

## THE EDITOR'S COMMENTS.

### THE LAW OF TITHING.

At a time of the year when every devout heart naturally contemplates the boundless mercy of God in sending His Son to redeem the world, it is appropriate to consider also what the Lord requires at the hands of His Saints. The Gospel, speaking in general terms, asks for supreme love of God and unselfish affection for fellow-men. Whatever is prompted by this, the most potent of all motives, is accepted by the Almighty as thanks-offering in the sanctuary for His tender mercies and loving kindness.

The Lord has, besides, been pleased to express His will with regard to the conduct of His people in some particulars. He has pointed out special duties, the observance of which He has said He will accept as a token of that supreme love. One of these duties relates to the payment of tithing and the care of the poor.

As early in the history of the Church as 1831 the Lord revealed the fact that this dispensation is one of sacrifice and tithing. He says:

"Behold, now it is called today (until the coming of the Son of Man), and verily it is a day of sacrifice and a day for the tithing of my people; for he that is tithed shall not be burned (at His coming)." Doctrine and Covenants, 64: 23.

It should be clear that when God speaks thus to men He looks for implicit obedience. As soon as a law is revealed, compliance with it is the test whether those to whom it is given are worthy of further blessings or not, whether their faith is living or dead, a power to salvation, or only a deception. For this reason the Lord says that those who do not pay tithing are unworthy of having their names enrolled on the records of the people of God.

"It is contrary to the will and commandment of God, that those who receive not their inheritance by consecration, agreeable to His law, which He has given, that He may tithe His people, to prepare them against the day of vengeance and burning, should have their names enrolled with the people of God; neither is their genealogy to be kept; or to be had where it may be found on any of the records or history of the Church." Doctrine and Covenants 85: 3, 4.

Seeing the importance of this law, it is no wonder that the Saints at an early day asked the Lord for light on the question how much is required of the people for a tithing. And in answer to this question the Lord said:

"Verily, thus saith the Lord, I require all their surplus property to be put into the hands of the bishop of my Church of Zion,

"For the building of mine house, and for the laying of the foundation of Zion and for the Priesthood, and for the debts of the Presidency of my Church;

"And this shall be the beginning of the tithing of my people;

"And after that, those who have thus been tithed, shall pay one-tenth of all their interests annually; and this shall be a standing law unto them for ever, for my holy Priesthood, saith the Lord.

"Verily I say unto you, it shall come to pass, that all those who gather unto the land of Zion, shall be tithed of their surplus properties, and shall observe this law, or they shall not be found worthy to abide among you.

"And I say unto you, if my people observe not this law, to keep it holy,

and by this law sanctify the land of Zion unto me, that my statutes and my judgments may be kept thereon, that it may be most holy, behold, verily I say unto you, it shall not be a land of Zion unto you;

"And this shall be an example unto all the Stakes of Zion. Even so. Amen." (Doctrine and Covenants, Sec. 119.)

What the law on this subject was in the earliest dispensations is not on record in the Scriptures, but it is stated that Abraham gave a tenth part of his substance to Melchisedek and also that Jacob in his covenant with the Lord included a promise to pay tithing faithfully (Gen. 28: 20-22). It is therefore certain that the law was known to the ancient patriarchs and observed by them.

In the Mosaic era the law of tithing was explicit. Under that dispensation all real estate in the promised land belonged to the Lord, and the tribes and heads of families held it as stewards. Whatever changes occurred, owing to deaths or sales, were only temporary and had to be readjusted every fiftieth year, the year of jubilee. A tenth part of whatever the land yielded belonged to the Lord. The law reads:

"And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's; it is holy unto the Lord." Lev. 27: 30.

"Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bring forth year by year." Deut. 14: 22.

Not to observe this law is by the Almighty counted as robbery.

"Ye are cursed with a curse, for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Mal. 3: 9, 10.

The secret of the success of President Brigham Young may be found, partially at least, in his willingness to consecrate his substance to the Lord. He says in a sermon, Journal of Discourses, Vol. 15, page 3:

"And another great neglect and infringement of the law of God by the children of Israel was in relation to their tithes and offerings. The law of tithing was revealed in very early times to the people of God; but they failed to observe it, and the Prophet whom God sent to Israel declared that they had transgressed the laws, changed the ordinances, and broken the everlasting covenant. Covenants were made with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but their descendants broke them. They would not observe but they would transgress the laws which God gave unto them, and they continued to do so down to the days of Malachi. The Lord, through the Prophet declared—'This whole nation have robbed me.' I also declare that this whole people, called the Latter-day Saints, are guilty of the same sin—they have robbed the Lord in their tithes and in their offerings. What would the people like? Do they want to know what is done with the tithing? If the Lord requires one-tenth of my ability to be devoted to building temples, meeting houses, school houses, to schooling our children, gathering the poor from the nations of the earth, bringing home the aged, lame, halt and blind, and building houses for them to live in, that they may be comfortable when they reach Zion, and to sustaining the

Priesthood, it is not my prerogative to question the authority of the Almighty in this, nor of His servants who have charge of it. If I am required to pay my tithing, it is my duty to pay it. \* \* \* I can say, that in the days of Joseph, when my circumstances were very straitened, I never had \$500, \$100, one dollar, fifty cents or twenty-five cents, but if it were wanted it went as free as a cup of water from a well—Joseph was welcome to it. Was I tried in this? Yes, for many and many has been the time in my poverty, when if I had a dollar or fifty cents in my possession, I have thought, I can buy a pint or a half pint of molasses for my children to sop their bread in, but it was called for, and it went as free as the water in the river here would be to a thirsty person."

Donations are not tithing. On this subject President John Taylor says:

"A feeling has more or less prevailed among the people that tithing is a matter to be decided on exclusively by the individual paying it, and that if he pays it, all right, if he does not pay his tithing it is not quite so much right; but it makes not so much difference. A good Saint perhaps may be honorable and upright and honest in dealings; may be a tolerably good neighbor, he may be zealous to a certain extent, according to his ideas and notions in regard to the propagation of the word of truth; he may be active and energetic in many things, but if he does right in the main, tithing is a matter of very little importance; it is only a temporary idea, it does not concern us much, it is only meant to meet the financial affairs associated with the Church—and that is a matter of very little importance. Now it is proper that we should be correctly informed in relation to these matters, and as I stated yesterday, there is a great diversity of opinion among men, and even men in authority in the Church, say Bishops, and probably presidents of Stakes and others, in relation to the principle of tithing. Now it is proper that we should have a correct view and a proper understanding of this principle. \* \* \* I think the people ought to be instructed in those things, and then if they do not live up to them you will not then be held responsible to the authorities that preside over you. The Lord tells us that they shall not be worthy of a place among us. Do we want to alter that? Not one iota. Would I wish to be harsh to men that are ignorant? No I would not. I would bear with them and teach them and instruct them. And if I were a Bishop, I would instruct the Teachers to do it; and then by and by, after they were fully informed, and had every opportunity to become acquainted with things, we might take final action in relation to their standing. I would not wish to enforce that law at present, until men were thoroughly informed. For instance, the case I referred to yesterday. There were two men: one paid \$100 in tithing, and the other paid \$25 in tithing. Both of them owned about the same amount of property, but the first paid his tithing and the other did not. The second, however, paid some \$75 in donations; but he did not pay his tithing, he only paid a quarter of it. That may have arisen from ignorance with regard to the law. The last paid out as much money as the first, and he may have been wrongly taught. Some of the Bishops do not understand these things, and yet we have had this doctrine given to us for forty-two years. Has a man a right to turn things as he pleases? I have not, and I do not believe any other man has. And if any Bishop or a President of a Stake or anybody else tells you that you can do as you please about the disposition you make of the