

Sunday Reading.

Songs of the Christian Life.

WHO TEACHES BEST?

He teaches best who best doth learn;
We give what we receive;
We cannot give unless we get;
Let none their hearts deceive.

He teaches best who best doth pray;
Enriched by prayer we give;
Our cries and tears bring down the rain
Which makes the seed to live.

He teaches best who best doth live;
'Tis thus the truth we know;
The power which living hearts doth win
From earnest lives must flow.

He teaches best who best doth love;
This quickens, yet controls;
This grace must live and reign in those
Whose aim is winning souls.

He teaches best who best believes,
Rests on the Spirit's power;
Such teaching flows with life aglow,
And lives beyond the hour.

He teaches best who best doth show
The merits of Christ's death,
Through whose kind words true love shall
And breathe in every breath. [glow,
Brighton. W. POOLE BALFERN.

Guardian Angels.

BY DANIEL CURRY, D. D., NEW YORK.

The doctrine of the ministry of angels is as old as the Bible; both Genesis and Revelation are especially full of it, and it is manifestly recognized in all parts of the sacred volume. At the same time, however, the facts and conditions of the angelic world are left in a good deal of obscurity. Sometimes they are spoken of in a manner to imply that they are very few in number, and again as an exceeding great multitude; sometimes as exclusively a high order of spiritual intelligences, and again as things material, or the forces of nature personified. These things often become occasions of doubts and differences of opinions among those who read their Bibles with only sincere purposes to understand its truth.

The confidence with which many of our best commentators assume that our Lord fully indored the popular notion respecting guardian angels is stronger than seems to be warranted. It is granted on all hands that the Old Testament clearly recognizes the doctrine of the ministry of angels, but not of the assignment of some specific field of guardianship—people, places or persons to certain chosen angels. That notion which pervades all heathenism came among the Jews from the East, with the return from Babylon, and was at our Lord's time widely prevalent among them; but, as with many other similar fancies, our Lord neither directly antagonized it nor yet indored it. It is method of inculcating the truth and so overthrowing all forms of untruth seems to have been to clearly set forth the great fundamental doctrines of religion, including both opinions and practices, and to leave them to operate in society, "till the whole lump shall be leavened." It is quite manifest also that he not only did not directly controvert either the prevalent scientific fallacies or the merely speculative theories of other-world matters, but that he sometimes used them as familiar illustrations in his teachings. His illustration of His own death and Resurrection, by the figure of the "corn of wheat," though exceedingly pertinent to the occasion, embodied an incorrect biological theory. His manner of speaking of cosmic affairs shows him as using a theory of the material heavens and earth that has become antiquated. As a general rule it is unsafe to assume that Christ adopted as His own, and stamped with the seal of infallibility, every thought, fancy or philosophical theory of which he made any use by way of illustration; to so assume would lead alike to confusion and peril. It would be therefore unsafe to accept Meyer's conclusion, in which he is seconded by Alford, and indeed by many, perhaps most, modern commentators, that "the belief that every individual has a guardian angel is here confirmed by Jesus."

The Christ whom we preach must be the full Christ of the Gospel—not the ideal, but the historic Christ; not a Christ of one's own invention and handiwork, but the Christ whom the believing Church of all ages confesses and adores as her own.—Van Oosterzee.

The perfection and beauty of Zion.

BY F. M. ELLIS, D. D., TREMONT TEMPLE, BOSTON, MASS.

The scene is Mount Zion. Mount Zion was a high point on the southwestern extremity of that broad plateau upon which the city of Jerusalem was builded, the original home of the Jebusites, who, though overcome by the prowess of the tribe of Benjamin, yet stoutly and persistently held their position, so that while Israel drove out other tribes, the Jebusites tarried in Jerusalem.

The threshing-floor of the Jebusite Ornan became the site of the original temple. When David had committed sin against God by disrusting his arm, in his solicitude to know the prowess and numbers of his own defenders, God sent forth a plague which rolled its darkening tides like billows, from Dan to Beer-sheba, until thousands of Israel had lain down still and silent in death. To end this pestilence an angel descended, and standing upon the threshing-floor of the Jebusite on Mount Zion, stretches forth the hand which stays the destruction which was sweeping off Israel, as the destroying angel afterwards did the encamped hosts of Sennacherib. Mount Zion found its crowning glory in that marvellous temple of which man was the artisan, and God the divine Architect. The spirit and genius of the Hebrew worship seemed to crystallize in the burnished gold and flashing stones, out of which the handicraft of human genius, obeying the inspiration of God, had reared it.

It became the image of the Messiah's coming kingdom, as after the coming of the Messiah it became the struggling Church the image and symbol of her final rest and glory.

The temple was Zion's glory. And the Shechinah, that mysterious, awful light which hung and throbbed and shimmered between the bowing angels, above the ark of the mercy-seat, as the visible token of the invisible presence of the Lord, was the glory of the temple.

This was the beauty and excellence of Zion, and the garment of her glory. Zion is the image of the Church of the redeemed, far more glorious, however, as souls are more than things; and a far grander endowment becomes the glory of the spiritual Zion, for its "perfection of beauty" is the indwelling holiness of God, which is the perfectness of His uncreated glory and the harmony of His divine attributes. Out of this temple God shines.

The internal beauty of Zion depends upon the indwelling of the divine presence. The external beauty and perfection of Zion depend upon the manifestation of this divine indwelling.

We have, therefore, two thoughts, the internal and external perfection and beauty of Zion. These two thoughts will constitute the themes for our consideration.

I. First, the internal perfection and beauty of Zion. If God has a Church upon this earth, there is His dwelling-place. It is because of the indwelling of the divine presence that we have a Church.

God dwells in His Church by virtue of making each individual member of His body a "temple of the Holy Ghost." Only as God dwells in us individually is it possible for Him to dwell in His Church as a body.

The Church of Christ is the aggregate of holy living; the aggregate of simple faith; the aggregate of personal consecration; the aggregate of personal devotion to God and to our fellow men.

Calvary was the scene of the revelation of the law of Infinite Love; the birthplace of the Gospel. Through the crimson gates of the cross issued forth the glory of the whole earth, flinging its blessing of mercy and grace over the wide world, as the sun, sweeping through the portals of the east, flings its light abroad, driving darkness and night before the splendor of its presence. So rose the "Sun of Righteousness" over Calvary.

The prism of God's glory is the cross, and through it streams the light of God's love, mercy, and grace, falling in all their moral splendor upon the Church. This light of God's love resting upon and dwelling in the Church gives her the beauty of her perfection and glory.

The difference between saints and sinners is to be found in the difference with which they receive the light which God has "shined into them," and give back the indwelling glory of God. The Church of Christ is but a cluster of diamonds, a chandelier of many brilliant lights, Jesus' crown of precious stones.

II. The external beauty and perfection of Zion. The Church of the redeemed, depends upon the shining forth or manifestation of this indwelling presence of God.

This is the perfection and beauty of Zion. Christ's Church is not a dark lantern, but, as I have said, a chandelier with its lights trimmed and burning—a lighthouse. And what a responsibility this wonderful bequest to believers, this marvellous endowment of the Church, carries with it; It is an honor to keep a lighthouse, but an honor that has a responsibility about it. There is honor in wearing the insignia of the commander-in-chief of an army, but there is a responsibility attached to it. There is an honor in being a child of God, but how few thus honored realize as they ought the responsibility which attaches to an honor such as this.

It is the outshining of this indwelling divine presence that displays the beauty and perfection of the Church. God shines out of the Church as the sun shines out of the sky. Ninety-five millions of miles away it blazes. Into that wonderous orb of throbbing light and heat worlds like this might drop as snow-flakes fall into a lake. What a majestic world! What a symbol of the majesty of God! What a lesson of the omnipresence of God burns and flames on the forefront of that sun;

What an image, too, of the omnipotence of God that sun affords us as it hangs yonder!

The sun is the womb of power, the conservator of force.

Thus the sun may be an interpreter to us of the lessons of God's majesty, omnipresence and power. And then what an image, too, the sun is of the Christ.

Mount Zion, the joy of the whole earth! Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined: shined in the going forth of the power of His Holy Spirit.

My brother, are you personally clothed with the "perfection of beauty" with which the indwelling presence of Christ arrays the sons and daughters of God? If God thus dwells in His people, He dwells in His Church; for in this divine indwelling manifested through the living of His people, and the marvels of His grace, "God shines out of Zion."—Pulpit Treasury.

Beautiful Thoughts.

To do so no more is the truest repentance.—Luther.

What a folly to dread the thought of throwing away life at once, and yet have no regard to throwing it away by parcels and piecemeal.—John Howe.

Kind looks, kind words, kind acts, and warm hand-shakes—these are secondary means of grace when men are in trouble, and are fighting their unseen battles.—Dr. John Hall.

God hath made many sharp-cutting instruments and rough files for the polishing of His jewels; and those he especially loves and means to make the most resplendent He hath oftenest his tools upon.—Bishop Leighton.

Intercession should be definite and detailed. Vagueness is lifelessness. St. Paul besought the Romans to pray for him, and then told them exactly what he wanted—four definite petitions to be presented for him.—Francis Ridley Havergal.

It is impossible for that man to despair who remembers that his Helper is omnipotent.—Jeremy Taylor.

(In 1880, a prize of \$25.00 was offered for the "best set of rules for the practice of PROPORTIONATE GIVING." The Committee awarded the prize to the following set of rules and instructions.)

Proportionate Giving.

RULES AND INSTRUCTIONS TO AID IN THE PRACTICE OF PROPORTIONATE GIVING. PRIZE ESSAY, BY THE REV. F. A. HORTON, CLEVELAND, OHIO.

PRELIMINARY REMARKS.—It is assumed that we speak to beginners. To all such it may be helpful to know that many Christians are now practising proportionate giving. Especially is this true among the clergy. Many Christians have followed the practice for years with increasing joy and assurance of the divine approbation, and could not be induced to abandon it. This number is increasing. Nevertheless the great majority follow the haphazard, hand to mouth, thoughtless method. These rules are commended to the care-

ful attention and better judgment of all such. They have not a grain of theory in them. They aim at no novelties. They have been discussed over and over again in ministerial gatherings, church assemblies, and in print. They represent the very few tried and proven principles upon which all agree, with everything carefully pruned away that has been found to awaken opposition. Even these are not cast iron, but flexible; not magisterial; but ministerial; not a sheriff, but a guide.

Rule. I. Consecrate yourself perfectly to the Lord, with all you have and hope for.

Instruction. This rule stands first in order, and also in importance. Without it, nothing. It is the root of the whole matter. What the Decalogue is to all law, what the Lord's prayer is to all prayer, this rule is to all beneficence. For true beneficence is not the result of outward suction, but of inward impulse. Here is the motive power. This rule will secure a cool head, a fervid heart, and an honest administration. As we are about to do business with God, we must, above all things, be honest. Stop right here, then, until you see clearly the import of this rule and obey it.

Rule. II. Reckon yourself to be only a steward of the manifold grace of God.

Instruction. Christian stewardship is the outcome of consecration. The great end of life now is to glorify God. I am God's: then I must live to his glory. My time is God's: I must spend it to his glory. My money is God's: I must hold and use it to his glory. What is His will in me and mine must be my attitude. Selfishness rebels. Imperfect consecration quibbles. Step right here, then, and decide this point whether you hold your property in fee simple, and so are independent of God, or whether you are simply or solely the steward of the bounties that fill your hand and must give account of them to him.

Rule. III. Find out your net income in cash or its equivalent.

Instruction. As the steward of God, you have no right to remain in ignorance on this point. Here your consecration will find its first test. A man's income is his increase in worldly goods. His net income is that increase less than the cost of producing it. We shall give instances sufficient to illustrate this rule, although its simplicity is transparent. The laboring man, skilled or unskilled, measures his gross income by his day's wages, as a general rule. If there are other sources of income, they must be considered by themselves. He may deduct the cost of his tools, his car-fare to and from work, and whatever expense is made necessary by his calling. The balance will be his net income. So also with the salaried men, clerks, book-keepers, and the like. The mail carrier, whose route demands a horse and gig, the country clergyman whose parish requires horse and buggy, may deduct the interest on the investment annually from his gross income, as also cost of keeping and repairs. Sanctified common sense honestly will decide in all these matters. So, too, a professional man's books or instruments, or whatever he buys because of his profession, are to him what the plan is to the carpenter, and may be deducted from his gross income for the year when purchased. The same rule is of easy application to whoever derives his income from fees, perquisites and the like. But in all these there is ample opportunity to figure down one's net income until it is a mere shadow. Hence the value of Rules I. and II. The merchant will of course deduct store rent, clerk hire and so forth—all legitimate expenses. But increase allowed to remain in the business to augment capital or enlarge buildings, may not be deducted. If he owns his store, he may not deduct rent from his gross income, for the interest on the money thus invested if it had been otherwise placed, and which would then have been so much in come, equals the estimated rental. Therefore no account may be made of either. The capitalist may be very rich and yet have no cash income. His property may be tied up in unproductive real estate, so that he may have to borrow ordinary fortunes to pay his taxes. Yet the growth of the city makes him a richer man every day. His cash income is nothing, his increase is princely. Debt is a barrier behind which he may hide from all benevolent calls, saying, "I

am too good a business man to borrow money to give away." Literally it is the truth, really it is subterfuge. The same is true of the farmer who no sooner pays the debt off from one farm than he buys another. These glintings and glancings illustrate the rule, and show how impossible it is to find two cases precisely alike, or any one case precisely the same in any two years. A consecrated man who thinks and prays for guidance will not go far astray.

Rule. IV. Fix upon some definite percentage of your net income that shall be devoted to the Lord for the current year.

Instruction. Many go back to Abraham and hold that the tenth of income and the seventh of time belong to God as the minimum in both cases. Others who fail to see that the tenth of income is binding upon the New Testament church, do yet see in it something so venerable and so largely present in the Word of God, that they make it binding upon themselves, from year to year, as their voluntary percentage. Perhaps far more use this fraction than any other. Still, the tenth for one man might be a hundred times more in proportion than the tenth for another. And so the seventh of time may be a far greater sacrifice to an industrious poor man than to a rich idler. Yet it has its compensations in other ways. So here it is remarkable with what unanimity those who have long practiced giving one-tenth of net income declare that God has blessed them in it in temporal things. But some percentage should be adopted both to regulate our giving and also to restrain prodigality in giving, for we may go astray on both sides.

Rule. V. Conduct all these matters in a business-like way.

Instruction. Provide yourself with an account book. As a suitable opening of the account, write down your pledge, stating the percentage you intend to give during the year.

Then provide some purse, or box, or place of deposit, for the tithes as they accrue. This is best, because, if it is simply charged up, and no money actually laid aside, we may be caught with empty hands and a pressing charity presented, with no ability to respond. Men with bank accounts, of course can cheque off at will to the Lord's agents; but all men do not have deposits in bank. Keep the account neatly, refer to it often, and study its contents. Know thyself.

Rule VI. Take pains to inform yourself upon all the great works to which the Church has set its hand.

Instruction. Distribution needs to be conducted wisely, or the fruits of consecration may be wasted. Knowledge, too, will deepen interest, and this will enlarge one's sympathies and this will open one's eyes as to ability. For what we are very much interested in we will try and compass in some way.—Herald and Presbyterian.

The Christian Pastor.

What kind of a pastor does Christ expect you to be? He expects you to be an impartial pastor, regarding every man, woman, and child of your congregation as belonging to your dear people; never allowing difference in temperament, in social position, in manners, in education, in property, in character even, to create such difference in your attention and sympathy as to awaken suspicion of intentional neglect or intentional favoritism. He expects you to be a prudent pastor—prudent in the families of your charge, in the business meetings of the church, in the street and the store, prudent in plan, action, and speech. He expects you to be a praying pastor—praying for your people, not only in public and in private but, when circumstances do not prevent, in their families. He expects you to be a teaching pastor—teaching from house to house, as well as in the pulpit, that repentance and faith are indispensable conditions of salvation. He expects you to be a sympathetic pastor—quick to respond to the joys and the sorrows of your people, appropriating their sorrows and their joys as your own, resisting the tendency to official formality in the utterance of your sympathy, and condemning yourself whenever you detect the least approach to the insincerity which the frequent repetition of sympathizing forms of speech may begot.—N. M. Williams, D. D.

A full purse never lacks friends; but when an empty purse gets one, wear him next your heart, for he is stamped with a higher value than any coin that was ever minted.—J. Jackson Wray.

The Christian Messenger.

Bible Lessons for 1884.

FIRST QUARTER.

Lesson III.—JANUARY 20, 1884.

THE POWER OF THE TONGUE.

James iii. 1-18.

COMMIT TO MEMORY: Vs. 2-5.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."—Matt. xii. 37.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

M. The Heart Inspires the Tongue, Matt. xv. 11-20.
T. The Tongue an Index of the Heart, Isa. xxxiii. 6; Luke vi. 45.
W. What to Speak, Eph. iv. 25, 29, 31, 32.
T. How to Speak, Prov. xv. 1-7.
F. The Good and Evil Tongue Contrasted, Prov. x. 11-14, 18-21.
S. The Carnal Tongue, 1 Cor. iii. 1-7.
S. The Consecrated Tongue, Acts v. 20; xviii. 9, 10.

ANALYSIS.—I. Take Care of the Tongue, Vs. 1-5. II. Its Irrepressible Nature, Vs. 6-12. III. Wisdom in Using It, Vs. 13-18.

QUESTIONS.—What definition of pure religion is given? "To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world."

Vs. 1-5.—To what office are we not to aspire with selfish eagerness? Why? How should we be moved to be public teachers and preachers? Are men to go into the ministry simply as a profession? 1 Cor. ix. 16. Is there any one who is not liable to err? What does Paul say of his own human weakness? Acts xiv. 15. In what do we most easily stumble? Are things important according to their size? Is the tongue's boast of its power true?

Vs. 6-12.—What is the tongue called in verse 6? What does it inflame? What does it defile? By what is it set on fire? Can we tame other people's tongues? Why does it need taming? What kind of poison does it distil? What is the right use of the tongue? If the mouth is the opening for bitter water, what is the fountain? Give the illustration of verse 12.

Vs. 13-18.—How much wisdom is there in bitter speech? How much in meekness? Does zeal for a good cause offset bitterness in it? From whence comes the wisdom of meekness? Fire is a good servant, although a bad master. And the tongue on fire for Christ is a blessed thing. How much we need to offer the Psalmist's prayer: "Open thou my lips, that my mouth may speak forth thy praise."

The intervening chapter (the second) presents three special points: 1. A rebuke for having respect to persons, or treating the rich with partiality. 2. The law is a unit, and broken in one point, is broken as a whole. 3. Faith without works is dead. This is illustrated by the cases of Abraham, Rahab, and the connection between spirit and body. From this point the writer comes to speak of the power of the tongue, which is the subject of our lesson.

NOTES.—Vs. 1.—Masters. Teachers. The Jews, as keepers of the sacred oracles, were inclined to set themselves up as teachers of the Gentiles. Many of the Christian Jews partook of the same spirit. But were unfit for this work. The apostle bids them not to be eager to become teachers, for such a position was accompanied with great responsibility, and those that abused the office would receive the greater condemnation.

Vs. 2.—We offend all. We all offend, or stumble. Offend (stumble) not in word. A public teacher is especially tried in this respect. Perfect. In the sense of having himself under full control.

Vs. 3, 4.—The tongue, though little is like the little bits that, put in horses' mouths, control them; and like the little rudders that determine the course of the great vessels. Governor. Helmsman.

Vs. 5.—There is often great power in what seem little things, as is the case with the little tongue, which boasteth great things. Matter Margin, wood. Behold how much wood is kindled by how small a fire! The image in the writer's mind seems to be of a vast forest ablaze from a single spark.

Vs. 6.—A fire. Translate: the tongue—that word of iniquity—is a fire. It burns up the peace in a heart, or family, or society. It is a little world of evil in itself. All the evils in the world are concentrated in it. Defileth the whole body. Spots or blackens it, as fire first blackens the wood, and then consumes it. Setteth on fire the course (wheel) of nature. A wheel, kindled in revolving, is soon wrapped in flames. Our whole being is likened to this wheel, and being set on fire in any one place by the tongue, it is soon thoroughly ablaze.

Vs. 7, 8.—All kinds of beasts are and