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I *Am* *Resolved*

*—to enter upon the
faithful stewardship
of the manifold
Grace of God*

BY LOUIE D. NEWTON

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION
NASHVILLE TENNESSEE

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Religion is everything, or it is nothing. It is the essence, or it is the dregs, depending upon the attitude of each heart. It is a joyous experience, or it is an exasperating suggestion. It is something for which we delight to live, or it is something which we dread and shun as we would some pestilence. It is an expression of something deeply real within, or it is a rite without meaning.

Religion and Christianity are synonymous for many of us who sincerely believe that our blessed Lord in his message and method offers the one and only satisfactory Way of Life. Jesus never once admitted in the slightest degree any suggestion of compromise in the matter of religion. He would have all, or he would have none.

Very well, what does Christianity have to say to me on the subject of stewardship? Has Christianity a philosophy sufficiently inclusive to cover the everyday business of money, time, and so forth? I think so.

THE TITHE

Jesus said himself that he had come to fulfil the law and the prophets, not to destroy them. I am glad that we may clearly understand that he was not excusing any one from the tithe in that oft-quoted passage in Matthew 23: 23. Nothing cheers me quite so much just now as the seeming awakening on the part of our leaders to the basic doctrine of the tithe. *I am resolved* to teach and preach the doctrine of tithing as never before.

For thirty-three years, since the day I joined the church as a lad of ten, I have practised this principle of giving a tithe. My mother taught me the principle by precept and by example. I know from experience that it is a good plan. It provides the minimum basis of stewardship for the Christian, just as it did for the Jew of old. You will have to tear out some of the leaves of your Bible if you excuse yourself from the doctrine of tithing; that is, of course, if you believe that Christianity is religion and that religion is everything or it is nothing.

Don't argue with a professing Christian about tithing—just cite the scriptures—the thus saith the Lord—and let such one fight it out with his own soul. There can be no doubt about the glorious results in our local churches, our state work and our Southwide work as Baptists if we who are pastors and lay leaders will *practice tithing and teach it in all earnestness and sincerity.*

FOR EXAMPLE

Doctor Alldredge reports 225,000 tithers among Southern Baptists in the *Handbook* for 1934. We have 4,277,052 members of our Southern Baptist churches, and only 225,000 tithers! Suppose the pastors and Sunday school officers and teachers and W.M.U. leaders and B.T.U. leaders and Brotherhood leaders were all tithers! Suppose all the deacons and members of the finance committees were tithers!

It is nothing to exclaim about, after all. Who excuses them? Does God? Read what he has to say about it in the third chapter of Malachi. He calls every man and woman who withholds the tithe a robber. Do you believe what God says?

One of the finest statements of the practical application of tithing I have ever heard was given me by the late Dr. W. L. Pickard, just a few weeks before his death. Said Doctor

Pickard: "I am now eighty years old. From my youth I have given God the first tenth, I have lived on the next eight-tenths, and I have tried to save the tenth-tenth, and I can tell you out of a heart of great rejoicing that it will not only work but will bring much peace to all who try it."

If the 1,350,000 Southern Baptists, representing 32% of our total membership, who gave something of record to denominational causes during 1934 had all been tithers, we would have given \$40,950,000 last year. *I am resolved*, I repeat, to preach and teach the doctrine of tithing everywhere the Lord permits me to minister.

OFFERINGS

Not only does the Bible clearly teach the doctrine of tithing, it goes on to lay the same emphasis upon offerings. We have not really given until we get into the realm of offerings. The tenth belongs to God. That is not debatable for one who regards Christianity as religion and who, by religion, means that it is everything or it is nothing.

Offerings! Brethren, let us look at the word. I wish you would follow the healthy and helpful exercise of taking your Bible and follow the references to the word *offering*. See what it signified in the Old Testament—see what it signified in the New Testament. Ah! *Love!* Correct.

First we bring the tithe, and gladly; and then we bring our offerings. The tithe is fixed. The little lad of ten knows what the tithe of his allowance is or the tithe of his slight earnings about the home. Certainly he knows. And the banker and the manufacturer and the farmer and the merchant and the lawyer and the doctor and all the rest know what the tithe is. They have experts employed to figure out their income tax to a penny. There is no ques-

tion about what the tithe amounts to in every case.

But the offering—the size of the offering depends upon the fervor of one's love to him who gave himself that we might live. Have you reached the alabaster stage of love for Christ? Have you arrived at that glorious commitment revealed in the widow's *all*? Do you share the joy that was in the heart of Barnabas when he sold lands and brought *all* the money and laid it at the apostles' feet?

Jesus said: "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness." There one glimpses the Christian concept of stewardship as it reaches into the realm of offerings. He amplified this doctrine on several occasions, making it quite clear that he would never accept second place in one's affection, and I repeat, we do not enter the realm of offerings until we come into the light of love. Duty demands the tithe, and no true Christian will shirk that duty, rather he will gladly embrace it when he once experiences its true meaning; but we go beyond duty when we speak of offerings—we are in the realm of love.

I am resolved to give him all the keys, and when I give Jesus all the keys, I will open to him every treasure chest, offering in gladness and unspeakable joy the first fruits of all my increase. Giving then becomes one of the graces of my religion, but not until then!

HE GIVETH THE INCREASE

Such a conception of religion—a conception that Christianity is religion and that religion means everything or it means nothing—rests its case in the assurance that it is not the amount of one's gift, but the spirit of the gift that counts in the sight of God. My tithe may seem a mite. My offering and my tithe may appear very, very small; but if they represent my heart's sincere answer to the teach-

ing of the Bible and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, we need have no worry. *God giveth the increase.*

One remembers the story of the miller who asked for the privilege of helping work out the knotty financial problem of a small country church in debt to the preacher and in debt to the bank and in debt to all the mission causes from which money had been withheld—how he took out a tithe of all the corn and wheat brought to his mill by members of the little church and within a year had paid the debts, painted the meeting house, repaired the cemetery fence, and sent sizeable checks to the mission boards, and how when the story was told at the conference of the church they not only rejoiced over financial results, but rejoiced in the desire to bring offerings to the Lord. Best of all, they experienced a revival of religion.

I am resolved to put first things first—to entrust my all to him who gave himself that we might relate ourselves and all we possess to the Father who hath made us and who hath preserved us in this his beautiful world. The universe has meaning and I rejoice that I may humbly identify myself with the seen and the unseen, becoming a faithful steward of the manifold grace of God.

*“When I survey the wondrous cross,
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.*

*“Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”*