

obedience of Israel: "Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from the ordinances, and have not kept them."

This is the old and oft-repeated indictment, and he holds out the same hope that other prophets offered:

"Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts."

After giving utterance to this general complaint, Malachi becomes specific. He employs one of the oldest and most effective forms of argument; he asks questions and answers them himself. The question focuses attention upon the point and the answer presents the truth more forcibly than it can be presented without the question. The interrogation point is like the sign at railroad crossings; it leads one to "Stop, Look, Listen."

A SEARCHING QUESTION.

"Will a man rob God?" That is a searching question. How can a man be willing to rob God if he has any conception of what he owes to God?

Some men talk about being self-made; question them. When did they begin to make themselves? How did they lay the foundations of their greatness?

If any man is inclined to be boastful of what he has done, let him set down on a piece of paper—it will not take much paper—all that he thinks he is, all that even he can consider worth computing.

Then let him subtract that which is due to inheritance and see how much more comes to him by descent than he himself can add. Who would exchange for anything that he himself can do the fact that he was born of a race with centuries of civilization back of it?

And then let him subtract that which has come to him through the environments of youth—the ideals and the opportunities that have made it possible to accomplish whatever he has accomplished.

When he has subtracted that which has come to him by inheritance and that which he has received through environment, the remainder will not be great enough to flatter his vanity. He will be ready to express himself in the language of Lincoln's favorite poem, "Oh, why should the spirit of mortal be proud?"

And yet, God's children, though the recipients of God's bounty every day of their lives, sometimes are willing to rob Him. Malachi, speaking for God, said to the children of Israel, "Yet ye rob me."

BEHOLD THE PROMISE!

Then he suggests another question that goes to the root of the matter—"Wherein have we robbed thee?" And the answer is, "In tithes and offerings." But behold the promise that is embodied in the following verse:

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

Here is our central thought—what are the tithes that we owe to God? One-tenth was the amount the children of Israel were expected to turn into the treasury, a tenth of all their incomes.

Is it practical? Entirely so. Millions have tried it successfully. It is the easiest way to give.

One knows just how much he has in his tithe account and his only task is the wise distribution of that of which he is but a steward. He does not have to spend time calculating whether he can afford to respond to requests; he has only to compare the claims upon the fund and this is not difficult when selfish interest is eliminated.

No one is competent to judge in a case when his pecuniary interests is on one side and the interests of others on the opposite side, but one can judge justly and decide wisely when his vision is not clouded by self.

WHAT TITHES WOULD DO

Tithes would equip the church for its work. What would it mean to the church if it could have for its activities a tenth part of the income of Christians? What is their proportionate part of the total income of the country? A few years ago I had occasion to look up the statistics and found that the country was spending three times as much for intoxicating liquors as it spent for education, and five times as much for alcoholic drinks as it contributed to all religious activities.

There are parts of our country in which there are neither churches nor Sunday schools, and yet the spiritual in man is that which con-

trols and the spirit needs nourishment as imperatively as does the body or the mind.

Christian education is sorely in need of funds. The development of the heart ought to go hand in hand with the training of the mind. As the rudder must be proportioned to the size of the ship, so the moral purpose that directs the life must be strong in proportion as the powers of the mind are increased.

ENTWINING SPIRITUAL AND INTELLECTUAL

It is difficult to estimate the addition in the moral strength of our nation that would come from the entwining of the spiritual with the intellectual in the education of our boys and girls.

We have an influx of immigration from all parts of the world. The blood of every land is mixed with the blood of America and these people help to shape the destiny of the world's greatest republic. Those who are attempting to assimilate and to instruct this new element are woefully lacking in the necessary funds.

In other lands people await the light of the Gospel—wait because the funds are lacking with which to carry the Gospel:

Our nation does more than any other nation for those who live under foreign flags, more in altruistic ways that yield no direct pecuniary returns. The Christian church of America has established centers of civilization all over the world. While our nation does not claim that its drum beat is heard around the world, that the sun never sets upon one of these centers of civilization, established by American benevolence, before it rises upon another. But how much more could be done if funds were only available!

LINKING HAPPINESS TO VIRTUE

While duty is the largest word in the language and ought to be a sufficient incentive to giving, still God's Word is full of promises that link man's happiness to his virtue—his prosperity to his righteousness. The first Psalm begins with a lofty appeal to man's highest interest:

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."

The connection between obedience to God and man's welfare is repeatedly pointed out and emphasized. Christ used the same argument in the Beatitudes—blessed, ever blessed, is the promise to those who do the will of God.

And so Malachi represents God as promising to reward those who bring "all the tithes into the storehouse." God will "open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." Who has ever suffered because he dealt justly with God? "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty. The liberal soul shall be made fat; and he that watereth shall be watered also himself."

CONTRIBUTIONS AND INVESTMENTS

Some years ago I was in a party where the subject of giving was discussed. One recalled an instance; he said that he never knew but one man who, in his judgment, gave too liberally. The man afterward failed in business, without fault of his own, and was in need.

The person who was describing the incident met this benevolent man after he had been reduced to poverty and said to him, "You are the only man whom I ever met who, in my judgment, gave too liberally." Tears came into the man's eyes as he replied, "That which I gave is all that I have left; that which I did not give, I lost."

We get more satisfaction out of that which we give than we do out of that which we spend on ourselves. Our contributions are our investments and the dividends that they earn are large and unfailing—they grow with the years.

There is a moral philosophy that cannot be ignored if one would measure life in a large way, viz., that giving is necessary to spiritual growth, and that spiritual growth is necessary to wise living.

When we give because we ought to give—because the conscience requires it—we do unselfish things that we would not do if, in each case, we stopped to calculate the probable profit before giving. We are told that bread cast upon the waters returns after many days, and every cheerful giver has proven it by his own experiences.

AN OVERFLOWING SPRING

The Christian life is best described as an overflowing spring that pours forth because it can and rejoices in its ability to give. Tolstoy has added a thought to this illustration; he says the added thought to this illustration; he says the spring does not ask where its waters go, but that, as a matter of fact, the waters sink into the first thirsty ground they find.

Water is inanimate and though its ripples

seem like laughter, it is unconscious of the happiness it gives. But man can find in giving a real delight, for he has not only the consciousness of duty done but the gratitude of those who benefit by his bounty.

"Will a man rob God?" "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, said the Lord of hosts."

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE OLD TESTAMENT STUDY

By WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN

BIBLE TEXT—LESSON FOR OCTOBER 1

(Luke 1:8-22)

And it came to pass that while he executed the priests' office before God in the order of his course.

According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.

And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.

For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.

And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.

And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.

And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things are performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.

And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple.

And when he came out, he could not speak unto them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.

A multitude of books was written before it, ever swelling multitude has been written since, yet the Gospel of Luke, by general assent of both the sacred and profane world, still stands out, in the words of Renan, as "the most beautiful book ever written."

But it is more than that; it is the most wonderful and complete account ever written of the most wonderful series of events the world has ever known—the birth, life, death and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

No Christian can fully understand Christ's earthly mission unless he knows the Gospel of Luke.

Written for the Gentiles—all the other Gospels were written for the Jews—Luke's is the longest and records more of Christ's miracles than any other.

It is especially worthy of note that this Gospel, written by a highly educated man—a musician, a painter a poet, and learned also in his profession of medicine—gives us a minute account of the virgin birth of Christ and exalts childhood and womanhood.

As one Bible authority so well puts it, "This is pre-eminently the Gospel of childhood, the Gospel of womanhood, the Gospel for the poor and the outcasts. It is the Gospel of song and praise. It is the Gospel that emphasizes the human side of the Saviour."

This Gospel, from the pen of one who was a Greek slave at the time of his conversion to Christianity, is also marked as being the only one of the four Gospels that gives us an account of the promise and birth of John the Baptist. It is with that promise made by God to Zacharias that his wife should bear him a son, to whom should be given the name John, that this most wonderful of all books opens. And therein lies our text today.

Zacharias was a priest and it was his lot to be in the temple of the Lord on that day and to burn incense. Outside "the whole multitude of the people were praying." An angel of the Lord—Gabriel, one of the two angels mentioned by name in the Bible—appeared unto Zacharias. Gabriel has been described as the messenger of mercy—Michael as the messenger of wrath.

Zacharias and his wife Elisabeth had desired a son, not only as children are desired today, but because the Messiah was looked for.

Those who were devout and godly entertained