TITHING.

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Tract Department.
Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.—Matt. xxiii, 23.

The Scribes and Pharisees neither began nor ended their works in God, nor had they any respect unto his name in doing them; they did them to be seen of men and for their own personal advantage. They were remarkably scrupulous in the performance of all the rites and ceremonies of religion, but totally neg-
lected the soul, spirit, and practice of godliness. Ye pay tithe of mint, anise, and cummin, which were not required by the law of Moses, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law—judgment, that is, acting according to justice and equity toward mankind—mercy to the distressed and miserable, and faith in God as the fountain of all righteousness, mercy, and truth. In the twenty-fifth verse he says, "ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess." In instituting a comparison between that system of tithing which the Mormon hierarchy impose upon their self-sacrificing subjects and true scriptural teachings upon the subject, I doubt if in the whole Bible I could find a more appropriate text.

With reference to these Pharisees, however, our blessed Lord did not object to their paying tithing, even of common pot-herbs, so long as they acknowledged their obligation to the testimonial law, for he immediately added, "these ought ye to have done, and not to have left the other undone." But he condemned them be-
cause they made this the paramount duty of religion to the utter neglect of its true spirit—judgment, mercy, and faith—thereby showing they had no religion and were strangers to its nature. In keeping with this, at almost every convocation of the Latter-day Saints for religious instruction, *tithing* is the one great theme of discourse. But little is said, if we judge from the printed discourses, of watchfulness, private prayer, the life of God in the soul, and of outward manifestation in the life of the fruits of the Spirit; *tithing*, *tithing*, is the cry that is kept ringing in the ears of the people, and but little is done to elevate them to the holy regions of intellectual and spiritual life.

That a certain portion of one’s income should be constantly devoted to religious and benevolent purposes, is one of the plainest duties taught in the Bible. Our Lord teaches it, we repeat, even in the text; but what are the limitations of this duty, and how far are we bound in the nineteenth century by systems which men have professed to copy from those of many ages past? Particularly, how does that
system of tithing imposed upon the people of Utah by Brigham Young compare with the requirements of God the Father and of the Lord Jesus Christ? These are not only proper questions for public discussion, but questions of great importance. In discussing this theme this evening we shall endeavor to show, I. That the Mormon system does not resemble, and cannot be deduced from, that system which prevailed under the Mosaic law. II. That it cannot be deduced from the teachings of the New Testament upon this subject; and, III. That it is in itself a system of extortion and plunder for personal uses by a despotic power.

We take up, then, our first proposition, namely, that the Mormon system of tithing does not correspond with, and cannot be argued from, that system which prevailed under the Mosaic law.

We have nothing more ancient concerning tithes than that which is found in Gen. xiv, 20, where Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek,
King of Salem, at his return from his expedition against the five kings. He then made a voluntary offering of one tenth of all the booty he had taken from the enemy. Jacob imitated this act of his grandfather when he vowed unto the Lord the tithe of all his substance which he might acquire in Mesopotamia. These were voluntary gifts, offered on special occasions, and nothing with reference to an authoritative system can be argued from them.

Under the law, Moses ordained, Lev. xxvii, 30, 32: "All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord. . . . And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord." They brought the tithes to the Levites at Jerusalem, as appears from Josephus and Tobit, and the Levites set apart a tenth of these tithes for the priest. Then there was a second kind of tithing for the maintenance of certain feasts at the Temple. Every third year this tithing was devoted to feasting the poor. See Deut.
xiv, 28, 29, as follows: “At the end of three years thou shalt bring forth all the tithe of thine increase the same year, and shalt lay it up within thy gates: and the Levite, because he hath no part nor inheritance with thee, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, which are within thy gates, shall come, and shall eat and be satisfied.” Also Deut. xxvi, 12.

These passages contain every thing important concerning the law of tithing. The points of difference between such a system and that which prevails among you, I hardly need detain you to point out at length. They will also be sufficiently remarked upon as I proceed to show that no authority can be advanced from this Mosaic system for that of Brigham Young.

In the first place, the old Mosaic dispensation, with the whole of its ritual, has forever passed away, and has been superseded by the Christian dispensation. The moral law, the principles of moral government, remain. From the nature of the case, they can never be changed; but God’s methods of dealing with
men do change; the means by which he illustrates and enforces his government and advances his kingdom vary to suit the conditions of men. Thus the whole ceremonial law, which "was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ," having accomplished that end, has been abrogated. For the bloody right of circumcision, we have now Christian baptism; for the feast of the passover, with its attendant difficulties, we have the Lord's Supper; for the Holy of Holies, into which the High-Priest went alone with fear and trembling "once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people," we have now the "throne of grace," unto which every poor sinner may come with boldness "and obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Once it was in the Temple, or at least toward it, that worship alone could be paid to God; but, said Christ to the unfortunate and bewildered woman at Samaria's well, "The hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. But the hour cometh, and now
is, when the true worshipers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him."

Why, then, this effort to bind upon you the yoke of the old dispensation? Or why select this one feature of the old Mosaic law to make it the pretense for laying a more burdensome duty upon you? Why not take circumcision, and the offering upon flaming altars of bleeding birds and beasts as well? Even the old distinction of descent from Abraham has been destroyed, and now those who have faith in God are recognized as the "children of faithful Abraham." Why, then, has not this system of tithing, which found its demand and its uses in the other parts of the ceremonial law, passed away with the rest? I answer, simply because it is the one feature of that economy that can be made profitable to the head of a false religion. It alone will pay the propagator of a false faith in dollars and cents, and make a spurious Church a remunerative concern. Hence, every other requirement of the old ceremonial law is set aside, and this one point is
brought in through the thousands of years that intervene as a pretext for laying upon you a still greater burden.

Men and brethren, the world moves forward and not backward. Every successive period of God’s government of the world brings progress and development; the darkness of the preceding disappears, the burdens of the old are laid aside; life and freedom and joy are the flowers that spring up in the footsteps of God as he walks along the pathway of the ages. So we live not in the twilight of the old dispensations, but in the full light of the new. So we gather not the budding tokens of life and liberty of the old day, but the fragrant, full-blown flowers of the new. Then reject this claim which men set up as authority to carry you backward to the burdens of past ages.

II. But we will now show that the actual necessity for the tithing system which existed among the Jews does not exist, even in the Mormon Church.

We have seen that the first tithing levied upon the Jews was divided among the Levites
and the priests. There was justice in this; for while every other tribe received a portion of the land of Canaan, the Levites received none. They had no inheritance among the Israelites. Of all the vast plains and fertile valleys of Palestine they could call none their own. Their time, their service, their lives, were to be given to the holy priesthood. They were to own nothing but this office, while the other tribes owned the land and the fruits thereof. Thus it was just that a portion of the proceeds of the land should be given them. It was also necessary, for they had no other means of daily support.

But is this the case with Brigham Young and his subordinates in the priesthood. Did he and they, upon settling in these valleys, divide all the lands and all the property among the poor people that had come, at his behest, across oceans and desert plains, reserving nothing for himself? Is he absolutely dependent upon the gifts of the people for his daily bread? Could he not draw upon his vast possessions if it were necessary? Aye, he could;
out he prefers rather to draw upon your hard earnings. When Brigham Young and his subordinates have no lands, no possessions; when all has been equitably divided among you; when they have given themselves also altogether to serve you, then may he offer the paying of tithes to the Levites as a precedent for you to follow.

There was another necessity among the Jews for this system. They maintained a showy and expensive worship. The world had not very far advanced; it was low both in the scale of morals and of intellect. God was compelled to use many impressive religious rites and ceremonies, which addressed themselves to the outward senses more than to the reason. But this great plan of expensive worship could only be sustained by large offerings of the people, and hence the requirement in the law. But now it is far different. God addresses himself to men’s reason, hearts, and consciences. Forms of worship are secondary; the spirit and the power are every thing. “The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but right-
eousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.” Even in your own Church your forms of worship are simple and plain enough. Where, then, is that necessity which formerly existed for such a system of wholesale revenue?

By reference to the law of Moses, already quoted, we see another necessity, especially for the second tithing mentioned, namely, the provision made for the poor. Every third year this tithing was to be divided between the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, the widow. Would to God that these classes in Utah could occasionally be feasted from the revenues that flow from your hard toil into the coffers of Brigham Young! If he has copied the Mosaic system of tithing, and quotes it as authority, why has he not copied this feature of it? How many poor hearts are ever gladened by any such distribution of the tithing? And yet it was a part of the Jewish system.

We have thus far seen that the matter of paying tithes unto the Lord was a feature of the old dispensation which was not carried over into the new, that the same demands and
necessities for it no longer exist, and that its uses do not correspond. We, therefore, conclude that, even if the spirit and scope of the two systems, Jewish and Mormon, were the same, the former could not be quoted as authority for the latter.

We shall now proceed to show,

II. That the Mormon system cannot be argued from the New Testament.

The New Testament law of Christian beneficence is brief and explicit. It shows at once that the Mosaic system has been superseded, and another, more in keeping with the spirit and appliances of the Gospel day, has taken its place. It is recorded in 1 Cor. xvi, 1, 2, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the Churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."

This has universally been conceded to be the prescribed method and law of beneficence under the Christian dispensation. Nothing
else upon this subject is contained in the New Testament, save those general lessons upon liberality, care for the poor, etc., which abound in its pages. With all, then, who accept the New Testament, this law must stand as the substitute in all Christian Churches for the Mosaic law. Now, see in how many respects it differs from the Mormon tithing plan.

In the first place, the *time* specified for the consecration of their gifts unto the Lord was the *first day of the week*. The supposition is that at the close of the week a person would, in those cases where it was possible, cast up the earnings of the week. Upon the next day, that is, the Sabbath, he should “lay by him in store,” that is, set aside, a suitable sum for benevolent purposes. If this could not readily be done by many, it could be practically observed through the keeping of accounts; and thus alms-giving would become a part of the Sabbath worship and service of Almighty God.

In the second place, we call particular attention to the amount required, “As God hath
prospered him." On some weeks it might be more, on some less, and some of the time possibly nothing. No hard and exacting rule is here laid down. From time to time the saints were to honor God with their substance, and try to make the world better and humanity happier by their benefactions, according to the ability which God should give them. And they were to be their own judges of that ability. The whole matter was left with their own consciences. If, all things considered, they had been so prospered that they judged they could wisely spare from their earnings a tenth, well and good; if more, well and good; if less, well and good; but they were individually to determine how much, be it more or less, and they were to answer for their decisions at the bar of their own consciences and at the bar of God. I submit to you if all this is not more in keeping with the character of the Divine Being, and with the spirit and aims of the Gospel. At all events there is not the slightest shade of resemblance between this and that system, which men in the Mormon Church,
who lay claim to a holy priesthood, would impose upon you. Whatever Brigham Young requires of you, Jesus Christ has given you a milder rule, and one more Christian in its character. So emphatically true is it that the New Testament can be no authority for this tyrannical system of the Mormon hierarchy, that in the volume entitled "A Compendium of the Faith and Doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," in which all the passages relied upon for the proof of any particular doctrine are given, every single passage concerning tithing, save one, is taken from the Old Testament and from the Book of "Doctrines and Covenants," and that one passage is a reference in the Book of Hebrews to the Levitical priesthood. Not one single utterance from the man of Galilee, or from his apostles, could be brought forward as sustaining this oppressive institution. We now call attention to our third point, namely:

III. That the Mormon system of tithing is one of extortion and plunder for personal uses by a despotic power.
I am aware that this is strong language, but in my opinion not too strong. And if you dare to be candid, and to fairly investigate matter of fact, you will also, I believe, arrive at the same conclusion. Let me take up these statements in the order in which I have made them. I say, first, it is a system of extortion. By this I mean that too much is required of you. I refer you to the revelation upon tithing in the Book of "Doctrines and Covenants," page 324: "Verily, thus saith the Lord, I require all their surplus property to be put into the hands of the bishop of my Church in Zion for the building of mine house, and for the laying of the foundation of Zion, and for the priesthood, and for the paying of the debts of the presidency of my Church."

I was at first greatly puzzled to know what was meant by the "surplus property" of the poor people of this Territory. But I readily found that it had reference to all that a man had over and above the amount needed for the actual support of himself and family. All the "surplus" is to be held subject to the order
of the "bishop" for the good of Zion, and "for the debts of the presidency." No man may provide for future exigencies; no man may lay by in store "for a rainy day;" no man can be allowed to accumulate for himself. The design is, if words mean any thing, to tie this whole people down to just what they need for subsistence, and nothing more. But this is only the beginning; for the revelation continues: "And this shall be the beginning of the tithing of my people; and after that, those that have thus been tithed shall pay one tenth of all their interest annually, and this shall be a standing law unto them forever, for my holy priesthood, saith the Lord."

If the Lord ever said that, then is his yoke not easy, nor his burden light. Then did he come to bind heavy burdens upon men which are hard to bear. Think of it; a people required to leave native land, home, kindred, all, then to relinquish all their surplus property, then to give one tenth of all their interest annually. Nor is this all. For under the present arrangement you are required to give
vastly more than one tenth of your annual income. If you are a farmer, and your whole crop of wheat and of oats and of potatoes is a failure, so that on the whole you suffer loss, so far as the results of your year's toil is concerned, yet if you have raised one hundred bushels of corn, ten bushels of that corn must go directly to the tithing office "for the debts of the presidency of my Church."

If the world ever beheld such an extortionate system as that before, it has not come within the compass of my reading.

But I said it was a system of plunder for personal uses, and this it is easy to maintain.

You understand better than I what control Brigham Young has claimed and exercised over the tithing fund. He has ever insisted upon the right to receive and disburse all the moneys and revenues thus derived. I quote from a sermon preached by him in the Bowery, Salt Lake City, September 16, 1860, and published in "Journal of Discourses," vol. viii, p. 167: "It is my business to control the disbursements of the tithing paid by the Saints,
and not the business of every elder in the kingdom, who thinks the tithing belongs to him.” It seems that, at this time, the elders of the English mission concluded they could as wisely use a little of the money in their hands among the needy brethren around them, as to send it all to Brigham at Salt Lake City. To this Brigham set up his most indignant protest. He continues in the sermon: “In the English Mission, where comparatively but little was done, fifty-four thousand dollars of the tithing money has been expended by the elders during the last two years. This has been kept from my knowledge until recently; but I have now got hold of the rope, and I will search out every secret act pertaining to this matter. . . . I am going to search into this business until it is stopped. . . . You may wonder why I have not sooner spoken of this. I could not get it in shape to do so until now, and have had to groan under it.” Poor man! Probably nothing in this world ever made him groan longer and louder than such acts as these. To quote all he has said of like char-
acter would fill a volume. Within the last year his groaning and roaring upon this subject have been heard in Provo. If I am rightly informed, one of the bishops, in his remarks at the church in this city, had been giving to the people that pre-eminently wise and priestly counsel, that it was their business to pay their tithing, and not their business to watch it afterward. At this Brigham waxed earnest, and declared that it was their business to watch it so far as to see that the bishops did not steal it. Then, turning to the bishop who had just been speaking, he said, "I do not say that this bishop will steal, but he talks just like a man that will steal." The sum and substance of all his teaching concerning this matter is, "Send the money to me." To do aught else is to steal it. And what account of all this money does he ever render to the Church? How often does he publish to Zion his receipts and disbursements? Any other person under heaven, holding and disbursing such vast amounts in trust, would not only be required to render accounts at least quarterly, but, if
honest, would feel it a privilege to do so. So would Brigham Young, if honest; and the fact that he treats every such suggestion with indignation, is *prima facie* evidence that he is not honest.

But for what purposes is the immense sum annually flowing into his hands used? Where are the evidences that it is used for the well-being of the people? Where are the public improvements? Where are the libraries and reading-rooms? Where are the orphan asylums, the poor houses, the insane asylums, etc.? Such institutions as Christian civilization has ever provided through its benefactions for the unfortunate. You have not withheld the benefactions; why, in the name of Heaven, do not these results appear? Ah, my friends, you know as well as I that it is not to provide such agencies for your good and the good of others that you are yearly called upon to sacrifice more than almost any other people on the face of the earth. It is chiefly to make one man and some of his subordinates rich, while you are poor; it is to keep him and them in
luxury, while you earn your daily bread by hard work, that you are thus called upon to yield up your own. Look at one fact. Twenty-five years ago, or a little more, Brigham Young and the Mormon people settled in Utah. You all came here poor. Brigham himself had been reared in the humblest walks of life; he became early inured to hard work. One of his former boasts was that he had only eleven and a half days at school. He learned the trade of a painter and glazier, but, as that was sometimes insufficient for him, he tells us that he did many a hard day's work for six bits a day. His straitened circumstances were not improved when he joined the Mormons. He relates how on one occasion he had to borrow some articles of clothing, as well as a pair of boots, to enable him to attend a Conference of the Saints. (See Stenhouse's "History Rocky Mountain Saints.") Twenty-five years have passed away. The most of you are still poor. You have perhaps the same lands that you obtained years ago. You live in the same humble dwellings that you first raised in these
far distant valleys. You still toil hard for your daily bread. How is it with Brigham? He is not only one of the richest men in this nation, but also in the world. His magnificent houses, his broad acres, his large estates, may be seen in and around almost every settlement in this Territory. If report be true, his deposits, stocks, and other investments, at home and abroad, count high up in the millions. Twenty-five years ago you were poor together; now this is the difference; and still the unrelenting cry is, “Give! give! give! to the prophet of the Lord.” When one of the Lord’s anointed comes to your door, it is not to inquire after your happiness, and the weal of your souls; it is to inquire after your tithing. When you are assembled for religious instruction, it is not the love of man for his neighbor and for his God, nor yet is it of “Christ and him crucified,” that you are called upon to hear; it is tithing! tithing! pay your tithing! Nor would this unparalleled extortionist allow you even the little pleasure afforded by seeing your wives and daughters indulge in the modern
refinements of dress. While God has robed the heavens and the earth with beauty, and made all nature resplendent with the same; yet if you should go so far as to provide for your wife an elegant hat, or give to your daughter a bow of beautiful ribbons, you and they would be branded as Babylonians. Is it to build the temple that you are thus urged and pressed? The temple!

On the 13th July, 1848, Brigham Young wrote to Orson Spencer, the President of the Church in Britain: "While you tarry in England, I wish you would exert yourself to gather up as much tithing as you possibly can, and bring it with you, ... in order to assist in building up the temple of the Lord in the valley of the Great Salt Lake." A quarter of a century has gone. Money enough has been contributed to build that temple a dozen times and more, and it is now a few feet only above the ground. Just now another temple is building in Salt Lake City in which Brigham takes more interest, I apprehend. It is to cost one hundred thousand dollars, and in it is to be
enthroned one of the fair queens of this coming deity, who berates you if you expend even money enough on yourselves for a fashionable suit of clothes. I give you an item from the Salt Lake "Daily Tribune," of Oct. 24, 1873.

"In the street car yesterday we had an interesting conversation with a workman. He entered the car with a dinner pail in his hand, snowy as the frosty Caucasus.

"Where are you working?" we inquired.

"On Brigham Young's new house."

"Gentile or Mormon?" we asked.

"Gentile," he replied.

"Then we had pisness with that individual. In answer to our questions he said he was paid four dollars a day, one half in greenbacks and one half in co-operative scrip. The workmen of the Mormon faith were paid the same amount per day, one third in greenbacks, one third in co-operative scrip, and one third in tithing orders.

"This information was suggestive. Paying tithes is euphemistically called casting their offerings into the Lord's treasury. Who has charge
of this fund? the Lord's treasurer, or a scribe of the prophet? We have had no experience in these spiritual governments, and cannot say upon whom responsibility devolves. But such dealings would never do for temporal affairs. Here's a hundred thousand Saints bringing in one tenth of their increase, besides subscribing liberally to the emigration fund, and this saintly old gentleman is allowed to pilfer just what he pleases, to build fine houses for his superfluous wives to live in."

That is the way, my friends. You must live in your small, humble adobe and log houses, and give to this autocrat every tenth pound of butter you can make from your cow, and every tenth dozen of eggs laid by your hens, while he builds his hundred-thousand-dollar houses for his multiplied and queenly-attired wives.

I had intended to show that this tithing was exacted by the use of arbitrary and despotic power.

But I am detaining you too long, and it is hardly necessary for me to prove to you what you already know so well. I will only remark,
that men in this Territory have told me that they paid tithing for many years after they felt that they ought not to do so, under a system of terrorism. To point out to you the terrible punishments, the direful consequences, that have followed those who refused to pay tithing, especially in the days of the reformation, is superfluous. But they are matters of history. I fully believe that there are thousands in this Territory to-day who would utterly refuse to accede to this demand for tithing if it were not for the consequences that such rebellion would bring down upon them. Gentlemen, the principle is the same as when a man presents a pistol at your head upon the highway and cries "Your money or your life." The means only are different.

I now leave this subject with you. I expect you will again be told that I have abused the people. Let but one word be uttered by a Gentile against the tyranny of the priesthood of Utah, and lo! this priesthood turns and tells the people that they are abused. I call you to witness whether I have abused you or
not. I have spoken fearlessly of a system that entails upon you oppression and suffering. I see you robbed of your hard earnings year after year, and I have spoken here, as elsewhere, in your interests.

I would not leave upon the minds of any of you the impression that you are not to give some portion of what God gives to you for good purposes. But to you I would say that charity ought to begin at home. I would have you enlarge and beautify your dwellings. I would have you add to your stock. I would have you to take up the old logs that have laid for years over the streams at your street crossings, and build neat walks and bridges. I would have you dress as you please, for all the priesthood. I would have you, if possible, enjoy at least a few of the luxuries of life, that might be compared to the crumbs that fall from Brigham Young's table. Then if you have aught to give, give it to the poor; give it for schools and libraries; give it for books and lectures; or give it where it will flow out in healing streams for the nations.
Tithing.

Give what you please, when you please, where you please; ever remembering that you are the Lord’s stewards. And ever remember that giving is not the “weightier matter of the law,” but, rather, “judgment, mercy, and faith.”