

obligations. Is it less our duty to discharge this the greatest and first of our obligations to the Lord? What proportion shall we pay? I believe the day is not far distant—I believe some who hear me this day will live to see it—when the question will be: "What proportion shall I retain to be used upon myself and my family to their highest advantage, and to the honor and glory of God in order that all the balance may be given to the church to help Christ save the world?" When we realize that all we possess is given to us by our Heavenly Father *in trust*, to be used for the promotion of truth and righteousness and the salvation of men; and when we have "first given ourselves unto the Lord," have surrendered to do his will, we will have no difficulty in settling the question of how much we should pay to the Lord. Our possessions are a trust and to misappropriate them is a breach of trust. Christians are not "good stewards" when they hoard up wealth to be handed down to others who may use it to promote the interests of the devil's kingdom. The only percentage named in the Bible is ten per cent. *The tithe is the Lord's*. This is the rule of both the Old and New Testament. Abraham paid tithes; Jacob vowed to pay one-tenth to the Lord; Moses recognized the tithe as a just proportion and incorporated it into his law. The Jews, through all their national existence, practised it, and when they failed to pay this proportion the Lord called them "robbers of God." (Mal. iii. 8-10): Jesus, in speaking to the Pharisees about tithing their products, but neglecting righteousness, judgment and faith, said: "These ye ought to have done, but not to have left the others undone." You ought to have given your tenth part to the Lord. That is right! But in doing that part of your duty you ought not to have neglected being holy, pure and good, was the lesson Jesus taught. But, you ask, "Can I afford to give one-tenth?" I answer, yes! You cannot afford not to pay what you owe. Nine dollars of every ten you receive is worth more to you with the blessing of God than ten dollars without his blessing. God blessed his people when they paid their tithes. He withheld his blessings when they refused to do so and called them "robbers of God." "There is that scattereth and yet increaseth, and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty." But, you say, "this was the law under the Old Covenant, and it is not binding to-day." Let me ask you in all earnestness if God required ten per cent from his people under the law, will he be satisfied with less from us under the gospel? Yea, more! If the Jews, with their narrow ideas and sympathies and limited obligations could afford and did pay one-tenth of their increase and prospered, can we afford to do less in this land of abundance and under the bright and blazing light of a universal gospel of liberty and love, and with the broad field of the world before us into which our Lord has called us to enter? The Jews' world was 150x40 miles—ours is the entire globe. The Jews had one nation—we have all the nations of the earth to bring under subjection to our Lord and His Christ. We should pay more than one-tenth and pay it freely, and thank God for the privilege and blessedness of a holy partnership under the reign of the blessed Christ! Some give one-seventh because one-seventh of their time is the Lord's. It is better to give one day out of every seven to rest and worship than to spend every day in labor, and it is better, infinitely better, to give one dollar of every ten to the Lord than to spend the ten upon ourselves and give nothing to him.

5. The text teaches, in the last place,

that *the giving is to be constant*. "Upon the first day of every week, lay by itself." Only those duties that have a regular place in our daily lives are long apt to have any place. Frequent giving, if possible regular weekly giving, is best for us. And such giving is best for the cause we profess to love. It is not the stream that is alternately a torrent and a droughty memory that best nourishes a land; it is the steady flowing river. It is not our fitful and spasmodic giving that sustains great enterprises; it is the steady flow of springs that do not fail. Paul seems to teach here, that the proportion consecrated to the Lord should be placed by itself, to be known as the Lord's proportion of our weekly increase, and to be used for nothing but the Lord's work. As was said before, we are stewards of the manifold grace of God, and we should give him credit for his part as strictly as we would any man from whom we had received a trust. We have no more right to use the Lord's part of our increase than has the treasurer of our city or state to use the money of the people whom he serves. Try this plan for one year. Make it a practice to divide your income, every dollar of it, with the Lord, and you will find that you have had less trouble to help the church and benevolent enterprises than ever before. Try it *faithfully* and I believe you will make it the rule of your life. Thousands of men and women in the churches are adopting this plan of laying away by itself one-tenth—many, one-seventh—some, one-fifth of their increase, consecrating it to the Lord and scrupulously and conscientiously pay it to the Lord's treasury every "first day of the week." Let us do it promptly and regularly and in the fear of God, and then when the end of the year comes we will not have to regret that we did not save more money for the Lord's work. I submit that if these rules of the apostles on Christian giving were adopted the whole problem of church finances would be solved. It is the Lord's will. Shall we answer, "Thy will be done?" Brethren, the sharp edge of the battle between the carnal and the spiritual joins on this matter of Christian giving. Which stands supreme, controlling and dispensing the treasures of our lives—the soul or the body? Mammon or God? Which? Dear brother, sister, I have tried to present this much neglected question to you in a plain way. I hold these rules to be just, sensible, and above all, scriptural. I ask you to make a study of the matter, and ask yourself these questions: Am I handling this trust in the best way for the glory of God? Am I doing what I can to get others to see and do their duty in this matter? May our blessed Lord and Saviour teach us that "it is more blessed to give than to receive," and may he help us to be good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Amen.

THE BIBLE versus INFIDELITY.

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V.

My theme is Applied Christianity. "By its fruits ye shall know it." This will be admitted by all to be a fair test. Let us compare Christianity and infidelity in their effect upon man—upon the world. Christianity—and we mean by that term the teachings of the New Testament—makes men honest, temperate and kind. There are hundreds of men on our streets to-day who can bear testimony to the good effects of Christianity. Homes are made happier; parents' hearts are

gladdened when they hear of their children becoming Christians. It leads men and women on to the commission of noble deeds, and begets patience under suffering. The Bible never made a bad man, not one; but it has made millions of men better for its beautiful teaching.

What has infidelity done? Into what dark places has it carried the light of morality and civilization? What benevolent institutions has it erected? Do we find infidels practising self-denial for the sake of others? Does it make a man happier to live an infidel? or to die an infidel? Are homes made happier when infidelity comes stalking in? Is the mother's heart gladdened when she hears that her boy has become an infidel? or that her daughter is in their society? Has infidelity the power to reform man? To all these questions I answer No! Young men under its influence become in general degraded and brutish. It never made a bad man good, but has made many good ones bad. Christianity never made a bad man, but has made millions of bad ones good.

What do you think of the comparison? True, things have been done in the name of Christianity that it is not responsible for. The fires of martyrdom have been kindled professedly in its service. Many things have been done by those who were called (falsely) Christian. Christianity is a system of love and goodwill toward men. It is not disproved because the alien and hostile human will has misapplied it.

Wherever the Bible has gone it has been followed by an increase of knowledge; by an increase of liberty of thought and conscience. The arts and sciences have developed under its influence. Morality increases with the spread of the Bible. Statistics prove that life is more secure in England than any other European country, and that life is secure in those countries just in proportion as the Bible is circulated and read. In England, a Bible land, there is one murder to every 178,000; in Holland, also a Bible land, there is one to every 100,000; in Austria, a half and half Bible land, there is one to every 57,000; in Spain, where there is no Bible, there is one to every 4,113; in Naples, where there is no Bible, there is one to every 2,750; in Rome, one to every 950.

Then again, in London, a Bible city, for every one hundred legitimate children there are four illegitimate; in Paris, where the Bible is scarcely read, there are forty-eight illegitimate to one hundred legitimate; in Vienna, where there are one hundred legitimate there are one hundred and eighteen otherwise; in Rome, for every one hundred legitimate there are two hundred and forty-three illegitimate.

From these figures I think it better to have the Bible and live in a Bible land. The effects of Christianity for good upon the world would have been much greater had it not been opposed and misrepresented. If you want a sample of what infidelity would do, or has done, look at the French Revolution of 1793. In that "reign of terror" you can see the fruit of the seeds sown by Voltaire and Rousseau. Infidelity is destructive; Christianity is constructive. It takes a man of intellect to plan and construct a fine dwelling, but any barbarian can come along with crow-bar and axe and despoil its beauty. Infidels have been hammering at every conceiv-