

Original Contributions.

ROBBING GOD.

BY M. R. LEMERT.

Jehovah asks the startling question, "Will a man rob God?" It is considered a presumptuous act for a man to rob his fellow man. Is it

not for more so to rob him who created the heavens and the earth, and who gives us life and breath and all things? He continues, "Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings, ye are cursed with acurses, for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation." Matt. 3: 8, 9.

Thus spake God to his ancient people Israel, who were typical of the true Israel, and it is written for our instruction and admonition, that we may pursue a wiser course and escape the curse which overtook them. The land of Canaan was given to the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, which consisted of twelve tribes, among which the land was equitably divided, save the tribe of Levi. This tribe had no inheritance. Why this exception? Men's best interests, temporal and eternal, require a religion given by God, who alone comprehends his wants. This religion God gave through Moses; which required so much time and labor, that the tribe of Levi was set apart for this service. Then for the support of this tribe, which had no inheritance, nor time to devote to secular employment, the other tribes were required to pay tithes—a tenth of the increase of their lands, of their flocks, and of their herds, which was for the support of the tribe of Levi, thus placing this tribe upon an equality financially with the other tribes. Then to prevent paying tithes from being burdensome, God blessed them in their basket and in their store; multiplied the increase of their lands, of their flocks and of their herds, while they walked in his commandments: so they were really gainers in paying tithes; verifying the saying of Solomon, "There is that giveth and yet increaseth; there is that withholdeth more than is meat, but it tendeth to poverty." But they were avaricious, lacked faith in God, and their foolish hearts were darkened, so they withheld the tithes; robbed God, and brought upon themselves a curse instead of a blessing. Withholding the tithes, which was for the support of religion, so impoverished those who served that

they had to go to work for a living, and cease to offer to God the various prescribed offerings, which would have ascended to God as sweet incense, causing him to smell a sweet smell; but instead thereof nothing but the stench of their disobedience ascended to him, causing

him to exclaim in the language of our text, "Will a man rob God? . . . yet have robbed me, even this whole nation." Withholding tithes, the temporal support of religion, caused the offerings to cease, and thus God was robbed of the offerings due him. As none but priests presented offerings to God, the "whole nation" could only rob him in offerings, by failing to sustain the priests, whose privilege and duty it was to offer them. In failing thus they robbed God and were "cursed with a curse."

This is fearful to contemplate. Will the true Israel pursue the same course, and reach the same end? Will we, for whom God gave his only Son, in return rob God? Do not our souls revolt at the thought? and do we not feel like saying, before doing so ungrateful an act may death intervene? Let us consider what is robbing God, under the gospel dispensation, and how it is or may be done. As he was then robbed by whatever prevented the priests from offering, or rather, by whatever hinders the offerings from being offered, which priests alone could offer; so now. As priests are indispensable, no priests, there can be no offering of sacrifices to God; few priests, few offerings; while with many priests there may be many, and incessant offerings. All in Christ are priests, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. Priests are enlisted, inducted to office, ordained, by hearing, believing and obeying the gospel, and are then ready for service—are God's priests, as dear to him as the apple of his eye, obtained by him at great cost, that they may minister to him in the priests' office.

As God has ordained the preaching of the gospel in this work, and that they who preach the gospel should live of the gospel—be sustained, when this is not done, God is robbed in tithes and offerings, and they who fail to share their increase, the productions of their labors, with the faithful preachers rob God. Every time a faithful minister of Christ necessarily leaves preaching to sustain his family by laboring with his hands, God is

robbed. There are hundreds of thousands, yea millions in our own land, to say nothing of other less favored lands, without hope and without God in the world, who might by the preaching of the gospel be enlisted as priests to God, to minister to him; but for lack of preaching, God is robbed of the service of such. Let us wake out of sleep.

Another way of robbing God, little, if any less criminal and disastrous, is by usurpation, hindering ordained priests from discharging the duties of their office—silencing them in worshiping assemblies, because of their sex, when in the priesthood under Christ, sex is risen above, wholly ignored, "The leaders of my people cause them to err." Still another way of robbing God in hindering priestly service, is by monopolizing the service of Lord's day, whether by the single pastor, or the lawful elders. Edification of the church for growth, and increase in knowledge and in grace, also church worship, prayer, praise, thanksgiving and adoration, belong to the priesthood, mutually; which renders a monopolist a usurper as well a robber. These charges seem harsh. Are they unjust, untrue? I would prefer being found a false accuser, than that the charges be true. Let us think soberly, be wise as serpents and harmless as doves, for we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

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WOMAN'S WORK IN THE CHURCH.

BY MRS. A. M. BEDWELL.

Why not let God's word settle this question. It says: "There is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." Gal. 3: 28. Now, brethren and sisters, we have grave and hard and much important work to do in this conflict if we would win souls to Christ, and in his name we must forget possibilities, and gird on our armor for the combat. In the great conflict before us, we will need all that we possess in strength and zeal, yea, and enthusiasm to accomplish much in winning souls to Christ. However, there seems to be no little difference of opinion on this matter of Woman's work in the Church, and as such is the case, we will notice a few facts concerning the work of women in the days of the apostles, which may be of benefit to us in noticing the work of women here.

In Acts 18: 26, we find Aquila and Priscilla teaching and expounding the way of God more perfectly to a man of learning. This goes to show that women even taught the gospel to men in those days; and we find in four out of six notices of this faithful couple, the wife's name preceding that of her husband's, and we also find that even so conservative an author as Smith, in his Bible Dictionary, speaking of Priscilla says, "Hence we should be disposed to conclude that Priscilla was the more energetic of the two," which is often the case in this our day. We also find that women labored in the gospel. In Phil. 4: 3, Paul says, "I entreat thee also, true yoke fellow, help those women which labored with me in the gospel," and many others, whom he recommended, as fellow laborers, such as Tryphena and Tryphosa, and "the beloved Persis." We find women serving in official capacity; as deaconess, Phoebe was deaconess in the church at Ceasarea, and we find women praying and prophesying all through the Acts of Apostles. So we conclude they must have been converted women. Or would it be reasonable to suppose, that when they were converted they would cease praying? Or could they then have been forbidden to pray or prophesy or speak in church? We think neither view can be substantiated for one moment. Women were as free to labor in any direction as were the men, subject only to such convictions as the prevailing ideas of propriety imposed; and if under the personal supervision of the apostles, women engaged in these, and similar duties and activities, what uninspired mind has any right to circumscribe their liberties at present. More than ever before we need to heed the apostle's injunction and "stand fast" in the liberty wherewith Christ made us free, and not be entangled again with the yoke of bondage; besides the women are three-fourths of the church in numbers, and who would keep that number of the members doing nothing. We do not believe it proper or right for a woman to usurp power in the church, nor indeed do we think there are many who are desirous to do so, but there are many Scriptures showing that women stand on an equal footing with her brothers in church work, in every particular, especially in the love of order and peace. Greater love than this hath no