



**Croteau, David A.**

***Tithing after the Cross: A Refutation of the Top Arguments for Tithing and New Paradigm for Giving***

Areopagus Critical Christian Issues 7

Gonzalez, FL: Energion, 2013. Pp. ix + 78. Paper. \$9.99. ISBN 9781938434129.

Nick Norelli

Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

New Jersey

Tithing is one of those hot button issues that often seems to get Christians (and to be honest, even quite a few unbelievers as well!) all hot under the collar. I've repeatedly been amazed at both the way that certain pastors use fear tactics in order to manipulate their congregations into giving and the way that other pastors avoid the topic like the plague for fear of losing church members. It seems to me that if we want to be faithful to the Scriptures in our preaching/teaching, and tithing is a topic addressed in the Scriptures, then we should be able to address it, but to do so with wisdom and balance.

David A. Croteau's *Tithing after the Cross* will aid the preacher in this task. Croteau's proposal is modest in that he says that tithing is not a requirement for Christians living under the New Covenant. He's written quite a bit on this topic elsewhere but the purpose of this slim volume is to address the most commonly used arguments in support of mandatory tithing for Christians. The introductory chapter begins by defining what a tithe is according to the Bible. While a tithe means a tenth it doesn't necessarily mean ten percent. That little nugget alone will shake the foundations of many people's beliefs about tithing. But Croteau goes on to explain that there were multiple tithes offered throughout the year and it was always and only offered from the livestock and produce of the land of Israel. This is important for the refutations that follow.

The following chapters present various arguments in favor of tithing according to the Old Testament (chapter 2), the New Testament (chapter 3), theology (chapter 4), history (chapter 5), and experience (chapter 6), before presenting Croteau's positive proposal for "giving after the cross" (chapter 7). In each chapter Croteau begins with the weaker arguments used and he proceeds to build to the stronger. In every case he returns to exactly what the Bible says about tithing and shows how the various arguments aren't actually in favor of biblical tithing, but rather giving ten percent, which again, isn't exactly what the text says.

In truth, a tithe on 19 animals was roughly five percent, while the multiple tithes (i.e., the Levitical tithe, the Festival tithe, and every third year the Charity tithe) offered on produce throughout the year totaled roughly twenty percent, and that's to say nothing about sabbatical years! The fact is that tithing according to Scripture isn't really what people expect Christians to do here and now. Some might think that Croteau is opposed to giving, but fret not, he's opposed to no such thing! In fact, Croteau is a strong advocate of supporting the local church, Christian missions, and those who are in need among us. He's also a proponent of wise financial stewardship and a cheerful attitude towards giving rather than a generosity compelled by fear and guilt.

I think that Croteau has succeeded in refuting the arguments used by tithing proponents but a volume like this always leaves one hungry for more exegesis. I understand the point of the Areopagus series is to present issues clearly to a general readership but books as slim as this feel more like an appetizer than the whole meal. It's a tasty appetizer though and the interested reader can turn to Croteau's more sustained engagements elsewhere if interested. I think what I gained more than anything from this volume was that there are more arguments in favor of tithing than I was previously aware and those that were new to me were weaker than I'd expect any argument to be. If I wrote a book on the subject I would have ignored half the arguments addressed but Croteau clearly wanted to be thorough and he has a wide audience in mind. I think *Tithing after the Cross* would be helpful to any Christian but I'd especially like to see it in the hands of preachers/teachers.