

were also there to sow the seeds of dissension, of jealousy and strife among the members of this colony, which had gone up full of zeal and enthusiasm to rehabit their ancient land, to rebuild the temple of God, and renew the worship of Jehovah. Even in the days of Cyrus, who was a friend to the Jews, the neighboring nations incited the Persian governor to report to that monarch that it would be impolitic and dangerous to permit these people who had created so much trouble in former years for the kings of Assyria and Babylon, to rebuild the city and temple of their God. These conspirators succeeded so well that Cyrus forbade the Jews to continue, and for the last seven years of his reign the work of rebuilding Jerusalem ceased. In the reign of his successor, Cambyses, they were not permitted to resume it; but in the days of another king, Darius Hystaspes—who was a second Cyrus to the Jews—the temple was finished and dedicated. But it was not until two other great men, Ezra and Nehemiah, had come from Babylon by permission of its king, that the work upon the walls of the city was entirely accomplished. Nehemiah was the cupbearer of Artaxerxes Longimanus, and it was under him and due mostly to his heroic efforts that the labor was finally completed. Having instituted the law of Moses again, and established that custom which prevailed in the days of our Savior, of reading the law in public, he returned to Babylon. But the Jews were a backsliding people. They needed to be constantly reminded of the duties they owed to their God; and notwithstanding the punishments they had received for their neglect and transgressions, they fell away again. The worship of Jehovah languished, the paying of tithing ceased, and the Priesthood, not being supported any longer by the people, could not continue to serve in the temple, but were compelled to go out into the fields and earn their bread, letting the work of the Lord take care of itself. It was this state of things, with other evils, that brought forth the last of the Old Testament Prophets. The sins which he denounced so strenuously were prevalent when he came, four hundred years before the birth of the Savior.

You will observe that Malachi laid great stress upon the principle of tithing, and upon the principle of offerings, for the support of the Priesthood while they officiated in the temple, and doubtless for the expenses of the temple, and perhaps for the rebuilding of the city. He is believed to have been cotemporary with Nehemiah, who was directing that important labor. So urgent was he in showing the people the necessity for observing these things, in order that heaven might continue to smile upon them, that their enemies might not again come upon them and carry them into captivity, in order that Jerusalem might stand upon her feet and remain free unto the coming of her King, for whose earthly advent Abraham and his posterity had been chosen as a peculiar people, a select lineage, and commanded to remain distinct and not allow themselves to be seduced from their allegiance to Jehovah or to neglect in any particular the laws which He had given them—so urgent was Malachi, so much in earnest, that he pleaded with the people in these words: "Will a man rob God?" Probably there were some among them who said: "No, not if he knows it." Not if

he knew he was stealing from the Almighty would any Jew dare do such a thing. "Yet ye have robbed me," said the Prophet, speaking in the name of the Lord. "But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee?" Doubtless they were thunderstruck when he told them that it was in withholding the tithes and offerings which should be paid into the storehouse of the Lord, that there might be meat in His house, and means to carry on the work which He had instituted. After seventy years of exile, sorrow and suffering, He had permitted them to return for this purpose, and now to neglect it again, and cause the worship of Jehovah in His holy temple to cease, because His servants, not being supported according to the law which He had given, were compelled to go into the fields and dig for themselves, and slight the sacred duties of their calling!

The law of tithing was no new thing to the Jewish people. As early as the times of Abraham, he, the head of the house of Israel, paid tithes to Melchisedek, after whom the High Priesthood was named. Abraham, returning from the slaughter of the kings, gave him tithes of all he possessed, in order that he might be sanctified by that law, and receive in return a spiritual blessing from Melchisedek, who was his superior; for, as Paul reasons, it is the lesser who is blessed of the greater, and consider, says he, "how great this man was, unto whom the Patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils." We are shown, in reading the scriptures, how God instituted this law while His people were wandering in the wilderness in the days of Moses. After He had called him up into the Mount and given him the Decalogue, the ten commandments, He instructed him as to how he should organize the Priesthood. It seems that it had been the original design to take the first-born of the house of Israel, who were spared on the night when the angel of death passed over the children of Israel and slew the first-born of the Egyptians, and make of them a Priesthood to minister for the rest of the tribes; but owing to a great sin which was committed while Moses was in the Mount, when Aaron made the golden calf and the people bowed down and worshiped it—one of the false gods of Egypt—the Almighty changed His purpose, if we may say so, and chose the tribe of Levi, to which Moses himself belonged, and set them apart as His Priesthood, with Aaron and his sons as Priests and Moses as Prophet and mouthpiece unto them. It was at this time—fifteen hundred years before the coming of the Savior—that the law of tithing was re-instituted. The Levites were to have the special care of the tabernacle and its appurtenances; the Priests were to bear the sacred ark upon their shoulders, and to officiate at the altar, and no man was to have this right, except he was a Priest, "called of God as was Aaron." Men were smitten with death because they presumed to act in the Priest's office without having been ordained thereto. Because these spiritual labors engrossed their time, and because it would have rendered them unworthy to bear the sacred vessels and officiate as a Priesthood if they had engaged too much in secular pursuits, the law of tithing was instituted. All the other tribes of Israel were tithed for the sustenance of this one tribe, in order that God's Priesthood might be properly

supported while they officiated before Him. This was the purpose of the law in that day. The law prevailed all down the centuries, and though it was often neglected, and had to be re-established with many warnings and admonitions, yet it continued to be a statute, and when Malachi came he spoke strongly upon this point, telling the people that if they did not observe the law they would rob the Almighty of what was His due. In the 13th and 14th verses of the first chapter of the prophecy he denounces also the practices of those who vainly sought to deceive the Lord by bringing that which was torn and lame and sick—in other words, those who paid their tithing with the worstlings instead of the firstlings of their flocks.

One reason, doubtless, why the Jews were neglectful in regard to this principle was because of the sneers and ridicule heaped upon them by those around them who were not of them, who did not understand the purposes of Jehovah, and probably tried to make the Jews believe they were being oppressed and imposed upon; that these Priests and Levites were "lazy dignities," indolent, tyrannical; that they should work like the rest of their fellows, and ought not to be supported. I have no doubt that such arguments were used, and because of these seducing spirits many fell away, neglected the law, and came under the condemnation which Malachi pronounced upon them.

But Malachi speaks of another principle, that of offerings. He says, "Ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings." What are we to understand by "offerings?" Something distinct, it would seem, from tithing.

Now, suppose we come down to our own day. The principle of tithing has been revealed to this Church. We are latter-day Israel. We are the descendants of that Abraham who gave tithes to Melchisedek. We are a peculiar people, chosen that we might introduce these laws anew in the latter days. A few years after the Church was organized, the principle of tithing was revealed to the Prophet Joseph. I could read to you, if I chose, the law of the Lord upon this subject, given in July, 1838, in response to the question as to how much He required of His people as a tithing. He said that He required them to put all their surplus property into the hands of the Bishop of the Church, and that should be the beginning of the tithing of His people; after that, He required a tenth of their increase annually. Those who observed this law would sanctify the land under their feet and make it a land of Zion, and unto those who did not do so it should not be a land of Zion. The purpose for which the tithing was to be paid is pointed out; it was for the support of the Priesthood who should give their time to the work of the Lord, to the preaching of the Gospel, to the administration of sacred ordinances, and who did not have time to engage in temporal pursuits, whereby to support their families or to amass riches; also for the laying of the foundations of Zion, and the general furtherance of the work of the Lord. But there is no mention there of offerings. We know, however, that we are required to give offerings as well as to pay tithes. It is a principle as old as the days of Malachi,