited Bible passages that the second tithe (the festival tithe) was meant to be taken to the national worship center, which was at Jerusalem. The three-yearly tithe was meant to be eaten at home, at the gate. How was the first tithe (the Levitical tithe) meant to be collected and administered? It was meant to be collected at the designated Levitical cities where the Levites lived (Neh 10:37-39). Ninety

percent of the tithe was to be consumed by the Levites. Only 10% of the tithe (a tithe of the tithe) was to be taken to Jerusalem for the consumption of the officiating priests!

“37 To bring the firstfruits of our dough, our offerings, the fruit from all kinds of trees, the new wine and oil, to the priests, to the storerooms of the house of our God; and to bring the tithes of our land to the Levites, for the Levites should receive the tithes in all our farming communities. 38 And the priest, the descendant of Aaron, shall be with the Levites when the Levites receive tithes; and the Levites shall bring up a tenth of the tithes to the house of our God, to the rooms of the storehouse. 39 For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the grain, of the new wine and the oil, to the storerooms where the articles of the sanctuary are, where the priests who minister and the gatekeepers and the singers are; and we will not neglect the house of our God.” (Neh 10:37-39)

Can we now clearly see the meaning of Malachi 3:10? It was only 10% of the Levitical tithe that was being referred to.

“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, ... (Mal 3:10a)

This was the logical thing to do because each of 24 courses of priests and Levites served weekly at the Jerusalem Temple (1 Chronicle 23:6, 1 Chronicle 24, 2Chronicles 31:15-19). If the people took all the tithes to the Jerusalem Temple, the Levites and the priests who were not on official duty at Jerusalem (the majority) would starve.

It is correct to say only ten percent of the tithes of all Christians in the whole world should be taken to the world church headquarter if we could import tithing from the Old Testament to The New Testament. We know that the Jerusalem Temple no longer exists both in relevance and in reality. Where shall we find the world Church headquarter to take the ten percent of all our tithes in compliance with the Mosaic Law? If it is compulsory to tithe, we have to do it according to the Law. To insist on tithing in a way that is >unknown to the Law is illogical.

Another aspect of the Law on tithing that is often not mentioned is that the Israelite farmers who were into crop farming were not required to tithe every 7th and 50th year because the land was

supposed to observe a sabbatical.

“10 Six years you shall sow your land and gather in its produce, 11 but the seventh year you shall let it rest and lie fallow, that the poor of your people may eat; and what they leave, the beasts of the field may eat. In like manner you shall do with your vineyard and your olive grove.” (Exo 23:10-11)

“That fiftieth year shall be a Jubilee to you; in it you shall neither sow nor reap what grows of its own accord, nor gather the grapes of your untended vine.” (Lev 25:11)

I hope we are beginning to see the futility of the tithe doctrine in the Christian Church? The tithe doctrine violates the principles of biblical interpretation earlier highlighted in this book.

The plain truth we see from all we have discussed is that no one is paying any tithe in the Church today as the Mosaic Law prescribed. It is practically impossible to do so at this age and time. Those who think they are tithing in the Church today are merely giving 10 percent of their income as donations to God legalistically!

There would have been no need to teach tithe in

the Church if we had considered the priesthood of believers.

“5 You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” (1 Peter 2:5 & 9)

Moreover, the individual believers and the collective body of believers (the local Church) are the temple of God and not a physical building being erroneously called the house of God.

“Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” (1 Cor 6:19)

“16 Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.” (1 Cor 3:16-17)

The introduction of a hierarchical priestly order similar to the Old Testament Levitical priestly order into the Church happened in the 4th century AD after Constantine joined Christianity. The Medieval Church created a distinction between the clergy and the laity, contrary to the universal priesthood of believers the apostles of Christ taught. The leadership introduced a retinue of rituals similar to the Old Testament sacrifices into the Church in contradiction of the fact that Christ, the ultimate sacrifice, had been offered for the remission of the sins of humanity once and for all. It was in a bid to sustain this elaborate hierarchical priestly order their numerous building projects the Medieval Church imported tithe from the Old Testament.

In summary, according to the Mosaic Law which is the foundation of the tithe in Malachi 3:10 (that is often quoted as the basis for the doctrine of tithing in the Church):

1. Only farmers were required to tithe. Those who engaged in other occupations were not required. They were only required to give freewill offerings.
2. Money was generally not used to pay tithe.
3. A minimum of 23 1/3 percent of annual

agricultural produce was required to comply with the Law.

4. Only crops, fruits, and animals produced from the land of Israel (the Holy Land) could be tithed because Gentiles' lands were considered unclean.
5. Gentiles (all non-Jews) could not give tithe to God because they were unclean.
6. Any Christian who wants to tithe must be a farmer and he has to go to Israel annually to give his tithe to the Levites who will then take 10 percent of it to the priests at Jerusalem. However, he needs to bear in mind that this will not be accepted because he is unclean and his farmland is also unclean. Moreover, the Jerusalem Temple no longer exists.

Chapter 10

Interpretation of the Main Tithe Scripture

I would like us to once again examine the main scriptural text (Malachi 3:8-12) which is often cited as the basis of tithe doctrine in the Church, applying the principles of biblical interpretation earlier stated but we would start from verse 7 instead of verse 8 of Malachi 3 for us to get a clear picture of what God was telling the children of Israel at that point.

"7 Yet from the days of your fathers You have gone away from My ordinances And have not kept them. Return to Me, and I will return to you," Says the Lord of hosts. "But you said, 'In what way shall we return?' 8 "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. 9 You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole

nation. 10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this," Says the Lord of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it. 11 "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field," Says the Lord of hosts; 12 "And all nations will call you blessed, For you will be a delightful land," Says the Lord of hosts. ((Mal 3:7-12)

Different preachers and teachers of the Bible often interpret this Bible passage essentially to mean that the Christian needs to pay a tithe of his income to the local assembly where he worships to experience God's blessings and escape His curse.

The truth is always self-evident. Just like the way God cannot be made to say what He does not want to say, the Holy Scripture is self-explanatory and no one can make it say what it does not say.

“20 knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation,

for prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” (2 Pet 1:20-21)

The basic truths from Malachi 3: 7-12 essentially include:

1. God was telling the Israelites their constant violation of His ordinance from the days of their fathers. This implies that the message in this Bible passage was not any new revelation but an injunction to comply with an already revealed counsel of God (Malachi 3:7).

What then is the meaning of this ordinance God was talking about? The Law of Moses is classified into three main categories according to the Bible—commandments, judgments and ordinances. The “commandments” expressed the righteous will of God (Exodus 20:1-26); the “judgments” governed the social or civil life of Israel (Exodus 21:1-24:11); and the “ordinances” governed the religious life of Israel (Exodus 24:12 to 31:18). These three elements formed the ‘Law’, as the phrase is generically used in the New Testament. Hence, according to Numbers 18, and the Malachi 3:7 tithe and offering belong to the

religious or ceremonial aspect (ordinances) of the Mosaic Law to which circumcision, burning of incense, religious washing etc. belong.

2. That they were currently violating two of the ordinances- tithe and offering (Malachi 3:8).
3. That this message was strictly for the children of Israel who were under the Law and not the Gentiles or the Church. God never made the Mosaic Covenant with the Gentiles or the Church; they are therefore under no obligation to obey its tenets.
4. That tithe is FOOD and not money as we have been wrongly taught. It was only farmers that were required to pay it as we have previously explained through scriptures in this book.

“10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be FOOD in My house, and try Me now in this,” Says the Lord of hosts, “If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.” (Mal 3:10)

5. That the blessing promised was not a new blessing but the one that was already written in the Law of Moses.

“The Lord will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you.” (Deut 28:8)

“The Lord will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow.” (Deut 28:12)

6. That the blessing in this Bible passage is RAIN. The Holy Land is a dessert that is often plagued by drought. So, they needed rain direly to survive.

“The Lord will open to you His good treasure, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season, and to bless all the work of your hand. You shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow.” (Deut 28: 12)

7. That the Israelites had incurred God’s curse for not obeying this law. This is not a new curse as we are often made to believe but the one that was already written in the Mosaic

Law (Deuteronomy 28 15-68).

8. That contrary to what we have been made to believe, the devourer in the 11th verse of this Bible passage is not any evil spiritual being but PESTS that destroy farm crops.

“And on your account I will keep back the LOCUSTS from wasting the fruits of your land; and the fruit of your vine will not be dropped on the field before its time, says the Lord of armies.” (Mal 3:11)

9. That TITHES and OFFERINGS were mentioned in Malachi 3:8 but tithe advocates deliberately ignore offerings and lay undue emphasis on only tithes.

“Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In TITHES and OFFERINGS.” (Mal 3:8)

What then are these offerings? They are the peace (fellowship) offerings, burnt offerings, meat (food) offerings, firstfruits, oil and wine offerings, heave offerings, free will offerings and any other type of offering apart from tithes that were brought to the priests at the Jerusalem Temple.

If the Israelites had incurred God's curse for not bringing all the offerings to the temple, it means that Christians also need to bring all the Mosaic offerings in addition to their tithes to escape the curse. To tithe and not give all the other types of offering, including animal sacrifices, is completely illogical.

0. That the tithe to be brought to Jerusalem was not the whole but 10% of the tithe to be paid to the Levites at the Levitical cities as we previously mentioned.
1. That the blessings attendant to compliance is not automatic as it is being currently preached. The Israelite farmer still needed to cultivate his farmland and tend the crops for him to get harvest. The bigger the farm, the more the harvest. God's portion of the bargain was to give rain and prevent pests (insects) from destroying the crops planted. The lazy farmer won't get much reward!
2. That God does not rebuke "devourer" on behalf of the Christian like he promised the Israelites of old. He has given the believer the authority to do so. If he refuses to use that authority he is to blame.

“19 Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.” (Luke 10:19)

“7 Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you.” (James 4:7)

**“8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.
9 Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world.” (1Pet 5:8-9)**

3. At the end of the day, when Malachi 3:7-11 is interpreted in light of the atonement of Christ, it tells how Christ has made it unnecessary for anyone who believes in Him to bear the heavy burden of the Mosaic Law before he can be blessed. Isn't this wonderful! This great accomplishment of Christ is what the tithe doctrine has trampled upon since it was cleverly introduced into the Church over a millennium and a half ago.

Chapter 11

Is the Christian under the Law?

After the fall of man in the Garden of Eden, all human beings still had access to God by choice. Those who wanted to approach God needed to come with an animal sacrifice. We see example in the way Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Job related with God in the book of Genesis and the book of Job.

Along the line, majority of the people deserted God to worship inanimate objects (idols) and demons. To bring humanity back to Himself, God needed a nation that was completely devoted to Him through which the Messiah could come. In a bid to realize this, He firstly called Abraham and gave him a promise that the whole world will be blessed through his seed. He (God) then made a temporary arrangement with the children of Israel to keep them devoted to Himself. This temporary arrangement was the Old Testament (the Old Covenant); it was never meant to be a permanent arrangement.

“1 Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, 2 but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. 3 Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. 4 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons.” (Gal 4:1-5)

After the establishment of the Old Covenant (the Mosaic Law), the world was divided into two categories of people: the Israelites and the Gentiles. God entered into a covenant with the Israelites at Mount Sinai with a proviso that they would obey the precepts delivered to them by Moses. This implies that the Israelites were at that time subject to the Law of Moses. The Gentiles were never into any exclusive relationship with God, they were never under the Law.

According to the Bible, the Gentiles were without God; they were separated from the commonwealth of Israel. In a way, the Mosaic Law became a barrier between the Gentiles and the Israelites on one hand, and between the

Gentiles and God on the other.

“That at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.” (Eph 2:12)

Nonetheless, God had promised He would make Abraham the father of many nations and to bless all the nations of the earth through him. In other words, God intended to bring the whole world (Israel and Gentiles) together in the same fold through Abraham.

As long as the Old Covenant lasted, the Jews continued to incur the curse of the Law because it was difficult to keep its demands. Though the Gentiles were not subject to the Law, they were excluded from the Abrahamic blessing by the same covenant that gave access to the Jews. Therefore, it was necessary to remove the Law to give access to all who want to enter into the fold of Abraham.

In the fullness of time, God removed the barrier (the Law) through the death of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary to give equal access to both the Jews and the Gentiles. Both groups have to now come afresh on an entirely new platform (by

faith in Christ) to the household of God (the Church).

“13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, 16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. 17 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. (Eph 2:13-17)

**“Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.”
(Col 2:14)**

The removal of the middle wall of partition (the Mosaic Law) created a new species (the Christians) that cannot be debarred from the blessing of Abraham or put under the curse

because of non-observance of one dictate of the Law (tithe). Never!

“13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), 14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” (Gal 3:13-14)

If Christians are not under the Law, why do preachers keep invoking the blessing and the curse of a Law that has been abolished?

Whoever continues to teach that Christians need to tithe to secure God's blessing and escape the curse of non-tithing (which is the curse of the Law) should know that he is preaching another Gospel that is unknown to the Bible. Such a person is directly assaulting the foundation upon which our faith stands- the spiritual significance of Christ's death, burial and resurrection. I think we all need to repent in this area.

“According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation (CHRIST), and another builds on it. But let each one take

heed how he builds on it.” (1 Cor 3:10)

We shall consider the position of the New Testament on tithing in the next chapter.

Chapter 12

The Position of the New Testament

What is the position of the New Testament on tithe? To have a clear understanding of this, we need to define accurately when the New Testament began.

Since a Will (Testament) cannot be enforced until the death of the person who made it, we can safely say that the New Testament began after the death of Jesus Christ. This takes us to the ending chapters of the four Gospels.

“For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives.” (Heb 9:17)

“Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you.” (Luke 22:20)

Therefore, the four Gospels are transitional books

between the Old and the New Testament. Although they contain mainly New Testament teachings and principles, they have some Old Testament contents that must be interpreted in context because all the events in them before the death of Christ occurred under the Mosaic Law.

A careful study of all the books of the Bible from the Acts of the Apostles through Revelation shows that tithing was neither taught nor practiced in the apostolic era.

As we mentioned earlier, Church history shows that tithing in the Church started in the 4th century AD. No New Testament authority taught that Christians need to tithe to obtain God's blessing and escape the Curse of the Law. Why is this so? **God did not make the Mosaic Covenant with the Church. Therefore, the Church is under no obligation to keep its tenets.**

We know that the Mosaic Law, which created the Levitical priesthood, has been abolished. Tithe cannot remain because the Law that established it and the beneficiaries no longer exist.

“18 For on the one hand there is an annulling of the former commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness, 19 for the law made

nothing perfect; on the other hand, there is the bringing in of a better hope, through which we draw near to God.” (Heb 7:18-19)

“1 Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, 2 a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man. 3 For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices. Therefore it is necessary that this One also have something to offer. 4 For if He were on earth, He would not be a priest, since there are priests who offer the gifts according to the law; 5 who serve the copy and shadow of the heavenly things, as Moses was divinely instructed when he was about to make the tabernacle. For He said, "See that you make all things according to the pattern shown you on the mountain." 6 But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. 7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a

second. 8 Because finding fault with them, He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah- 9 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. 10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 11 None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. 12 For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." 13 In that He says, "A new covenant," He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away." (Heb 8:1-13)

Therefore, the ceremonial law of tithe and the

curse thereof have no place in the New Testament because the entire Mosaic Law and its priesthood have been abolished.

The apostles of Christ understood this fact. They knew that a Christian is not subject to the Mosaic Law and its demands. This is why they never taught that people should tithe or comply with the numerous demands of the Mosaic Law. This is manifest in the resolution of the Jerusalem council which was convened to resolve whether the Gentile converts needed to be circumcised and keep the Law of Moses.

“23 They wrote this letter by them: The apostles, the elders, and the brethren, To the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings. 24 Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "You must be circumcised and keep the law" — to whom we gave no such commandment — 25 it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 We have

therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. 28 For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: 29 that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.” (ACTS 15:23-29)

Anyone who has read this book to this point will admit that the Gospel is very simple but ignorance and human craftiness complicated it. We will gain nothing by continuing in this folly.

Chapter 13

Who is subject to the Curse of the Law?

I believe we have reached a critical point where we need to define who is truly subject to the curse, according to the Bible. We have stated previously that the Gentiles (non-Jewish people) were never a party to the Mosaic Covenant (the Old Covenant). Hence, they cannot incur the curse of the Law under normal circumstances.

Only the Jews were a party to the Mosaic Law. They were the ones that were subject to the curse of the Law. This curse, the Bible explicitly states, has been removed by the sacrificial death of Christ.

“11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.” 12 Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.” 13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a

curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”).” (Gal 3:11-13)

The only way the Law related to the Gentiles before the death of Christ was that it prevented them from having access to God. This is why the Bible calls it "the middle wall of partition". Again, the death of Christ has removed this middle wall of partition. So, the Gentiles are now free to be a part of God's family.

“14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, 16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. 17 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. 18 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. 19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of

God.” (Eph 2:12-19)

We know that the curse of Malachi 3:9 is essentially the Curse of the Law as stated in Deuteronomy 28. This implies that Malachi 3:9 rests squarely on the Mosaic Law. If this is so, it is safe to say that the curse of Malachi 3:9 as it relates to the Jews no longer exists because the Mosaic Law has been abolished, according to the Bible.

Having established this foundation, certain circumstances in which a man can deliberately bring himself under the curse exist. Such instances include:

1. Preaching a Gospel that is not founded solely on the sacrificial death of Christ. This is what the Bible calls "another gospel". This could occur either by adding to what Christ has done or suggesting a totally different method apart from faith in Christ for salvation.

“6 I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, 7 which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. 8 But even if we, or an angel from

heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. 9 As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed.” (Gal 1:6-9)

Therefore, those who say we need to tithe before we can be saved are essentially saying Christ alone is not enough! They are preaching another gospel and inadvertently placing themselves under the curse.

To underscore the seriousness of this subject, the apostle Paul pronounced an anathema on himself and his associates if they preached another gospel.

“8 But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed.” (Gal 1:8)

2. Seeking to be justified by the works of the Law. That is, seeking God's approval by rigidly observing the dictates of the Mosaic Law like circumcision, tithing, observance of certain days and festivals etc. as a way of pleasing God.

“16 knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified.” (Gal 2:16)

“10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them.” 11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.” 12 Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.” (Gal 3:10-12)

This means those who seek to please God by tithe and not by faith in Christ alone put themselves inadvertently under the Curse of the Law. Why? Because such persons are now under obligation to fulfill all the demands of the Law. The Law cannot be Cherry-picked. He has to compulsorily obey all the 613 laws contained in the Mosaic Law! We need no seer to tell us that this is an impossible task. It also implies that such a one has rejected Christ and fallen from Grace!

“1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. 2 Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. 3 And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. 4 You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” (Gal 5:1-4)

Are we beginning to see the seriousness of this matter?

3. Not loving our Lord Jesus.

“If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O Lord, come!” (1Cor 16:22)

Why will anyone who does not love our Lord Jesus be accursed? It is because such a one cannot have fellowship with God and His children. He is an outsider.

“Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either; he who acknowledges the Son has the Father also.” (1John 2:23)

From the foregoing, it is evident that a Christian, whether Jewish or Gentile, is not subject to the curse except he deliberately seeks God's approval by the works of the Law or preaches another gospel. To my mind, this is a fundamental issue we all need to understand clearly.

Is it not ironic that those who have put themselves under the curse for reasons best known to them are the ones threatening those who removed themselves from it? Child of God, do not be afraid. Let no one threaten you again with the curse of Malachi 3:9 because it does not apply to you. Rather, have mercy on such people by praying to God to deliver them.

Chapter 14

Evidence against Christian Tithe

So far, we have focused on the biblical and historical incorrectness of the tithe doctrine in the Church. We shall now focus on the practical (empirical) side of the doctrine.

A major reason why this doctrine could not be right is the degree of fear and guilt delayed compliance or default elicits in the minds of the children of God. I had a first-hand experience of this fear-guilt complex in the more than 21 years I rigidly complied.

Although I have not conducted any scientific survey, I believe the majority of Christians who pay tithe primarily do so not because of the expected “blessings” but because of the fear of the “devourer.” I believe the major “sustainer” of this fear-guilt motivated giving is the constant invocation of the Malachi 3:9 curse, which is essentially the Curse of the Law in Deuteronomy 28 (let the reader check it up) in the sanctuary.

Truly, the Law is not meant to give life, it was designed to bring condemnation and death to man. In other words, the Law was designed to make man realize how incapable he is to fully obey its righteous demands so that he can cry out for mercy, which is the only way of escape.

“19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” (Rom 3:19-20)

“7 But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, 8 how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? 9 For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory.” (2Cor 3:7-9)

Invoking Malachi 3:9 repeatedly in Church services accuses the people wrongly of their

indebtedness to the Mosaic Law, which Jesus already fulfilled on their behalf and abolished by His death. This cannot be correct since it is considered unjust in law for an accused to suffer double jeopardy. That is, to be prosecuted twice for the same offense. It is wrong to treat the redeemed of the Lord in this manner. This practice, in my view, seeks by all means to invalidate the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ.

“4 Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.” (Isa 53:4-5)

The terrible stench of condemnation and fear the constant invocation of the Malachi 3:9 produces in the sanctuary is certainly not compatible with the sweet aroma the Gospel produces.

In His infinite mercy, God decided to send Jesus to rescue man because He saw no one could fully obey the Mosaic Law. Jesus did this in two ways. First, He lived a sinless life which no one else could. Second, He met the legitimate demands of

the Law, punishment for wrongdoing, on our behalf by His death on the cross. Therefore, we are no longer required to fulfill the obligations of the Law if we put our faith in Him. In essence, the Mosaic Law has been fulfilled and abolished by the sinlessness and sacrificial death of Jesus. In my view, this ought to be our consolation and emphasis and not the constant recourse to an ineffectual Law that no longer exists in the eyes of God.

“7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second. 8 Because finding fault with them, He says: “Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah — 9 not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord.” (Heb 8:7-9)

“1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2 For the

law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. 3 For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, 4 that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.” (Rom 8:1-4)

If we are sincere with the truth of the Gospel that Christ has redeemed us from the Curse of the Law, we have to admit this doctrine has no place in the Church.

The second empirical evidence that shows the doctrine has no place in the Church is that it has not delivered on its promise of “open heaven” to the majority of the practitioners. An honest observer will admit that the majority of those who adhere to this system are either poor, many are extremely poor, or at best are middle-income earners. If indeed the “window of heaven” of financial blessing is opened on those who tithe as claimed by the advocates, all tithers, not a single one left out, ought to be stupendously prosperous financially.

One distinct attribute of the truth is its universality. Any concept that does not have a universal application cannot be said to be the truth. This is true of natural science. For any theory or concept to be accepted as a scientific fact, it must pass the test of universality. If natural science can be this meticulous, how much more spiritual truth? For example, the Bible says whosoever confesses Jesus as Lord and believes Him would be saved because God does not discriminate.

“8 But what does it say? “The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart” (that is, the word of faith which we preach): 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame.” 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. 13 For “whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.”” (Rom 10:8-13)

“For God so loved the world that He gave

His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

We know this truth is valid anywhere in the world irrespective of race, gender, social status, or otherwise of the one who sincerely believes and confesses Jesus, he would always be saved. We, however, know that the majority of those who practice tithing are not rich. This can only mean that this doctrine is false.

Evidence abounds that the majority of the most financially prosperous individuals and nations in the world today don't tithe. The majority of the Forbes billionaires don't tithe. Many of them don't even believe in religion. None of the countries that became highly or moderately prosperous after World War II like Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Thailand, China, Malaysia, etc. is a Christian-majority country. This simply tells us that there is more to financial prosperity than tithing. The laws of financial prosperity are universal natural laws that have no respect for creed or color. Whoever obeys them will become rich, all things being equal. We shall talk extensively about this concept later as we address the “prosperity gospel” in another work. Today, we know that

many of the founders and major shareholders of the big multinational corporations that are the largest private employers of labor worldwide are non-tithers.

The questions we have refused to ask ourselves are: 1) Why would God, a loving father, deliberately prosper those who do not believe in Him above His obedient children? 2) Why would God make those who do not believe in Him the employers of His obedient children?

Some are quick to say that wealthy non-Christian or non-tithing individuals and nations make their money through unrighteous means. This kind of generalized assertion is false and baseless. We know the principles these individuals and nations applied before they became prosperous, which any person or nation interested in economic prosperity can apply. We also know that many of these stupendously wealthy people did not make their money through illegal means. Is anyone saying that non-tithing people like Warren Buffet, Larry Ellison, Bill Gates, Steve Jobs, Jeff Bezos, Larry Page, Mark Zuckerberg, Richard Branson, Jack Ma, etc. made their money illegally? This can only be a joke.

Some also say that these people became rich

because they are generous givers. This assertion is also false because many of these people did not show any philanthropic tendency until they became billionaires. Steve Jobs never believed in philanthropy. Also, some say that it is the devil who gave them their money. This, again, is a quick-fix answer that is borne out of intellectual indolence. The Bible tells us that God is a generous God who does not discriminate and whatever a man sows he would reap. These people are just reaping what they sowed. Let the skeptics go ahead and apply themselves the same way these individuals did and see if they would not become billionaires.

“That you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” (Mat 5:45)

“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.” (Gal 6:7)

The third empirical evidence that shows the Christian tithe doctrine to be false is its failure to deliver on its promise to keep “the devourer” away. Tithers have a common saying that people who do not tithe will somehow pay it to the devil

through negative life events. An honest observer would admit that all negative life events such as sickness, financial indebtedness, business failure, examination failure, “untimely death”, divorce, accident, crop failure etc. happen to both non-tithers and tithers. If indeed payment of tithe keeps “the devourer” away, tithers are supposed to be immune to these negative life events. I will appreciate it if any consistent tither could disprove this assertion.

As we stated before, the devourer in Malachi 3:11 is not an evil spiritual being like the common assertion in the Church today. It is pest that eats crops. A simpler Bible translation will easily give this out.

**“10 Bring the full amount of your tithes to the Temple, so that there will be plenty of food there. Put me to the test and you will see that I will open the windows of heaven and pour out on you in abundance all kinds of good things. 11 I will not let insects destroy your crops, and your grapevines will be loaded with grapes.”
(Mal 3:10-11; GNB)**

Since God cannot lie, it could only mean that man is the liar.

“Certainly not! Indeed, let God be true but every man a liar. As it is written: “That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged” (Rom 3:4)

The simple reason the tithe doctrine cannot deliver on its promises is that the Law that established it no longer exists. God has abolished it through the sacrificial death of Christ. What does not exist cannot deliver on any promise.

Some people say if we don't tithe, we cannot claim the promises attached to it. The bad news for such people is that the promises no longer exist. So, there is nothing about them to claim. The good news, however, is that we have a better covenant with better promises. Really, a Christian does not need tithe promises to prosper.

“But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises.” (Heb 8:6)

Can we see why this doctrine can't deliver any promise to the adherents today?

Chapter 15

Firstfruits

The doctrine of the firstfruit is not as widely believed as the tithe doctrine in the Church today. I have never been a part of any Christian denomination or group that teaches or practices firstfruit. However, some denominations believe and practice the doctrine. It also seems to be gaining more popularity by the day among the Prosperity-Pentecostal churches.

This practice in the Church seems to be an inference from the admonition of Solomon in Proverbs 3:9.

**“Honor the LORD with your possessions,
And with the firstfruits of all your
increase.” (Proverbs 3:9)**

However, we know that Solomon was not establishing a new doctrine apart from the Mosaic Law. To do so would have been tantamount to a blasphemy punishable by death under the Old Covenant. He was only affirming the Mosaic Law.

Firstfruit has no single definition in the Church today. Since I have never been a part of any Christian group that practices the doctrine, I would rely on the understanding I gleaned from different sources.

According to those who advocate it, firstfruit is the first salary or wage the Christian receives from a new job. There is the firstfruit of increase, which they define as the difference between the old salary and the first salary a Christian gets after a promotion at work. Some go to the extreme by defining firstfruit as the whole of the January salary of the worshiper! The worshiper must pay all these to the local Church compulsorily to obtain God's favor. From another source, I learned that this denomination tells all the members to deposit their firstfruits into a single bank account to allow the leader, called the high priest, to bless the contributors.

What is the Bible's definition of the firstfruit?

According to the Mosaic Law, firstfruit was a small amount of the first crop harvest the Israelite farmer offered to God in thanksgiving at the Temple in Jerusalem. It was small enough to fit into a hand-held basket. The Israelites of old were also required to give the first offspring of their

animals to God. The Israelites were also supposed to offer their firstborns to God, but He made provision for their redemption. These agricultural products were taken directly to the Jerusalem Temple and consumed by the officiating priests.

“29 You shall not delay to offer the first of your ripe produce and your juices. The firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me. 30 Likewise you shall do with your oxen and your sheep. It shall be with its mother seven days; on the eighth day you shall give it to Me.” (Exo 22:29-30)

“1 And it shall be, when you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, and you possess it and dwell in it, 2 that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground, which you shall bring from your land that the Lord your God is giving you, and put it in a basket and go to the place where the Lord your God chooses to make His name abide. 3 And you shall go to the one who is priest in those days, and say to him, ‘I declare today to the Lord your God that I have come to the country which the Lord swore to our fathers to give us.’ 4 “Then

the priest shall take the basket out of your hand and set it down before the altar of the Lord your God.” (Deut 26:1-4)

“35 And we made ordinances to bring the firstfruits of our ground and the firstfruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, to the house of the Lord; 36 to bring the firstborn of our sons and our cattle, as it is written in the Law, and the firstborn of our herds and our flocks, to the house of our God, to the priests who minister in the house of our God; 37 to bring the firstfruits of our dough, our offerings, the fruit from all kinds of trees, the new wine and oil, to the priests, to the storerooms of the house of our God.” (Neh 10:35-37a)

According to the Bible, God made a prescription on how to celebrate the feast of the firstfruits. He instructed the Israelites to make an offering consisting of a waved sheaf, a male lamb, two loaves of bread, wine, and oil. They were to give the remainder of all the crops and animals offered as firstfruits to the officiating priests.

“10 Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest,

then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. 11 He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted on your behalf; on *the day after the Sabbath* the priest shall wave it. 12 And you shall offer on that day, when you wave the sheaf, a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the Lord. 13 Its grain offering shall be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering made by fire to the Lord, for a sweet aroma; and its drink offering shall be of wine, one-fourth of a hin. 14 You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.” (Lev 23:10-14)

“13 Whatever first ripe fruit is in their land, which they bring to the Lord, shall be yours. Everyone who is clean in your house may eat it. 14 “Every devoted thing in Israel shall be yours. 15 “Everything that first opens the womb of all flesh, which they bring to the Lord, whether man or beast, shall be yours; nevertheless the

firstborn of man you shall surely redeem, and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem. 16 And those redeemed of the devoted things you shall redeem when one month old, according to your valuation, for five shekels of silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs. 17 But the firstborn of a cow, the firstborn of a sheep, or the firstborn of a goat you shall not redeem; they are holy. You shall sprinkle their blood on the altar, and burn their fat as an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the Lord.” (Num 18:13-17)

We see from these Bible passages that firstfruit and firstborn offerings were agricultural like the tithe. Money was never involved. Nonland-holding Jewish workers like blacksmiths, goldsmiths, masons, tentmakers, fishermen, hired farm laborers, scribes, seafarers etc. were never mandated to give firstfruits.

Since the Old Testament is a shadow of the realities the death and resurrection of Christ brought to light, we can only get the spiritual significance of firstfruit by looking at the ways the New Testament scriptures uses the word. Therefore, we shall examine these to ascertain

firstfruit's relevance to the Christian.

The New Testament used the word "firstfruit(s)" to refer to different concepts or individuals.

1. It is used to depict Christians, generally, who are said to be the firstfruits of creation. This is because those who believe in Christ are the first to taste of the redemptive power of the cross of Christ.

“22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. 23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.” (Rom 8:22-23)

2. It is used in reference to the first believer(s) in a geographical location. This simply implies the first Christian convert(s) in a geographical location.

“Likewise greet the church that is in their house.

Greet my beloved Epaenetus, who is the firstfruits of Achaia to Christ.” (Rom 16:5)

“I urge you, brethren — you know the household of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the ministry of the saints.” (1Cor 16:15)

“But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.” (2Thess 2:13; ESV)

3. It is used in relation to the early Jewish Christian converts. Paul the apostle argued that despite the refusal of the majority of the Jews to embrace the Gospel initially, the fact that some of them (the firstfruits) embraced it indicates that the rest would eventually embrace it at a later time. In this respect, firstfruits implied the first set of Jews that embraced the Gospel.

**“15 For if their rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?
16 If the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole lump, and if the root is**

holy, so are the branches. 17 But if some of the branches were broken off, and you, although a wild olive shoot, were grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing root of the olive tree” (Rom 11:15-17; ESV)

“25 Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. 26 And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, “The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob.” (Rom 11:25-26; ESV)

4. It is used in reference to the symbolic 144,000 resurrected saints who were considered to be the firstfruits among the redeemed of the Lord.

“3 And they were singing a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and before the elders. No one could learn that song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth. 4 It is these who have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins. It is these

who follow the Lamb wherever he goes. These have been redeemed from mankind as firstfruits for God and the Lamb, 5 and in their mouth no lie was found, for they are blameless” (Rev 14:3-5)

5. It is used in reference to Christ as the first to truly resurrect from the grave. This gives us the assurance that we will also resurrect from the grave after death. This is the ultimate.

“20 But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. 23 But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, then at his coming those who belong to Christ.” (1Cor 15:20-23; ESV)

We see clearly that firstfruit relates to humans in the New Testament, of which the ultimate is the resurrection of Christ. This gives us the assurance that we will also resurrect if we die in the Lord. Just like in the Old Testament, the word was never used in reference to monetary offering.

What inferences can we make from the foregoing?

1. Firstfruit has never been about money, whether in the Old Testament or in the New Testament.
2. Since all New Testament believers are priests of God, it is not only wrong but it is totally unscriptural to ask a priest to give firstfruit to another priest in whatever name. We have no other High Priest apart from the Lord Jesus Christ. It is sacrilegious for any minister of the Gospel to call himself or allow others to refer to himself as the “High Priest”.

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” (1Pet 2:9; ESV)

3. The firstfruit offering is a Jewish practice that belongs to the ceremonial component of the Mosaic Law that has been abolished by the sacrificial death of Christ. The Christian is, therefore, not under any obligation to observe it.

“For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second. 8 For he finds fault with them when he says: “Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, 9 not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt. For they did not continue in my covenant, and so I showed no concern for them, declares the Lord.” (Heb 8:7-9; ESV)

4. We know that the Old Testament is a shadow of the New Testament. The Mosaic Law recommended three feasts that were to be celebrated in succession – the Passover, the feast of Unleavened bread, (also called the Sabbath) and the Firstfruit (Leviticus 23:10-14). These feasts speak figuratively about Christ’s death, atonement for sin and resurrection.

Hence, firstfruit ultimately represents the resurrection of Christ which gives us the assurance that we will also resurrect on the last

day.

5. It may not be wrong for a Christian to dedicate or give a certain portion of his income to God as a sign of appreciation for his new job, promotion or the new year so long as it is freely given. However, to rigidly and legalistically insist that a child of God must pay the so-called firstfruits offering to the Church or a pastor to access God's blessing is completely against the letter and the spirit of the New Testament.
6. It is cruel and unjust to ask a worshiper to donate the whole of his January or first salary to the church or a pastor compulsorily. How in God's name would anyone make it a law for Children of God to donate the whole of their January salaries seeing that most people would not have recovered from the numerous expenses of the festive season and the school fees of children paid in January? How do they intend for them to feed their families? Why would anyone ask a newly employed person to donate the whole of his first salary? How is he supposed to survive till the next salary? To my mind, this doctrine is the height of man's inhumanity to man and does not represent the

mind of our kind and loving Heavenly Father (God).

7. This doctrine is at best a convenient means of raising money which is based on a distorted biblical interpretation. It serves man's interest and not God's.

Firstborn Redemption Offering

This is essentially a part of the firstfruit command, according to the Law of Moses. However, we have to pay particular attention to it in this book because some individuals have been teaching it as a special command from God. I do not have firsthand experience regarding this also but those who have the experience told me what it entails.

As we stated earlier, every firstborn of animals and humans was to be devoted to God just like the first matured fruits of plants, according to the Mosaic Law. Every living being that has been so devoted should ordinarily be sacrificed to God. However, God made a special provision for default in the cases of man and unclean animals. This involved the payment of money to prevent human sacrifice on one hand and the abominable sacrifice of unclean animals on the other hand.

“15 Everything that opens the womb of all flesh, whether man or beast, which they offer to the Lord, shall be yours. Nevertheless, the firstborn of man you shall redeem, and the firstborn of unclean animals you shall redeem. 16 And their redemption price (at a month old you shall

redeem them) you shall fix at five shekels in silver, according to the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs. 17 But the firstborn of a cow, or the firstborn of a sheep, or the firstborn of a goat, you shall not redeem; they are holy. You shall sprinkle their blood on the altar and shall burn their fat as a food offering, with a pleasing aroma to the Lord.” (Num 18:15-17; ESV)

What do the proponents of this doctrine teach? They teach that the Christian ought to redeem his firstborn with a monetary offering compulsorily! There are different shades of the doctrine but this is the essential element. Some go further to say that the first child and his siblings may not do well in life if this ritual is not performed. Where is the place of the redemptive sacrifice of Christ in all these?

Is this truly the position of the New Testament? No! Not for once is this type of command given in the entire scriptures of the New Testament. It may not be wrong to appreciate God with a monetary donation to the local church after the birth of the first child or any other child but it is unscriptural to insist that a child will not do well in life unless a monetary offering is given to redeem him. The

Bible states categorically that the faith of the Christian parent sanctifies the child. The Bible does not command parents to redeem their firstborn with money.

“For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are holy.” (1Cor 7:14)

From what are they redeeming the child since the firstfruits injunction has been abolished by the death of Christ? If indeed Christ died to redeem humanity from sin and its consequences, what further sacrifice is needed to redeem a child? This is another fallacy that emanated from either scriptural ignorance or greed.

Chapter 16

Ministerial Support: Old versus New

There are different types of government in the secular world. These include monarchy, democracy, aristocracy, and dictatorship. Each of these systems operates by principles, rules, or tenets that are peculiar to it. For instance, a country that intends to change from monarchy to democracy must first change its monarchical rules to democratic rules. It must enact a new constitution consistent with democracy. Otherwise, the democratic experiment will fail.

Therefore, when God abolished the Old Covenant and replaced it with the New Covenant, He also changed the rules. Whereas the Old Covenant governed the Israelites with a myriad of commandments, judgments, ordinances, statutes, rules, and regulations, the New Covenant governs the believer in Christ with only one rule- LOVE.

“34 A new commandment I give to you,

that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

“6 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love. 13 For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. 14 For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Gal 5:6, 13 & 14)

The Mosaic Law sustained the Levitical priesthood because it created it. Similarly, grace has to sustain the New Testament ministry since it created it. We know it is unacceptable to run a democracy by monarchical principles and rules. In the same token, it is inappropriate to run the ministry of grace with the dictate of the Mosaic Law (tithe) because the desired result, which is LIBERTY, will not be achieved.

“Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.” (2 Cor 3:17)

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.” (Gal 5:1)

The Levitical ministry, according to the Pentateuch (the five books of Moses), was sustained by tithes and offerings [peace (fellowship) offerings; corn, oil & wine offerings; firstfruits of crops and herd and flock; heave offerings, freewill offerings and any other type of offering apart from tithe]; the compulsory annual headcount tax of all males of 20 years and above (Exodus 30: 11- 16, 2Kings 12:3-11); and voluntary monetary donation at the temple for offerings (Mark 12: 41-44).

How were these administered? The Levites took 90% of the Levitical tithes while the Priests received 10% of the tithes, firstfruits, and any other offering that was not burnt completely on the altar (Numbers 18; Nehemiah 10:35-39). The monetary contributions were for the maintenance of the tabernacle or the temple (2Kings 12:3-11).

Just like the Levitical ministry was supported through giving by the children of Israel who received the ministry, the New Covenant ministry is to be supported through giving by the children

of God. However, there is a major difference between the two. While the former was sustained by the coercive force of the LAW, the latter is sustained by GRACE through LOVE.

“For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” (John 1:17)

While the Israelite under the Old Covenant had to give specific portions of his belongings compulsorily by the Law, the New Testament believer is under no such legal obligation. Rather, he is encouraged to give generously to support the preaching of the Gospel. He is at liberty in the Lord to administer his belongings to the furtherance of the Gospel.

What are the New Testament's instructions on giving? We shall consider these in the next chapter.

Chapter 17

Principles of Giving in the New Testament

It is good to state here that too much emphasis has been laid on monetary giving. Money is not the only thing we can give to the Lord and His people. We can give our time, materials, services, skills, talents etc. to the Lord and His people. It is not only monetary giving that will be rewarded, any act of kindness we do, as little as giving a cup of water, in the name of the Lord has a definite reward, according to the Bible. The undue emphasis on money is not necessary.

“And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, assuredly, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward.” (Mat 10:42)

The Law makes nothing perfect. The New Testament believer is saved by grace. He cannot under any circumstance be made perfect by the

Law. It is sacrilegious to start with Christ and end with Moses. Below are the highlights of some of the explicit biblical principles guiding Christian giving. These are guiding principles and not laws.

“You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.” (Gal 5:4)

There is Grace for Giving

The New Testament giving is voluntary and not by compulsion. People should be encouraged to give because grace is available for them to do so and not be forced, harassed, threatened, or coerced. They are not to be cursed. No one can curse whom God has blessed.

“1 Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: 2 that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. 3 For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, 4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. 5 And not only as we had hoped, but they

first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God. 6 So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well. 7 But as you abound in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us--see that you abound in this grace also.” (2 Cor 8:1-7

“For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have.” (2 Cor 8:12)

Give yourself to the Lord first

It is of no use giving our material possessions to the Lord when we live our lives contrary to His word. Our first obligation to the Lord in response to what He has done for us is to give ourselves unreservedly to Him. This is the best form of giving.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” (Rom 12:1)

“4 Imploring us with much urgency that we

would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. 5 And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.” (2Cor 8:4-5)

There is Blessing in Giving

God will reward anyone who gives to Him, that is, to the poor, a neighbor in need, the ministers of the Gospel etc.

“But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” (2Cor 9:6)

“And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.” (2Cor 9:8)

“For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward.” (Mark 9:41)

“6 Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches. 7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for

whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. 9 And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.” (Gal 6:6-9)

Give in Proportion to your Income

Let's bear in mind that there is nothing wrong with a Christian separating a certain percentage of his weekly or monthly income to give in support of the ministry of the Gospel, be it 1% 5%, 8%, 10%, 20% etc. according to his ability. This should ordinarily be encouraged but it is unscriptural to teach and insist that until a Christian legalistically gives 10% of his annual income to a Church denomination he is unqualified for God's blessings and would be cursed by God.

Those who are already giving 10% of their income regularly can continue to do so if they so wish but they should stop being legalistic and self-righteous about it. They also need not be afraid of incurring God's curse if they default since they are not subject to the Mosaic Law.

“For if there is first a willing mind, it is

**accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have.”
(2Cor 8:12)**

“On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.” (1 Cor 16:2)

Sacrificial Giving

This implies giving beyond what is considered 'normal' for the individual.

**“1 Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: 2 that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. 3 For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, 4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.”
(2Cor 8:1-4)**

This, in my opinion, should be occasional rather than the rule since God expects the believer to take care of his personal and family needs.

“33 I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. 34 Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me.” (Acts 20:33-34)

“But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” (1 Tim 5:8)

Give regularly

Giving should not be a sporadic event. It should be regular. We should cultivate a generous spirit and make giving a lifestyle.

“On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.” (1 Cor 16:2)

Give willingly, purposefully and cheerfully

Giving should be done willingly from the heart and not grudgingly or because one was manipulated emotionally to give. Ministers of the Gospel need to be careful here. It is better to use persuasion than manipulation with promises that God has not given in His word.

“So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2Cor 9:7)

Give on the Basis of Need(s)

Giving should be rational, especially in relation to the needs of the brethren.

“34 Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, 35 and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they DISTRIBUTED TO EACH AS ANYONE HAD NEED.” (Acts 4:34-35)

“13 For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened; 14 but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack--that there may be equality. 15 As it is written, "He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack." (2Cor 8:13-15)

Priority should be given to the weak like the aged, the young orphans, the disabled, and all those who cannot fend for themselves for genuine

reasons. Able-bodied young men and women who are in a financial crisis should be helped at the initial stage but they should not be conditioned to depend permanently on the Church for sustenance. Rather, they should be taught and helped to work with their own hands to provide for their needs and those of the weak.

“11 That you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you, 12 that you may walk properly toward those who are outside, and that you may lack nothing.” (1Thess 4:11-12)

“7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; 8 nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but worked with labor and toil night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you, 9 not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an example of how you should follow us. 10 For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. 11 For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. 12

Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.” (2Thess 3:7-12)

Give as led by the Holy Spirit

The believer needs to bear in mind that God owns him; everything he has belongs to God and not just ten percent as been taught erroneously. Therefore, he should be willing to allow the Spirit of God to lead him to give more than the legalistic ten percent. He should permit the Spirit of God to lead him to supply needs he is not aware of naturally.

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” (Rom 8:14)

“For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.” (1Cor 6:20)

Chapter 18

To whom should we give?

We must first establish that the first beneficiary of God's financial blessing is the direct recipient under normal circumstances. Therefore, the Christian should first take care of his own legitimate needs and those of his dependents from what God provided for him. After this, he should support the poor, needy, and the ministry of the Gospel.

God is a generous God. He gives His blessings generously to people irrespective of their faith in Him. He gives to both the good and the bad, even to the unthankful! Believers in Christ are carriers of the divine nature. It should be natural for us to exhibit God's generosity. Stinginess is alien to God.

“That you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” (Math 5:45)

“But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.” (Luke 6:35)

To whom should we give?

The Poor and those in Need

God is a compassionate God. He cares about the poor and the downtrodden. He desires His children to pay attention to the things that are of utmost importance to Him. One of such is the care of the poor and the needy. Too much attention is given to tithe payment and donation to building projects at the expense of the poor in the modern Church.

“33 And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in;

36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was

sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.' 37 Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39 Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' 40 And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.' 41 Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink; 43 I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.' 44 Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?' 45 Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these,

you did not do it to Me.' 46 And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Mat 25:33-46)

"17 Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. 18 Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, 19 storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life." (1Tim 6:17-19)

"I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" (Act 20:35)

Give to your Parents

The Bible says to honor our parents to live long on the land of the living. We should always remember to lend a helping hand to them as the Lord blesses us.

"But if any widow has children or

grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before God.” (1Tim 5:4)

“Honor your father and mother (which is the first commandment with a promise), 3 so that it may be well with you, and that you may live long on the earth.” (Eph 6:2-3; NASB)

“3 He answered and said to them, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? 4 For God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death.' 5 But you say, 'Whoever says to his father or mother, "Whatever profit you might have received from me is a gift to God". 6 then he need not honor his father or mother.' Thus you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition.” (Mat 15: 3-6)

Give to support the preaching of the Gospel

Money is needed to send the Gospel forth. We should generously support the preaching of the Gospel. Money is needed in providing the

logistics required in Church administration, the publication of Gospel literature, organization of crusades, missionary outreaches, electronic media outreaches, charity, Christian medical missions, etc. Our giving should not be restricted to our local assemblies. We should allow the Spirit of God to lead us to give to support other ministries that are involved in genuine efforts of spreading the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

“15 And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the Gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom 10:15)

Give to those who minister the Gospel to you

Ministers of the Gospel deserve to be supported by those who directly benefit from their ministries. Many of them have sacrificed their secular careers for the Gospel. They have no other means of sustenance. They should be supported by the recipients of their ministries.

**“13 Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar?
14 Even so the Lord has commanded that**

those who preach the Gospel should live from the Gospel.” (1Cor 9:13-14)

“Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.” (Gal 6:6)

“14 Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. 15 Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the Gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. 16 For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.” (Phil 4:14-16)

Missionaries and other Ministers

This is an aspect of giving that is often neglected by many Christians. Missionaries help to do the vital work of spreading the Gospel to the unreached. Many of us are unable to do this work either because of the nature of our calling or because we are unwilling. We need to continually and deliberately remember to support those who have voluntarily given themselves to such work.

“4 I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth. 5 Beloved, you

do faithfully whatever you do for the brethren and for strangers, 6 who have borne witness of your love before the church. If you send them forward on their journey in a manner worthy of God, you will do well, 7 because they went forth for His name's sake, taking nothing from the Gentiles. 8 We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth.” (3John 1:4-8)

As led by the Spirit of God

As we mentioned in the previous chapter, we should allow the Holy Spirit to lead us to give as He pleases. We should not restrict our giving to only our local assemblies.

Responsibility in Giving

We have heard that we should not bother about what the recipients of our monetary donations do with them. We are told to leave them to God to make a verdict on their stewardship. While it is true that God is the ultimate judge, the scripture never said we should not take responsibility for our actions. Indeed, the Bible teaches personal responsibility.

I am afraid many children of God may not get any

reasonable reward for their giving on the last day because they continually make all their contributions with their eyes wide open to those who misuse them.

We are all stewards of the grace of God. Faithfulness is required of a steward. A steward who persistently misallocates the goods entrusted to him by his master won't receive a pat on the back. He would suffer the loss of his reward.

While it is not necessary to be fastidious about this, it should worry a child of God if the recipients of his regular monetary donations expend them on things that are not the primary interests of the Gospel of Christ. He needs to be aware that as he needs to work and make money, he is responsible for dispensing the fruits of his labor in line with the prescription of the Gospel. Therefore, we all should be interested in what the recipients of our regular donations use them for since we would all give an account of our stewardship to God someday.

It is a given that a child of God would decline to give money to someone who approached him for help to hire a prostitute or purchase hard drugs. He would naturally take full responsibility for his stewardship in such cases. In the same token, the

Christian ought to take full responsibility for his giving. He needs to deny those who misuse his monetary gifts to prosecute human ambition, build private empires, purchase and maintain carnal status symbols, enjoy excessive luxury, and any other thing that runs contrary to what the Gospel prescribes. He is also responsible to divert such donations to the poor and those who would use them to propagate the genuine Gospel of Christ.

A child of God shouldn't continue to give to those who prefer the mundane to the spiritual. He should deny those who care more about physical projects than the welfare of the brethren of his gifts. He needs to pay attention and know when the purpose of giving is being abused and withdraw his support. To continue to support the waste of scarce resources on frivolity under the guise of "leaving it to God" is a sheer abdication of personal responsibility.

Chapter 19

“The Prosperity Gospel”

I believe it is not out of place to mention briefly here the 'prosperity gospel'. The prosperity gospel is a pejorative appellation for a variant of the Gospel that teaches that material wealth is a reward for faith in Christ. I detest poverty with every fiber of my being. No one in his right senses would designate himself a poverty preacher but the way the popular 'prosperity gospel' is currently being preached, which lays undue emphasis on tithing and giving of various types of monetary offerings known as “seed” as the absolute requirements for God's blessings does not leave much to be desired.

The Roman Catholic Church during the Dark Ages devised different means, apart from using the instruments of government to make people tithe, to extract money from the people. Such methods, among others, include the sales of indulgence to release the souls of the dead from the purgatory and sales of holy relics. It took great

effort by the Protestant Reformers like Martin Luther to tackle these issues during the time of the Reformation of the Church.

Unfortunately, some of the “prosperity gospel” preachers in the Pentecostal circle have also devised various means that are unknown to the Holy Scriptures to extract money from the people of God. Apart from the undue emphasis on tithing to coerce Church members to give, other methods employed among others include:

Seed Naming

The giver is asked to attach a specific thing in return for the monetary offering he intends to give. There is no single verse in the Bible that supports this practice. Yes, the Lord could instruct someone to give something out or make a donation while seeking an answer to a specific need. However, it is unscriptural to convert such a personal experience to a universal doctrine that must, by all means, be obeyed by all believers before they can receive from the Lord.

We cannot force God to reward our giving according to our dictates. We understand explicitly from the Bible that God is not a debtor to any man. He would reward us for any good we do but he owns the prerogative of the kind and timing

of the reward He would give. The Lord instructed us expressly to ask in simple faith if we are in need. He also gave us enough assurance that God will hear and answer our prayer.

“7 Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. 8 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. 9 Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? 10 Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? 11 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!” (Mat 7:7-11; NASB)

“16 You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.” (John 15:16; NASB)

“Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that

your joy may be made full.” (John 16:24; NASB)

“14 This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. 15 And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him .” (1John 5:14-15; NASB)

Sending Offering on Assignment

The giver is asked to speak to his offering (money) and send it on an assignment to God. This looks more like a pagan practice whereby a pagan priest asks a seeker to speak his desires to an object during oracular consultation. We find no such practice in the Bible.

Giving for a 24-hour Miracle

This is often done through electronic media. The prospective giver is asked to give an offering and expect a 24-hour miracle in return.

Though there was an instance in the Bible where God met a specific need immediately because a woman obeyed an instruction to feed Prophet Elijah in 1Kings 17, we must be careful not to build a doctrine around such an isolated

occurrence. We must bear in mind that the Bible does not give us the liberty to choose the type and the timing of our reward. We are encouraged to wait patiently for the reward our giving.

“9 Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary. 10 So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.” (Gal 6:9 -10; NASB)

Is it right to expect God's reward for our giving? Yes, it is. However, we cannot command Him to reward us within 24 hours of giving.

Giving to get a hundredfold return

The giver is asked to give a certain amount of money and expect a hundredfold return. This is an erroneous interpretation of the words of Jesus in Mark 10:29-30.

“29 Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the Gospel's sake, 30 but that he will receive a hundred times as much now in the present age,

houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.” (Mark 10:29-30; NASB)

Jesus obviously was not talking about giving and receiving a hundredfold of money here. He was talking about sacrifices made for the sake of the kingdom of God.

It is evident that whoever sacrifices for the sake of coming to the fold of Christ will receive a hundredfold reward on earth and in the hereafter. How will he receive the reward on earth? Through his association with the brethren, he now has more than a hundredfold of mothers, brothers, sisters, children etc.

Another Bible passage that is often cited to support this teaching is Genesis 26:12.

“12 Now Isaac sowed in that land and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. And the *Lord* blessed him.” (Gen 26:12; NASB)

Again, this Bible verse is often taken out of context to imply what it does not say. To understand the meaning of the verse, we need to firstly read Genesis 26 from verse 1 to 15.

There was a famine in the land of Canaan. God instructed Isaac to dwell in the land and not go down to Egypt with a promise that He would be with him and bless him if he obeyed. God never asked Isaac to give monetary offering to anyone as we are often made to believe. Although the true meaning of the verse is that Isaac planted crops in the land, God never specifically instructed him to do so at any point. Isaac was naturally doing what he knew to do- he was a farmer. He was merely practicing one of the natural principles of prosperity, that is, diligence at work.

The main lesson for us as children of God from this Bible passage is that obedience to God regarding where to live (if we have a specific instruction from God) and diligence at work, our professional calling or vocation attracts God's blessings. This Bible passage is not saying that giving monetary offering will lead to a hundredfold reward. We need to bear in mind that the primary way God blesses man financially is through work. God never intends for man to live idly without work.

“Then the *Lord* God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.” (Gen 2:15; NASB)

“10 For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat. 11 For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a disorderly manner, not working at all, but are busybodies. 12 Now those who are such we command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they work in quietness and eat their own bread.” (2 Thess 3:10-12)

Anyone who is diligent at work will definitely reap a bountiful harvest. This was what Isaac did and God blessed him.

“Do you see a man who excels in his work? He will stand before kings; He will not stand before unknown men.” (Prov 22:29)

Sales of Holy or anointed Materials

To the consternation of the writer, some Pentecostal ministers, even some respected ones, now sell holy or anointed materials just like the Roman Catholics sold holy relics. Anointed water and oil, anointed handkerchiefs, olive oil from the holy land, prayer shawls from Israel etc. are now being sold to undiscerning brethren.

Emotional Manipulation through Vows and Pledges

Does a Christian need to make a financial vow or a pledge before receiving from the Lord? It is well-established that whoever gives to the Lord will receive his reward; God does not owe any man (2 Cor 9:6).

Though the practice of vow and pledge making was common in the Old Testament, no single verse in the New Testament instructs Christians to make vows or pledges, whether for its sake or as a condition to receive blessings from God.

In fact, the word of God instructs us not to swear oaths, which is in a way similar to making vows.

“33 Again you have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not swear falsely, but shall perform your oaths to the Lord.' 34 But I say to you, do not swear at all: neither by heaven, for it is God's throne; 35 nor by the earth, for it is His footstool; nor by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. 36 Nor shall you swear by your head, because you cannot make one hair white or black. 37 But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No.' For whatever is more than these is from the

evil one.” (Mat 5:33-37)

“But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your "Yes," be "Yes," and your "No," "No," lest you fall into judgment.” (James 5:12)

Why do we often hear that the brethren should make financial vows and pledges to receive God's blessing? To my mind, this violates the New Testament teaching and can bring the believer into judgment. People should not be compelled or manipulated to make financial pledges because some enthusiastic children of God with inadequate means can make large and impractical pledges. It is sufficient to ask people to donate according to their capability or as the Spirit of God lays it on their hearts without compulsion.

Certainly, it is good to encourage people to give in a disciplined fashion regularly to support God's work. However, we should be careful not to hang it on their necks as a spiritual obligation they must fulfill without regard for their financial condition. An explicit principle of giving in the New Testament is voluntariness without compulsion.

“For if there is first a willing mind, it is

accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have.” (2Cor 8:12)

“So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.” (2Cor 9:7)

The key thing is to give; give generously, freely, and without the compulsion of an oath, vow or pledge.

We need to understand that our relationship with God in the New Testament is based on the “Father-Son relationship”. If it is absurd for a son to make vows and pledges to his earthly father to receive his basic needs, why do we say Christians need to do the same before their Heavenly Father can bless them?

“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him!” (Math 7:11; NASB)

While it may not be wrong to encourage the brethren to commit to a specific amount they intend to give towards a cause or project, ministers of the Gospel must be careful not to

manipulate them emotionally to make financial pledges and vows. Such practices are alien to the Holy Scripture.

The explicit New Testament fundraising practice entails announcing a need transparently and encouraging the brethren to give generously. Why do people find it difficult to practice this in the Church today?

The prosperity gospel preachers' current approach breeds primitive accumulation, and display of affluence among the preachers on one hand and unrealistic expectations, mental docility, and laziness among the hearers on the other hand.

Preachers harass, denounce, and call non-tithers despicable names like thieves and robbers. They have forgotten that these people are equally children of God who were bought by the precious blood of Jesus.

The undue emphasis on tithe prevents believers from paying good attention to Spirit-led giving and other aspects of giving apart from giving to the local assembly of the believer like giving to the poor and missionaries on the fields which are equally, if not more, important.

Despite that I do not have statistics to support this, it seems to me that many ministers of God today don't get it that Church buildings and personal pet projects are not the Church, and hence, less important to the heart of God than human beings. They are like Solomon that executed numerous building projects and lived extravagantly, and as a result, heaped a heavy burden on the children of Israel. It is a source of concern that the amount of money in the bank account is now the measure of ministerial success and not the number of saved and transformed souls.

It is important to always bear in mind that we don't need to do anything special to obtain God's favor and blessings. We already have the blessing of Abraham by faith. God already favors us. If we got salvation freely, which is the greatest gift of God to man, how much more material blessings and protection, which are inferior to salvation? Unfortunately, some handlers of God's word have perverted it. They have turned the blessing of God into commercial products that people have to buy with money.

“He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all

things?” (Rom 8:32; NASB)

“In order that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” (Gal 3:14; NASB)

“2 This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? 4 Have you suffered so many things in vain--if indeed it was in vain? 5 Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” (Gal 3:2-5)

Let it sink into your mind child of God: you are already blessed; you have the blessing of Abraham by faith in Christ Jesus. Though there is a promise of reward for giving, bear in mind that you cannot buy God's blessing with money.

Details of the biblical teaching on financial prosperity is beyond the scope of this discourse. Suffices to say that no one can prosper materially without PRODUCTIVITY, no matter how much he gives. Productivity in itself is a form of giving.

Little wonder, many who don't believe the Gospel but practice the principles of productivity and wealth creation are doing well financially while many children of the kingdom are wallowing in abject poverty despite paying tithe regularly. How many of the wealthiest people in the world today pay tithe? Is this not instructive enough?

A child of God needs to go out by faith and deploy his gifts, talents, and skills positively and creatively with the full assurance that God would bless his work to prosper.

Chapter 20

Why this Book?

Someone may ask, “Why this book?” This book is not persuading the Christian to stop giving to the work of propagating the Gospel. Instead, it tells him to give generously but willingly without the element of legalism. It also tells him to give responsibly.

Primarily, it addresses an age-long doctrinal error in the Church of Christ that inadvertently places a redeemed child of God under the curse of the Law. It also addresses other unscriptural practices concerning giving in the Church.

I have taken pains to highlight the New Testament's instructions on giving for the sake of those who may worry that contribution toward gospel financing would reduce if people stop giving legalistically. If the apostolic Church (Early Church) did not lack funds despite total adherence to voluntary giving without tithing, why do we think the modern Church will starve if we

do the same? Are we wiser than God? Don't we believe in the ability of the Holy Spirit to move God's people to give? Are we so faithless? Have we forgotten the word of our Lord Jesus Christ about finding faith on earth at His return?

“...Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8b)

I recognize that tithing, a deeply entrenched erroneous doctrine in the Church that has been around for more than 1,500 years since the first advent of Christ, is a convenient way to make people give. However, we must admit that the longevity of an idea is not a proof of its veracity. We must have the courage to correct any wrong idea irrespective of its age to keep the Gospel of Christ sacrosanct. To keep violating the basic premise upon which the Gospel stands as the basis of the believer's blessing (the love of God) because of seeming financial gain is to my mind worse than the error of Jeroboam.

Jeroboam was the one who led the Northern kingdom of Israel to sin by creating idols in Dan and Bethel and told them not to bother going to Jerusalem to worship the true God because he was afraid that the people's hearts could return to

the house of David. Regrettably, subsequent kings of the Northern Kingdom of Israel continued the evil practice because of the fear of losing their subjects to the Kingdom of Judah until God drove out the whole nation into captivity because of their sins.

Man invented the Christian tithe in the medieval Church. It is not a New Testament ordinance. We have to deal with this false doctrine headlong in the manner the Reformers of old dealt with the crafty inventions of the Roman Catholic Church like sales of indulgence and holy relics, purgatory etc. Though regrettable that the Reformers did not address this unbiblical doctrine adequately, I believe the time has come to expose and deal with it once and for all.

It is quite paradoxical that the Roman Catholic Church no longer lays undue emphasis on tithing compared to the Protestants and Pentecostals who claim superior scriptural knowledge. Some Protestant and Pentecostal churches keep their members' tithe records and deny defaulters certain privileges they ordinarily should have. This practice violates two instructions of our Lord Jesus Christ: the instruction to give anonymously (Mathew 6:1-4) and the instruction to minister the Gospel freely to people as we received (Mathew

10:8).

Contemporary evidence from the United States of America suggests that modern-day Christians are already becoming aware of the scriptural incorrectness of the tithe doctrine. Tithing among many faith organizations, apart from the Mormons, went down to as low as 3% in 2011 and was stable at 12% among born-again Christians in 2012.^{20, 21} The theology of tithing is being called to question, with many saying the command to contribute 10% of one's income is not biblical.^{21, 22} About 58% of Evangelical leaders in America in 2011 did not believe that Christians should tithe, although they believe in giving.²²

Deceit does not serve Christ's interest. Instead of telling people not to challenge this erroneous doctrine, the onus is on us to teach the whole truth about it. Besides, we should teach people to give graciously and generously as the Gospel prescribes.

I believe God has started a work. He is ready to complete the work of Reformation of the Church that the Reformers of old did not complete. We will be wise to conform than to resist the move of the Holy Spirit.

“7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: “Today, if you will hear His voice, 8 Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness.” (Heb 3:7-8)

Those who refuse to comply but resist will have themselves to blame in the end. They would be shamed because the brethren will eventually know the truth. The truth cannot be suppressed forever. It will manifest openly.

“For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, As the waters cover the sea.” (Hab 2:14)

The Lord is ready to liberate His people from the yoke of the Law that human craftiness placed upon their necks.

Someone may ask, "Why do you bother about tithing in the Church since it helps to serve the purpose of financing the Gospel?" It is because the doctrine challenges the foundation of our faith- that God's approval and blessing are obtained solely by faith in Christ and not by human effort (works). **It is not uncommon to hear Christians say in a self-righteous way like the Pharisees of old (Luke 18:12), “I pay my tithe”.** They think erroneously that tithe

payment gives them access to God's blessing and protection. They have forgotten that human righteousness is like a filthy rag before God (Isaiah 64:6). Do not be deceived, only faith in Christ gives you access to God. You can't pay your way to Him.

Tithe doctrine in the Church is synonymous with the doctrine of circumcision in the early Church. To appreciate the seriousness of this issue I encourage the reader to read the book of Galatians substituting the words "LAW" and "CIRCUMCISION" with the word "TITHE". I believe he won't need any further persuasion after this.

For the few who may still be in doubt after the above experiment, I suggest that they get a Bible concordance and look for "tithe" and "tithes" and read all the scriptural references they find in an easy-to-read Bible translation. I am certain that such persons would not come to conclusions that are substantially different from the highlights of this book.

Let those who want to continue to believe that they can secure God's blessing through tithe know that they would also need to fulfill all the other 612 components of the Mosaic Law to the

letter to be justified. This is an impossible task they need not venture into.

“10 For as many as are of the works of the Law are under a curse; for it is written, “CURSED IS EVERYONE WHO DOES NOT ABIDE BY ALL THINGS WRITTEN IN THE BOOK OF THE LAW, TO PERFORM THEM.”

11 Now that no one is justified by the Law before God is evident; for, “THE RIGHTEOUS MAN SHALL LIVE BY FAITH.”

(Gal 3:10-11; NASB; Emphasis mine)

I believe many people teach this subject ignorantly based on the traditional teachings they heard growing up. Probably, they had never taken time to examine it critically from scriptural and historical perspectives.

I challenge whoever doubts the contents of this book to conduct a personal study as I suggested. I have no doubts that their findings would challenge their theology thoroughly. They would have no option other than to repent and change their ways.

“Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.” (Acts 17:30)

Truth is self-evident. There is nothing we can do against the truth. After all, is said and done, only the truth will remain.

“1 Therefore, since we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we do not lose heart. 2 But we have renounced the hidden things of shame, not walking in craftiness nor handling the Word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God.” (2Cor 4:1-2)

The Law cannot save anyone. It was designed to minister condemnation and death. There wouldn't have been any need for Jesus to die if we could obtain God's approval by the works of the Law.

“... For if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.” (Gal 3:21b)

“7 But if THE MINISTRY OF DEATH, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, 8 how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? 9 For if

THE MINISTRY OF CONDEMNATION had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory. 10 For even what was made glorious had no glory in this respect, because of the glory that excels. 11 For if what is passing away was glorious, what remains is much more glorious. 12 Therefore, since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech- 13 unlike Moses, who put a veil over his face so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the end of what was passing away.” (2 Cor 3:7-13)

The Law can never give life because it was not designed to do so. Only the Lord Jesus can give life.

Chapter 21

Prominent Theologians who Disagreed with Tithing

This chapter was written to let the reader see that from one generation to another God never left His people without a witness. These servants of the Lord raised their voices to expose the incompatibility of tithing with the letter and the spirit of the New Testament but their voices have largely been subdued by the loudness of the voices of those who support the practice. There are several of such ministers but we will cite only eleven (11) to buttress our point.

John Wycliffe (1330–1384)

John Wycliffe was an English theologian, scholastic philosopher, biblical translator, reformer, and seminary professor at Oxford. He was an influential nonconformist within the Roman Catholic priesthood during the 14th century. Wycliffe criticized the privileged status of the clergy, which was central to their powerful role

in England. He also criticized the luxury and pomp of local parishes and their ceremonies. He translated the Bible from the Vulgate into vernacular English (The Wycliffe Bible).

“Why curates are so severe in exacting tithes, since Christ and his apostles took no tithes, as men do now; neither paid them, nor even spoke of them, either in the Gospel or the Epistles, which are the perfect law of freedom and grace. But Christ lived on the alms of holy women, as the Gospel telleth; and the apostles lived sometimes by the labour of their hands, and sometimes took a poor livelihood and clothing, given of free will and devotion by the people, without asking or constraining.” “Paul proved that priests, preaching truly the Gospel, should live by the Gospel, and said naught of tithes. Certainly tithes were due to priests in the Old Law — but it is not so now, in the law of grace.”²³

Martin Luther (1483–1546)

Martin Luther needs no introduction. He was a German professor of theology, composer, and a preacher of the Gospel. He was a very prominent figure in the Protestant Reformation. He rejected several teachings and practices of the Medieval Catholic Church. Luther vehemently disputed the

assertion that freedom from God's punishment for sin could be bought with money. He taught that salvation and the resultant eternal life is not earned by good deeds but is received only as a gift of God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Luther challenged the authority and office of the Pope thoroughly by teaching that the Bible is the only source of divinely revealed knowledge from God. Although he advocated that people should pay tithe to the Government (the equivalence of today's income tax),¹⁷ he rejected the idea of payment of tithe to the Church.²⁴

“The Law of Moses binds only the Jews and not the Gentiles. Here the Law of Moses has its place. It is no longer binding on us because it was given only to the people of Israel. And Israel accepted this law for itself and its descendants, while the Gentiles were excluded.” “For you see and hear how they read Moses, extol him, and bring up the way he ruled the people with commandments. They try to be clever, and think they know something more than is presented in the Gospel; so they minimize faith, contrive something new, and boastfully claim that it comes from the Old Testament.” “But we will not have this sort of thing. We would rather not preach again for the rest of our life than to let Moses

return and to let Christ be torn out of our hearts. We will not have Moses as ruler or lawgiver any longer. Indeed God himself will not have it either.” “Moses has nothing to do with us. **If I were to accept Moses in one commandment, I would have to accept the entire Moses.**” “We will not regard him as our lawgiver — unless he agrees with both the New Testament and the natural law.” “For not one little period in Moses pertains to us.” “But the other commandments of Moses, which are not [implanted in all men] by nature, the Gentiles do not hold. **Nor do these pertain to the Gentiles, such as the tithe and others equally fine which I wish we had too.**” ²⁴

John Owen (1616–1683)

John Owen was an English Nonconformist Church leader, theologian, and academic administrator at the University of Oxford.

“And without solicitousness concerning offence, I shall take leave to say, that it is no safe plea for many to insist on, that tithes are due and divine, as they speak, that is, by a binding law of God now under the Gospel. For, be the law and institution what it will, nothing is more certain than that there is nothing due under the Gospel by virtue of God's command or institution with

respect unto his worship, unto any who do not wholly give up themselves unto the ministry and labour in the word and doctrine, unless they be such as are disenabled by age and infirmities, who are not to be forsaken all the days of their lives. For men to live in pleasure and idleness, according to the pomp, vanities, and grandeur of the world, neither rising early, nor going to bed late, nor spending their time or strength in the service of the Church, according to the duties required of all the ministers thereof in the Gospel, to sing unto themselves that tithes are due to them, by the appointment and law of God, is a fond imagination, a dream that will fill them with perplexity when they shall awake.”²⁵

John Bunyan (1628–1688)

John Bunyan was an English writer and Baptist preacher best remembered as the author of the book *The Pilgrim's Progress*. In addition to *The Pilgrim's Progress*, he wrote nearly sixty other titles, mostly from expanded sermon titles.

“Nor doth his positive holiness help him at all, forasmuch as it is grounded mostly, if not altogether, in ceremonial holiness. Nay, I will recollect myself, it was grounded partly in ceremonial, and partly in superstitious holiness, if

there be such a thing as superstitious holiness in the world, **this paying of tithes was ceremonial, such as came in and went out with the typical priesthood.**"²⁶

George Fox (1624–1691)

George Fox was an English Dissenter, founder of the Religious Society of Friends (The Quakers).

"It were better for you to plead for Christ, who has ended the tithing priesthood with the tithes, and has sent forth his ministers to give freely, as they have received freely."²⁷

Charles Haddon Spurgeon (1834–1892)

Charles Haddon (CH) Spurgeon is popularly called the "Prince of Preachers" because of his unique oratory skills. He was a British Baptist preacher who remains highly influential, even after death, among Christians of different denominations. Spurgeon pastored the congregation of the New Park Street Chapel that was later called the Metropolitan Tabernacle in London for 38 years. He was a prominent figure in the Reformed Baptist tradition, defending the Church and opposing the liberal and pragmatic theological tendencies in the Church of his day. He was a prolific author of many types of works

including sermons, an autobiography, commentaries, books on prayer, devotionals, magazines, poetry, hymns etc. His unique oratory skills held his listeners awe-struck in the Metropolitan Tabernacle.

“But you are not under a system similar to that by which the Jews were obliged to pay tithes to the priests. If there were any such rule laid down in the Gospel, it would destroy the beauty of spontaneous giving and take away all the bloom from the fruit of your liberality! There is no law to tell me what I should give my father on his birthday. There is no rule laid down in any law book to decide what present a husband should give to his wife, nor what token of affection we should bestow upon others whom we love. No, the gift must be a free one, or it has lost all its sweetness.”²⁸

Cyrus Ingerson Scofield (1843–1921)

C. I. Scofield was an American theologian, minister, and writer of a best-selling annotated Bible.

“In contrast with the law, which imposed giving as a divine requirement, Christian giving is voluntary, and a test of sincerity and love.”²⁹

Franz August Otto Pieper (1852–1931)

Franz Pieper was a Confessional Lutheran theologian. He became a professor of theology at Concordia Seminary in 1878 and later became the president of the institution in 1887.

“With respect to the *tithe* which God enjoined upon the Jews in the Old Testament, Lev. 27, 30, we must remember, on the one hand, that also this provision belonged to the Ceremonial Law, which has been abolished by Christ, Col. 2: 16-17, so that it is no longer binding upon Christians in the New Testament; on the other hand, however, the abolition of the law of tithing must not be abused by Christians in the interest of neglecting liberal giving, since also in the New Testament God exhorts His saints to give continually and liberally, 2Cor. 9: 6-7.”³⁰

William Edwy Vine (1873–1949)

William E. Vine was an English Biblical scholar, theologian, and author of “Vine’s Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words”.

“Love and devotion to God! That imparts the real value to giving. And this perhaps serves to explain why no command as to the amount is laid down for believers. To obey a command stating

the amount or proportion would be easy, but what exercise of heart would there be? Where would the motive lie? Loyalty would be superseded by mechanical religion. Love would be replaced by formalism. Both individuals and local Churches would lose their sense of the high motive which should inspire in the offering a loving response to the love of the great Giver Himself.”³¹

Zola Levitt (1938–2006)

Zola Levitt was a Jew who converted to evangelical Christianity. He founded a Church, Zola Levitt Ministries, in Dallas, Texas. He was quite successful at raising money through repeated visits to evangelical Churches between 1960s to the 1980s to support the multimillion-dollar budget of his organization that had a mission to the Jews. Levitt wrote a large number of books. He also produced and starred in his own radio and television shows, many of which were broadcast on the Trinity Broadcasting Network.

“Is tithing for the Christian today? Tithing was a part of the Law of Moses under the legal economy of Israel. It does not apply to the Church today, since we are under grace and not the law (Romans 6:14; 10:4). Therefore, we are obligated

to give first our bodies and souls as living sacrifices in reasonable service to God (Romans 12:1–2). The New Testament teaches proportional giving according to what we have, not what we don't have (2 Cor. 8:12). If we can only give 5% as the Lord leads, so be it. It is not how much you give that matters to God, but the attitude and motive which you are giving from. This is the concern of the New Testament with regard to giving, rather than measuring the amount that is given.³²

John Fullerton MacArthur (1939–)

John F. MacArthur is an American pastor and author known for his international radio program "Grace to You". He has served as the pastor-teacher of Grace Community Church in Los Angeles, California since 1969. He is currently the president of The Master's College in Newhall, California and The Master's Seminary in Los Angeles, California. He was acknowledged as one of the most influential preachers of his time. He edited or authored more than 150 books.

"In all the passages where the Church gives, there is no mention at all any place of tithing. But in order to get tithing in, they say if law required a tenth, certainly grace does. And I'm not against

the principle. **But what they're really saying is, we know tithing is not New Testament giving, but if we don't push the tithe, we're afraid we won't get enough money to operate. It really boils down to that kind of motivation. The 10% sort of keeps the money flowing.** You know what's wrong with the 10%? Number one, it isn't biblical and it's giving for the wrong reason. It's giving to fulfill an obligation rather than a response to a loving, willing heart, right? Second thing that's wrong with it is, it hinders what you could do by making you think you're done. Giving is never to be by coercion. It is never to be by fundraising. It is never to be by compulsion. It is - any gimmick is offensive to God.”³³

There are many more ministers, theologians, Churches, organizations and groups that disagree with the requirement to tithe. The reader may find these websites useful:

- Those Who Disagree with Tithing - <http://www.tithing.com/those-who-disagree-with-tithing/>
- Theologians Against Tithing - <https://indieChurch.wordpress.com/theologians-against-tithing/>

Epilogue

My Struggles

I was a regular tither until 2014. I tried my best to pay my tithe for about 21 years. I must admit that I defaulted or delayed payment occasionally but I tried my best to comply with the charge- "Thou shall tithe" dogmatically in those years. On the majority of the occasions I defaulted, I paid back at a later date.

However, I started doubting the correctness of the tithe doctrine as I grew in the knowledge of the Word of God for the following reasons:

- I was always afraid that something sinister would happen to me each time I defaulted or delayed payment. As a result of this, I asked if I needed to appease God regularly to escape His punishment despite Jesus Christ's sacrifice on the cross of Calvary. I found this very difficult to bear.
- They told us regularly we would have financial abundance if we tithed. After several years of

diligent adherence, I would be dishonest to say I was rich. In reality, I sometimes struggled to balance my books. I could not resist the temptation to ask how long I would have to obey this injunction to have the promised financial prosperity. I also knew several 'tithers' whose conditions were either like mine or worse financially. I reasoned, "Since God cannot lie, it is either the theology is incorrect or there are other requirements for financial abundance than tithing".

- The condemnation of non-tithers by preachers with the curse of Malachi 3:9 always grieved me. Some even say that our lives would be tight if we don't tithe. I wondered why a minister of the Gospel would say such things despite that Christ abolished the curse of the Law, according to Galatians 3:13-14.

“13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree"), 14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” (Gal 3:13-14)

At a point, the Lord began to impress it on my heart to study the subject. I was reluctant to study initially. I kept pushing the thought away because I believed I knew enough. I was somewhere alone one morning when this impression came again. It was so strong I could not resist it anymore. I knew the Lord wanted me to study the subject. I would be lying if I said I didn't know. I then began a search for the truth, to know the position of the infallible Word of God on the subject. It turns out that several people have also conducted a similar search like mine. My findings, as documented in this book, are not new. They are similar to those of sincere diligent inquirers before me. The Spirit of truth is one.

I had conducted studies on several Christian subjects in the past but I must confess that until 2014 I did not make any deliberate effort to study this subject. Just like many of you who are reading this book, I relied on unverified teachings I received from people to develop my conviction and practice in this line.

To be honest, the search was a worthwhile exercise. My theology has been thoroughly challenged. I have dropped whatever I could not honestly justify by Scripture. I have developed better convictions that are based on the eternal

Word of God.

My initial reaction after the search was to keep my findings to myself. I did not want to be tagged “controversial”. I was concerned that my reputation would be negatively affected by the truths contained in this book. I reasoned again, “Is my reputation more important than the reputation of the Lord and His Word? Who am I to withstand the Lord? Who am I to deny the truth of the Gospel?” I concluded that it is better to share my findings with fellow believers who may be having similar conflicts like mine about the subject.

This book began as a conversation with some brethren on social media shortly after my research. Someone suggested that I should put the thoughts I expressed during the interaction in a book but I resisted the suggestion then because I did not think it was necessary. I believe the time is now ripe for this work to go out.

I know I stand the risk of being vilified, castigated, and ostracized by those who differ from the thoughts expressed in the book despite this epilogue. I am determined to stand for the truth of the Gospel irrespective of differing opinions.

Some will inevitably disagree with some of the thoughts expressed regarding tithe/tithing in

particular. To such persons I say- we may not agree on every subject of the Bible at all times but we can at least keep the line open for further deliberations as the Lord gives us insight. We may never be able to fully comprehend the height, depth, width, and breadth of the grace of God on this side of eternity but we need to be humble and continually pray that God would open our eyes to appreciate His gifts to us and mankind in general.

I remember the first time someone gave me a copy of an unpublished work on tithing to read some years back, I deliberately refused to read it because I considered the material heretic. I continued to hold on tenaciously to an opinion founded on the human tradition until I was inspired to conduct this search. Here am I today writing a book on the subject.

Let us not be close-minded to the prompting of the Spirit. Let's be like the Berean Christians who received the Word of God with open-mindedness and searched the scriptures daily for personal understanding.

“10 Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. 11 These were

more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so. 12 Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.” (Acts 17:10–12)

I remain His humble servant.

Abiodun Jemilohun

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