

SALT & LIGHT (A CHRISTIAN JOURNAL)

An informal journal for the timely communication of Biblical teaching and commentary of importance to Christians.

The ABC of Biblical Giving

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I. Prologue

Today there are literally thousands of organizations claiming to be Christian ministries. Some are churches or outreach ministries of local congregations; many are independent evangelistic associations; others are organizations devoted to a variety of goals, some of which clearly run contrary to the teaching of the Scripture. The Christian is constantly bombarded with requests for money from these ministries, and many Christians are confused as to which organizations should be supported, and how much support should be given to each.

Christians in general are confused with respect to giving, simply because most have never been taught from the Scripture the categories of Biblical giving and the system God has ordained for support of the ministry. Not understanding these matters, and consequently being unaware of his responsibility in this realm, the typical Christian is haphazard and impulsive in his giving. As a result, legitimate ministries generally are in

want, while apostate organizations, utilizing Madison-Avenue techniques to raise funds, flourish. Meanwhile, the Christian finds himself continually in economic distress and oppression, not realizing that his financial woes are a direct consequence of his failure to comply with the Biblical rules of giving.

In New Covenant Scripture, we find no less than three separate and distinct categories of giving, each having its own criteria. These categories are: (1) giving to support the one who teaches the Word, (2) giving to send forth the evangelist, and (3) giving to relieve fellow Christians who have fallen into distress.

II. First Things First

The first category of giving is that of support of the ministry. The example was set by Abraham, long before the Old Covenant was made between the Eternal and Israel at Mount Sinai. Abraham paid the tithe to a priest named Melchizedek:

14 And Abram having heard that Lot his nephew had been taken captive, numbered his own home-born servants three hundred and eighteen, and pursued after them to Dan. 15 And he came upon them by night, he and his servants, and he smote them and pursued them as far as Choba, which is on the left of Damascus. 16 And he recovered all the cavalry of Sodom, and he recovered Lot his nephew, and all his possessions, and the women and the people. 17 And the king of Sodom went out to meet him, after he returned from the slaughter of Chodollogomor, and the kings with him, to the valley of Saby; this was the plain of the kings. 18 And Melchisedec king of Salem brought forth loaves and wine, and he was the priest of the most high God. 19 And he blessed Abram, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, who made heaven and earth, 20 and blessed be the most high God who delivered thine enemies into thy power. And Abram gave him the tithe

¹Unless otherwise noted, all citations of Old Covenant scripture are taken from the Septuagint (typically, from the A. D. 1851 English translation of Brenton), which is a translation into the Greek dialect called 'Koine' of the ancient Hebrew canon of Old Covenant scripture. The Septuagint commonly is designated by the Roman numeral 'LXX', which corresponds to the number seventy, this supposedly being the number of men who laboured on the translation.

The translation was made a century or more prior to the Incarnation, and copies of the Septuagint circulated throughout the ancient world. By the time of the birth of Christ, the Septuagint had become accepted as the authentic and official Canon of Old Covenant scripture. Popular acceptance of the Septuagint was due largely to the fact that the Hebrew language had fallen into disuse; this, in turn, being largely a consequence of the dispersion of Israel by the Assyrian invasion, together with the subsequent seventy years of captivity in Babylon of the remnant which Assyria did not carry away. By the time of the return from Babylon, Greek had become established as the common language of the world, as a result of the conquests of Alexander the Great. Thus, it is the Septuagint, rather than the ancient Hebrew Canon, which was in common use throughout Judea during the era of the Incarnation and the apostolic age, and there is little, if any, evidence that the ancient Hebrew canon was still in use by anyone during this period. Jesus and the apostles quoted from the Septuagint rather than the ancient Hebrew, thus authenticating the Septuagint as the official and authentic canon of Old Covenant scripture. Consequently, it is the Septuagint, rather than the ancient Hebrew text, which the early Church preserved and revered as genuine.

Veneration of the Septuagint—on the part of both the Christian and the Christ-rejecting, unregenerate Jew—persisted for a period of roughly a century after the Resurrection. However, the Jew, having nothing but an adversarial relationship with the Christian, began maintaining his own editions of the Septuagint. Sometime after the final destruction of the city of Jerusalem and the temple in A. D. 70, the Jew attempted to revive the defunct Hebrew language and to re-create the abandoned ancient Hebrew text—a text which, like the ark of the covenant, has disappeared without a trace. It appears that neither a copy nor even so much as a fragment of the ancient Hebrew canon survived to the modern era; at least, Christian scholars know of none to be extant. These efforts of the Jew culminated in creation of the so-called 'Masoretic Text', which was not published until

of all.

– Genesis 14:14–20 (LXX)¹

1 For this Melchisedec, 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 by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; 3 Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually. 4 Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. 5 And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: 6 But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises. 7 And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. 8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. 9 And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. 10 For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him.

– Hebrews 7:1–10

Later, under the terms of the Old Covenant, the Levitical priesthood was designated recipient of the tithe:

25 And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, 26 Thou shalt also speak to the Levites, and shalt say to them, If ye take the tithe from the children of Israel, which I have given you from them for an inheritance, then shall ye separate from it a heave-offering to the Lord, a tenth of the tenth. 27 **And your heave-offerings shall be reckoned to you as corn from the floor, and an offering from the wine-press.** 28 So shall ye also separate them from all the offerings of the Lord out of all your tithes, whatsoever ye shall receive from the children of Israel; and ye shall give of them an offering to the Lord to Aaron the priest. 29 Of all your gifts ye shall offer an offering to the Lord, and of every first-fruit the consecrated part from it. 30 And thou shalt say

to them, **When ye shall offer the first-fruits from it, then shall it be reckoned to the Levites as produce from the threshing-floor, and as produce from the wine-press.**

– Numbers 18:25–30 (LXX)

This passage demonstrates the principle of *equivalence of income*: though the Levites neither sowed nor harvested grain, nor did they cultivate the vine, yet they were to pay a tithe of the tithe which they received from their fellow Israelites. Thus, wages and stipends are the equivalent of the harvest. Modern-day Pharisees, attempting to follow the letter of the law of Moses, while failing to perceive the spirit of that law, erroneously argue that the tithe is applicable only to the farmer—that those who labour in office or factory have no “harvest”, and thus owe no tithe.

2 And Ezekias appointed the courses of the priests and the Levites, and the courses of each one according to his ministry, to the priests and to the Levites, for the whole-burnt-offering, and for the peace-offering, and to praise, and to give thanks, and to minister in the gates, and in the courts of the house of the Lord. 3 And the king's proportion out of his substance was appointed for the whole-burnt-offerings, the morning and the evening one, and the whole-burnt-offerings for the sabbaths, and for the new moons, and for the feasts that were ordered in the law of the Lord. 4 And they told the people who dwelt in Jerusalem, to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might be strong in the ministry of the house of the Lord. 5 And as he gave the command, Israel brought abundantly first-fruits of corn, and wine, and oil, and honey, and every fruit of the field: and the children of Israel and Juda brought tithes of everything abundantly. 6 And they that dwelt in the cities of Juda themselves also brought tithes of calves and sheep, and tithes of goats, and consecrated them to the Lord their God, and they brought them and laid them in heaps. 7 In the third month the heaps began to be piled, and in the seventh month they were finished. 8 And Ezekias and the princes came and saw the heaps, and blessed the Lord, and his people Israel. 9 Then Ezekias enquired of the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps. 10 And Azarias the priest, the chief over the house of Sadoc,

the 15th century A. D. It is vital to understand that the Masoretic Text is the product of unregenerate men, working entirely in the Christian era—an era in which no man rightly can claim to possess covenantal relationship with God under the terms of the Old Covenant, for the Old Covenant came to a permanent and irreversible end upon the death of Christ Jesus. Being the creation of unregenerate men, the Masoretic Text by no stretch of the imagination may be considered canonical.

Popular notion perceives the Masoretic Text as simply the ancient Hebrew text to which ‘vowel points’ have been added; but, in actuality, the Masoretic Text is a new Bible, written in a language considerably more complex than the language of the ancient Hebrews. Regrettably, William Tyndale translated his English Bible from the Masoretic Text, rather than from the Septuagint; thus were Christians originally introduced to the Jewish counterfeit of the ancient Hebrew Canon. And despite the fact that, soon after its publication, the Masoretic Text was demonstrated by Christian scholars to be but a counterfeit of the ancient Hebrew Canon and marred by numerous serious flaws, Tyndale's use of the Masoretic Text set a precedent which has been followed by virtually every subsequent translator of the English Bible. Demonstration of the corrupt and spurious nature of the Masoretic Text is not difficult, for New Covenant scripture contains numerous quotations of Old Covenant scripture, and inspection of the quoted passages reveals all manner of corruption, including truncation, augmentation, and selective editing.

Thus, despite its historical role as the basis for English Bible, the Masoretic Text is nothing more than a poorly-crafted modern Jewish counterfeit of the ancient Hebrew Bible which long ago had been abandoned, even by the Jew; as such, the Masoretic Text is unreliable, utterly worthless, and offers nothing whatsoever of value to the Christian. The oldest extant copies of the Septuagint predate the oldest extant copies of the Masoretic Text by more than a thousand years. Moreover, there is no *demonstrated* continuity between the ancient Hebrew Canon and the Masoretic Text. Without question, the Septuagint is the only reliable link to the ancient Hebrew Canon. Indeed, the Masoretic Text gives the appearance of being a heavily-edited translation of the Septuagint into the Masoretic Hebrew language. But whatever the pedigree of the Masoretic Text, it is the Septuagint alone which is the authentic canon of Old Covenant scripture, simply because it is from the Septuagint alone that Jesus and the apostles cited the Scripture.

For a more comprehensive discussion of this matter, see the journal article, “Rightful Succession & Imposture: The Case of the Septuagint vs. the Masoretic Text”, *Salt & Light*, Vol. 2, No. 6.

spoke to him, and said, From the time that the first-fruits began to be brought into the house of the Lord, we have eaten and drunk, and left even abundantly; for the Lord has blessed his people, and we have left to this amount. 11 And Ezekias told them yet farther to prepare chambers for the house of the Lord; and they prepared them, 12 and they brought thither the first-fruits and the tithes faithfully; and Chonenias the Levite was superintendent over them, and Semei his brother was next. 13 and Jeiel, and Ozias, and Naeth, and Asael, and Jerimoth, and Jozabad, and Eliel, and Samachia, and Maath, and Banaias, and his sons, were appointed by Chonenias and Semei his brother, as Ezekias the king, and Azarias who was over the house of the Lord commanded. 14 And Core, the son of Jemna the Levite, the porter eastward, was over the gifts, to distribute the first-fruits of the Lord, and the most holy things, 15 by the hand of Odom, and Benjamin, and Jesus, and Semei, and Amarias, and Sechonias, by the hand of the priests faithfully, to give to their brethren according to the courses, as well to great as small; 16 besides the increase of males from three years old and upward, to every one entering into the house of the Lord, a portion according to a daily rate, for service in the daily courses of their order. 17 This is the distribution of the priests according to the houses of their families; and the Levites in their daily courses from twenty years old and upward were in their order, 18 to assign stations for all the increase of their sons and their daughters, for the whole number: for they faithfully sanctified the holy place. 19 As for the sons of Aaron that executed the priests' office,—even those from their cities the men in each several city who were named expressly,—were appointed to give a portion to every male among the priests, and to every one reckoned among the Levites. 20 And Ezekias did so through all Juda, and did that which was good and right before the Lord his God. 21 And in every work which he began in service in the house of the Lord, and in the law, and in the ordinances, he sought his God with all his soul, and wrought, and prospered.

– II Chronicles 31:2–21 (LXX)

32 And we will impose ordinances upon ourselves, to levy on ourselves the third part of a didrachm yearly for the service of the house of our God; 33 the shewbread, and the continual meat-offering, and for the continual whole-burnt-offering, of the sabbaths, of the new moon, for the feast, and for the holy things, and the sin-offerings, to make atonement for Israel, and for the works of the house of our God. 34 And we cast lots for the office of wood-bearing, we the priests, and the Levites, and the people, to bring wood into the house of our God, according to the house of our families, at certain set times, year by year, to burn on the altar of the Lord our God, as it is written in the law: 35 and to bring the first-fruits of our land, and the first-fruits of the fruit of every tree, year by year, into the house of the Lord: 36 the first-born of our sons, and of our cattle, as it is written in the law, and the first-born of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God, for the priests that minister in the house of our God. 37 And the first-fruits of our corn, and the fruit of every tree, of wine, and of oil, will we bring to the priests to the treasury of the house of God; and a tithe of our land to the Levites: for the Levites themselves shall receive tithes in all the cities of the land we cultivate. 38 And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites in

the tithe of the Levite: and the Levites shall bring up the tenth part of their tithe to the house of our God, into the treasuries of the house of God. 39 For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring into the treasuries the first-fruits of the corn, and wine, and oil; and there are the holy vessels, and the priests, and the ministers, and the porters, and the singers: and we will not forsake the house of our God.

– Nehemiah 10:32–39 (LXX)

New Covenant Scripture teaches us that passages of Old Covenant Scripture which pertain to the Levites likewise pertain to those in this age who minister the Word. As always, the one who is instructed in the Word has responsibility to contribute toward the physical sustenance of the minister who feeds him from the Word. The tithe was ordained by God for this purpose.

The English word 'tithe' means 'tenth part.' Moreover, the Scripture defines the tithe as the *first* tenth of one's increase:

22 Thou shalt tithe a tenth of all the produce of thy seed, the fruit of thy field year by year. 23 And thou shalt eat it in the place which the Lord thy God shall choose to have his name called there; ye shall bring the tithe of thy corn and of thy wine, and of thine oil, the first-born of thy herd and of thy flock, that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always. 24 And if the journey be too far for thee, and thou art not able to bring them, because the place is far from thee which the Lord thy God shall choose to have his name called there, because the Lord thy God will bless thee; 25 then thou shalt sell them for money, and thou shalt take the money in thy hands, and thou shalt go to the place which the Lord thy God shall choose. 26 And thou shalt give the money for whatsoever thy soul shall desire, for oxen or for sheep, or for wine, or thou shalt lay it out on strong drink, or on whatsoever thy soul may desire, and thou shalt eat there before the Lord thy God, and thou shalt rejoice and thy house, 27 and the Levite that is in thy cities, because he has not a portion or inheritance with thee. 28 After three years thou shalt bring out all the tithes of thy fruits, in that year thou shalt lay it up in thy cities. 29 And the Levite shall come, because he has no part or lot with thee, and the stranger, and the orphan, and the widow which is in thy cities; and they shall eat and be filled, that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the works which thou shalt do.

– Deuteronomy 14:22–29 (LXX)

5 And as he gave the command, Israel brought abundantly first-fruits of corn, and wine, and oil, and honey, and every fruit of the field: and the children of Israel and Juda brought tithes of everything abundantly. 6 And they that dwelt in the cities of Juda themselves also brought tithes of calves and sheep, and tithes of goats, and consecrated them to the Lord their God, and they brought them and laid them in heaps.

– II Chronicles 31:5–6 (LXX)

Thus, what is in view is the first tenth of the pay of a wage-earner, the first tenth of the crop of the farmer, or the first tenth of the profit realized in industry.

It should be noted well that God demands that the tithe be paid from the first-fruits, rather than from the gleanings; this is a direct consequence of the first commandment:

1 And the Lord spoke all these words, saying: 2 I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of

Egypt, out of the house of bondage. 3 Thou shalt have no other gods beside me.

– Exodus 20:1–3 (LXX)

Heli was priest before Samuel. The sons of Heli were unregenerate; when Israelites brought sacrifices to the Lord, these evil sons took for themselves the choicest portions which should have been offered up as burnt offerings. Thus did they withhold from the Lord that which was his:

12 And the sons of Heli the priest were evil sons, not knowing the Lord. 13 And the priest's claim from every one of the people that sacrificed was this: the servant of the priest came when the flesh was in seething, and a flesh-hook of three teeth was in his hand. 14 And he struck it into the great caldron, or into the brazen vessel, or into the pot, and whatever came up with the flesh-hook, the priest took for himself: so they did to all Israel that came to sacrifice to the Lord in Selom. 15 And before the fat was burnt for a sweet savour, the servant of the priest would come, and say to the man that sacrificed, Give flesh to roast for the priest, and I will by no means take of thee sodden flesh out of the caldron. 16 And if the man that sacrificed said, First let the fat be burned, as it is fit, and take for thyself of all things which thy soul desires: then he would say, Nay, for thou shalt give it me now; and if not I will take it by force. 17 So the sin of the young men was very great before the Lord, for they set at nought the offering of the Lord. 18 And Samuel ministered before the Lord, a child girt with a linen ephod.

– I Samuel 2:12–17 (LXX)

29 And wherefore hast thou looked upon my incense-offering and my meat-offering with a shameless eye, and hast honoured thy sons above me, so that they should bless themselves with the first-fruits of every sacrifice of Israel before me? 30 Therefore thus says the Lord God of Israel, I said, Thy house and the house of thy father shall pass before me for ever: but now the Lord says, That be far from me; for I will only honour them that honour me, and he that sets me at nought shall be despised.

– I Samuel 2:29–30 (LXX)

4 And the men of Israel gather themselves together, and come to Armathaim to Samuel, 5 and they said to him, Behold, thou art grown old, and thy sons walk not in thy way; and now set over us a king to judge us, as also the other nations have. 6 And the thing was evil in the eyes of Samuel, when they said, Give us a king to judge us: and Samuel prayed to the Lord. 7 And the Lord said to Samuel, Hear the voice of the people, in whatever they shall say to thee; for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected me from reigning over them. 8 According to all their doings which they have done to me, from the day that I brought them out of Egypt until this day, even as they have deserted me, and served other gods, so they do also to thee. 9 And now hearken to their voice; only thou shalt solemnly testify to them, and thou shalt describe to them the manner of the king who shall reign over them. 10 And Samuel spoke every word of the Lord to the people who asked of him a king. 11 And he said, This shall be the manner of the king that shall rule over you: he shall take your sons, and put them in his chariots, and among his horsemen, and running before his chariots, 12 and his manner shall be

to make them to himself captains of hundreds and captains of thousands; and to reap his harvest, and gather his vintage, and prepare his instruments of war, and the implements of his chariots. 13 And he will take your daughters to be perfumers, and cooks, and bakers. 14 And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your good oliveyards, and give them to his servants. 15 And he will take the tithe of your seeds and your vineyards, and give it to his eunuchs, and to his servants. 16 And he will take your servants, and your handmaids, and your good herds and your asses, and will take the tenth of them for his works. 17 And he will tithe your flocks; and ye shall be his servants. 18 And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king whom ye have chosen to yourselves, and the Lord shall not hear you in those days, because ye have chosen to yourselves a king. 19 But the people would not hearken to Samuel; and they said to him, Nay, but there shall be a king over us. 20 An we also will be like all the nations; and our king shall judge us, and shall go out before us, and fight our battles. 21 And Samuel heard all the words of the people, and spoke them in the ears of the Lord. 22 And the Lord said to Samuel, Hearken to their voice, and appoint them a king. And Samuel said to the men of Israel, Let each man depart to his city.

– I Samuel 8:4–22 (LXX)

2 And she again bore his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground. 3 And it was so after some time that Cain brought of the fruits of the earth a sacrifice to the Lord. 4 And Abel also brought of the first born of his sheep and of his fatlings, and God looked upon Abel and his gifts, 5 but Cain and his sacrifices he regarded not, and Cain was exceedingly sorrowful and his countenance fell. 6 And the Lord God said to Cain, Why art thou become very sorrowful and why is thy countenance fallen? 7 Hast thou not sinned if thou hast brought it rightly, but not rightly divided it? be still, to thee shall be his submission, and thou shalt rule over him.

– Genesis 4:2–7 (LXX)

The first-fruits are equated with the best the land has to offer:

1 The Lord shewed me two baskets of figs, lying in front of the temple of the Lord, after Nabuchodonosor king of Babylon had carried captive Jechonias son of Joakim king of Juda, and the princes, and the artificers, and the prisoners, and the rich men out of Jerusalem, and had brought them to Babylon. 2 The one basket was full of very good figs, as the early figs; and the other basket was full of very bad figs, which could not be eaten, for their badness. 3 And the Lord said to me, What seest thou, Jeremias? and I said, Figs; the good figs, very good; and the bad, very bad, which cannot be eaten, for their badness.

– Jeremiah 24:1–3 (LXX)

29 Thou shalt not keep back the first-fruits of thy threshing floor and press. The first-born of thy sons thou shalt give to me. 30 So shalt thou do with thy calf and thy sheep and thine ass; seven days shall it be under the mother, and the eighth day thou shalt give it to me. 31 And ye shall be holy men to me; and ye shall not eat flesh taken of beasts, ye shall cast it to the dog.

– Exodus 22:29–31 (LXX)

Indeed, God refuses to accept anything less, and God curses the one who offers that which is inferior while withholding the best:

6 A son honours his father, and a servant his master: if then I am a father, where is mine honour? and if I am a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord Almighty. Ye the priests are they that despise my name: yet ye said, Wherein have we despised thy name? 7 In that ye bring to mine altar polluted bread; and ye said, Wherein have ye polluted it? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is polluted, and that which was set thereon ye have despised. 8 For if ye bring a blind victim for sacrifices, is it not evil? and if ye bring the lame or the sick, is it not evil? offer it now to thy ruler, and see if he will receive thee, if he will accept thy person, saith the Lord Almighty. 9 And now intreat the face of your God, and make supplication to him. These things have been done by your hands; shall I accept you? saith the Lord Almighty. 10 Because even among you the doors shall be shut, and one will not kindle the fire of mine altar for nothing, I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord Almighty, and I will not accept a sacrifice at your hands. 11 For from the rising of the sun even to the going down thereof my name has been glorified among the Gentiles; and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering: for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord Almighty. 12 But ye profane it, in that ye say, The table of the Lord is polluted, and his meats set thereon are despised. 13 And ye said, These services are troublesome: therefore I have utterly rejected them with scorn, saith the Lord Almighty: and ye brought in torn victims, and lame, and sick: if then ye should bring an offering, shall I accept them at your hands? saith the Lord Almighty. 14 And cursed is the man who had the power, and possessed a male in his flock, and whose vow is upon him, and who sacrifices a corrupt thing to the Lord: for I am a great King, saith the Lord Almighty, and my name is glorious among the nations.

– Malachi 1:6–14 (LXX)

Upon receiving our pay for the week or for the month, we tend first to satisfy our needs, and only afterward to pay the tithe, if funds remain. To do so, however, is a sure path to disaster: it will soon be found that our pay is exhausted long before all our needs are satisfied, and that we never have enough left to pay the tithe. However, the man who in faith always pays the tithe first, irrespective of pressing needs or seeming emergencies, soon discovers that all his financial needs are being met.

The failure of the Christian to tithe goes beyond his personal economic well-being—it has repercussions which echo throughout the land. An immediate result of the general failure to tithe is that men called of God to the full-time occupation of studying and teaching the Scripture are forced to find employment outside the ministry, in order to make ends meet. Labouring outside the ministry to provide for themselves and their families, these men are unable to devote sufficient time to study, writing, and teaching. Sadly, some Christians look with approval upon such situations—failing to appreciate the fact that, in every era, support of the ministry is mandatory, rather than optional. As a direct consequence of this unwarranted burden upon the pastor-teacher, the land experiences a

spiritual famine. Consider this passage from the prophecy of Amos:

11 Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will send forth a famine on the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the word of the Lord. 12 And the waters shall be troubled from sea to sea, and from the north to the east shall men run hither and thither, seeking the word of the Lord, and they shall not find it. 13 In that day shall the fair virgins and the young men faint for thirst; 14 they who swear by the propitiation of Samaria, and who say, Thy god, O Dan, lives; and, Thy god, O Bersabee, lives; and they shall fall, and shall no more rise again.

– Amos 8:11–14 (LXX)

Books, movies, and even comic strips in the newspapers have traditionally portrayed the minister of the Gospel as ill-fed, ill-housed, ill-clothed, without adequate transportation, and generally living on the verge of poverty. Much to the shame of the contemporary Church, these portrayals are, in many cases, an accurate reflection of reality.

Nor is the situation unique to this day. In the days of the Old Covenant, the Israelite repeatedly neglected support of the temple and the Levitical priesthood. Consider the following words from the 3rd chapter of the book of Malachi, as found in the Septuagint.

5 And I will draw near to you in judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the witches, and against the adulteresses, and against them that swear falsely by my name, and against them that keep back the hireling's wages, and them that oppress the widow, and afflict orphans, and that wrest the judgment of the stranger, and fear not me, saith the Lord Almighty. 6 For I am the Lord your God, and I am not changed: 7 but ye, the sons of Jacob, have not refrained from the iniquities of your fathers: ye have perverted my statutes, and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, saith the Lord Almighty. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? 8 Will a man insult God? for ye insult me. But ye say, Wherein have we insulted thee? In that the tithes and first-fruits are with you still. 9 And ye do surely look off from me, and ye insult me. 10 The year is completed, and ye have brought all the produce into the storehouses; but there shall be the plunder thereof in its house: return now on this behalf, saith the Lord Almighty, see if I will not open to you the torrents of heaven, and pour out my blessing upon you, until ye are satisfied. 11 And I will appoint food for you, and I will not destroy the fruit of your land; and your vine in the field shall not fail, saith the Lord Almighty. 12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a desirable land, saith the Lord Almighty.

– Malachi 3:5–12 (LXX)

The book of the prophet Haggai records the same phenomenon—the ministry neglected and relegated to a low priority. We see from this passage that, once the people of God turn from neglect of the ministry to obedience, the curse is immediately removed and the return of prosperity is readily apparent. We see also the promise of “peace of soul” to those who take part in the restoration.

2 Thus saith the Lord Almighty, saying, This people say, The time is not come to build the house of the Lord.

3 And the word of the Lord came by the hand of the prophet Aggaeus, saying, 4 Is it time for you to dwell in your ceiled houses, whereas our house is desolate? 5 And now thus saith the Lord Almighty; Consider your ways, I pray you. 6 Ye have sown much, but brought in little; ye have eaten, and are not satisfied; ye have drunk, and are not satisfied with drink, ye have clothed yourselves, and have not become warm thereby: and he that earns wages has gathered them into a bag full of holes. 7 Thus saith the Lord Almighty; Consider your ways. 8 Go up to the mountain, and cut timber; build the house, and I will take pleasure in it, and be glorified, saith the Lord. 9 Ye looked for much, and there came little; and it was brought into the house, and I blew it away. Therefore thus saith the Lord Almighty, Because my house is desolate, and ye run everyone into his own house; 10 therefore shall the sky withhold dew, and the earth shall keep back her produce. 11 And I will bring a sword upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the wine, and upon the oil, and all that the earth produces, and upon the men, and upon the cattle, and upon all the labours of their hands.

– Haggai 1:2–11 (LXX)

8 Mine is the silver, and mine the gold, saith the Lord Almighty. 9 For the glory of this house shall be great, the latter more than the former, saith the Lord Almighty: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord Almighty, even peace of soul for a possession to every one that builds, to raise up this temple.

– Haggai 2:8–9 (LXX)

15 And now consider, I pray you, from this day and beforetime, before they laid a stone on a stone in the temple of the Lord, what manner of men ye were. 16 When ye cast into the corn-bin twenty measures of barley, and there were only ten measures of barley: and ye went to the vat to draw out fifty measures, and there were but twenty. 17 I smote you with barrenness, and with blasting, and all the works of your hands with hail; yet ye returned not to me, saith the Lord. 18 Set your hearts now to think from this day and upward, from the four and twentieth day of the ninth month, even from the day when the foundation of the temple of the Lord was laid; 19 consider in your hearts, whether this shall be known on the corn-floor, and whether yet the vine, and the fig-tree, and the pomegranate, and the olive-trees that bear no fruit are with you: from this day will I bless you.

– Haggai 2:15–19 (LXX)

The books of Ezra and Nehemiah record the return of the remnant to Jerusalem and the subsequent rebuilding of the city wall and the temple. Yet, soon after, we see the temple neglected and the Levites forced to abandon their ministry in the temple and turn to agriculture in order to survive. Consider this account found in the 13th chapter of Nehemiah.

10 And I understood that the portion of the Levites had not been given: and they had fled every one to his field, the Levites and the singers doing the work. 11 And I strove with the commanders, and said, Wherefore has the house of God been abandoned? and I assembled them, and set them in their place. 12 And all Juda brought a tithe of the wheat and the wine and the oil into the treasuries, 13 to the charge of Selemia the priest, and Sadoc the scribe, and Phadaea of the Levites: and next to them was Anan the son of Zacchur, son of

Matthanias; for they were accounted faithful: it was their office to distribute to their brethren.

– Nehemiah 13:10–13 (LXX)

These passages in the Old Covenant Scripture were written and preserved for our instruction:

For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.

– Romans 15:4

1 Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; 2 And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 And did all eat the same spiritual meat; 4 And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ. 5 But with many of them God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. 6 Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. 7 Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. 8 Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand. 9 Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents. 10 Neither murmur ye, as some of them also murmured, and were destroyed of the destroyer. 11 Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come. 12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

– I Corinthians 10:1–12

14 But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of, knowing of whom thou hast learned them; 15 And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 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 perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

– II Timothy 3:14–17

III. The Ox Treading the Sheaves

In Deuteronomy 25:4, we read, “*Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treads out the corn.*” The apostle Paul interprets this verse for us, in his first epistle to the Corinthians and in his first epistle to Timothy.

7 Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charges? who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock? 8 Say I these things as a man? or saith not the law the same also? 9 For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? 10 Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. 11 If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? 12 If others be partakers

of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. 13 Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? 14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

– I Corinthians 9:7–14

17 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. 18 For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward.

– I Timothy 5:17–18

The Greek word translated ‘honour’ is *time* (pronounced ‘tim-may’), a noun which means honour or esteem and, according to lexicographer Vine, is “*primarily a valuing, hence, objectively, a price paid or received*”.

“Treading the corn” refers to threshing—separation of the kernels of grain from the stalk and husks. In olden times, the separation was accomplished by means of an ox, made to walk upon the sheaves of grain. The ox is constrained to a circular path, into which sheaves are strewn and from which the resulting straw and kernels of grain are raked away.

Thus, the canon of Scripture is compared to sheaves which must be threshed to free kernels of grain, in order to provide food in a form suitable for consumption. The teacher of the Word is portrayed as an ox whose assignment it is to tread the sheaves. Treading the sheaves—which is representative of study and teaching—is no easy task. Consequently, the Scripture commands that the ox be allowed to freely eat his fill as he treads the sheaves.

In order to feed others from the Word of God, the teacher must first thresh the Word, through study. In this modern day—a day in which the languages of Scripture and the customs of the ancients have become obscure, the teacher must spend hours or even days in study to prepare material which may take only a single, brief session to present. Consequently, study of the Word and teaching constitutes a full-time occupation, particularly if one has the responsibility of teaching several times a week, or if he is engaged in the publication of written material.

In Deuteronomy, in Matthew, and in Luke, we find a basic truth which many Israelites still do not understand: the Word of God is as vital to the Israelite as is physical food.

2 And thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee in the wilderness, that he might afflict thee, and try thee, and that the things in thine heart might be made manifest, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments or no. 3 And he afflicted thee and straitened thee with hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thy fathers knew not; that he might teach thee that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live.

– Deuteronomy 8:2–3 (LXX)

1 Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. 2 And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. 3 And when the tempter came to him, he said, If

thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. 4 But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.

– Matthew 4:1–4

1 And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, 2 Being forty days tempted of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered. 3 And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, command this stone that it be made bread. 4 And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.

– Luke 4:1–4

Once a man sees the vital necessity of feeding upon the Word, it should not be difficult for him to see the necessity of adequately providing for those charged with teaching the Word. The student of a university expects each of his professors to be a full-time professor, proficient in his respective field of study, and with income more than adequate to meet his needs, so that the professor is free to concentrate upon study, research, and teaching. To this end, universities salary their faculty, provide them with offices and other amenities, and encourage them to engage in study and research. In return, the student pays a substantial tuition.

How warped our scale of values, when we expect those who teach us the Word of God—the highest of all academic subjects—to engage in the ministry as an after-hours pursuit, while having to labour in another occupation to put food on the table and keep the utilities connected! How stupid we are, when we defy the commandment of Scripture and fail to provide physically for those who feed us in the spiritual realm—not realizing that by withholding from them physical sustenance, we starve ourselves of the Word of Life!

IV. The Inheritance of the Levite

God separated the tribe of Levi from the other tribes of Israel, and made the Levites servants to their brethren. The nature of their service was the ministry.

6 And I have taken your brethren the Levites out of the midst of the children of Israel, a present given to the Lord, to minister in the services of the tabernacle of witness. 7 And thou and thy sons after thee shall keep up your priestly ministration, according to the whole manner of the altar, and that which is within the veil; and ye shall minister in the services as the office of your priesthood; and the stranger that comes near shall die.

– Numbers 18:6–7 (LXX)

When the promised land was divided among the tribes of Israel, the Levites were given no allocation.

20 And the Lord said to Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any portion among them; for I am thy portion and thine inheritance in the midst of the children of Israel. 21 And, behold, I have given to the sons of Levi every tithe in Israel for an inheritance for their services, whereinssoever they perform ministry in the tabernacle of witness. 22 And the children of Israel shall no more draw nigh to the tabernacle of witness to incur fatal guilt. 23 And the

Levite himself shall perform the service of the tabernacle of witness; and they shall bear their iniquities, it is a perpetual statute throughout their generations; and in the midst of the children of Israel they shall not receive an inheritance. 24 Because I have given as a distinct portion to the Levites for an inheritance the tithes of the children of Israel, whatsoever they shall offer to the Lord; therefore I said to them, In the midst of the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.

– Numbers 18:20–24 (LXX)

7 For the sons of Levi have no part among you; for the priesthood of the Lord is his portion; and Gad, and Ruben, and the half tribe of Manasse, have received their inheritance beyond Jordan eastward, which Moses the servant of the Lord gave to them.

– Joshua 18:7 (LXX)

The tribe of Levy received no allocation of land, because the Levites were to be scattered throughout the other tribes, in order to teach and minister to the other tribes. Being called to engage full-time in the work of the ministry, the Levites were unable to provide their own needs through agriculture, which itself is a full-time occupation. Consequently, the Levites required no extensive allocations of land in which to grow crops. Instead, the Levites were to dwell in the cities and the suburbs.

1 And the Lord spoke to Moses to the west of Moab by Jordan near Jericho, saying, 2 Give orders to the children of Israel, and they shall give to the Levites cities to dwell in from the lot of their possession, and they shall give to the Levites the suburbs of the cities round about them. 3 And the cities shall be for them to dwell in, and their enclosures shall be for their cattle and all their beasts. 4 And the suburbs of the cities which ye shall give to the Levites, shall be from the wall of the city and outwards two thousand cubits round about.

– Numbers 35:1–4 (LXX)

The needs of the Levites were to be supplied from the sacrifices and offerings made by their fellow Israelites. That is, the Levites were to obtain their living through the ministry.

8 And the Lord said to Aaron, And, behold, I have given you the charge of the first-fruits of all things consecrated to me by the children of Israel; and I have given them to thee as an honour, and to thy sons after thee for a perpetual ordinance. 9 And let this be to you from all the holy things that are consecrated to me, even the burnt-offerings, from all their gifts, and from all their sacrifices, and from every trespass-offering of theirs, and from all their sin-offerings, whatever things they give to me of all their holy things, they shall be thine and thy sons'. 10 In the most holy place shall ye eat them; every male shall eat them, thou and thy sons: they shall be holy to thee. 11 And this shall be to you of the first-fruits of their gifts, of all the wave-offerings of the children of Israel; to thee have I given them and to thy sons and thy daughters with thee, a perpetual ordinance; every clean person in thy house shall eat them. 12 Every first-offering of oil, and every first-offering of wine, their first-fruits of corn, whatsoever they may give to the Lord, to thee have I given them. 13 All the first-fruits that are in their land, whatsoever they shall offer to the Lord, shall be thine: every clean person in thy house shall eat them. 14 Every devoted thing among the children of Israel shall be thine. 15

And every thing that opens the womb of all flesh, whatsoever they bring to the Lord, whether man or beast, shall be thine: only the first-born of men shall be surely redeemed, and thou shalt redeem the first-born of unclean cattle. 16 And the redemption of them shall be from a month old; their valuation of five shekels— it is twenty oboli according to the holy shekel. 17 But thou shalt not redeem the first-born of calves and the first-born of sheep and the first-born of goats; they are holy: and thou shalt pour their blood upon the altar, and thou shalt offer the fat as a burnt-offering for a smell of sweet savour to the Lord. 18 And the flesh shall be thine, as also the breast of the wave-offering and as the right shoulder, it shall be thine. 19 Every special offering of the holy things, whatsoever the children of Israel shall specially offer to the Lord, I have given to thee and to thy sons and to thy daughters with thee, a perpetual ordinance: it is a covenant of salt for ever before the Lord, for thee and thy seed after thee.

– Numbers 18:8–19 (LXX)

1 The priests, the Levites, even the whole tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel; the burnt-offerings of the Lord are their inheritance, they shall eat them. 2 And they shall have no inheritance among their brethren; the Lord himself is his portion, as he said to him. 3 And this is the due of the priests in the things coming from the people from those who offer sacrifices, whether it be a calf or a sheep; and thou shalt give the shoulder to the priest, and the cheeks, and the great intestine: 4 and the first-fruits of thy corn, and of thy wine, and of thine oil; and thou shalt give to him the first-fruits of the fleeces of thy sheep: 5 because the Lord has chosen him out of all thy tribes, to stand before the Lord thy God, to minister and bless in his name, himself and his sons among the children of Israel.

– Deuteronomy 18:1–5 (LXX)

Moses sternly enjoined Israel never to neglect supply of the Levite:

19 Take heed to thyself that thou do not desert the Levite all the time that thou livest upon the earth.

– Deuteronomy 12:19 (LXX)

V. Application to the Present Day

In this era of the New Covenant, the pastor, the teacher, and the evangelist correspond to the Levite. God has ordained that these men obtain their living from the Gospel, i.e., from contributions made to support the ministry of the Gospel:

13 Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? 14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

– I Corinthians 9:13–14

By application, the fact that the tribe of Levy was given no inheritance in the land indicates that the minister of this day is not to engage in agriculture or industry. Instead, he is to devote his full time and energy to the ministry of the Word. His prosperity is to come through his labour in the ministry. As compensation for the fact that he is denied the normal means of gaining wealth, in consideration of the fact that he is called to

be a servant to his countrymen, and by virtue of the fact that his function is the most vital of all functions to the nation, the minister of the Gospel is to have his physical needs supplied by his countrymen. Moreover, the minister is to be blessed with the best which the land has to offer, for this is what God demands that the people present as tithes and offerings.

As previously noted, the tithe is to be paid from the first-fruits, not from the gleanings. Thus, it should be clear that the minister of this day is not to be supplied from that which the congregation has rejected or discarded. By application, he is not to be fed with scraps or surplus commodities; he is not to be housed in a barn or a tumble-down shack; he is not to be clothed with rags or with apparel from the second-hand store; he is not to be dependent upon a jalopy or the city bus for transportation. Those who think it improper for a minister of the Gospel to eat well, to live in comfort, to be properly and tastefully clothed, and to have good transportation ought give very careful consideration to the words of the Lord, spoken through the prophet:

6 A son honours his father, and a servant his master: if then I am a father, where is mine honour? and if I am a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord Almighty. Ye the priests are they that despise my name: yet ye said, Wherein have we despised thy name? 7 In that ye bring to mine altar polluted bread; and ye said, Wherein have ye polluted it? In that ye say, The table of the Lord is polluted, and that which was set thereon ye have despised. 8 For if ye bring a blind victim for sacrifices, is it not evil? and if ye bring the lame or the sick, is it not evil? offer it now to thy ruler, and see if he will receive thee, if he will accept thy person, saith the Lord Almighty. 9 And now intreat the face of your God, and make supplication to him. These things have been done by your hands; shall I accept you? saith the Lord Almighty. 10 Because even among you the doors shall be shut, and one will not kindle the fire of mine altar for nothing, I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord Almighty, and I will not accept a sacrifice at your hands. 11 For from the rising of the sun even to the going down thereof my name has been glorified among the Gentiles; and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering: for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord Almighty. 12 But ye profane it, in that ye say, The table of the Lord is polluted, and his meats set thereon are despised. 13 And ye said, These services are troublesome: therefore I have utterly rejected them with scorn, saith the Lord Almighty: and ye brought in torn victims, and lame, and sick: if then ye should bring an offering, shall I accept them at your hands? saith the Lord Almighty. 14 And cursed is the man who had the power, and possessed a male in his flock, and whose vow is upon him, and who sacrifices a corrupt thing to the Lord: for I am a great King, saith the Lord Almighty, and my name is glorious among the nations.

— Malachi 1:6–14 (LXX)

VI. The Building Syndrome

The early Church met in small groups in homes. However, with the advent of Roman catholicism, the Church began erecting great and magnificent edifices and meeting en masse. During the persecutions following the Reformation, the true Church was forced for a time to return to meeting in small groups in

homes, but the impetus to erect central sites of assembly remained strong.

A natural consequence of the consolidation of assemblies was a reduction in the number of teachers. In the early Church, there appear to have been a multiplicity of teachers. In the contemporary Church, each congregation typically has one man with the title ‘pastor’, and in most cases, the pastor is the sole teacher of the assembled congregation. However, many congregations have an auxiliary organization called ‘Sunday school’, in which there are many teachers, each with his own small group of pupils.

Today, most local congregations assemble on a regular basis, and for this purpose either rent a large auditorium or meeting hall, or else purchase land and erect their own facilities. However, large buildings are expensive to construct, operate, and maintain. If members of a congregation pay the tithe directly to the minister who teaches the Word, how is this expense to be met? Most congregations have addressed this issue by forming an artificial entity (which they typically call a ‘church’) which receives contributions and disburses payments. This entity becomes the owner of the physical assets of the congregation, and the pastor becomes an employee of the entity.

No one seems to have asked whether it is proper for a congregation to own property and buildings, and, if so, what scheme of ownership is consistent with the teaching of Scripture. Joint ownership carries with it a plethora of problems, including that of members who leave the congregation and demand their share of the assets. The generally-chosen alternative—corporate ownership (i.e., formation of an artificial entity)—is likewise flawed: the very basis of the corporation is the concept of limited liability—a concept which is contrary to the Law of God. Moreover, the concept of tithing to the ‘church’ rather than to the minister of the Word has no clear Scriptural authority. Finally, the concept whereby the minister is an employee of the congregation is completely at odds with the proper function of the ministry.

The example of Paul. In the last verses of the book of Acts, we find an example which, if used as a guide, would appear to circumvent many of the problems which trouble congregations of this day. The subject is the apostle Paul, who is under house arrest in Rome.

30 And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, 31 Preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.

— Acts 28:30–31

Consider some of the consequences of leaving to the pastor-teacher of a congregation the responsibility for providing a place for assembly. The larger the congregation to which the pastor ministers, the greater the cost of providing a place in which to meet. However, if the congregation faithfully tithes directly to the minister, this cost is readily met. The potential of battles—legal or otherwise—between opposing factions within the congregation is eliminated: disgruntled or factious members of the congregation, having no claim of ownership with respect to the meeting place or other physical assets, simply leave or are expelled. No artificial entity is required to manage

physical assets: tithes are paid directly to the minister, the minister purchases or rents the place of assembly, and the minister pays for utilities and maintenance. Issues of church government which have been debated for centuries simply disappear, for the congregation has nothing to govern. Most importantly, the minister stands in his rightful place of authority, free to rebuke and admonish from the Word—which is virtually impossible if he is an employee of the congregation.

VII. Merchandising the Teaching of the Word

In this day, many Christians receive instruction in the Word from publications and from sound recordings supplied by ministries located in other parts of the land. However, printed material and tapes are expensive to produce and distribute, and when there is a general failure to tithe, the demand for teaching material can easily overtax the resources of a ministry.

This is a situation for which there is no easy solution. The one called to shepherd has a God-given responsibility to feed and protect the flock. The failure of the sheep to financially support the shepherd severely impairs his ability to feed and protect them. Nevertheless, failure of the sheep to give does not release the shepherd from his responsibility, nor does it give the shepherd license to merchandise the Word.

9 Hear now these words, ye chiefs of the house of Jacob, and the remnant of the house of Israel, who hate judgment, and pervert all righteousness; 10 who build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. 11 The heads thereof have judged for gifts, and the priests thereof have answered for hire, and her prophets have divined for silver: and yet they have rested on the Lord, saying, Is not the Lord among us? no evil shall come upon us. 12 Therefore on your account Zion shall be ploughed as a field, and Jerusalem shall be as a storehouse of fruits, and the mountain of the house as a grove of the forest.

— Micah 3:9–12 (LXX)

Faced with severe economic pressure, most ministries have disregarded this warning and have elected to sell booklets, audio and video tapes, and CDs. Oftentimes, the fact is disguised: a ministry will offer a tape or booklet as a ‘gift’ in exchange for a “suggested minimum contribution”. Inasmuch as booklets and tapes take the place of a teacher standing before an assembly, it should be clear that the sale of publications and tapes is tantamount to the sale of teaching. To argue that it is permissible to sell booklets and tapes is to argue that it is permissible to charge admission to a Bible class, for there is a cost associated with providing a place for assembly. Both arguments are invalid. Whenever a price is put on teaching, it is inevitable that some members of the flock will go hungry, while others will eat their fill.

Under the system God has ordained, the minister is to teach without charge and without price.

1 Ye that thirst, go to the water, and all that have no money, go and buy; and eat and drink wine and fat without money or price. 2 Wherefore do ye value at the price of money, and give your labour for that which will not satisfy? hearken to me, and ye shall eat that which is good, and your soul shall feast itself on good things.

— Isaiah 55:1–2 (LXX)

Under this system, every member of the congregation is able to feed on the Word to his heart’s delight, and no one need go away hungry for lack of funds with which to purchase teaching. Our gracious heavenly Father has made provision for every man to be fed adequately from the Word—whether his tithe is a hundred dollars or a dime.

Of course, the man whose tithe is a hundred dollars subsidizes the man whose tithe is a dime; this is good, and is in accordance with divine design. What most fail to consider is the possibility that the man with an abundance of monetary wealth may have a deficiency in other areas—perhaps a deficiency which is being filled by the man who is financially poor. In every realm of life, the members of the body of Christ Jesus are to supply one another’s needs:

12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 16 And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? 18 But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him. 19 And if they were all one member, where were the body? 20 But now are they many members, yet but one body. 21 And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. 22 Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: 23 And those members of the body, which we think to be less honourable, upon these we bestow more abundant honour; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. 24 For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honour to that part which lacked: 25 That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. 26 And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. 27 Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular.

— I Corinthians 12:12–27

Consider the following passages:

14 in the morning it came to pass as the dew ceased round about the camp, that, behold, on the face of the wilderness was a small thing like white coriander seed, as frost upon the earth. 15 And when the children of Israel saw it, they said one to another, What is this? for they knew not what it was; and Moses said to them, 16 This is the bread which the Lord has given you to eat. This is that which the Lord has appointed: gather of it each man for his family, a homer for each person, according to the number of your souls, gather each of you with his fellow-lodgers. 17 And the children of Israel did so, and gathered some much and some less. 18 And having measured the homer full, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that had gathered less had no lack; each gathered according to the need of those who

belonged to him.

– Exodus 16:14–18 (LXX)

1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; 2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. 3 For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; 4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. 5 And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. 6 Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also. 7 Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also. 8 I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. 9 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. 10 And herein I give my advice: for this is expedient for you, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago. 11 Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which ye have. 12 For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. 13 For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: 14 But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality: 15 As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.

– II Corinthians 8:1–15

The individual who is being fed by more than one ministry should divide his tithe among the respective ministries, according to the proportion in which he is being fed by each. The ‘need’ of a particular ministry is not the basis for giving the tithe, nor is it proper to apportion the tithe on the basis of ‘need’. The Christian owes the tithe to the ministry which is feeding him, irrespective of whether that ministry has an apparent need. The supplying of need is a different category of giving, and must never interfere with payment of the tithe.

VIII. The Feet of the Evangelist

The second category of giving found in New Covenant Scripture is that of support for evangelistic efforts.

15 Behold upon the mountains the feet of him that brings glad tidings, and publishes peace! O Juda, keep thy feasts, pay thy vows: for they shall no more pass through thee to thy decay.

– Nahum 1:15

This is addressed by the prophet Isaiah, and by the apostle Paul, who quotes Isaiah:

1 Awake, awake, Sion; put on thy strength, O Sion; and o thou put on thy glory, Jerusalem the holy city:

there shall no more pass through thee, the uncircumcised and unclean. 2 Shake off the dust and arise; sit down, Jerusalem: put off the band of thy neck, captive daughter of Sion. 3 For thus saith the Lord, Ye have been sold for nought; and ye shall not be ransomed with silver. 4 Thus saith the Lord, My people went down before to Egypt to sojourn there; and were carried away forcibly to the Assyrians. 5 And now why are ye here? Thus saith the Lord, Because my people was taken for nothing, wonder ye and howl. Thus saith the Lord, On account of you my name is continually blasphemed among the Gentiles. 6 Therefore shall my people know my name in that day, for I am he that speaks: I am present, 7 as a season of beauty upon the mountains, **as the feet of one preaching glad tidings of peace, as one preaching good news:** for I will publish thy salvation, saying, O Sion, thy God shall reign.

– Isaiah 52:1–7 (LXX)

13 For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. 14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? 15 And how shall they preach, except they be sent? **as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!**

– Romans 10:13–15

Those who equip, send forth, and support the evangelist are portrayed as the feet of the evangelist, and are accorded special blessing.

Unlike the first category of giving, this category is voluntary. One is not obligated to give to support the evangelist, nor is there specification regarding the amount of support. Voluntary giving of this category and of the third category is termed ‘sacrifice’ by the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews.

But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

– Hebrews 13:16

The Greek word the King James version translates ‘communicate’ is *sunkeinoneo*, which means literally, *to share together with*. Lexicographer Vine notes, “*the thought is that of sharing with others that which one has, in order to meet their needs*”.

The apostle Paul received support as an evangelist. The Philippians were the only Christians who provided financial support for Paul in the beginning of his ministry.

10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. 11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. 12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. 13 I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me. 14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction. 15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving,

but ye only. 16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. 17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. 18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God. 19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

– Philippians 4:10–19

Paul instructs Timothy to admonish the wealthy with respect to voluntary giving.

3 If any man teach otherwise, and consent not to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which is according to godliness; 4 He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings, 5 Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. 6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. 7 For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. 8 And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. 9 But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. 10 For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. 11 But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. 12 Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. 13 I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; 14 That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: 15 Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; 16 Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen. 17 Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy; 18 That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate; 19 Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

– I Timothy 6:3–19

IX. Saints in Distress

The third category of giving found in New Covenant Scripture is that of relieving fellow Christians who are in distress. An example from Scripture is the collection which was taken for the Christians in the land of Judea, who were suffering as a result of a famine which came upon the land.

27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. 28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there

should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. 29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: 30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.

– Acts 11:27–30

This relief offering is the subject of a lengthy passage in II Corinthians—a passage which has often been misapplied to other categories of giving.

1 For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: 2 For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many. 3 Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready: 4 Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting. 5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness. 6 But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. 7 Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: 9 (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever. 10 Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;) 11 Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God. 12 For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; 13 While by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men; 14 And by their prayer for you, which long after you for the exceeding grace of God in you. 15 Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.

– II Corinthians 9:1–15

Thus, the minister who, immediately before passing the offering plate, declares that the criterion for giving is “*not grudgingly or of necessity*” is guilty of fraud. Even the most cursory inspection of the context reveals that the verse has nothing whatsoever to do with the support of the teacher or with the sending forth of the evangelist; rather, “*not grudgingly or of necessity*” is the criterion for giving to relieve fellow saints in distress.

The following words of Paul in 15th chapter of Romans have been generally misinterpreted, being sometimes used to support the false contention that Christianity is a derivative of Talmudic Judaism.

25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. 26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor

saints which are at Jerusalem. 27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things.

– Romans 15:25–27

The so-called ‘Gentiles’ (Greek *ethnos*, meaning *tribes*)—are debtors to the saints in Jerusalem in two respects. First, following the apostasy of the Northern Kingdom, Judah became custodian of Old Covenant Scripture:

1 What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? 2 Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God.

– Romans 3:1–2

Second, it was from Jerusalem that evangelists were sent forth to preach the Gospel to the lost sheep of the House of Israel:

1 The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, 2 Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen: 3 To whom also he shewed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: 4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. 5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. 6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? 7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. 8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. 9 And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.

– Acts 1:1–9

The phrase, “*their spiritual things*” refers to Old Covenant Scripture and the Gospel—not to diabolical Talmudic myth. The fact that the contribution was voluntary is seen in the phrase, “*it hath pleased them*”.

X. Giving which Brings Cursing and Discipline

The responsibility to give is also the responsibility to exercise discernment with respect to the object of giving. The Christian to whom God has given great physical wealth may try to ‘cover all the bases’, by giving indiscriminately to a variety of organizations. In doing so, however, he may well become a partaker in evil, and thus bring upon himself discipline or even cursing.

7 For many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. This is a deceiver and an antichrist. 8 Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward. 9 Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath

not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. 10 If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: 11 For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.

– II John 1:7–11

In the book II Chronicles, we find an example which is applicable to the individual as well as to the nation. In the first verse of the 18th chapter, we see that Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, “*And Josaphat had yet great wealth and glory, and he connected himself by marriage with the house of Achaab [Ahab]*”. At this point in history, Israel had split into two nations, each with her own king. Judah was the Southern Kingdom. The Northern Kingdom bore the name Israel, and had Ahab as king. The Northern Kingdom was deeply mired in apostasy and idolatry, and was shortly to be carried off into captivity at the hand of the Assyrians. In the third verse of the 18th chapter, we see Jehoshaphat’s pledge of support to Israel. When the alliance subsequently went to war, Israel was defeated and scattered by the enemy, and Ahab was slain. When Jehoshaphat returned to Jerusalem, God sent a prophet to rebuke him.

2 Chronicles 19:1 And Josaphat king of Juda returned to his house at Jerusalem. 2 And there went out to meet him Jea the prophet the son of Anani, and said to him, King Josaphat, doest thou help a sinner, or act friendly towards one hated of the Lord? Therefore has wrath come upon thee from the Lord.

– II Chronicles 19:1–2 (LXX)

This passage should be recalled whenever one is asked to contribute to the relief of idolatrous heathen populations in foreign lands stricken by disaster.

XI. Conclusion

Tithing to support those who teach the Word, giving above the tithe to send forth the evangelist, and giving above the tithe to relieve saints in distress are the three basic areas of giving found in New Covenant Scripture. Giving, however, is but one element of a comprehensive system—a system which our God has designed to provide health, prosperity, and happiness for his people. The system is called ‘the Way of Life.’

Of the categories of giving, tithing in support of the ministry is the most basic and the most important, for, apart from a thorough understanding of the Word, it is impossible for Christians to walk accurately in the Way of Life. Consequently, when the people of God stray from the Way, one of the first things they are commanded to do is bring in the tithe, so that the teaching so vital to recovery may resume.

6 For I am the Lord your God, and I am not changed: 7 but ye, the sons of Jacob, have not refrained from the iniquities of your fathers: ye have perverted my statutes, and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you, saith the Lord Almighty. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? 8 Will a man insult God? for ye insult me. But ye say, Wherein have we insulted thee? In that the tithes and first-fruits are with you still. 9 And ye do surely look off from me, and ye insult me. 10 The year is completed, and ye have brought all the produce into the storehouses; but there shall be the plunder thereof

in its house: return now on this behalf, saith the Lord Almighty, see if I will not open to you the torrents of heaven, and pour out my blessing upon you, until ye are satisfied. 11 And I will appoint food for you, and I will not destroy the fruit of your land; and your vine in the field shall not fail, saith the Lord Almighty. 12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a desirable land, saith the Lord Almighty.

– Malachi 3:6–12 (LXX)

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*These, having put the world in commotion,
are also here present...and these all do contrary
to the decree of Caesar, saying another
to be king—Jesus.*

– Acts 17:6–7

We ought obey God rather than men.

– Acts 5:29