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Religious.

A SERMON ON TITHES,

Delivered at Harpoot.

BY BLIND HOHANNES—THE "WALKING CONCORDANCE."

In the tenth chapter of his valuable book, "Ten Years on the Euphrates," Mr. Wheeler of the Eastern Turkey mission, has given an account of the commencement of the movement for paying tithes in that mission field, in one of the poorest of their churches, under the influence of a blind native preacher, Hohannes (John), surnamed the "Concordance," on account of his wonderful readiness in quoting Scripture, by the chapter and the verse. Miss West, of Harpoot, recently sent to the editor of the *Herald* an abstract of a discourse which she had just heard from this blind preacher—a graduate of the Harpoot seminary—and hopes is expressed, in behalf of the missionaries there, that it may be published, and may do good in America. It will surely interest, and can hardly fail to benefit, the thoughtful reader.

Miss West writes: "I wish you could have been present and seen, for yourself, how interested the people were in the delivery of the discourse. The blindness of the preacher added to the interest. Saying—'We will read such a chapter,' or 'hymn,' he would repeat the same word for word. When he called upon the people to read, it was for their sake rather than his own; and when the reader had reached the point he desired, he never failed to say 'stop,' that he might take it up just there. Doubtless many a more learned and talented man, among those educated by missionaries, would look with pity upon this poor preacher, who has little book-knowledge except of his blessed Bible; but oh, how far above them he stands in this respect! This one book is his *theological library*. It is his study, by day and by night, and he is really a walking concordance." The account given of the sermon is as follows:—

The preacher commenced his discourse by repeating that striking passage in Malachi:—"Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me: But ye say, 'Wherein have we robbed thee?' In tithes and offerings," etc. He then, in a few words, told us that he proposed to show from the Word of God, that the giving of a tenth to the Lord was a primitive institution, attended with great blessings to the givers, and perpetuated and enforced under the new dispensation no less than the old.

"Open your Bibles," he said, "at the 14th chapter of Genesis, and let some one read the 18th and 20th verses." Bibles were instantly opened all over the house, and the passage read in clear tones, by one of the congregation. "Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek," said the preacher, "more than four hundred years before the giving of the law to Moses;—Abraham, 'the father of the faithful,' whose children the Jews gloried in being;—Abraham, whom even Moslems honor and call 'the blessed.'"

"Now turn to the 28th chapter, and read the 20th, 21st, and 22nd verses." Jacob's vow was read, concluding with the words: "And of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth to thee." He then rapidly drew the contrast between Jacob's going to Padan-aram, alone, and in utter destitution, and the return, with his flocks and herds and camels, men-servants and maid-servants;—for the man had increased exceedingly, in spite of the covetousness of Laban. "And now," he said, "open at the 27th of Leviticus, and read the 30th verse. 'And all the tithes of the land is the Lord's,'" repeated the preacher; "and nine-tenths for yourselves, but one-tenth 'is holy unto the Lord.' Open at Numbers 18th, and read the 20th, 21st, 26th, 28th, and 29th verses."—This was done, and then Hohannes briefly commented upon each verse. He said the Levites, who ministered in the house of the Lord, were to have no part or inheritance in the land, for the tithes of the people were to be their inheritance; and of these tithes they were to offer a tenth to the Lord, "even of all the best thereof!" "Read Deut. 14th, 22d; and 26th, 12th. See the abundant provision made, not only for the Levites, but also for

the 'stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.' Read also 2nd Chron. 31: 4-10, where the people are described as obeying the command of God, and bringing in 'abundantly' of the 'increase of the land.' And the chief priest answered king Hezekiah, when he questioned him concerning the 'heaps,'—'Since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of the Lord, we have had enough to eat, and have left plenty; for the Lord hath blessed his people; and that which is left is this great store.'

"Now read Nehemiah 13: 10th, 13th, and 14th verses. Mark the contrast! The people no longer gave tithes;—the house of the Lord was desecrated, and the Levites had forsaken their sacred office, and 'fed every one to his own field!' And now," said the preacher, "we will turn to the new dispensation. Open at the 23rd of Matthew and read the 23rd verse: 'These ought ye to have done and not to leave the other undone,' are our blessed Saviour's words to the Scribes and Pharisees. Ye do well to pay tithes—it is your duty—but ye ought also to do judgment mercy, and faith. Now turn to Luke 11: 42. 'Woe unto you Pharisees, for ye tithe all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.' Read Luke 3: 7-12. 'Bring forth fruits worthy of repentance,' repeated the preacher. "John the Baptist was a connecting link between the Jewish and the Gospel dispensations, and he spake as he was moved by the Spirit of God,—'Now also is the axe laid at the root of the tree.' What tree? It was nothing less than the tree—the root—of self and selfishness! What this good fruit is he tells us in the 11th verse: 'He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat (food), let him do likewise.' Where now remains the tenth?' he exclaimed. "Under the new dispensation not one-tenth merely, but one half is required! (At this announcement there was an evident sensation in the audience; many a face lighted up with a smile, as the electric current shot through the assembly.)

The preacher continued: "Read now the 6th of Luke, 38th verse. 'Give, and it shall be given unto you: Give, and you shall have the wherewithal to give! Shut your hand and your heart, and you shut the windows of heaven; you keep back the blessing of God.—See what Christ says in Luke 12: 33. 'Sell that ye have and give alms, &c., which means—consider yourselves as stewards of God's grace on earth; seeking your inheritance in the world to come. You are to set light store by your earthly possessions, and lay up treasure in heaven. Now read Luke 14: 33.—'Slowly and solemnly the preacher repeated the words of the Master,—"So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple! Ah, my brethren," he said, "it is not merely a tenth, or even a half of our worldly possessions that Christ claims, it is our all! Think upon the meaning of those words. It is thus he speaks to you: 'If you wish to be my disciples, you must count the cost! You cannot serve two masters. You must give up everything that the children of this world seek after. You must hold yourselves aloof from your earthly possessions (the Armenian version of the text quoted from Luke 14: 33), holding to them loosely, setting your affections on things above. Your comfort, pleasure, honor, ease, yes, your very life, you must esteem as nothing in comparison with my service! And in thus losing all, you will find all and that for ever."

"Open your Bibles at Matthew 19: 29, and Mark 10: 29 and the glorious promise to those who truly 'forsake all' for Christ and his cause. See," exclaimed Hohannes, after solemnly repeating the passage, "see how rich the reward! A hundred-fold in this life, and life everlasting beside! Now open at Luke 19th, read from the 2nd to the 10th verse. Note the words of Zaccheus: 'The half of my goods I give to the poor,'—and mark the answer of our Saviour. But what say you, is salvation to be bought with money? We all know that it is 'without money, without price.' Why then this blessing upon Zaccheus?"—"Because," answered one of the congregation, "the giving was the fruit of his faith!" "Yes," rejoined the preacher, "Zaccheus brought forth fruit worthy of true repentance

and immediately received the promised blessing.

"Now let me tell you a story. When I was in the class in sermonizing in the seminary, our teacher was very anxious that we who were soon to go forth as preachers, and perhaps become pastors, should work upon right principles; and he often talked to us of our duty, as leaders, to teach the people to do for themselves. He sometimes told us of places where much money (of the Board) had been expended by missionaries, and little real good accomplished, because the people had not been taught to give for Christ's cause. 'In one little village,' he said, '40,000 piastres of the Board's money was spent, the people giving only 50 piastres during thirteen years! And the work in that place amounts to nothing to-day, in consequence of this unwise course.'

"It so happened, that when my course of study was finished, I was appointed to that village. It was the last place I should have chosen. I had no desire to go to that field, but God had so ordered, and I went. The missionaries told me that my wages would be 1,500 piastres per year (\$60,—the piastre is about four cents) of which the people were to raise 600; and before I left, one of them took me aside, and counselled me to make it as easy for the people as possible, by eating at their houses, etc., etc., because it would come hard to them at first to do so much. Soon after I went there, a neighboring pastor came over to the village, and we held a meeting with the brethren. We talked about my support, and it seemed that they had, with much difficulty, subscribed 500 piastres per year. I told them the missionaries had said they would raise 600. 'Never!' they exclaimed, 'we cannot raise another para!' And pastor M. said it was impossible:—they were too poor. 'Where then shall I get my other hundred?' I asked. 'We will help you from our place,' he answered.

"But my mind was not at rest. That night I thought much on the subject. I said to myself—'Suppose the American Board should some day withdraw its support from this and other feeble churches, what will become of them?' And I prayed: 'O, Thou who knowest all things, and with whom are all plans, show thy ignorant servant how thy kingdom can best be established in this land.' And it seemed to me that a voice said, in my soul,—'It can be done, by giving one in every ten!' When I thought it over, it occurred to me to test it first in my own case. One tenth of my 1,500 per year would be 150 piastres. 'No!' I said, 'I can't give as much as that; I should suffer for it.' But when I came to take it out of every month's allowance, it did not seem so much. 'One-tenth of my 125 per month will be 12½ piastres; 'I can do it,' I said, 'and I will, even if I do have to pinch a little!' (Hohannes has no family to support.) It happened that pastor—visited us about that time, and I laid the subject before him. 'It can be done,' he said, 'and it must be. I will give the tenth of my salary.' And so said preacher—, who also came over. 'Well, then,' I said, 'do you think it will do for me to lay it before the brethren?' 'Yes,' they replied, 'it is the best thing you can do.' So I prepared myself and preached to the people on the next Sabbath. The Lord blessed his own word. They accepted it, and came together to be 'written' for their tithes. When we made a rough estimate it appeared that their tithes would amount to more than my entire salary! 'Why, how is this?' they all said; 'it was so hard before, but now it comes very easy and is truly pleasant.'

"Now, to show you how God blessed that little flock, I will mention one case. There was one of the brethren who had a vegetable garden, which the Turkish official, in writing down the taxes, had estimated at 900 piastres (for that year's produce), taxing him 90 piastres. Others said it was too much; it would not produce that amount. But mark the fulfilment of the promise in Malachi iii. 10. 'That brother sold 3,000 piastres' worth of vegetables, besides what was eaten by a household of 32 persons, and given away,—amounting to full 3,000 more. Others were also blessed, and all acknowledged that they had never known a year of such prosperity. The people not only supported their preacher and school-teacher, but also paid over 2,000 piastres for other purposes."

The preacher was about to close his discourse, when a member of the congregation arose, and asked permission to say a few words. "I have learned," he said, "from one of the missionaries, another truth which has great weight in this giving of one-tenth of our income to the Lord. Under the old dispensation, the Jews were only required to care for their own nation, but under the new dispensation the command is, 'Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature!' Therefore a tenth is not enough for Christians to give." To this the preacher responded: "A tenth is the very least that a disciple of Christ can give. Over and above that, he should give as God prospers him." "And now," he added, "let us seek the aid of the Holy Spirit, that we, and all our offerings may find acceptance before God."

To the foregoing account Miss West adds: "It is difficult to do justice to a scene and a sermon so unique. When that sightless man was led up into the pulpit, his appearance was anything but attractive. He looked rough and uncared-for; quite inferior in person. But he had a message from the Lord of hosts, and well did he deliver it; reminding me of the words: 'God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty, and base things of the world and things which are despised hath God chosen,' etc."

"It was worth much to see and hear one who had been so evidently taught of the Spirit, and made the honored instrument of laying a new foundation stone for the building of Christ's church throughout the world! For the new ray of light that dawned in that obscure village of Armenia, two years since, has begun to radiate from many distant points, and we believe that it will solve the problem of the support of Christian institutions in all lands, and hasten the day when the earth shall be filled with the glory of God. Well may every worker in foreign lands say, with Jesus: 'I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good in thy sight.'—*Missionary Herald*."

Men wanted.

The great want of this age is men. Men who are not for sale. Men who are honest, sound from centre to circumference, true to the heart's core. Men who will condemn wrong in friend or foe, in themselves as well as others. Men whose consciences are as steady as the needle to the pole. Men who will stand for the right if the heavens totter and the earth reels. Men who can tell the truth and look the world and the devil right in the eye. Men that neither flag nor flinch. Men who can have courage without shouting to it. Men in whom the courage of overlasting life runs still, deep, and strong. Men too large for sectarian bonds. Men who do not cry nor cause their voices to be heard on the streets, but who will not fail nor be discouraged till judgment be set in the earth. Men who know their message and tell it. Men who know their places and fill them. Men who will not lie. Men who are not too lazy to work, nor too proud to be poor. Men who are willing to eat what they have earned, and wear what they have paid for.—*Southern Home Journal*.

The Use of a Text.

When Pitt, as first lord of the treasury and Chancellor of the Exchequer, at the age of twenty-three, revisited Cambridge, where he had graduated, Paley marked with a sarcastic eye how assiduously some of the leading men of the university courted the youthful prime minister, and made up to him in view of the good things which he would now have at his disposal. It was Paley's turn to preach before the university at St. Mary's on the Sunday during Pitt's visit. Accordingly, he took for his text, "There is a lad here which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes," adding, as he looked round on the crowded church, "But what are they among so many?"

Regret not a golden age that is behind. There is one before, and it beckons you. Its rewards are not for idle, but for the brave hearts disciplined to toil.