

Sunday Reading.

The Dead Year and the to-day.

With solemn stroke and slow,
The great clock strikes the blow
That seals the closing year!

And while the hollow sound
Sweeps all the city round,
Falls many a sigh and tear.

Tears for some precious dead,
Sighs for some treasures fled,
Both from the breaking heart.

O thou relentless Year,
To what far distant sphere
Dost thou from earth depart?

I spake, and thought to trace
The flying year's wild race
By modern lore or art.

The dead year answered not—
And backward fell my thought,
To pierce me like a dart.

But at my side I see
The young year's majesty,
Flushed with the morning's dawn.

"Tell me, thou Year," I cry,
"How dost thou prophesy?
What lot for me has drawn?"

To my low cry he said:
"Lift up thy drooping head,
Nor let wild fear dismay."

"For while I may not tell
What in my months may dwell,
This I may kindly say:

"How'er thy life may run,
With prizes lost or won,
Peace give I thee to-day."

Then from the far off sky
Fell forth some angel's cry,
In fading Christmas lay:

"Glory to the King new born,
Glory to the New-year's morn,
Peace to the world to-day."

"To-day, but how to-morrow?
Has that its cup of sorrow?"
But all the Year would say,

Lifting his young wings to soar;
"I can tell no more, no more—
Peace be to thee to-day."

—Bethune Duffield.

The New Year.

"WE WILL TRUST IN THEE."

Mine eyes are unto thee, O God the Lord:
In Thee is my trust.—Psa. cxiii. 8.
Gracious Saviour! Thou hast lengthen'd
And hast blest our mortal span,
And in our weak hearts hast strengthen'd
What thy grace alone began!
Still, when danger shall betide us,
Be thy warning whisper heard;
Keep us at thy feet, and guide us
By thy Spirit and thy word.

Let thy favour and thy blessing
Crown the year we now begin;
Let us all, thy strength possessing,
Grow in grace, and vanquish sin,
Storms are round us, hearts are quailing,
Signs in heaven and earth and sea;
But, when heaven and earth are failing,
Jesus, we will trust in THEE.

Something gives Way.

A Christian woman in a town in New York desired to obtain a school house for the purpose of starting a Sabbath School; but was refused by a sceptical trustee. Still she persevered, and asked him again and again.

"I tell you, Aunt Polly, it is of no use. Once for all, I say you cannot have the school house for any such purpose."

"I think I am going to get it," said Aunt Polly.

"I should like to know how, if I do not give you the key?"

"I think that the Lord is going to unlock it."

"May be He will," said the infidel, "but I can tell you this: He will not get the key from me."

"Well, I am going to pray over it, and I have found out from experience, that when I keep on praying something always gives way."

And the next time she came the hard heart of the infidel gave way, and she received the key. More than this, when others opposed the school he sustained her, and great good was done for perishing souls.

"Something gives way." Sometimes it is a man's will, and sometimes there is a funeral. When God's Spirit inspires a prayer in a believing Christian's heart, Omnipotence stands ready to answer it. "Something gives way."

The Christian Life in its Revelation.

BY E. S. MACARTHUR, D. D.

THE CHRISTIAN AND HIMSELF.

In Paul's Letter to the Galatians, the second chapter and twentieth verse, he gives us a striking illustration of the blending of his personality with that of his Lord. In no passage which we call to mind does his individuality come out more distinctly. Five times we have the personal pronoun "I": three times we have "me"; yet in no passage is his personality so lost in and with that of Christ. In one sense, no man has so little self-life as the Christian; in another sense, no man has so distinct a personality. He lives a two-fold life. Of this fact Paul was distinctly conscious. What he would, he did not; what he would not, that he did. He found a law in his members warring against the law of his mind. Some great orators have told us that, in their loftiest flights, when they knew that power was going out of them, when they saw audiences sitting spell-bound, or swayed as trees before the storm, they were conscious of a two-fold personality. They stood outside of themselves; they were ecstatic; they listened to themselves, as if it were another who was speaking. This is a strange experience; but men who are not great orators have, in their measure, enjoyed this rapture. Our title, then, "The Christian and Himself," is not a misnomer. "Take heed unto thyself," is an inspired injunction.

In speaking of the Christian and Himself, we must remember his relation to his body. On one occasion, Paul was so exalted that he could not tell whether he was in the body, or out of the body; but that must have been a rare experience, even for him. We are not often troubled in that way; the reminders are numerous and strong. Paul's thorn, his perils, his friends, his enemies, would remind him that he was not a disembodied spirit. The body is marvellously real. In the passage in Galatians to which we have already referred, Paul speaks of the various kinds of life which he lived; one of these was "the life I now live in the flesh." He seldom forgot that. There is no gain in any one's forgetting it. Christians are to be men among men. We must care for the body. A sound body around a good soul is a great blessing. Many men in the ministry are largely indebted for their success to their sound bodies. There is an important truth, although sometimes unduly pressed, in what is called "Muscular Christianity." That conception of religion which makes it degrade the body, is false and wicked. I have never learned that dyspepsia, and its attendant ills, are a means of grace. The Bible, properly translated never speaks of the body as "vile." Those who lacerate the body in order to ennoble the soul, misinterpret Christ and the apostles. To "keep the body under" is to give it its rightful place; to abuse it, is to sin against its Lord.

Religion contemplates the resurrection of the body, as well as the redemption of the soul. The Christian should aim to have good health. We know that some persons receive as their heritage poor, feeble bodies. Some of the greatest souls that have labored, longed and loved, dwelt in frail tenements; and it is often amazing what an amount of work such souls will get out of such bodies. If physically weak, let us not be discouraged; if physically strong, let us work up to the measure of the great blessing. But let us remember that health is not only a privilege, but a duty. Sickness is often a reflection on a man's good sense, if not—as it often is—on his moral character. A good many men in this country can remember the sharp eye of a princely college president, which pierced them through, when they went to ask for an excuse for neglect of duty on account of sickness; they can remember the ringing question, "What have you been doing, sir?" It required more courage than the average student could muster to go the second time with the plea of sickness. It would be well if such presidents were more numerous. Sickness in college, in business, and in social life "covers a multitude of sins." Obedience to Christ tends directly to make sound bodies. In many ways, he is still the physician to men's

bodies as well as their souls. Loyalty to him "nips vice in the bud," implants pure thoughts, and makes the noblest aims the ruling motives of life. To write Christ on the soul is often to write health, vigor, and beauty on the body. Ever since the Eternal Word tabernacled in the flesh, the body has been dignified and glorified. The Christian's body is the temple of the Holy Ghost. Dare he defile it? Dare he even neglect it? Dare he in any way unfit it for its highest uses? Let him see to it that it is worthy of its divine Guest and Lord.

But the Christian, as related to himself, is more than a body; he has a mind. Mind is more than muscle; the intellectual surpasses the physical relation. It is his duty to himself and his Lord, to make the most of himself. All of his faculties, and all of each faculty, belong to the Lord who has bought him. The mind is Christ's. It must be enlarged to its utmost capacity, and, when so enlarged, consecrated to Christ. Ignorance, especially in our day, is not simply a misfortune; it is a sin. There is no possible excuse for it. Every Christian should obtain as liberal an education as circumstances will admit. We want educated laymen; the cry for an educated ministry has been largely heeded; we must push the idea of higher education on the part of the laity. This is at this hour the most pressing need of our denominational life—thoroughly educated men for deacons, Sunday-school teachers and superintendents; for business and political life. What men are prominent in political life to-day in our country who are scholars? Christian men need the fullest education attainable by them, not simply for its professional advantages, but for its own sake in enlarging the range of their own manhood. We want broad and symmetrical men and women in the churches. Ephraim was a cake not turned; on the one side he was raw dough, on the other he was burnt crust; and both sides were useless. He has his representatives still. Many men are unduly developed along one line; other elements of their nature are neglected entirely. A Christian ought to be baked clear through. A worldly man is crude—uncooked; a Christian is like a biscuit—twice cooked. Culture without piety is partial, defective; piety without culture is robbed of her power. Piety is indispensable, but it never will sanctify stupidity. Culture adorns piety; piety adorns and glorifies culture. We need both. When rightly understood, both are one.

But the Christian is more than muscle, more than mind. He has a heart—an affectional, as spiritual nature. The heart was made for Christ; and, as Augustine long ago taught us, it never can find rest until it reposes on Christ. Its Lord must be seated on its central throne. When we pray that the dearest idol may be removed from the heart, we say, and rightly say: Help me to tear it from thy throne.

The Christian must be true in his deepest soul. With all his keeping, he must keep his heart. If he be loyal at heart to his Lord, he will not be disloyal in word or act. Every young Christian, especially, is liable to one or two dangers; either undue introspection, or undue relative regard for the outer life. After a time he learns to adjust these relations, giving to each its proper place. The danger to-day is not in the direction of the introspective and meditative side of the Christian life. Life is bustle. Sunday is too often a whirl. The Martha, rather than the Mary side of Christian service has prominence to-day. But let the Christian know that his heart is right, and he may be sure that this or that act of his life will not be far or long wrong. The great dramatist showed his deep knowledge of human life when he said:

This above all—to thine own self be true; And it must follow, as the night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man.

A man cannot stop every moment to ask whether he is doing this or that for the Glory of God; but if honest inquiry reveals the truth that his controlling motive is to glorify God, he cannot be far wrong in any particular act. Let this be our motive. Selfishness is death; self-abnegation is life, peace, and power. The man who is willing to lose himself for Christ, will

find his higher and nobler life. Live for truth; this alone is to live rightly. The masterful man is the serving man; the true master is Christ, the king in the realm of truth. There is no nobler motto than that of the Prince of Wales: "I serve." The Prince of Peace, the King of Glory, has taught us that whoever will be greatest must be the servant of all. This law is universal as gravitation; it is eternal and immutable as God.—Home Circle.

Space in Prayer-Meetings.

The people must be near each other and near the minister. Any other course is suicidal. Every vacancy in space makes additional demands upon the faith and love that must run from heart to heart. The worst place for a prayer-meeting is the large audience room of a church. The next is a long rectangular vestry. In the first instance the people must occupy some corner and the leader get as near as he awkwardly can. In the second case the rear seats must be so arranged that the people cannot get into them. If they can, they will, and justify themselves by perversion of our Lord's parable of the man who took a low seat and was asked 'to go up higher.' If the leader is compelled to invite the people forward, let him pleasantly ask all to rise and move forward to the front. In this way none have to pass ahead of others with apparent discourtesy. This method will generally prove effectual. The beseeching, commanding, complaining and coaxing that results in the cold chill that follows failure, and puts the meeting back fifteen minutes in time, and half a mile in spirit may be thus avoided.

It is as impossible to enjoy social freedom and warmth in a prayer-meeting where the people are widely scattered, as it would be to enjoy a social call if your friend occupied one and yourself the other corner of a large double parlor and conversed either loudly or inaudibly. No one would be disposed to repeat such a call. Nobody will go twice to such a prayer meeting, if conscience will allow him to stay away. Good people unconsciously ruin their prayer-meetings and then complain of their own work or of their leader.

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK is the shortest of the four. Matthew contains 1,068 verses; Luke, 1,149; John, 879; Mark but 673 verses. It narrates the three years or more public ministry of our Saviour, especially as regards the miracles and acts of the Saviour. Christ in action—Christ doing, not speaking, seems to be the leading feature of the Gospel.

Our Saviour performed 36 miracles, Matthew records, - - 20
Mark " - - 18
Luke " - - 21
John " - - 8

There are but two miracles recorded in Mark not recorded in the other three Gospels, Mark 7: 3, and 8: 22.

Our Saviour uttered 38 parables; Mark records 3; Matthew, 20; Luke, 15; John none.

Our Saviour gave 24 Discourses; Mark mentions one, 2 chap. 18 to 22, 'On Fasting.'

There are but 24 verses in Mark which contain any important fact not named by some other evangelist.

Five years ago a lady of London, England, noticed that a great number of the young women employed in that city spent their dinner hours in the street. On enquiry she found that most of them resided at a distance from the centre of the city, and few were so well paid as to permit them to dine at the ordinary restaurants. Mrs. Fisher—for that was the lady's name—immediately had hand-bills distributed among the young women in the busiest part of London, inviting them to come together and devise means for remedying this evil. At that meeting only two persons put in an appearance. Nothing daunted, Mrs. Fisher continued her endeavors, obtained the use of a room in Aldersgate Street and started and maintained daily religious meetings at the dinner hour. The work grew, and now no fewer than sixty religious meetings are held daily in London workrooms. Nor was this the end. A week or two ago a new restaurant was opened, under the appropriate name of the Welcome, for the use of working women only. Tea, coffee, and cocoa, are supplied at the price of one cent a cup, and other viands are sold at an equally low rate.

Our Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1883.

FIRST QUARTER.

- Jan. 7.—The Ascending Lord, Acts i. 1-14.
" 14.—The Descending Spirit, Acts ii. 1-16.
" 21.—The Believing People, Acts ii. 37-47.
" 28.—The Healing Power, Acts iii. 1-11.
Feb. 4.—The Prince of Life, Acts iii. 12-21.
" 11.—None Other Name, Acts iv. 1-14.
" 18.—Christian Courage, Acts iv. 18-31.
" 25.—Ananias and Sapphira, Acts v. 1-11.
March 4.—Persecution Renewed, Acts v. 17-32.
" 11.—The Seven Chosen, Acts vi. 1-15.
" 18.—The First Christian Martyr, Acts vii. 54-60; viii. 1-4.
" 25.—Quarterly Review.

Lesson II.—JANUARY 14, 1883.

THE DESCENDING SPIRIT.

Acts ii. 1-16.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Verses 1-4.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost."—Acts ii. 4.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

- M. The Lesson, Acts ii. 1-16.
P. Prophecy by Joel, Joel ii. 21-32.
W. Promise of the Spirit, John xvi. 1-15.
Th. Christ Going to the Father, John xvi. 16-23.
F. Christ's Prayer for his Disciples, John, ch. xvii.
S. God's Wonderful Works, Psa. cvii. 1-22.
S. Peter's First Sermon, Acts ii. 14-36.

THE COMING OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.

LESSON OUTLINE.—I. The Descent of the Spirit, Vss. 1-4. II. The Gift of Tongues, Vss. 4-13. III. Peter's Explanation, Vss. 14-16.

QUESTIONS.—How long time between the Ascension and the Day of Pentecost?

Vss. 1-4.—Who sent the Holy Spirit? When and where? What audible and visible tokens of his coming? Had the Holy Spirit wrought upon men before? Who alone had hitherto received the Spirit in fullest measure? (Matt. iii. 16; John iii. 34).

Vss. 4-13.—Why were these "devout men" staying at Jerusalem? What drew a crowd together? What remarkable sign of the Spirit's presence? Vss. 14-16.—Who stood forth? Who was the speaker? How did he refute the scoffers? Can a man be a Christian without the Holy Spirit? State the difference between the Spirit's work before and after Pentecost?

Scripture Searchings.—What proofs can you find of the divinity of the Holy Spirit? Where are the three Persons of the Trinity formally named?

NOTES.—I. The Promised Gift, (Vss. 1-4).

Vss. 1, 2.—Pentecost. So called because it was the fiftieth day after the sixteenth of Nisan, or the second day of the Passover, (Lev. xxiii. 16), called, in Exodus xxiii. 16, the feast of the harvest; being the harvest festival, or season of thanksgiving. In Deut. xvi. 10, it is denominated the feast of weeks, because seven weeks from the Passover. One of the three great Jewish festivals to which all the males were required to go up, (Deut. xvi. 16). At a later day it was observed, also, as the anniversary of the giving of the law from Sinai. With one accord. The New Version has it, simply, they were all together. Yet the oneness of locality indicates unity of purpose and spirit. See i. 14.

In one place. Probably the upper room of i. 13. They were all there, the company mentioned in i. 13, 14; not only the apostles, but the hundred and twenty also. The Holy Spirit is a common gift, not confined to any ecclesiastical class. See Luke xi. 13. Suddenly. While they were praying and waiting, according to command; unexpectedly, as our Lord will come at last, even though we are waiting for him. A sound from heaven, etc. As if a mighty blast were rushing along. A startling phenomenon, indicating the presence of the Holy Spirit to their sense of hearing, as the tongues of fire did to their sight. Filled all the house. As the cloud filled the tabernacle, so that the priests could not enter. See i Kings viii. 11. Now, men, purified by the blood of Christ, and thus rendered fit for the habitation of the Spirit, were themselves the tabernacle. (1 Cor. vi. 9).

Vss. 3, 4.—Cloven tongues, like as of fire. Not tongues of fire, but resembling fire in appearance. The Holy Spirit assumes the visible character which corresponds with his work. To Christ, he came as a dove,—a symbol of the meekness of him of whom it was written: "He shall not strive nor cry," etc. (Matt. xii. 19, 20). But the mission of the disciples was to proclaim the gospel boldly, everywhere. Hence the sound of the impetuous wind, and the fiery tongues. The cloven appearance was symbolical of the diverse languages, and the fire of the penetrating power of the word which they were to preach. Sat upon each. Upon apostles, and brethren; upon men and women alike. All filled. An abundant fulfillment of the promise of power. The Lord loves to do large things for his people. Other tongues. A miraculous gift, resulting from the bestowment of the Spirit; for they spoke as the Spirit gave them utterance. Men of various languages and dialects heard in their own tongues "the wonderful works of God." The symbol of the cloven tongues was realized in their ability to speak in the dialects which were before unknown to them. See references to this gift in Mark xvi. 17; Acts x. 46; xix. 6; 1 Cor. xii. 10, 28; xii. 1; xiv. 1-19. The last reference tends to show that this gift was not so much for the purpose of saving the labor of learning languages, as a hint, or teaching, that the gospel was to be preached in every tongue, and to all peoples.

II. The Astonished Multitude, (Vss. 5-13).
Vss. 5, 6.—Dwelling at Jerusalem. Both residents and visitors who had come to the feast. Devout men. The same word, in the original, as is applied to Simeon, (Luke ii. 25), and to the men who carried Stephen to his burial, (Acts viii. 2). There were God-fearing men even in a nation of backsliders; men who came to the feast with reverent hearts, and inquiring after the truth. Out of every nation under heaven. Significant of the wide dispersion of the Jews, already accomplished. When this was noised abroad. New Version, when this sound was heard. Thus the Greek, apparently intimating that the "sound as of a rushing mighty wind" was not confined to the "upper room," but was heard all through the neighborhood, perhaps throughout the city. No wonder they were confounded, as each man heard various disciples speaking various tongues, and among them his own language.

Vss. 7-11.—Are not all these . . . Galileans? That is, people of one country and one dialect. Though not all were, strictly speaking, Galileans, the leading ones and prominent speakers were, Parthians. The enumeration begins at the extreme East, and proceeds to the West and South. See Isa. xi. 11; xxii. 6; Jer. xlix. 34-39; Ezek. xxxii. 24, 25; Dan. viii. 1, 2. Mesopotamia. A district well known, lying between the Euphrates and Tigris Rivers. Cappadocia. Northwest of Mesopotamia; at this time a Roman province. Pontus. On southern border of the Black Sea, at this time divided into petty principalities under Roman protection, but afterwards a Roman province. Asia. A portion of Asia Minor, the western division of it. Proselytes. Heathen converted to the Jewish faith. The wonderful works of God. Not in creation, but in redemption. Their story was one of sovereign grace, shown in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

Vss. 12, 13.—Were in doubt. That is, were perplexed, as in New Version. Others, mocking. A true picture of society in all generations. The scoffers, the man who calls good evil, is everywhere. Full of new wine. Rather, sweet wine, produced from dried grapes by soaking them in old wine, and pressing them a second time. It was very intoxicating. The charge was that the disciples were drunk. Infidelity only looks upon the surface of things, and is always absurd.

III. The Address of Peter, (Vss. 14-16).
Peter. Reclaimed from backsliding, repentant and forgiven. With the eleven. Simply their spokesman, not primate and superior; and the eleven standing manfully by his side in sympathy, and to sanction what he said. Lifted up his voice. A strong voice may have been as much his qualification for taking the lead in speaking, as a ready utterance. Not in vain had this fisherman developed his voice in the storms of the Sea of Galilee. In his address, he first defends the character of the apostles from the charge of drunkenness. But the third hour of the day. A conclusive refutation of the charge, then, as, according to Lightfoot, "the Jews were not wont so much as to taste anything of meat or drink," before the hour of morning prayer, and especially upon feast days. He explains the miracle of tongues as the fulfillment of prophecy; and enforces the claims of Christ as the looked-for Messiah.

SUGGESTED LESSONS.

The way to secure the blessing is to pray and wait, pleading the Lord's promises.