

Sunday Reading.

Only Asleep.

Oh, be not ashamed of tears:
The Lord did not blush to weep,
But do not give way to distressing fears:
Your darling's only asleep.
Yes, only asleep through the hours of night:
He'll greet you again in the morning light.

It must be a pain to part
With the treasure you loved so well,
No wonder the anguish within your heart
Is more than all words can tell,
But "hope thou in God," oh, be still and calm,
In Gilead yet there is healing balm.

You cannot but sorely miss
His innocent prattle and glee,
The soft soothing stroke, and the coaxing kiss
He gave when upon your knee.
But try to look up; for the truth remains,
That God bears a part in His people's pains.

You thought, with intense delight,
Of a future before your boy,
In which he would gladden your failing sight,
And serve you with strength and joy.

But do not forget that the Lord knows best:
'Tis He who has cradled your babe to rest.

And God, who hath taken away,
Shall surely in safety keep.
Then murmur no more: He doth softly say—
"Your darling's only asleep."
Yes, only asleep through the hours of night;
He'll greet you again in the morning light!
—Lincoln. G. P. MACKAY.

The Master's Touch.

In the still air the music lies unheard;
In the rough marble beauty hides unseen;
To make the music and the beauty needs
The Master's touch, the sculptor's chisel, keen.

Great Master, touch us with thy skillful hand;
Let not the music that is in us die!
Great Sculptor, hew and polish us; nor let,
Hidden and lost, thy form within us lie!

Spare not the stroke! Do with us as thou wilt!
Let there be naught unfinished, broken, marred;
Complete thy purpose, that we may become
Thy perfect image, thou our God and Lord!
—Bonar.

The following article from a late number of *The Evangelical Churchman* contains some thoughts of much beauty and value, although we do not endorse every word and form of expression:

Every Thing a memorial of Christ.

All objects around us are to be regarded by us as being symbols and memorials of our Lord. Bread and wine are very common things; the act of eating and drinking is not a very elevated one; a supper-table is by no means a very holy place. And when Christ selected such a place, such a time, such an act, such common materials, as being the fitting embodiment of the grandest and most precious truths of His Gospel, in addition to all the other things that He did by such a selection He did this furthermore—He showed us that all material things as well as that bread and wine which He chose for the special purpose, were fitted and were intended to impart the same symbolic and memorial teaching which these two are specially selected to do. The bread and the wine have an adaptation to speak to us about Christ's flesh and Christ's blood, about Christ's sacrifice, about eating and drinking it as the sustenance of our spirits; but they are not more adapted,—or at least not in a different way, though in a different degree,—than the rest of the common objects that lie round about us.

There is one mind in the universe, one Spirit working through all things; and all creatures, on their various platforms and in their different degrees, receive the impression of the same will, and are set to testify of the same Lord. The unity of the Maker, the all-pervading influence of one Divine Spirit, make everything sacred, and make the whole world a series of manifold meanings, and put every object to witness to some Divine truth. All things that are are the shadow and image of heavenly things. The highest lesson they can teach is, to remind us of and to symbolize for us the uncreated and everlasting Wisdom and Love and Beauty which lie beneath them, and ripple up through them.

But I need not dwell on this. The language of every nation under heaven has confessed it. The teaching of all

the wise has embodied it. The natural impulse of us all is to find shadows and symbols of spiritual life in natural existence. He who spoke as never man spake, spake in parables, and, knowing all things, took bread and said, "This is my body." Surely, besides all the other purposes of that institution there is this also to teach us to see everywhere emblems of Him. Every day we walk amidst "the outward and visible signs of an inward and spiritual grace," and in that meaning of the word sacrament, the true and Christian view of this wonderful world is that it is all one great sacrament. All the elements stand as types of spiritual things. The sunshine is to speak to us of the "light of the world," the life of men. The wind blows, an emblem of that spirit, which, though He comes low and soft as befits a "Comforter," can rise and wax into a tempest against all "the lofty and lifted up." The water speaks of the stream of life and the drink for thirsty souls; and the fire of His purity and of His wrath. All objects are consecrated to Him. The trees of the field, in a thousand places, speak of the "root of David," and the vine of which we are all branches. The everlasting mountains are His "righteousness," the mighty deep His "judgments." All the processes of nature have been laid hold of by Him. The gentle dew falls a promise, and the lashing rain forbodes another storm, when many a sand-built house shall be swept away. Every spring is a prophecy of the resurrection of the dead, every harvest a promise of the coming of His Kingdom and the blessed issues of all service for Him. All living things, in like manner, testify of Him. In that sense, as is in others, He is Lord over the fish of the sea, and over the fowls of the air, and over the beasts of the field. The "eagle stirring up its nest," the "hen gathering her chickens under her wings," speak of Him, His functions and His relations to us. The "Lion of the tribe of Judah," and the "Lamb of God," were His names. All occupations of men, in like manner, are consecrated to reveal Him. He laid His hand upon the sower and the vine-dresser, upon the ploughman and the shepherd, upon the merchant and the warrior, upon the king and the prophet, and the judge; upon the teacher and the lawgiver, as being emblems of Himself. All relations between men testify of Him. Father and mother, brother and friend, husband, parent and children, they are all consecrated for this purpose. In a word, every act of our life sets forth some aspect of our Lord and of our relation to Him, from the moment when we open our eyes in the morning—as those do who, having slept the sleep of sin, awake unto righteousness all through the busy day, when our work may speak to us of His that worketh continually, and our rest may prophesy to us of the "rest that remaineth for the people of God;" and our journeyings may tell of the journey of the soul to God, and our home may testify of the home which is above the skies—up to the hour when night falls, and sleep, the image of Death, speaks to us of the last solemn moment, when we shall close the eyes of our body on earth, to open those of our soul on the realities of eternity; when we shall no more "see through a glass darkly," but face to face. All things, and all acts, and the whole wonderful universe, proclaim to us the Lord our Father, Christ our love, Christ, our hope, our portion, and our joy. Oh, brethren, if you would know the meaning of the world, read Christ in it. If you would see the beauty of earth, take it for a prophet of something higher than itself. If you would pierce beneath the surface and know the sanctities that are all about us, remember that when he took bread and wine for a memorial of Him, He did not profane thereby, but consecrated thereby, all that He left out, and asserted the same power and the same prerogative, in lower degree, but as really and truly, for everything which the believing heart should apprehend. All is sacred. The world is the temple of God. Everywhere there are symbols and memorials of the living God!

We should live so that when called to leave earth we could meet God as a little child meets its earthly father after a day's absence.

Patching the Old Garment.

BY REV. THEODORE L. CUTLER.

Some of our Lord's parables are to be weighed rather than measured. Brief as to space, they are most profound and practical in their significance. In a single verse is compressed the following parable: "No man seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment; else the new piece that filled it up taketh away (or teareth away) from the old, and the rent is made worse."

No sensible man would patch an old, threadbare, outworn garment with a piece of undressed and unfulled cloth, and for two good reasons. The ill-matched patch would make an ugly appearance. The strong cloth would soon tear out from the weak, rotten fabric, and the whole process would end in failure. By this pithy parable the great Teacher taught that the old dispensation of ceremonial observances had had its day and become obsolete. His Gospel was a new system of religious faith and methods, entirely complete and adequate for all persons and all time. Any attempt to engraft it upon the outworn system of Judaism would be abortive. The new faith was to be embodied in renovated forms of speech and forms of service.

This parable has a very practical bearing upon the vital point of character, and the vital process of conversion. Hardly any simile describes character better than that of a fabric, made up of innumerable threads, and put together by numberless stitches. The earliest stitches are commonly put in by a mother's hand; the subsequent work of Sunday-school teachers and pastors may do much in the making or the marring of the fabric. A great many poor, shabby fabrics have a smooth and substantial look, but in the wear of life they betray the weak spots and ravel out. Some people also are not stoutly sewed; they are only basted. When the warp and woof of character is weak and worthless, when it is badly rotted by sin, there are two methods of repair. The one is to patch up the old; the other is to discard it altogether, and procure an entirely new fabric. The first is man's plan; the second is Christ's plan. The fatal objections to the first method is that a patched character does not look well, and it will not last. Harmony is a prime essential of beauty, and a bright strip of virtue pieced in upon a godless life only makes the rest of the fabric look more unsightly. Nor is there strength enough in the fabric to hold the incongruous patch.

We ministers make a sad mistake when we direct our main efforts against particular sins, instead of striking at the source of all sins, a godless, unrenowned heart. Make the tree good, and the fruit will be good. Many a drunkard, disgusted and horrified by his own loathsome vice, has made a solemn resolution to break off his evil practice, but has not gone the whole length of seeking a new heart and the mighty help of God. He has attempted to patch a new habit on an old unregenerate heart. Even his temperance pledge may soon tear out, and the rent be made worse. Such men as John B. Gough and Mr. Sawyer testify that what the inebriate needs is the new fabric wrought by the almighty power of the Holy Spirit. So with all kindred sins of falsehood, Sabbath-breaking, lechery, covetousness, and the like. A man may be ashamed out of certain public acts of Sabbath desecration, and yet hide away a Sabbathless heart in his own house, and spend the day in utter defiance of God. An eloquent appeal may wring a contribution out of a stingy soul; but he will lock his purse the tighter next time, and confirm his covetousness. What he needs is the melting power of a new affection; if he does not give from a right motive, he is none the better for having his money extorted from him. Barnabas gave his land to the Christian church because he had first given his heart to Jesus. In all my long ministry I have never been able to patch up a sinner so that he will look and act like a genuine Christian.

Christ's method of dealing with human character is the only thorough and successful method. He says, "Behold I make all things new." If any man be in Christ, and Christ in him, he is a new creature. The rotten garment

has been discarded, and the complete righteousness has been put on so that the shame of his nakedness might be hid. How sharply Jesus clove to the core of the matter with Nicodemus! He does not tell the inquiring Pharisee to go home and reform certain bad habits, but, "thou must be born again." The young ruler was able to display some very bright patches of virtue, and expected to be praised for them; but when the Saviour offered him the entirely new garment that cost self-denial, and yet would pass him into heaven, the poor fellow went away with his old patched robe, disappointed and sorrowful. God has ordained this principle that no pardon of sin and no spiritual blessing can ever be obtained except through an inward acceptance of Christ, and an entire regeneration by the Holy Spirit. The supreme gift of the Lord Jesus is a new character. The Apostles never wasted a moment on a gospel of patch-work. Their twofold text was, "turn to the Lord," which meant repentance, and "cleave to the Lord," which meant a life of faith and holiness.

It is quite in line with this idea of spiritual clothing that the Apostle exhorts every one to "put on the Lord Jesus Christ." That signifies the entire enveloping and enfolding of ourselves in the holy texture of his perfect righteousness and all-sufficient grace. We walk inside of our clothes. So a consistent Christian walks inside of the beautiful garment which Christ has woven for him and wrapped about him. Bear in mind that it is a "seamless robe" which the dear Master provides for us; we must have it all or none. How warm it is in its ample protection against all weathers! How beautiful it is when washed white in the blood of the Lamb! How well it wears! I have seen it look brighter than new after fifty years of hard service, and in heaven that wedding garment will make even a pauper to shine like an angel of light.

With such a beauty of holiness offered to us, why should so many professors of religion be content to be only a bit of shreds and patches? Certainly no unconverted worldly is ever so charmed by them as to come and say to them—"Where did you find that? I want something just like it." Inconsistent Christians simply disgust the people of the world, and lead them to say, "If that be Christianity, I don't want it; my coat is as good as that, and better." A poor fabric is made none the better by the patch-work of public prayers or professions. A re-conversion is a new heart-work and a renovation of the very warp and woof of character, is what God requireth. And what a new power and beauty and irresistible influence would go forth from all our churches if we were all freshly clad in Christ Jesus!

"This spotless robe the same appears
When ruined nature sinks in years,
No age can change its glorious hue;
The robe of Christ is ever new."

New York Evangelist.

If there is within your house, within your sphere, one sleeping soul which you could awake, and yet allow to sleep on, you will be held responsible. I do not say for the entire loss of that soul, but at least for not awakening him. There is need for this lesson. A contrary doctrine has been making way, and especially in educated society, for some time—the doctrine of reticence in spiritual things. It is supposed that in proportion as men are educated, they become silent and secret from all their fellows in their whole religious experience. It is hinted that it would scarcely be less than a breach of politeness and religious propriety to mention the soul, the Saviour, the God of salvation. It seems to me that if that theory be true, when human perfection is reached here or in heaven, God might as well not be, for He will never be named again. So you see the ideal heaven of those men would come to be exactly what our fallen and miserable state now is—a state of estrangement from God, and of cold and selfish isolation, even from one another.—Dr. Raleigh.

He that is good will infallibly become better, and he that is bad will as certainly become worse; for vice, virtue, and time are three things that never stand still.—Colton.

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1883.

FIRST QUARTER.

Lesson III.—JANUARY 21, 1883.

THE BELIEVING PEOPLE.

Acts ii. 37-47.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 38-41.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"Then they that gladly received his word were baptized."
—Acts ii. 41.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

- I. The Lesson, Acts ii. 37-47.
- T. Man's Need of the Spirit, 1 Cor. ch. ii.
- W. Regeneration by the Spirit, John iii. 1-13.
- T. Indwelling of the Spirit, Rom. viii. 1-17.
- F. Apostolic Baptism, Rom. ch. vi.
- S. Baptism and the Risen Lord, 1 Pet. iii. 12-22.
- S. Church Life, Eph. iv. 1-16.

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK IN SAVING MEN.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. Conviction, Vs. 37-40. II. Conversion, Vs. 41. III. Union in One Body, Vs. 42-47.

QUESTIONS.—What sin had Peter charged on his hearers? (Vs. 23). What had the Jews reason to expect? (Luke xix. 42-44; 2 Thess. ii. 8, 9).

Vs. 37-40.—What guilt did Peter's hearers feel? What did these inquirers ask? What was Peter's answer? What is it to repent? What do we learn of baptism? What blessings were promised, if the inquirers would obey?

Vs. 41.—What is the natural state of men? If unchanged, what will become of them? What makes the gospel effectual to salvation? What class of persons were baptized on the Day of Pentecost? What is baptism? Who ought to be baptized? What does baptism express? Can baptism do any good without repentance and faith?

Vs. 42-47.—In what four things were the converts faithful? How did the disciples show brotherly love? What is related of their worship and manner of life? What power united them all in one body? What is the purpose of the communion? Who are qualified to partake?

Scripture Searchings.—Find Paul's account of the lost condition of men. What does Jesus teach in the "Great Commission" about the way of salvation?

NOTES.—I. The Inquiry Meeting, (Vs. 37).

When they heard this. That is, the discourse of Peter, in which he set forth so powerfully the Lordship and Messiahship of Christ, and charged upon them his death, (vs. 23). Pricked in their heart. It is not said that they were awed by Peter's eloquence; nor excited in their imaginations; nor gratified in their taste; the result was infinitely grander: They were pierced in their hearts. The preacher was lost sight of, in the effects produced by the truth. There was a sorrow unto repentance. The story of the Cross proved its power in this first Christian sermon. Unto Peter and the rest of the apostles. The sermon was over, and now came a less formal inquiry meeting, in which all of the apostles participated. What shall we do? The fact brought home to them, that they had rejected and crucified One who had shown his power to punish by rising from the dead and ascending on high, alarmed them. Was there any pardon for them?

II. Gospel Directions, (Vs. 38-40).

Vs. 38.—Peter opens, at once, the gospel. That is, the good news of salvation to the lost. Repent, means a change of mind, and of our whole view of Christ, so as to receive him as the Messiah and Saviour. The direction to be baptized, follows never precedes the direction to repent, or believe. But it follows swiftly, as a matter of importance, in openly avowing fealty to Christ. Peter speaks of repentance and baptism for (New Version, unto) the remission of sins; not teaching that remission came through an outward ordinance, either wholly or in part; but through that repentance or faith which was to be immediately followed by baptism. Every one of you. Neither repentance nor baptism can be attended to by proxy. Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ was, and is, a public confession of him as Saviour and Lord. Ye shall receive the Holy Ghost. The wall of exclusiveness was broken down, and the great gift was open to all.

Vs. 39, 40.—For the promise. Not of baptism, as one would be led to suppose from the use of this text in some Confessions of Faith, but of the Holy Spirit. See vs. 17, 18. Unto you and to your children. The word translated children is correctly rendered in the sense of descendants; in all that are afar off, i. e., to the Gentile nations, they stand in the same category as the children. The apostle, while widening out the promise of the Holy Spirit as

broad as the world, yet limits it to such as are called out of it by the Lord our God. The teaching is that the Holy Spirit is for no nation or people, exclusively, but for all who will receive the gospel. With many other words. He expounded to them fully the way of salvation, and urged them to save themselves, or be saved, from this untoward (crooked) generation.

III. Conversion and Baptism, (Vs. 41). Gladly received the word. The gladly is omitted in New Version. Yet those that receive the good news are glad; and these were no exceptions. They accepted the words of Peter as true. Both head and heart received them. Were baptized. At once, faith first, baptism immediately succeeding. Three thousand souls. It is not said that the three thousand were baptized that same day, though it is most likely they were. There is no difficulty in the matter of the baptism of so many, either in time, or sufficiency of water. These converts were received into the church, as is the fair inference, (although the language is, were added, and may mean simply to the company of believers,) upon their profession of repentance, and their baptism, without further instruction,—the church itself being the fold in which the lambs of Christ's flock are to be fed, and to grow.

IV. Christian Walk, (Vs. 42-47).

Vs. 42, 43.—They continued steadfast and firm; for this was the work of the Holy Spirit. In the apostles' doctrine, or teaching they were not neglected after coming into the church, but were carefully taught. Fellowship. A community in sympathy and brotherly love, and also in worldly goods. In the breaking of bread. The Lord's Supper, with the early church, came after faith and baptism. And in prayers. Not simply private prayer, but social religious gatherings. And fear. Awe and reverence. Their service was no gay, holiday matter; but conducted with seriousness and decorum.

Vs. 44, 45.—All that believed were together. Bound by the closest of ties. Not in one room, as was impossible; but in one community of brotherhood. Had all things common. Each placed his property in a common fund, for the benefit of all. And sold their possessions, etc. A voluntary act, evincing a great love for the Master, and for one another. And parted them to all. That is, to such of the brotherhood as had need. This communism of the early church was not commanded, grew partly out of local circumstances, was only temporary, and was afterwards abandoned. And while the spirit of it, the free disbursement of our goods to brethren in need, is in accordance with the spirit of the gospel, their action is not related as having binding force upon us.

Vs. 46, 47.—In the temple. Not at once did they cut loose from all Jewish forms of worship. Breaking bread. Evidently referring to the Lord's Supper. Gladness and singleness of heart. A beautiful picture of a daily life in Christ. It was a period of spiritual ecstasy. Having favor with all the people. Even as Christ had before them. But not with the Jewish ecclesiastics, who soon began to persecute them, as they had their Master. The Lord added to them daily. Such spiritual life as this Jerusalem Church had, will always produce like results.

SUGGESTED LESSONS.

It is not enough to pierce the intellects of our hearers; our great aim must be to pierce their hearts.

A tongue of fire, like Peter's on the day of Pentecost, will find hearts in the congregation to be set aflame with conviction.

Great wisdom is needed in dealing with inquirers.

The way of salvation is very simple. The work of atonement is done, and our cry should be like that of Peter,— "Repent and be baptized, every one of you."

The apostles were careful in teaching their converts after, as before conversion. This accounts for their steadfast continuance in Christian fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

Love to Christ begets love to the brethren.

A vital faith is both joyous and fruitful; and a living church will have constant additions from the Lord, of such as are being saved.

Help for Parents, or for the Teacher of the Primary Class.

TRUTHS TO BE TAUGHT: 1. Need of being cleansed from sin. 2. Repentance. 3. Baptism of the believer. 4. Christian fellowship.

Peter charged them with crucifying Jesus, who was both Lord and Christ. When they realized this, they were very,