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Tithing a Duty

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Matthew XXIII. 23.

Immanuel Kant was a profound philosopher, we may not accept his system, but cannot understand philosophy and ignore him, he once said, "The two things that overpower me are the starry worlds above, and the moral order within." And of these, the moral order within is the more wonderful. The visible universe does not imply moral order, great inventions are made, wonderful machines constructed by men without moral character. The glory and handiwork of God, as declared by the visible order, do not demand moral power. The sense of right in the soul of man is more marvellous than the proof of order in the starry worlds. Conscience within calls for a moral God, and morality is more than matter. George Washington was a great soldier and statesman. Among the few books studied by him when a lad is a book on morals by Chief Justice Matthew Hale of England. The little book opens to a thumb-worn, finger-stained page on the great account we must all give for the deeds done in

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the body. Washington was pre-eminently great in his moral character, and this was formed by steady contemplation of his duty to God.

Daniel Webster was a great jurist, to a friend who asked him, "Mr. Webster, what is the greatest thought that ever came into your mind?" made reply. "The sense of personal responsibility to Almighty God." Philosopher, Statesman, Jurist, agree that the moral order within, related to God is the greatest order in the world.

Education that deepens the moral sense makes men great and ensures the stability of the State; education that belittles the moral sense wrecks the soul and ruins the State.

"Duty, stern daughter of the voice of God,
Thou wearest the Godhead's most benig-
nant grace."

The sense of responsibility, the feeling of duty, is innate, wrought into the soul. It is the spiritual force of gravity holding the soul together and in the moral order. The force of gravity moulds matter into a globe, and holds it loyal to the sun. If the force of gravity should be destroyed the earth would disappear, the universe lapse into chaos. When the sense of duty fails the soul collapses, the moral order become chaos. A prisoner without moral character is a heap of rubbish.

Duty is what is due in the nature of

things. The universe is made one way rather than another, we are made a part of it, duty is what is due from a part to the whole, by you and by me to the rest, and to God over all. The universe being what it is, we being what we are we owe certain duties to God and men. As the wild calls to the animal born and reared in it, so God calls to the soul of man, the sense of duty is the soul's answer to God's call. We are born into certain relations with parents, brothers, sisters, the State, God, these relations carry duties, the sense of duty is in-born. By choice we enter into certain relations, these relations imply duties. When a man enters a trolley car he makes a contract with a corporation, it agrees to carry him a certain distance, he agrees to pay a fare. The conductor stands before him, demanding the due, if he refuses, he is cast out of the relation, if he meets the due the bell proclaims the duty discharged. A man comes into certain relations with God, conscience demands what is due, if he refuses, as Adam did, as men do, he is cast out, knowledge and life are forfeit, he is a wanderer, if he wrongs his fellow he is cast out of relation, if he discharges his obligation, conscience rings out the commendation.

When a man marries a woman he enters into certain relations with her, assumes duties, if children are born he has duties as a parent. When all men discharge all duties

faithfully, we have an ideal State, when a part dodge, a criminal class, when all refuse, duties, then a mob, a riot, chaos.

We may mistake in carrying out our obligations, err in judgment, hence the need of education, all instincts need training. Without training we may err, without the moral sense as original capital training is useless.

Moses, trained in Egyptian university life, had a call to free his people, he blundered in his first attempt, the mistake cost him forty years in Midian, when he tried again he was wiser. Because he was a man he owed certain duties to God, because he was a Hebrew, certain duties to his countrymen.

Saul verily thought he ought to do many things contrary to Jesus of Nazareth, which things he did, true to conscience, training taught him wisdom. If he had been false to conscience, when ignorant, the call of Christ would have meant nothing. Obedient to his sense of duty he was led to knowledge.

Men who have learned become teachers. Great teachers have arisen in every land to aid the people. Confucius appealed to conscience in China, Buddha in India, Moses in Israel. Christ has come as the Son of Man, to all people. He teaches the art and science of life. We believe with Nicodemus, that he is a teacher come from God, not because of his miracles, but because of his character

and the truth he taught, and the character he develops when men are faithful to him. His teachings obeyed give a finer character than Buddha, Confucius, Moses, or all combined. As Christians we accept Christ as teacher, he appeals to the innate sense of duty.

Our relations are of two kinds, with God and men; our duties are of two kinds, toward God and men. "A man shall be like a tree planted" a tree has relations through the roots with earth, through the leaves with the sun and air. A man is rooted in human nature, is in constant contact with men, he branches toward God, is constantly reaching out and up. Christ appeals to the sense of ought in our relation to God and men. We ought to do certain things to men, certain things to God.

1. To men. What he calls, "The weightier matter of the law," judgment, mercy, faith, are duties toward men.

A Judgment. Judging with a view to adjusting rights and duties, justice. Judging for the sake of justice. Plato says, "A good man is a good citizen in a good state." You can't be a good man and be a bad citizen, for your business enters the state and reacts upon your character as a man. I sat beside a man recently at a banquet, asking after his town, he replied. "It is morally decadent, it is a wide open town, there is a good deal of gambling there, gamblers gath-

er there from neighboring towns and cities to gamble." "But why aren't the righteous as active as the unrighteous, Why don't the good men organize to have a good town?" He replied, with an upward inflection, "Yes: that would be pleasant." It isn't a question of pleasure, but of duty. The good man is under obligation to act his goodness in public life; if he dodges his duty he is as bad as the man who is actively bad. Christ appeals to conscience. "Ye ought to do judgment, seek justice. Light should destroy darkness, leaven should lift flour, seed should organize soil. Seek justice in every relation of life. If bad men seek gain in wrong ways, and good men overlook them because it would cost to compel justice, then both are in the open market, and both have their price. One does evil for gain, the other permits evil for gain, and they are partners in iniquity. When the prophet said, "Be sure your sins will find you out, "He spoke of sins of omission. "How shall ye escape if ye neglect?"

"Faith, hope, charity, and the greatest of these is charity." Appetite, avarice and apathy, and the greatest of these is apathy. Apathy is as unjust as appetite and avarice. For appetite men sin, for avarice men sin, by apathy men sin, appetite and avarice would have little chance but for apathy. Most of the great injustices of earth flourish because of the apathy of righteous men.

If you employ men, seek justice, if you are employed, seek justice, if you are an on-looker, seek justice. Nothing is settled till it is settled right. "They enslave their children's children, who make compromise with sin."

B. Mercy—If all sought justice there would be no need of mercy, the call for mercy comes because of lack of justice. If the brigands between Jerusalem and Jericho had been just, there would have been no need of the compassion of the good Samaritan. But so long as the way is infested by the unjust, we must seek mercy and pursue it. "Deal justly, love mercy."

C. Faith. The word means trust in God, fidelity toward men, the latter here. Faith is the surrender of the soul to God, fidelity is the outworking of the surrender toward men. Faith makes faithful. The dynamo that surrenders to the power in the turbine wheel, gives forth energy in the form of electricity. Faith binds the soul to God, fidelity is the outflow of the soul toward men. By faith we surrender to God, by fidelity we serve men. What is the good of faith in God, if the God you believe in doesn't work through you to make the world Godlike? "Faith without works is dead." Works that grow out of faith in God are fidelity toward men.

Christ appeals to the sense of duty. A man ought, because of his relations with

God and men to seek justice, mercy, fidelity.

Isn't that enough? No: A man has relations with God. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy might, mind and strength," is the first and greatest commandment. Love to the family does not take the place of loyalty to the State. I doubt not Benedict Arnold loved his family, but that could not be urged against punishment when he betrayed his country. A living tree must not only have sap in the roots, but in the branches, the tree cannot compromise. A man may love his fellows and be a traitor to God. Love? Yes! Pray? Yes! Worship? Yes! You may love, pray, worship, and not give God a cent.

You would think that a strange love of a husband for his wife, if he should exhaust it in singing her praises, praising her virtues, and begging favors of her. Yet no less strange is it to see men praising God, thanking God, asking from God, and giving nothing in return.

Men use time, which was before they came, and will be after they go, no more theirs than the sea belongs to the fish, or the air to the bird, or the sun to the plant, time is simply opportunity. Men use strength, talent, also gifts of God, put human skill and strength into the forces of Nature, the result is money, owning neither of the two factors, they claim the whole

product, curious logic that. Christians admit that time, talent, raw material all belong to God, but claim the product as their own. If the gold and the silver in the earth, and the forests and beasts on the earth belong to God, by what logical juggling does the minted money and finished lumber and dressed beef belong to man? Finding is not owning. Early discoverers claimed continents for King and Church, later trusts claim the earth for themselves, and Christians are much in the mood of modern life, "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price." "We are God's poem, God's husbandry, God's property." "What hast thou, thou hast not received?"

God files a claim for one seventh of the time; the Sabbath belongs to God. The Sabbath is God's benediction on the laborer. You can do more and better work in six days than in seven. You are better men all your days by keeping one sacred to God. The Sabbath is a window, flooding all days with light. Men won't go wrong six days if they rest with God one day. The Sabbath is not a kindergarten for crime. Prisons are not filled with men who worship God one day in seven. Fill the reservoir of the seventh day with worship, and you can easily put out the fires of sin the other six days.

But the same God sets aside the tenth of the income for Himself. Religion, like man,

must have a body, and the body costs. There must be land, buildings, heat, light, service. You can't hold a visible worship without visible buildings, and the visible costs. Principles are defended by visible armies and navies, and they cost. The Church must have a visible habitation. Men will not be won to God by a religion that costs nothing.

The compass is quite as useful as the engine, the "Sky pilot" as the stoker. If the heathen world is to be won to Christ it must be by men and women, in buildings using books, and things cost. The Water of Life is free, but the reservoirs and channels and machinery cost. We have a Christian civilization because men and women now dead did what they ought, shall we become pickpockets of the dead and steal where we were served? A pickpocket is mean enough, but what of the man who steals from the centuries, profits by men who heard and heeded the call of God, but refuses in turn to lend a hand?

God's way of getting substance is through the tithe, Christ rests it on the sense of duty. "Ye ought." It is due in the nature of things. Christ found little to commend in the Pharisees, but that little he did commend "Ye pay tithes, this ought ye to have done."

If we take Christ as our teacher, we must honor his teachings. He knows what God

wants, and he tells us, that is the end of the argument, spend your strength doing, not debating.

The Pharisees compromised, neglecting judgment, mercy, fidelity, and paying tithes, we stand on the other foot, we seek judgment, mercy, fidelity, but neglect tithes. We are bidden run with patience the race that is set before, run, not hop; we can't hop into the kingdom of Heaven. The Pharisees hopped on one foot, we try the other. Their trees run to roots, judgment, mercy, fidelity, and we neglect the branches, fruit ripens in the branches, nestles among duties done for God. Christ used the Sabbath for man, it was made for him, he calls the tithe in for God, it was established for Him. Will you be loyal to man and rob God?

The great peril of the age is the money peril, men are money mad, the Ship of State is driving on the reefs, men are marketed in the street at money values, the Church should cast the anchor of the tithe, one tenth given weekly for God, will keep the soul from covetousness. As the Sabbath keeps all time sacred, so the tenth would keep all money sacred. The tithe will cure the nation of blood poisoning. "No covetous man can see the kingdom of heaven." The tithe is God's cure for covetousness. No man can pay God the weekly tithe and be blasted by covetousness. Kingdoms perish of poverty, Republics of wealth, our abounding prosperity is like to be the deck

load that shall founder the Ship of State;
the tithe is God's cure of the peril. The
tithe is grounded in the nature of things, to
neglect duty is to defy God, to defy God is
to perish.

If Jesus Christ is a man,

And only a man, I say,
That of all mankind I will cleave to Him
I will cleave to Him alway.

If Jesus Christ be a God,

And the only God, I swear,
I will follow Him through heaven and hell,
The earth, the sea, and the air."

And the pocket book! Will you?