

Sunday Reading.

For the Christian Messenger.
From a Sick-room.

Loved ones, ye whose tender pity,
Soothes and comforts all my pain,
Ye are wondering why your praying,
Seems an asking all in vain;
Ye are wondering why I suffer
In the spring-time of the year,
When e'en to the plants and flowers,
Blessed spring time brings good cheer.

Loved ones, I am with our Father,
With a loving, trusting heart;
He has called me from the great world
To a little room apart;
And with looks of love so tender,
That my soul can ask no more,
Twixt the world, with all its gladness,
And myself, He's shut the door.

For He has such words to whisper,
As must be in quiet heard,
For His sweet voice is so gentle,
Noise might make me lose a word.
Sickness means so close to Jesus,
In a little room apart,
With a shut door that each whisper
Through the ear glides to the heart.

Loved ones, the shut door will open
When the whispering is done,
And I leave the darkened chamber,
Not a sad and weary one;
Not a soul that has been smitten
By a cruel, stinging rod,
But a mortal blest and strengthened,
By an interview with God.

Make the Title sure.

Two gentlemen were talking about the ownership of a house. The one to whom it belonged said, "I was in some doubt until yesterday, when I just gave up the whole day to thoroughly looking into the deeds, and consulting my lawyer about them, and now I have not a doubt. I know it is mine." Men of business know it is wise sometimes to lay other business aside for a day, and finally settle a question. It would often be wise for souls to set apart a day and enquire thoroughly into the question of the inheritance in heaven. Multitudes are unwilling to give an hour to know whether their hopes are built on sand or on the rock.

One of these gentlemen that evening was at an enquiry room after a mission service. He fell into conversation with a lady, who had considerable earthly property, but no bright hope of a home in heaven. She had been to the meeting hoping to get some good to her soul. She said, "I have been trying for years to be a Christian, but seem no nearer than when I began. I have been praying, and have given up sinful pleasure, and been trying to do what is right, but cannot find peace with God."

"Have you ever," said the gentleman, "accepted Jesus Christ as your Saviour and left all to Him?"

"That is just what I have been trying to do, but am not able to get any evidence that He has accepted me."

"What evidence do you expect?" he asked.

The lady replied, "I think I should feel very different if I were a Christian. I should be happy and have peace in my heart. I should have that heavenly experience of which I have read that true believers possess."

She was making the common mistake of looking to herself rather than to Christ. She was looking to be saved by frames and feelings, rather than by the Great Redeemer. She was looking within, and hoping to find salvation there, rather than to Him who said, "Look unto Me and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth."

The incident of the morning's conversation came into his mind. "Do you own the house you now live in?" said the gentleman rather abruptly.

"I do sir," the lady replied.

"How do you know that it is yours?"

The lady briefly stated that it had come into her possession in a regular legal way. She had examined the title-deeds and knew they were correct.

"If any one should dispute your right you would appeal to the title-deeds and rest confident they could not be disputed?"

"Unquestionably," she replied.

"You would not prove your case by saying, 'I know this house is mine because I feel so happy and contented every time I walk through its rooms.'"

I have a homelike feeling in it which I have nowhere else. And so I am sure it is mine, because I feel it is."

"Of course not," she said.
"But you do feel that it is your house?"

"Indeed I do."
"Why?"
"Because I know it to be so. I have the writings, which can be proved to be legal and correct."

Said the gentleman then, "Now apply the same reasoning to salvation. This book is legal and correct. Turn to John iii. 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved. He that believeth on Him is not condemned.'

"Then you mean to say," said she, "that the title-deed is the work of Jesus Christ? I must look to that for evidence."

"Precisely so. You could not enjoy your home if you felt doubts as to your ownership. If the question arose you would settle that first, and settle it by examining the title. There can be no peace where there is doubt. Look to Jesus, and see that your inheritance is secure; the rest will follow in due course."

"Blessed are ye Poor"

I have in mind a person, and it is certainly no uncommon person, who thinks it very hard to be poor; who thinks that plenty of money would be great happiness, and that without it life is not worth living. Worldly prosperity, indeed, has been almost universally and under all forms of religious belief taken for a mark, or at least a gift, of special divine favor. This pious opinion prevailed among the Jews in the life-time of our Lord. But it found no countenance in his teaching. On the contrary, he antagonized it with contradiction so direct, so emphatic and so sweeping, as to stagger the faith and understanding not only of his immediate disciples, but also of their successors generally to this day. "It is easier," said he, "for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." If this means anything, it means that salvation is that much harder for a rich (all other things being equal) than for a poor man. "With God," he added, "all things are possible," even to save a rich man. In the same sense he congratulated the poor and distressed in this life. "Blessed are ye poor. Blessed are ye that hunger now. Blessed are ye that weep now. But woe unto you that are rich. Woe unto you that are full. Woe unto you that laugh now."

But poor, hungry and mourning people are not for these causes more worthy of the kingdom of heaven than the rich and happy. Neither is it from a divine parsimony that cannot afford both sets of blessings, the temporal and the eternal, to the same persons, that to the rich man in torments no other reason is given but "that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things." The purpose of that most awful parable was to enforce the same strange and momentous lesson so clearly expressed (but so seldom noticed) in Luke's version of the beatitudes and woes above quoted. The difference made in the gospel, between rich and poor, gay and sorrowful, is not judicial, still less arbitrary or invidious. It is inherent and ineradicable in the opposite influences of their opposite conditions. It is woe to the temporally rich and happy that for them this world is so bright and fascinating that it is harder to give it up for Christ than for a camel to go through the eye of a needle; and it is the blessing of the poor and sorrowful that they are under no such mighty temptation, but on the contrary, this world is filled with trouble, to drive them to seek a better portion and to welcome the exchange which the gospel proffers. Therefore it is said, "Whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth," because, as a general thing, it is only by such means that he can subdue and win souls to himself; and so those favorites of grace, the heirs of salvation, are blessed beforehand with poverty and trials, in most cases, as indispensable means of grace. "I have chosen these in the furnace of affliction."

"Hath not God chosen the poor of this world [to be] rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom that he hath promised to them that love him?" Not that he hath chosen them because they are poor, but they are poor because he hath chosen them.

We cannot imagine how anything so hard as the passage of a camel through the eye of a needle can be accomplished. As little then can we imagine how immense is the obstacle to salvation that we have avoided by having worldly riches, joys, temptations, withheld from us through the compassion of our Saviour. Nay, we may doubt that there could have been any salvation for us, if the submerging weights of worldly wealth that we long for had been suffered to be hung like millstones about our necks, or if the trials under which we fret were made any less effective than they are to wean us from our fond love of this world.

Thrice blessed then, ye poor! Ye that hunger now, ye that weep now, if ye will but know your mercies and accept the grace and saving help extended to you by affliction, ye that through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God, your lot is blessed beyond all congratulation:

"Not to be mentioned without shouts of praise,
Not to be thought on but with tides of joy."
—*Christian Weekly*.

For the Christian Messenger.
Fundamental Truths of Christianity.
LUTHER'S APOLOGETICAL DISCOURSES.
Translated from the German, by Prof. D. M. Welton.

TENTH DISCOURSE.
THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST.

II.
(To be continued.)

The first Christian instruction was everywhere a narration of the evangelical story; for the preaching of the gospel was a preaching of Jesus Christ. The great deeds of his life, the words he spoke, the fate he endured, his sufferings, his death, his resurrection—these were the themes of apostolic preaching. The entire interest of the Christian community concentrated itself upon the Person of Jesus Christ and his history. There never was a religious society which could have felt any thing like the interest in the history of their founder, which was felt by the Christian church. For the facts of his history are the contents of their religious faith, and the certainty of the facts is the foundation of their faith. How exactly their faith was hereby confirmed can be seen in the carefulness with which Paul in the first Epistle to the Corinthians (chap. xv) enumerates the witnesses of the resurrection of Christ. The apostolic letters show us how vivid was the memory of the life of Jesus in the early church. And if we had no gospel accounts, we could yet gather from those letters all the more important facts of the life of Jesus. And they were written twenty or thirty years after his death, that is, in the first generation of Christendom.

The Christ of the Apostolic epistles is however the same as the Christ of the gospels. It was natural that the necessity of such a written account of the life of Jesus should only first be felt, when the first generation began to die, from the sixtieth and seventieth year of our era onward. Up to that time various annotations had been made—as we see in the Prologue of Luke's gospel—by which the memory was assisted. But they lacked sufficient completeness, and the necessary certainty of contents and authority of origin were wanting. They have been supplanted by the greater writings which came from the Apostolic circle itself, and which acquired under the name of the gospels from the end of the first century a general authority in Christendom. Indeed a divine Providence appears in the composition of these four gospels. For their different portrayals make up in a wonderful way one rich harmonious picture of our Redeemer. The first gospel—so we are told—was written by the Apostle Matthew for the Jewish Christians of Palestine, before he left this country to preach the gospel in other countries. According to ecclesiastical tradition the second gospel originated under the eye of Peter. The third declares in itself that it is the finest of diligent inquiries in the Holy Land, and it is dedicated to a distinguished Roman for his further instruction, and that it might then through him be made the property of

the Christian church. The fourth is confessedly the account of an eyewitness, and clearly a writing of the Apostle John, and we are told that John, having long spoken only orally of Jesus at Ephesus, as the head of the Christian community yielded to urgent request to compose this evangelical writing.

We have only a few remains of the Christian literature of the first century. Only from 150 after Christ is it abundant. But however scanty and incomplete this literature, we yet find in it various references to the evangelical writings; and indeed the more copious that literature becomes, the more frequent also become these references and the more its ecclesiastical authority and ecclesiastical use are assured. And this testimony of the old church is the more highly estimated the more we see from various individual examples, how accurately and tenaciously it was transmitted, also when the question concerned the treasuring up of inferior traditions, so that this accuracy and tenacity of the old church can only awaken in us a favorable judgment of the evangelical writings. The church of the second century also stirred up many a controversy over entirely subordinate differences of tradition; but the evangelical canon, this fundamental matter of the entire church, was neither combated nor discussed: it was regarded from the beginning as indisputably settled. And to that very gospel, to which the question concerning the gospels is chiefly related, namely, to the gospel of John, the closely connected chain of the tradition of John's circle of movement bears testimony. For Polycarp was the pupil of the apostle John, and at the age of about 90 died the martyr's death as bishop of Smyrna. And his pupil again was Irenaeus, in whose writings we have exact testimony to John's gospel. And Irenaeus could know exactly concerning this, for his teacher Polycarp had related to him much from his personal intercourse with the aged Apostle John. Thus Irenaeus must have known whether the fourth gospel originated from John, and he could not possibly ascribe it to him, if it were as foreign to the time as to the spirit of this apostle as the negative criticism affirms. And far back beyond Irenaeus to the decade immediately following the death of the Apostle John, the remaining testimony of the second century reaches.

To the testimony of the church, however, must be added that of he-etics. The adherents of the fantastic Gnostic heresy of the second century would not have appealed to the canonical gospels and, with all the arts of an allegorical interpretation, have sought to prove its agreement with the same, especially with the gospel of John, if they had not placed in the general authority of the gospels the necessity of such an apparent justification of their heresy. And not less do the early appearing—as early as the beginning of the second century—apocryphal gospels bear witness to the canonical gospels, which they presuppose.

But it is not simply the external testimony of the church, or of the heretical sects which witnesses for the gospels: it is their self-testimony, the testimony which their total utterance and entire character offer for them. The knowledge of the evangelical history was a joint property of the entire Christian church. Not only was this knowledge published through the gospels, but through the oral instruction which they all received from the apostles. For with this instruction began instruction in Christianity. Would the gospel accounts have been received if they had not agreed with this oral instruction? For this instruction originated with eyewitnesses. Providing the gospel accounts rested also upon such ocular testimony, they would obtain a hearing, their authors even might have been eye-witnesses as Matthew and John, and perhaps Mark partly, or have received their accounts from the mouth of eyewitnesses as did Luke. But this character the gospels manifestly have. A directness and originality are observable in them throughout. The breath of freshness, the charm of originality is diffused over them all. Therein lies their enchantment, their charming power. We see Jesus, we hear him, we live with him. It is not reflections upon his history we

meet with, but the living facts themselves; it is not scholastic representations of history, but history itself: it speaks to us, we are transported into its midst. And this directness of representation will also bear examination. It is interspersed with a multitude of geographical and other notices. We can verify them. And the verification becomes a confirmation.

But the principal thing is the representation of Jesus which this history gives. No man could invent this portrait, it can only be a copy of an actual original. One can say of a man that he is without sin and error, the likeness of a divine sanctity itself. But one could not portray this likeness without introducing into it the features of his own limited, erring and sinful spirit, which would betray its origin. Here however, we have a completely accomplished life-picture in all possible situations, in every vicissitude of the inner and outer life, under the strongest contrasts. And in every lineament, in every gentle expression the picture excites our wonder and draws us before it on our knees. We could not invent the representation. Least of all could the Jews do so. For this was not the ideal which they carried in their mind. They did not give reality to their ideal, but this reality only first gave them their ideal. For the ideal which they had might correspond perhaps to a Jewish scribe—but how little of this did Jesus exhibit in himself! He was entirely the opposite of such an one. With dependence on the authority of the teachers in religious things, as the disciples shared this with the remainder of the uneducated people, they would never have emancipated themselves from the conception of these authorities and sat up an entirely different image, if the reality of this image, which they portray, had not come before their souls with overmastering power and majesty in Jesus. The English Cardinal Wiseman thus expresses himself in one of his addresses: "We have in the writings of the Rabbins rich material out of which to fashion a sample of a Jewish teacher of the law; we have found perhaps all the sayings and doings of Hillel, of Gamaliel, of Rabbi Samuel, but all with the impress of national ideas, all according to a rule of imaginary perfection. Indeed nothing can be farther removed than their thoughts, their axioms, their actions and their character from those of our Redeemer, Lovers of bitter controversy and ensnaring judgments, zealous defenders of the exclusive rights of their nation, fiery and zealous battlers for the smallest letter of the law, while through their sophisms they depart from its spirit—these are their great men, the very counterpart and copy of the Scribes and Pharisees, who are so severely blamed as the direct opponents of the spirit of the gospel. How could men without any culture come to portray a character, which deviated in every respect from the national type," in opposition to all the traits which appeared to be hallowed as the fairest by custom, education, love of country, religion and natural disposition even? This only is possible, the evangelists must have drawn the portrait which they have given, from the life; and the harmony of the moral features which they give him, can only proceed from the accuracy with which each one of them copied the same." We might, perhaps, invent a similar character; but only by having this copy before us. And then—how would our invention succeed? Renan has pointed out, who seeks to set up a self-invented ideal which will realize the essential truth of the gospel. How does the attempt succeed? Jesus in all his majesty and amiableness becomes after all a visionary and fanatic, who does not scruple to use immoral means for the attainment of his object. So our portrayals turn out in spite of this pattern. And now how could those Jewish publicans and fishermen whose models were so entirely different—how could they have sketched this wonderful picture? It is the tenor and contents of the gospels which bear witness to themselves and continually beget faith in their verity. Goethe could not resist this impression. "I hold the gospels," says he in his conversations with Eckermann (III. 371)—"to be genuine throughout; for there is in them the reflection of a majesty, coming from the person of Christ and of so heavenly a kind, that even on earth it appears divine."

(To be continued.)

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1884.

THIRD QUARTER.

Lesson X.—SEPTEMBER 7, 1884.

CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

Psalm xxvii. 1-14.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 4, 5.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?"—Ps. xxvii. 1.

Spurgeon thinks this Psalm was written by David, at the time when Doeg, the Edomite, spoke against him to Saul (1 Sam. xxii. 9) about a. c. 1062. Because the writer was pursued by enemies, verses 2 and 3, was shut out from the house of the Lord, verse 4, was just parting from his parents, verse 10, and was subject to slander, verse 12.

REFERENCES.—(1) Micah vii. 7, 8; Ex. xv. 2; Ps. lxii. 2, 6. (2) Ps. xiv. 4. (3) Ps. iii. 6. (4) Ps. xxvi. 8; Ps. lxxv. 4; Ps. lxxii. 2. (5) Isa. lv. 6, 7. (6) Ps. xl. 3. (7) Ps. lxxiii. 3. (8) Ps. xlv. 6. (9) Isa. xlii. 15. (10) 1 Sam. xxii. 9; 2 Sam. xvi. 7, 8. (11) Eph. ii. 8. (12) Ps. xxxi. 24; Isa. xxv. 9.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

III. The Lesson.
T. The Probable Occasion of the Psalm. 1 Sam. xxii. 9, 10, 22.
W. Confidence in God. Ps. iii.
T. Love for God's House. Ps. lxxxiv.
F. David's Trust in Trouble. Ps. xxxi.
S. A Prayer for Help. Ps. lxxix.
S. Blessedness of Waiting on the Lord. Isa. xl. 28-31.

ANALYSIS.—I. Expressions of Confidence, Vs. 1-3. II. God's Loving Care, Vs. 4-6. III. Prayer for Help and Guidance, Vs. 7-12. IV. Waiting on the Lord, Vs. 13, 14.

QUESTIONS.—Who is the author of this Psalm? When is it supposed to have been written? What internal evidence is there of this? Give Title, Golden Text, and Analysis.

Vs. 1-3.—How many times does the name Jehovah occur in this Psalm? What three titles are given to him in vs. 1? What is the meaning of these? What triumphant questions does the writer ask? What befell his enemies when they came upon him?

Vs. 4-6.—How many things does David say he desired of the Lord? Was he content with mere wishing? How did he say he would secure the blessing? What does Jesus say on this point? Matt. vii. 7. What was David waiting? What would he find so excellent in the house of the Lord? What is the beauty of the Lord? What does David say of God's care of him in trouble?

Vs. 7-12.—What is his first petition in vs. 7? Was he satisfied with formally saying his prayers? What is the second? What evidence of his truly seeking the Lord is given in vs. 8? Why is it that some who seem to be seeking Christ do not find him? Give the petitions of vs. 9. What argument does he use to secure present blessings?

Vs. 13, 14.—What kept David from faint-heartedness in his trials? What was the ground of his faith?

Lesson Proofs.—Where, in this lesson, do we find—1. That the Lord saves, enlightens, and defends his people? 2. The advantage of seeking the one thing that is needful? 3. The tender care of the Lord for his saints in times of trouble? 4. How to pray and what to pray for?

NOTES.—Vs. 1.—The Lord; Jehovah. This name occurs thirteen times in the Psalm. My: not simply a light, or a salvation. Faith says my. Light: the sun of the moral world. See John viii. 12, where Jesus calls himself the light of the world. Strength of my life: the stronghold in which my life is kept. One in a stronghold, need not fear the enemy.

Vs. 2.—Eat up my flesh: like wild beasts. So, sometimes, troubles come. They: it was they that were destroyed, not I.

Vs. 3.—Though an host: one trusting in God, need not fear the whole world. Not fear: no heart can be so bold as one at peace with God. In this: that is, in this extremity.

Vs. 4.—The secret of his great confidence is here revealed. One thing: and the best of all. Seek after: many wish salvation, but don't seek it. House of the Lord: to praise and learn of him. Beauty of the Lord: his grace, love—such as is seen in Jesus Christ.

Vs. 5.—Pavilion: tent. The royal pavilion was in the centre of the army, and surrounded by guards. The Lord hides his people in a secure place. Secret of his tabernacle: in the most holy place, where none dare go to molest.

Vs. 6.—Lifted up: in affliction the head is bowed, in joy it is lifted up. In his tabernacle: his joy was not to be expressed in rebellings at home; but in shouts of praise in the tabernacle.

Vs. 7.—Hear, O Lord. Praise is turned to prayer. Notice his anxiety to be heard, when he prays. How many rattle off prayers regardless of this. Answer me: one who truly prays will be answered. Notice his earnestness.

Vs. 8.—Face: favor. The Lord says "seek my face" to all. My heart: not