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TITHES

Without question it is universally admitted that to *give* is the bounden duty of every christian. It is an acknowledged duty man owes to God. And the reason for this is not far to seek. It is not that God *needs* our money; "The silver is Mine, the gold is Mine, saith the Lord of Hosts." But it is that He demands our *trust*. We must acknowledge our belief in, and dependence upon Him in our actions as well as in our words. The way He has devised for us to show by our acts that we trust and depend upon Him for material things is by our giving away a part of all such material blessings received from Him; "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruits of all thine increase." Hence the universal acknowledgement of the duty of giving. It is a duty which is instinctive in the human heart, planted there by God Himself, and is by no means limited only to that part of the human race which believe in revelation. Consequently the duty of giving is a moral one. It is not necessary to quote texts of Scripture to show the Divine command, though there are many of them. The high degree of morality concerned in this duty, however, may be recognised at the outset if we remember that nearly every person, yes every person, for the active missionary gives himself, must *give* in order to proportionately discharge Christ's great commission to the whole Church to "make disciples of all nations" and to preach the gospel to every creature."

But giving, as well as being a moral duty incumbent upon every one, is one of the choicest of the *means of grace*. How this comes about may be ascertained by any thinking person. I will, therefore, only suggest a few ways in which giving may plainly be seen to be a channel through which God's choicest blessings flow to us. Regular and systematic giving promotes the habit of self-denial and unselfishness; it adds to self-control, or control of the will power; it

enlarges the heart, widens the sphere of usefulness, and promotes the true catholicity of the soul; it increases the givers love and charity for all; it enlarges his sympathy for others less fortunate than himself; it deepens his gratitude to God for all he possesses; it helps to loosen his ties to this world, and gives him a deeper interest in the next; it greatly increases his faith in God, and brings him a degree of unalloyed happiness, unequalled probably, by anything else. But to give at all is a gift from God, by Whose power alone our natural human selfishness is sufficiently overcome to enable us to give. Thus it is a Divine means, or channel of grace. "Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift;" writes St. Paul. What gift? The gift, or grace of giving.

How important, then must the subject be! Considered as a moral duty, it opens for us the awful possibilities of retribution in the world to come, of either rewards or punishment according as we have discharged or neglected it in this. Considered as a means of grace, it has much to say as to our present condition of soul, and our present state of happiness, according as we have opened up communication with God by this channel which he has provided.

Such considerations as these only lead us to assume that God would not leave us in the dark as to the proper discharge of this part of our general duty towards Him. If He has given us a guide in His Holy Word as to all other matters concerning our duty, it is not unreasonable that we should expect to find, in that same volume, a clear indication of His mind with regard to this particular one. "To the law and to the testimony," then, let us go. To the writer the Divine Will on this subject is as clearly indicated in the Bible as it is with regard to any other matter which concerns our moral status in God's sight. And it shall be his effort in the next number to show the line of argument that has most forcibly appealed to him and to others who consider the tithes of our increase as God's by Divine right.