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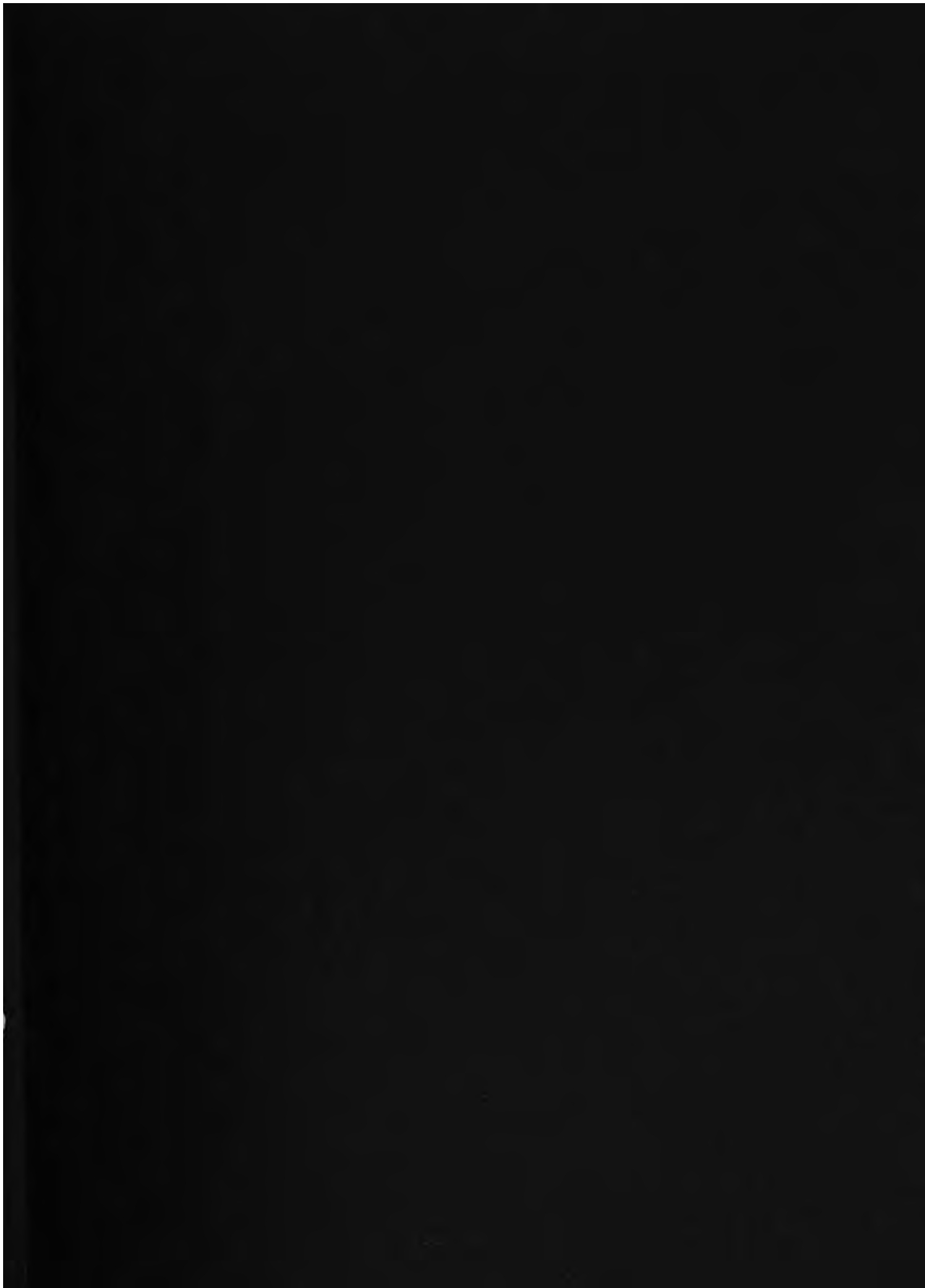
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SABBATH LESSONS
FROM
WESTMINSTER







SABBATH LESSONS

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SABBATH LESSONS

FROM

WESTMINSTER:

Meditations
on the
Assembly's Shorter Catechism
for
Sabbath Use.

BY THE

REV. JOHN SINCLAIR.

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Preface.

THE Shorter Catechism was compiled by the Assembly of Divines which sat at Westminster from 1643 to 1649. It has long been esteemed as an admirable summary of Christian truth, and as such has been used by man and blessed of God in the instruction of the young. In this work an attempt is made to unfold its meaning in such a way as to stimulate meditation and devotion. Inasmuch also as the Sabbath has been ordained of God as a special weekly season of worship, the Lessons have been so arranged as to afford means of reflection and devotion at the morning and evening hours of the Lord's Day throughout the year.

While therefore this work is primarily intended to be helpful to those who seek private communion with God, the Author trusts that it may also be useful to parents, Sabbath-school teachers, and others, who desire through the Catechism to instruct and train the young in the ways of heavenly wisdom.

May the God of truth and of salvation graciously vouchsafe His blessing on these pages, and to Him shall be all the glory.

J. S.

March 1886.



Outline of the Shorter Catechism.

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“The formula, which embodies a dogma for the theologian,
readily suggests an object for the worshipper.”

J. H. NEWMAN.

Lesson 1.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—1 CORINTH. x. 31, "WHATSOEVER YE DO, DO ALL TO THE GLORY OF GOD."

Question I. : What is Man's Chief End ?

Answer :
MAN'S CHIEF END
IS
TO GLORIFY GOD
AND
TO ENJOY HIM
FOR EVER.

ONLY from the Scriptures can we obtain a worthy or adequate answer to such a question as that before us. What is man's chief end? What design had God in man's creation? It is well for us to know; for what was God's design ought to be our desire, what was His end ought to be our aim. We brush aside all secondary purposes which man may serve, and ask, What end is highest, chiefest, greatest of all? "To glorify God, and to enjoy Him for ever." How can man glorify his Maker? Can he make Him more glorious than He essentially is? No; but man ought to aim at and manifest the glory of God. By reverence and confidence, by love and obedience, we should glorify God. In our thoughts and feelings, in our speech and conduct, we should glorify God. In daily life as well as in spiritual duties; in solitude as well as in society; in the shadow of adversity no less than in the sunshine of prosperity, we should glorify God. It should ever and in all things be our aim, our desire, our endeavour, to secure this great end. Can we say that this is really, actually, the bent of our lives? That it ought to be so, human nature, even in its ruined condition, plainly evinces. An ironclad, wrecked long years ago, lies amid the sea-weed and shells in the depths of the ocean. We can think of her engines

and propeller, her turret and cannon, her broad decks and stately cabins. Were they meant to lie there, covered with tangle and stones? No; wrecked though she be, we can see her chief end. So is it with man. Fallen though he be, we can see the end of his being—even to serve and glorify his Maker. To that great purpose grace can restore him; for only when reconciled in Christ, and renewed by His Spirit, can we do aught as we should to the glory and praise of God.

Moreover, it was part of the Creator's design that man should also "enjoy Him," and that "for ever." Being graciously willing that we should find in Him our "chiefest joy," He has made the thirst of our souls too great to be satisfied with anything else or less than Himself. When man lost God, the void was too vast for any creature to fill. Earth's waters are like the salt sea: they do but make our thirst more painful and fatal. But in this present life we may find in God's service a joy that is unspeakable; even though the sweetest seasons of gladness here are but an earnest of the unbroken and unending delights of heaven, like the birds of bright plumage which met Columbus on his way, to assure him of a sunny land not "very far off."

Mark well, that we must first glorify Him in order to enjoy Him. These two cannot be reversed in order or separated in experience. In proportion as we glorify Him, so shall we enjoy Him; till at last in heaven above, our service and our happiness shall be alike perfect and eternal. Through ages that shall crowd after one another without break or end, our natures shall be fully satisfied in God Himself. Let us ask, Do we here and now seek our happiness, not in self nor in sin nor in the world, but in God alone? Oh that from this day we may in singleness of eye be able to make the motto ours, "To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

Lesson 2.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—2 TIM. III. 16, "ALL SCRIPTURE IS GIVEN BY INSPIRATION OF GOD."

Question II.: What rule hath God given to direct us how we may glorify and enjoy Him ?

Answer :
THE WORD OF GOD
WHICH IS CONTAINED IN
THE SCRIPTURES OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS,
IS THE ONLY RULE TO DIRECT US
HOW WE MAY GLORIFY AND ENJOY HIM.

THE Word of God. This is a title which in its highest sense belongs to the Son of God alone. He is the living expression of God's character and will to men. Only as it sets forth this Word Incarnate, and speaks with His authority, does the Word written deserve the name. The Scriptures are the swaddling-clothes of the child Jesus, the field in which He, the priceless treasure, is to be sought and found. Out of relation to Him they are both meaningless and profitless.

The written Word contains richly varied materials, History and Poetry, Biography and Prophecy, Laws and Letters, in all of which we may see the local and temporal setting of the various parts, and the diverse characters and capacities of the human authors. Yet the Bible is a harmonious whole, complete within itself. As one has said, it is "not such a book as man would have made if he could, or could have made if he would." It is a revelation of God and of His will to our race, which the Holy Spirit taught, moved, and inspired holy men of God to commit to writing. He guided not only the intellect and the heart, but the tongue and the pen as well, of those whom He chose as His agents. Since the living and eternal Word is the centre and sum of all Scripture, and the Spirit its infallible author, its truth

and authority are divine and absolute, while its place and claims are alike lofty and unique.

Only by practical experience can the value of the Scriptures be realised. Let us open to their influence our whole natures, that they may accomplish in us their grand design. Are there truths? Let us believe them. Are there commands? Let us obey them. Are there warnings? Let us take heed to them. Are there promises? Let us trust them. Even if the Word prove fatal to our ease, or hostile to our inclinations, or humbling to our pride, still let us receive it willingly and practise it diligently. Let its effects on us be like those which it wrought on a rich and noble lady in days when its open circulation was forbidden on the continent of Europe. A pedler, after offering to her his rich silks and glittering pearls, persuaded her to accept a copy of the Scriptures. The following lines tell the issue:—

“The hoary traveller went his way, but the gift he left behind
Hath had its pure and perfect work on that high-born lady’s mind ;
And she hath turned from the pride of sin to the holiness of truth,
And hath given her contrite heart to God in the beautiful hours of youth.”

This Word of God is our “only rule.” We can allow nothing to supplant or compete with it in that capacity. It is all we need, for it is both plain and perfect. What better could we have than heaven’s lamp for earth’s journey, heaven’s sword for earth’s battles, heaven’s staff for earth’s last dark valley? How highly ought we to esteem and reverence this holy and heavenly Word! May we receive it with meekness, and hide it in our hearts. May it grow and be multiplied in us so that we shall reap from it the blessed fruits both of pardon and purity.

Lesson 3.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—PSALM CXIX. 18, "OPEN THOU MINE EYES THAT I MAY
BEHOLD WONDROUS THINGS OUT OF THY LAW."

Question III.: What do the Scriptures principally
teach?

Answer: THE SCRIPTURES
PRINCIPALLY TEACH
WHAT MAN IS TO BELIEVE CONCERNING GOD, AND
WHAT DUTY GOD REQUIRES OF MAN.

NATURE presents to us her volume; and it is both full and fair. Providence also is daily unfolding her pages to view as they open one by one. Yet neither nature nor providence do or can tell us enough of their God. Reason and conscience may lead us yet further in the search, yet it is only to dip our feet in the shallow ripples. All that these combined can tell us is as nothing to that which they leave undiscovered and unrevealed. The Word of God teaches us as none of these can.

Never is the chief end of the Scriptures forgotten or obscured in their pages. Whatever their variety or diversity, their main drift, that which they principally teach, is clear and plain. They teach man what to believe, setting before him the grand object of faith, even God Himself; and they teach man what to do, that is to say, what duty God requires of him. In the firmament of Scripture the sublimest truths shed their saving light, and

"The primal duties shine aloft like stars."

First, Scripture tells us what to believe; for there God has given to us a clear and full testimony regarding Himself. He has made known to men the full-orbed glory of His character as it never could be known unless so discovered; but brightest and richest of all is the revelation embodied in the person and

excellences and work of His Son, the "Word made flesh." All the Father shines in Him, as He is presented to our view in the four-fold portraiture of the Gospels.

Moreover, in His written Word, and in the Incarnate Word, God has revealed not only His character, but His will, His counsel and purposes regarding man's salvation. These are in themselves "secret things" which God has been pleased to make known. The "purpose of grace" from all eternity; the gift and mission of the Son of God as Surety for sinners; the pardon of sins, the renewal of the heart, a title and meetness for heaven; these and many similar displays of God's good will are discoveries which it is the function of Scripture to make, and of our faith to believe and accept. In the language of an Eastern proverb, man may well hold the skirts of his mantle wide when the heavens are raining such gold.

Again, the Scriptures teach "what duty God requires of man." Whether as by nature His creatures, or as by grace His children, there are duties which we owe to God. What these are, we are plainly and fully taught in his Word. Of all these instructions and counsels, it may be said to man—

"Before thine eyes Duty, a constant flame,
Shines always stedfast with unchanging light
In dark days and in bright."

The mutual relations of faith and duty are crystallized in Paul's phrase, "the obedience of faith." There is a fixed order of nature between them. It may be formulated thus: no faith, no obedience; first faith, then obedience; if faith, then obedience. Let us believe what God has revealed, and as a fruit of that faith, do what He has required. May He awaken in us keen spiritual appetite for His word, and make us so docile and obedient in spirit that we shall learn both to believe and obey as we should.

Lesson 4.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—JOHN IV. 24, “GOD IS A SPIRIT ; AND THEY THAT WORSHIP HIM MUST WORSHIP HIM IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH.”

Question IV. : What is God ?

Answer : GOD
 IS A SPIRIT,
 INFINITE, ETERNAL, AND UNCHANGEABLE,
 IN HIS BEING,
 WISDOM, POWER, HOLINESS, JUSTICE, GOODNESS, AND TRUTH.

“GOD is a Spirit.” So said He who was “God manifest,” who alone “knoweth the Father.” He is pure, absolute Spirit, uncreated and immortal. As Spirit, He is also Light and Love. How sincere, how spiritual, must be the worship and service due to such a Being !

There are three of God’s attributes which are incommunicable ; they cannot be shared by any creature. He is “infinite.” There are no bounds either to His Being or to His attributes. Though He is not everything, yet He is everywhere. As one has said, “His centre is everywhere, His circumference nowhere.” God is also “eternal ;” He is “from everlasting to everlasting.” Eternity, as a deaf and dumb boy once wrote, is “the lifetime of the Almighty.” He is “I AM,” “which was, and is, and is to come.” Again, God is “unchangeable.” He is “the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever,” in His nature and perfections. What God ever is, He always is : He remains immutably the same. These three declarations apply to the Supreme Being in His very essence ; they relate equally to the bright and glorious attributes which shine, as in a rainbow span, around His throne. The chief of these we are specially invited to note and admire.

His “Wisdom ” is to be adored. This is not mere knowledge,

not even omniscience. It is that wisdom which seeks the highest, the holiest ends, and uses the best, the most perfect means. It culminates in Christ who is the "Wisdom of God."

His "Power" is to be adored. It extends over all the world of nature, over the realms of light and darkness, over all the events of providence. Whatsoever He wills, that He can accomplish. The Son of God incarnate is the "Power of God."

His "Holiness" is to be adored. So perfect, so pure, so full is God's character, that holiness is His very glory. He cannot "look upon iniquity." When it lay as a burden on His own Son, a willing sufferer in man's room, God hid His face, and "dumb darkness" wrapt the surety in its folds.

His "Justice" is to be adored. He deals with evil and with good as they severally deserve: His balances are ever true. Where sin is, there must punishment follow. This was why the sword awoke against the shepherd, the sin-bearer, even though He was God's fellow.

His "Goodness" is to be adored. There is a trinity of perfection hidden under that sweet name. The everlasting, limitless love wherewith He hath loved man; the rich, tender, abundant mercy which delights to help the miserable; the free glorious grace toward the undeserving, which reigns over all God's saving dealings with the guilty; all these are embraced in that goodness which "endureth for ever."

His "Truth" is to be adored. It embraces all that is of real and permanent value to men, as set forth in precept and prophecy and promise, and embodied in Him who said "I am the Truth." Faithfulness is the girdle of God's loins: He will never suffer it to be torn away.

In Christ and Him crucified all these perfections are displayed, harmonized, glorified. Oh for a mind to apprehend, and a will to choose, and a heart to love, and a conscience to adore, a God so great, so good, so glorious!

Lesson 5.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—1 CORINTH. VIII. 4, "THERE IS NONE OTHER GOD BUT ONE."

Question V. : Are there more Gods than one ?

Answer : THERE IS BUT ONE ONLY,
 THE LIVING AND TRUE GOD.

THERE is but one God. This is no mere matter of number, as if we should say, There is no other, no second, no third, no more. That is true, but is not all the truth. God is essentially and absolutely alone. In being and nature He is such that there cannot be any other. As to His pure essence and holy perfections, God is solitary. We may think of some lofty mountain pressing its lone peak far up into the snowy clouds with no equal or rival ; yet around its base may be clustered heights which, though molehills in comparison, are of the genus mountain after all. Not so is it with God's oneness and aloneness. In the strict sense no one and nothing can share either name or nature with Him. There are great attributes in God which He can communicate to no other, and which, because they belong to Him, no other can possess.

To us who believe that there are three Persons in the Godhead, there are few truths which we find harder to apprehend practically than the absolute unity of God. Even the coming and work of the Saviour and the mission and operations of the Spirit, both of which are distinguished in Scripture from the actings of the Father, tend to drive our finite and feeble minds into conceptions of a triple Godhead. Yet we must pursue and hold fast this great truth that God is one. Jesus came to earth to die, yet was, and ever is, in the bosom of the Father. The Holy Spirit proceedeth from the Father and from the Son, yet cannot

in substance be separated from either. Let faith accept the twin truths that the One is Three, and yet the Three are but One.

This one God is the "living" God. He lives in and of Himself; He is self-existent. He giveth life to all; and the life which He bestows He sustains so long as He pleases, and can recall when He sees meet. He "quickeneth" all things—the face of nature, the lower creatures, the dead soul of man. What a contrast is this to the idols of heathendom. Of these, a letter, attributed by tradition to one of the ancient prophets, gives this graphic picture:—"They cannot save themselves from rust and moths, though clad in purple; and men have to wipe the dust off their faces. The doors need locks and bars to keep such gods safe; and though the lamps are lit for them, they cannot see. Their faces are blackened with smoke, and the bats and swallows sit on their bodies and heads." Such are dead idols; but the one God liveth, and liveth for ever.

Once more. This one God is the "true" God. All others are no gods, false gods. They are lifeless objects or empty names. What are the sun and moon, Nile and Ganges, ox and lion? Creatures lower than man himself, and no more. What are Jupiter and Mercury, Dagon and Diana? Empty names, not even creatures of God, but only of man's imagination. Surely we at least need no burnt sacrifice on Carmel to convince us that "the Lord, He is God; the Lord, He is God."

Jean Paul Richter, "the unique" German genius, has said, "No one in creation is so alone as the denier of God. He mourns with an orphaned heart." Let us ask our own conscience, Is this one living and true God our God? Do we love Him? Do we serve Him? If we know Him as a "God in Christ," then may we claim Him as "Our Father which art in heaven."

Lesson 6.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—MATT. XXVIII. 19, “GO YE THEREFORE, AND TEACH ALL NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE HOLY GHOST.”

Question VI.: How many Persons are there in the Godhead ?

Answer : THERE ARE THREE PERSONS IN THE GODHEAD ,
THE FATHER,
THE SON, AND
THE HOLY GHOST,
AND THESE THREE ARE ONE GOD,
THE SAME IN SUBSTANCE,
EQUAL IN POWER AND GLORY.

AS this Day of Rest draws near its close, let us each one, as Leighton says, hear this voice of God in our ears, “My Son, return inwardly to thyself, abstract thyself from all things, and mind Me only.” We cannot know too much of Him whose day this is, and whose children by grace we profess to be.

There is in the Godhead a Trinity, not of essence, but of persons. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost have properties which distinguish them, each from the other two. The Father is “of none,” but the Son is begotten of Him, and the Spirit proceedeth from Him. The Son is “of the Father,” begotten from all eternity, and from Him also the Spirit proceedeth. The Spirit is “of the Father” and “of the Son,” proceeding equally from both. The same nature, attributes, and acts, are in Scripture ascribed to each ; and to each equal service and homage are due.

In redemption these distinctions in the Godhead also appear. There are certain acts ascribed specially to the Father ; others to the Son ; others again to the Holy Ghost. What are these ?

To God the Father is assigned the *Authorship* of redemption. His wisdom conceived the great plan. As one has expressed it, when the law which said "Thou shalt love," had failed because of man's sin, love ordained a gospel of which the key-note was "God so loved." Freely, graciously, God gave and sent His Son. In so doing, even divine love has gone to its uttermost. In giving Christ, the Father gave the brightest jewel in heaven, better than all heaven besides; for He had no other Son, no better Christ to bestow.

To God the Son is assigned the *Accomplishment* of salvation. As the Father gave His Son, so did the Son, in wondrous grace, give Himself to be the Saviour. We see that grace and its gift in His cradle, when He became man. We see them yet more gloriously in His cross, when He died for man. That holy body pained and pierced, bruised and broken, for us! That reasonable soul weighed with sorrow and wrung with anguish for us! That precious life surrendered and quenched in darkness for us! We may know that grace and praise Him for it; but who shall tell its mighty measure?

To God the Holy Ghost is assigned the *Application* of redemption. By His divine energy He applies to us the blessings of salvation, enlightening, convincing, comforting, sanctifying the souls of men. In the far north is a giant mountain, named Suilven, from which on all sides trickling streams flow down. From one side it appears a magnificent cone; from another, it is seen to be divided into three great peaks. There is unity in trinity, and trinity in unity. From the one great cone, and yet from the parted peaks, the living waters flow. Faint image of the Godhead; One yet Three, Three yet One; the fountain of living waters! Can we claim this Three-One God as ours? Only by faith can we call God Father; only by faith can we accept Jesus as Lord; only by faith on our part can the Spirit apply to us the benefits of redemption.

Lesson 7.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—EPHES. I. 11, "THE PURPOSE OF HIM WHO WORKETH ALL THINGS AFTER THE COUNSEL OF HIS OWN WILL."

Question VII.: What are the decrees of God?

Answer: THE DECREES OF GOD ARE
HIS ETERNAL PURPOSE
ACCORDING TO THE COUNSEL OF HIS WILL
WHEREBY FOR HIS OWN GLORY
HE HATH FORE-ORDAINED
WHATSOEVER COMES TO PASS.

THIS is a theme which under any and every system of Theology presents many and grave difficulties. From their very nature, God's purposes cannot be fully comprehended by man; and it is doubtful whether even with a fuller revelation and greatly increased capacities, finite minds shall ever adequately understand or appreciate them.

The decrees of God are "His eternal purpose." From all eternity God formed one grand comprehensive plan respecting all His creatures and all His dealings with them, a plan which embraces all things that ever have been, or now are, or ever shall be, whether good or evil. All separate decrees affecting details are parts of the one great purpose.

This purpose is "according to the counsel of His will." It is, in its origin and nature, free, sovereign, spontaneous, on the part of God. All that He does is the issue of calm and conscious intention. By the use of the word "counsel," we understand that God's will did not and does not act without the alliance of His unerring intelligence. All that He ordains and determines is approved by His supreme wisdom.

What was the chief end of His purpose? It was "for His

own glory ;” that is, it was in order to a full exercise and display of His perfections. In its design, in its execution, in its results, in its every detail, the glory of God is displayed.

What form does this purpose assume? “He hath fore-ordained.” He not only foresaw from all eternity, but did moreover, in His wisdom and sovereignty, determine the coming and sequence and circumstances of all that ever has been or ever shall be. That solemn truth is taught in Scripture, but we must set around it others which are its fitting framework. For example, God is not the author of sin.

“God without sin willed sin to be,
Yet will to sin is sin in me.”

We will to sin, that is, to commit sin, which very will is itself sin. God “willed sin to be,” that is, permitted it, which He could do and yet be blameless. Nor is God’s purpose inconsistent with man’s free will. God respects that high prerogative which He has bestowed on man, and has done and will do nothing to fetter its exercise, or tamper with its freedom.

A wandering bee in the early summer enters a greenhouse. With noisy hum he sails from flower to flower and steals the honey from their folds. At length, laden with treasure, he goes to seek his home. But what does he do? Again and again he dashes wildly, fretfully, against the glass, till he falls down baffled and exhausted. Poor insect! we pity him. We see the door ajar, and open spaces among the sashes by which he might escape. So is it with us. We dash our heads against strange truths when God sees an open way out of all their perplexities.

“Be still,
And keep thy soul’s large window pure,
That so, as life’s appointment issueth,
Thy vision may be clear.”

Lesson 8.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—REV. IV. 11, “THOU HAST CREATED ALL THINGS; AND FOR THY PLEASURE THEY ARE AND WERE CREATED.”

Question VIII.: How doth God execute His decrees?

Answer: GOD EXECUTETH HIS DECREES
IN THE WORKS OF
CREATION AND PROVIDENCE.

THIS statement is in the present tense. God has not “executed” His decrees, for His world-programme is yet far from accomplished; nor can we say simply that He “will execute” them, for the work is not all in the future; much has been already done. He “executeth” His decrees. It is a continuous, habitual, present work—long since begun, now in progress, going on to completion. No better lesson can any of us learn than to see God’s hand in every step and bend of His earthly course as well as in the history of nations and the world.

In “creation” first of all, has God executed one of His grand decrees. It includes all and everything outside of God Himself. The whole universe, of which our planet is a tiny member; the world itself with all that it contains; the living creatures of earth and sea and sky; and man, the crown and king of them all; in these has God displayed His creative wisdom, power, and goodness. Respecting the beautiful works of nature let the simple prayer be ours—

“Thou who hast giv’n me eyes to see
And love a world so fair,
Give me a heart to find out Thee
And read Thee everywhere.”

In “providence” also, a field of boundless magnitude, doth God execute His decrees. From the convulsions of a mighty

earthquake rending the earth and shaking the sky, to the fall of a feeble sparrow or quivering leaf; from the revolutions which overturn thrones and wreck empires, to a slip of the foot or the breaking of a child's toy, all things are under His direct and absolute control. He so orders everything as to subserve the ends of His grand purpose. How beautifully has one spoken of our world and its destiny. "Earth, thou grain of sand on the shore of the universe of God, thou Bethlehem among the princely cities of the heavens, thou art and remainest the loved one among ten thousand suns and worlds, the chosen of God. Thee will He again visit, and then thou wilt prepare for Him a throne as thou didst prepare a manger cradle. In His radiant glory wilt thou rejoice, as thou didst once drink His blood and His tears and mourn His death. On thee hath the Lord a great work yet to accomplish."

No power in the universe can alter or hinder God's purposes. They are like Himself, "eternal" and "unchangeable."

"The scoffer may scoff at Jehovah's decree,
And the sceptic may write that it never shall be;
But the finger of time on its dial may stop
Ere one promise prove false or one prophecy drop."

May we this Sabbath evening humble ourselves under His mighty hand; may we invoke His care and protection; and may our hearts be ever filled with gratitude for the past and confidence for the future. May we have daily grace to glorify Him, in whose hand our breath is and whose are all our ways.

Lesson 9.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—HEBREWS XI. 3, "THE WORLDS WERE FRAMED BY THE WORD OF GOD, SO THAT THINGS WHICH ARE SEEN WERE NOT MADE OF THINGS WHICH DO APPEAR."

Question IX. : What is the work of creation ?

Answer : THE WORK OF CREATION IS
GOD'S MAKING ALL THINGS OF NOTHING,
BY THE WORD OF HIS POWER,
IN THE SPACE OF SIX DAYS,
AND ALL VERY GOOD.

THIS morning's dawn reminds us of God's holy rest after the work of creation was completed. He invites us to share His rest. Withdrawn from the feverish, anxious work of the week, may we seek communion with Him. May He accomplish His work of new creation in us, then rest in His love, and give us also to taste of a Sabbath bliss and calm. So shall we with Herbert say of this day—

"The couch of time, care's balm and bay ;
The week were dark but for thy light,
Thy torch doth light the way."

"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." These words at the opening of Genesis tell us of the primary and fundamental exercise of creative power in its pure and immediate form. From the next verse we learn that the fruit of this first great "making out of nothing" was the raw material of the universe, the elementary essences of all things in a formless mass. Then followed a series of operations to which the term "creative adjustments" has been applied. These are, the separation of light from darkness ; the parting of waters above and below the expanse of heaven ; the severance of earth and seas, with the beginnings of vegetable life ; the appearance of the heavenly bodies, especially the sun and moon ; the advent of living creatures

to inhabit the sea and air ; then of land animals to stock the earth, and finally, the creation of man in God's own image, as the climax and crown of all His works. Thus we find a grand primal exercise of pure creative energy, then a series of processes by which things were formed and fitted to their varied ends, and these again crowned by fresh creative acts when animal life is called into being, and man, the vicegerent of God, appears upon the scene of his future history. Then the work of creation ceases and the Creator rests.

God made all things "by the word of His power." Again and again we have, "Let there be," "Let the earth," "Let the waters," and in the creation of man the still more special and personal utterance, "Let us make." Thus by His word, and in the highest sense, by Him who is THE WORD, does the power of God go forth.

"In the space of six days." In Scripture, "day" frequently means, not a narrow span of twenty-four hours, but a period more or less prolonged. So here, the repetition of the word six times over implies that God wrought in graduated processes, by successive stages, such as are familiarly marked by the dawn and decline of the day. Step by step, in an order befitting His calm and conscious might, did God create the world ; and when the work was done, rested on the seventh day.

"And all very good." Even while He was yet busy, the Creator saw that all things, being perfect in their nature, were adapted to the ends for which they were made ; and now, when the work is over, His eye rests with holy satisfaction on what He has done. Surely He who gave to man the capacity to love the beautiful must Himself have taken delight in the fair and faultless works of His hands. More glorious still is the new creation of the soul. What a jubilee of joy when in all the saints it is perfected for ever ! Then shall come an eternal Sabbath of rest.

Lesson 10.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—GENESIS I. 27, “GOD CREATED MAN IN HIS OWN IMAGE; IN THE IMAGE OF GOD CREATED HE HIM; MALE AND FEMALE CREATED HE THEM.”

Question X.: How did God create man?

ANSWER: GOD CREATED MAN MALE AND FEMALE,
AFTER HIS OWN IMAGE,
IN KNOWLEDGE, RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND HOLINESS,
WITH DOMINION OVER THE CREATURES.

MAN'S origin is at once lowly and lofty. As to his material nature, one has truly said, “God first made clay out of nothing, and then made man out of that clay.” So frail are our earthly tabernacles, that so soon as we begin to live we begin to die. Of each one of us is the solemn dictum true—“Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return.”

The words before us relate to other aspects of man's creation. There is first the distinction of sex, for God made man “male and female.” Adam was first created, then Eve. He was formed out of the dust of the ground; she, out of a rib from man's side. Very quaintly does an old writer say that Eve was not created out of Adam's “head to rule over him, nor out of his feet to be trampled upon by him, but out of his side to be equal with him, under his arm to be protected, and near his heart to be beloved.”

“After His own image” did God create Adam. Man's essential nature is, like that of his Maker, personal and spiritual; and God has given to him in reason a power, and in free-will a privilege, like to perfections of His own. This is primarily, fundamentally, the image of God; then follow the attributes belonging to man in his state of innocence.

“In knowledge, righteousness, and holiness.” On the walls of a philosophy class-room were written the words, “The greatest thing in the world is man; and the greatest thing in man is mind.” With this then does the statement begin. Knowledge in man made him like to the only wise God. Then follow qualities of the will and affections. Righteousness in man was akin to the same perfection in God; and holiness in man was a reflection of the spotless purity of his Maker. Being thus innocent, man enjoyed unclouded communion with God, and in that communion found pure happiness.

“With dominion over the creatures.” God advanced His new-born creature, man, to royal dignity, making him vicegerent over all nature. Communion with God was his blessed privilege; dominion over the creatures his kingly prerogative. His superiority to the other creatures in the spiritual and moral image of God was the natural basis of that world-wide dominion which the Governor of all bestowed upon him.

What is man's condition now? Through sin he has lost the fair image of God, of which as to his moral nature only faint traces now remain. In place of knowledge, righteousness, and holiness, there are ignorance, guilt, and impurity. Man has failed to realise his high ideal, and has forfeited his supremacy over the creatures. But God's plans shall not miscarry; rather is there a way opened for their perfect development. In the perfect man Christ Jesus is humanity restored; and in Him shall its possibilities be realised. Already the God-Man is seated on the throne; and ere long all His enemies shall be made His footstool. What we need is vital, conscious, union to Him; then shall we be renewed in the image and restored to the favour of God. In His safe and happy keeping we shall find the truth of the words, “The Creator's hand is the creature's home.”

Lesson 11.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—ISAIAH XXVIII. 29, "THE LORD OF HOSTS, WHICH IS
WONDERFUL IN COUNSEL AND EXCELLENT IN WORKING."

Question XI.: What are God's works of providence ?

Answer : GOD'S WORKS OF PROVIDENCE ARE
 HIS MOST HOLY, WISE, AND POWERFUL
 PRESERVING AND GOVERNING
 ALL HIS CREATURES
 AND ALL THEIR ACTIONS.

IN creation God began the execution of His eternal purpose ; in providence He carries it forward to final completion. Yet in His dealings with men there is much that is dark and mysterious to us. A noted preacher uses this illustration. Walking along a rough farm road, he observed a pretty caterpillar in one of the deep ruts which the wheels had made. Just then he heard a lumbering cart behind, which he knew must crush the helpless worm in a moment. To save its life he raised the little creature with his staff and tossed it out of the track. Might not the caterpillar complain, "Why disturb me thus, and throw me out of my course ?" Poor creature ! it could know no better ; yet the deed was wisely and kindly done. Little better is man able to understand or criticise the inscrutable ways of God.

Yet what comfort we possess. His power in providence is almighty, but it is neither capricious nor malevolent. It is "holy" and "wise" in its exercise. God's ends are ever the best, for they are on the side of holiness ; and His means and methods are ever the wisest, for they are perfectly adapted to the attainment of His designs. "He doeth all things well."

“ I know that all thy full designs are bright,
That darkest threads grow golden in thy hand,
That bending lines grow straight, the tangled right,
The bitter drops all sweet, at Thy command.”

God's works of providence are “preserving” and “governing.” He upholds the whole framework and constitution both of nature and of society. Not for an instant nor from the smallest detail is His hand withdrawn. And as He guards, so also He governs. He rules the world of nature and all His creatures by laws suitable to the natures He has given them. The whole history of redemption, as part of His eternal purpose, is embraced in the providence of God, for in its wide fields grace exercises her imperial sway in working out the divine plan of the world. In this connection we cannot forget that providence has a distinct and peculiar relation to the Church of God. His redeemed ones are the objects of His special care, for whose highest good He makes “all things” to “work together.” Amid the troubles and worries of life, the Christian may well be both calm and confident. Why should God care, and he care as well? The future may bring suffering or sorrow; but what a solace if we can sing—

“ I have nothing to do with to-morrow,
Its burdens then why should I share?
Its grace and its strength I can't borrow,
Then why should I borrow its care?”

The Arabs say, “All sunshine makes a desert.” If our way be dark and toilsome, the rest will be blessed and eternal. If we must say, like Rutherford, “Oh the windings, the turnings, the ups and downs, He hath led me through, and I see yet much way to the ford,” we shall understand all when the Lion of the tribe of Judah opens the sealed book of providence and justifies the ways of God to men.

Lesson 12.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—GAL. III. 12, “THE LAW IS NOT OF FAITH ; BUT, THE
MAN THAT DOETH THEM SHALL LIVE IN THEM.”

Question XII.: What special act of providence did
God exercise toward man in the estate wherein
he was created ?

Answer : WHEN GOD HAD CREATED MAN,
 HE ENTERED INTO A COVENANT OF LIFE WITH HIM,
 UPON CONDITION OF PERFECT OBEDIENCE,
FORBIDDING HIM TO EAT OF THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF
 GOOD AND EVIL,
 UPON THE PAIN OF DEATH.

GOD made “a covenant,” or express agreement, with man in his innocence. By the law written in his heart, Adam was bound to be righteous and holy ; but in the covenant God was pleased definitely to require of man absolute obedience to His will, and in doing so He Himself came under certain obligations and promises. There was something to be done on man’s side, and something to follow on the part of God, in other words, there was the making of “a covenant” between them.

Though as to its condition it was a covenant of works, yet as to its end it was “a covenant of life.” If man should obey, then he was promised not only a continuance of the Divine favour and fellowship, but the permanence of these hallowed relations between him and his Maker, even a life which should be eternal. For himself and for his posterity, this should be the happy issue of Adam’s loyalty to the covenant.

Such was the promise ; on what did it depend ? “Upon condition of perfect obedience.” This was a natural and just claim on God’s part from one of His intelligent creatures. Man’s

obedience must be entire, without defect or flaw ; it must be constant, without break or end ; it must be hearty, that is, not cheerful and willing merely, but the spontaneous expression of loyalty in the soul. In short, it must be perfect, as God would have man himself to remain. Many years ago, a gentleman laid claim to a beautiful property in the Highlands. The chain of descent which he presented was marvellously full and exact, but it was not perfect. There was a single break in the pedigree ; one life, one link, wanting. That defect marred all, and the claim utterly broke down. So with the obedience man owes to God. "He that offendeth in one point is guilty of all."

As a clear, fair, and simple test, God forbade Adam "to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." The issue would be a distinct indication of the state of his heart toward the declared will of God as such. If he obey, then life is his ; if he disobey, then that life is forfeited, and the penalty becomes due.

What then was the penalty ? "Upon the pain of death." Pain here means, not suffering, but punishment as threatened or executed. Death temporal, death spiritual, death eternal ; these and no less were the appointed penalty. To have body and soul parted from one another ; sadder still, to have the soul parted from God, losing His favour and communion ; worst of all, to have that condition of estrangement and condemnation made permanent, made eternal ; such was the dire alternative set before man.

An anxious inquirer was once asked, "Does your conscience say *Amen* to the curse of the broken law ?" It was a severe and searching but profound question. Do we recognise the justice of our condemnation as sinners ? Only as we do so, shall we value Christ and His salvation.

Lesson 13.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—ROMANS V. 12, “BY ONE MAN SIN ENTERED INTO THE WORLD, AND DEATH BY SIN.”

Question XIII.: Did our first parents continue in the estate wherein they were created ?

Answer : OUR FIRST PARENTS
 BEING LEFT TO THE FREEDOM OF THEIR OWN WILL,
 FELL FROM THE ESTATE IN WHICH THEY WERE CREATED
 BY SINNING AGAINST GOD.

WHEN put to the test, man failed to obey, and so broke the covenant. Both our first parents were concerned in this great disaster. Paul tells us that woman must be a learner and not a teacher for two reasons, namely, that she was second in point of creation, and that she was first in point of transgression. The serpent deceived Eve and she ate ; Eve became the vehicle of the serpent's deception to Adam and he ate. Thus did they together sin and fall. When God issued His sentence, it was pronounced first against the serpent, then against Eve, and lastly, against Adam.

Our first parents were “left to the freedom of their own will ;” so that they could not escape responsibility for the sin. Free will is a lofty, but at the same time a very solemn, privilege. God will bring no undue pressure to bear on man. He may command or persuade, but He will not in anything nor at any time compel or coerce. God gave to man this noble gift—absolute freedom of will—and then stood aside, “left” them, so that its exercise might be entirely spontaneous—

“I made him just and right,
Sufficient to have stood though free to fall.”

Even upon us now, though our wills be depraved by sin, God will

exert no force inconsistent with our freedom. In the gospel offer, He commands, invites, entreats men to accept of salvation, but He will thrust it upon no one. We may refuse if we please ; but we do so at our peril. So is it also with the children of God. "This is the will of God, even your sanctification ;" but if it be not also your will to be holy, He will not use you as dead matter, and drive you into harmony with His design.

The evil use of his freedom made by man was "sinning against God." With Him the covenant was made ; to Him the obedience was due ; by Him the test was applied ; therefore the deed was sin, and it was sin against God. Whether we regard the sin as sensuousness, to which the fruit of the tree appealed ; or selfishness, to which the proud prospect of equality with God at least on one point was attractive—still the offence was committed specially against God. Only in this solemn light can we realise the exceeding sinfulness of any sin. Evil consequences to ourselves or to others are sad indeed, but they are as nothing when we see the enormity of sin as David did when he cried, "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned."

We have here man's "forsaking of God," which is a main aspect of sin. We shall see, by and by, God's "forsaking of man," which is a chief element of punishment. Where the one is, there shall the other follow, as effect upon cause.

How fitting on this Sabbath morning to remember our fallen state, that we may prize the more highly, and welcome the more cordially, the glad tidings of salvation. From the high estate of innocence in which he was created, man has fallen. From the noble destiny to which by obedience he might have attained, man has fallen. From what a height of honour, to what a depth of shame, has man sunken by his sin ! "Out of the depths have I cried unto Thee, O Lord."

Lesson 14.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—1 JOHN III. 4, "WHOSOEVER COMMITTETH SIN TRANSGRESSETH ALSO THE LAW; FOR SIN IS THE TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW."

Question XIV.: What is sin?

Answer: SIN IS
ANY WANT OF CONFORMITY UNTO,
OR TRANSGRESSION OF,
THE LAW OF GOD.

SIN is, in an important sense, only an accident of human nature, not an original or necessary element in man as a creature of God. It may be separated from him, and he from it. Like the slime and shells which defile the ship below her water mark, like the foulness which obstructs the smooth motion of machinery, like the ills and sores with which the body may be afflicted, sin is an evil from which we cannot too soon seek and find deliverance.

From the word of God we obtain our only full and true views of sin. Two aspects of moral evil are prominent in Scripture. Sometimes it is spoken of as "unrighteousness"—more frequently as "sin" or "transgression." These epithets are related yet distinct. The former is contrasted with right in its abstract form, the latter with right in its concrete form, that is, the law of God. That law as written in the heart, as graven on the tables of stone, as amplified all through Scripture, is a reflection of God's character and an expression of His will. By that rule and standard we must be tested now and judged hereafter.

Sin is disagreement on the part of man with the divine law. Two forms of sin are here noted. If we ask, What does God's law require? and find that we have failed to perform, then there is omission, or want of conformity. If we ask, What does God's

law forbid? and find that we have done it, then there is commission or actual transgression. The test may be applied to man's inward state, as well as to his thoughts, words, and actions. Are our hearts, our natures, right with God? Are the workings of our minds, always and in everything, in harmony with His law? Are the daily utterances of our lips such as He can approve? Are our actions such as will square with the law's requirements? When we press these questions home and seek carefully and prayerfully to know the truth, we make, under the Spirit's teaching, great discoveries regarding both the law and sin. The former we find to be broad, and searching, and spiritual as we never dreamt it to be. It probes us deeply; it strips us of our self-righteousness; it casts down the Dagon idol of our pride; it shows us that in ourselves there is no help or hope whatever. The latter, that is, sin, becomes exceeding sinful. We see its evil nature; we feel its despotic power; we blush because of its baseness; we tremble at its doom. It has become part, aye, even the ruling part, of our natures. It lurks in every chamber of the soul; it crawls forth in all our outward activity.

Jesus only can break the power of sin, wash away its guilt, destroy its love, and at last sever it and us for ever.

Ah! Lord, the cruel burden
Of right belongs to me,
Of my misdeeds the guerdon
Hath all been laid on Thee.
I cast me down before Thee,
Wrath were my rightful lot,
Yet hear me, I implore Thee;
Redeemer, spurn me not.

Lesson 15.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—ROMANS V. 17, "BY ONE MAN'S OFFENCE DEATH
REIGNED BY ONE."

Question XV.: What was the sin whereby our first
parents fell from the estate wherein they
were created?

Answer :

THE SIN

WHEREBY OUR FIRST PARENTS FELL FROM THE ESTATE

WHEREIN THEY WERE CREATED

WAS THEIR EATING THE FORBIDDEN FRUIT.

A GAIN we are invited to spend a day with God. He hath commanded rest that we might the better enjoy the privilege of worship. May this Sabbath be a day of grace, a day of growth, a day of gladness, to our souls. May our present meditation increase our hatred of sin, and at the same time stimulate our endeavours after holiness.

Our theme to-day is that of Milton's immortal poem, the "Paradise Lost." It speaks

"Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
Brought death into the world and all our woes,
With loss of Eden."

What was the transgression by which our first parents fell? It was "their eating the forbidden fruit." It was God's appointment and command which made the trial what it was; and it was good that the test should hang on His expressed will alone. To eat was forbidden; that should have been enough. Yet they ate, and in eating sinned, and in sinning fell.

It is worthy of notice that the temptation as presented by Satan wears a threefold aspect of which Scripture elsewhere

speaks. There is first "the lust of the flesh," for the woman saw that "the tree was good for food." There is next "the lust of the eye," for the tree was "pleasant to the eyes." There was also "the pride of life," for the fruit was to be desired "to make one wise." Satan, with all the natural influence of a stronger over a weaker will, used all these weapons skilfully and prevailed. Only when he confronted the Perfect Man, Christ Jesus, in the wilderness, using the same baits in other forms, was he foiled and routed again and again.

There was both unbelief and disobedience in their sin. First of all, they believed Satan and made God a liar. It was the beginning of an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the "living God." Moreover, they deliberately, wickedly, disobeyed God's command, setting up their own will as a law against His. As by unbelief man departed from God, so by simple faith must we return.

This sin, with its consequences, God permitted, "having purposed to order it to His own glory." He has made it the occasion of marvellous displays of grace. Augustine, recognizing in this case, as in so many others, how God can turn evil into good, boldly called Adam's sin *Beata Culpa*, a blessed fault. Another has in homely fashion expressed the same idea—

" What Adam did amiss
Turned to our endless bliss.
Oh happy sin ! which to atone
Drew filial God to leave His throne."

By nature we are all in the first Adam, and are under condemnation ; only by grace shall we be found in the Second, the Lord from heaven, and be in Him forgiven and accepted.

Lesson 16.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—ROMANS V. 18, “BY THE OFFENCE OF ONE, JUDGMENT
CAME UPON ALL MEN TO CONDEMNATION.”

Question XVI.: Did all mankind fall in Adam's first
transgression ?

Answer: THE COVENANT BEING MADE WITH ADAM
NOT ONLY FOR HIMSELF BUT FOR HIS POSTERITY,
ALL MANKIND DESCENDING FROM HIM BY ORDINARY GENERATION
SINNED IN HIM AND
FELL WITH HIM
IN HIS FIRST TRANSGRESSION.

THE sin of Adam was both displeasing to God and ruinous to himself. He incurred God's wrath and lost Paradise. Moreover, as our sins are like wedges cut out of the tree to split it up, his transgression introduced disorder and ruin into his own nature.

But the mischief did not, could not, end there. Being our first father, the natural root of all mankind, God dealt with him as the federal head of his race. The consequences being what they were, the natural heart rebels against this arrangement. If for himself and us Adam had maintained his innocence, perhaps no such objection would have been raised. Moreover, let us look at facts as we see them all around us. Through the solidarity of our race, and the close bonds which link us one to another, all of us suffer through faults which are not our own, and make others suffer through misdeeds of ours. Yet mankind utter no protest of general injustice in such an experience. Above all, we cannot object to the principle of the Headship of one for many, if we prize the truth of Christ's substitution for sinners. If we mourn

over the disobedience of the first Adam, we are invited to rejoice in the obedience, even unto death, of the second Adam acting on our behalf.

As Levi, not yet born, was accounted to have paid tithes in Abraham his father, to the Priest-king Melchisedek, so we federally and virtually sinned in Adam's sin, and fell in Adam's fall. We are not personally guilty of the express sin which he committed, but since he acted as a public person, we are legally involved in his transgression and its consequences. We have said "we," speaking of the race, but there is one notable exception, whose case is provided for in the words, "by ordinary generation." The man Christ Jesus was unique in His birth, for as to His human nature He was "without father." He became man, yet stood alone, and did not inherit either the guilt or the corruption common to all the seed of Adam.

For our race generally, the covenant made with Adam may be said to have terminated when it was said of the seed of the woman, "It shall bruise thy head." For each of us individually it terminates when we flee to Christ, and are by faith vitally united to Him. Is Christ our living Head? Are we His members? Then we are sharers in a new and better covenant, in a new and holy life, and in bright hopes which shall never make us ashamed. When, therefore, as this holy day closes, we lay ourselves down to rest, we may sleep the sleep of His beloved, for His favour shall compass us about as with a shield.

Oh glorious Head, Thou livest now !
Let us Thy members share Thy life ;
Canst Thou behold their need nor bow
To raise Thy children from the strife
With self and sin, and death and dark distress,
That they may live to Thee in holiness ?

Lesson 17.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—ROMANS V. 21, "SIN HATH REIGNED INTO DEATH."

Question XVII.: Into what estate did the fall bring mankind?

Answer: THE FALL BROUGHT MANKIND
INTO AN ESTATE
OF SIN AND MISERY.

THE evidences and fruits of the fall are many and patent. They are found in all ages and climes; among all races and ranks; in the abodes of culture and civilization as well as in the haunts of ignorance and savagery. Even when, this Sabbath morning, we have each one, like the Psalmist, mournfully to confess, "My soul cleaveth unto the dust," is there not in our earthliness of spirit, and slowness to rise upward to God, too sad a proof of our own fallen condition? Well may we cry, "Quicken Thou me according to Thy word."

In the state or "estate of sin" into which the fall has brought our race, we have first to think of the sin of man's nature. He is wholly corrupted and depraved, for sin has poisoned all the springs of his being, and distorted all his powers. See this in detail. His understanding is blinded. He has lost the capacity either to discern or to appreciate spiritual things. Of man's reason and intellect it may be said that, "those that look out of the windows be darkened." Then, what of the will of man, on which God bestowed the noble gift of freedom? Alas! how are the mighty fallen! The will is free no longer. It has been enslaved by sin, and is now prone to evil, and impotent to good. Ancient story tells of a blacksmith who had given offence to a monarch. In revenge, the tyrant commanded him to forge chains by which afterwards his own limbs were bound. So hath man forged the

fetters by which his own will is bound. Again, how is it with man's affections? Evil dispositions have ruled over and debased him. He loves sin which he should hate; he hates God whom he should love. All his affections are turned aside out of their proper channels like the waters of the river of Babylon on the night of its doom. But, one may say, is the ruin complete? Does not conscience remain true? No; conscience, though not destroyed, has been defiled, outraged, filled with guilty fears. In the ruined edifice of humanity, it is like a maniac to whom, as one has said, "The fall of the temple was the death of his reason," and who by his cries makes the shades more dismal than ever. From these tainted springs in man's nature do all actual transgressions flow.

But man is not only ruined but wretched, not only sinful but miserable. Whether he realise it or no, he is "the wretched and miserable one, poor and blind and naked." He is poor, because he has lost God; blind, because he can neither see nor appreciate spiritual truth or beauty; naked, because he stands before God without a righteousness and in all the shame of his guilt. And to this death of sin, in which he lies, man is insensible. You may hold before death-bound eyes the fairest of earth's flowers, yet the sleeper sees not its beauty. So does the natural man see no loveliness even in the Rose of Sharon. You may fill the chamber with exquisite strains of music, yet the dead one hears them not. So also is the natural man dead to the sweetest notes of the gospel call. Well it is that in his corruption and helplessness, man's extremity is God's opportunity. How blessed the cry of hope, "Thou hast destroyed thyself, but in Me is thine help!" Jesus can pardon and purify and bless. May we never be content till the last remnants of sin, and with them the last remnants of misery, are taken away. If heaven were but freedom from sin and no more, it were worth any suffering and any sacrifice to gain an entrance to its bliss.

Lesson 18.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—PSALM LI. 5, “BEHOLD I WAS SHAPEN IN INIQUITY, AND IN SIN DID MY MOTHER CONCEIVE ME.”

Question XVIII.: Wherein consists the sinfulness of that estate whereinto man fell?

Answer: THE SINFULNESS OF THAT ESTATE WHEREINTO MAN FELL
CONSISTS IN
THE GUILT OF ADAM'S FIRST SIN,
THE WANT OF ORIGINAL RIGHTEOUSNESS,
AND THE CORRUPTION OF HIS WHOLE NATURE,
WHICH IS COMMONLY CALLED ORIGINAL SIN;
TOGETHER WITH ALL ACTUAL TRANSGRESSIONS WHICH PROCEED
FROM IT.

MAN'S sinful condition is marked off into that which is original, and that which is actual. In that which belongs to all our race before the exercise of personal agency, the first element is the guilt of Adam's first sin. Like the serpent which folded Laocoon and his sons in its deadly embrace, Adam's breach of the covenant wraps all our race in its fatal bonds. We cannot escape that guilt; it haunts and follows us always. In his condemnation and ruin we, too, are involved. Mark now a second element in original sin. Where is the righteousness which God bestowed as a fair garment on His creature? Did Adam transmit it as a precious heirloom to his seed? Alas, no; that righteousness is gone; we are naked to our shame. God can no longer see in us His own moral image—the purity and holiness on which His eye loves to dwell. But the picture has yet another dark shade. When, taught by the Spirit of God, we look within, how sad the sight! Our whole natures are corrupted by sin. The natural bent of all our powers is away from God and holiness. We may see a picture of our state in a familiar

pastime. The balls which are thrown along the smooth-cut sward are not fairly balanced in weight ; each is loaded on one side or other. What is the effect of this bias ? They will inevitably turn toward the right or left ; the heavier side will determine the direction. So with man's nature. The bias, the weight is all towards evil ; corrupt dispositions hold the reins and govern the whole man. Now this guilt, and unrighteousness, and depravity are the elements of original sin, and as such are innate and universal among men.

“ Together with all actual transgressions which proceed from it.” The leaven of evil diffuses itself with marvellous rapidity and certainty. It leavens the whole man, the whole life. The seeds of corruption bring forth “ in some thirty, in some sixty, in some an hundredfold.” From within, innumerable forms of evil stream out over all our lives. Sins against God, against Father, Son, and Holy Spirit ; sins against men, above us, around us, beneath us ; sins secret and sins open ; sins of purpose and sins of practice : they are countless as the myriad grains of sand.

When a sinner is awakened, conviction usually begins with some form of outward transgression. But as it grows, he is led step by step back the rills of evil, till he discovers the impure fountain-head of all deep bedded in human nature. Then will he cry like the Psalmist, “ Create in me a clean heart, O God.” He who has tasted of pardon will long for purity. Only the pure in heart can or shall see God.

I know a bosom, which within
Contains the world's sad counterpart ;
'Tis here—the reign of death and sin,
Oh God ! evangelize my heart !

Lesson 19.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—ROMANS VI. 23, "THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH."

Question XIX.: What is the misery of that estate whereinto man fell?

Answer: ALL MANKIND BY THEIR FALL
LOST COMMUNION WITH GOD,
ARE UNDER HIS WRATH AND CURSE,
AND SO MADE LIABLE
TO ALL MISERIES IN THIS LIFE,
TO DEATH ITSELF
AND TO THE PAINS OF HELL FOR EVER.

HOW priceless in value are the privileges we enjoy! What would not the lost give for the dawn of a Sabbath, a visit to the house of God, an invitation to the throne of grace, a call to repentance, an offer of full and free pardon; yet all these privileges, these talents, are still ours. God grant us wisdom and grace to use and improve them this day as we should.

Man's sin could not fail to awaken God's just anger. Being what He is, He cannot but hate and punish all iniquity. But man's misery has moved and does move the tender compassion of God. The elements of that misery are our sad and humbling theme to-day.

All mankind have "lost communion with God." Ancient philosophers sought to discover the *Summum Bonum*, the chief good; and even yet the many blindly cry, "Who will show us any good?" Man is like a poor caterpillar, which has reached the summit of a stalk, and bends to this side and to that in the empty air, vainly seeking after some object of rest. God is the chief good, and communion with Him the only true happiness. Through his sin, man has lost both the favour and the fellowship of his

Maker. Only in Christ can the loss be repaired and communion restored.

Sin has entailed not only the loss of good, but a visitation of evil ; for man is "under the wrath and curse of God." This is strong language, but it is the language of Scripture. Jesus said of the sinner yet in his sins, "The wrath of God abideth on him." It not only hangs over, but rests on him ; he is a "child of wrath." Nay, more, he is "under the curse," the condemning sentence of the law, and unless removed, its execution shall be his final doom.

Furthermore, sin has exposed man to much evil. He is liable to "all miseries in this life." He tasted the forbidden fruit ; he must now taste the bitter fruits of his sin. In every pain, sorrow, want, the rigid law is verified,

"Seed of sin, crop of sorrow,
Sow to-day, reap to-morrow."

Again, man is liable "to death itself." The legend, "Unto dust thou shalt return," is written on the forehead of every man. According to Mahometan belief, even the appointed hour of death is traced in letters visible only to God on each one's brow. Then is man's destiny fixed, though its eternal stage is yet to come. For what is the final consequence of sin if grace prevent not ? "The pains of hell for ever." Final exclusion from the favour and presence of God ; burning fires of desire that can never be gratified or quenched ; creeping qualms of remorse that refuse to die ; the abiding sense of the divine displeasure : these are among the elements of sin's last doom. And they shall be "for ever." Evil naturally, inevitably, tends to become permanent ; and Scripture holds out no hope of any change beyond death. As is God's own nature, as is heaven itself, as is the blessedness of the saints, so shall be the fate of those who are finally impenitent and unbelieving—everlasting, eternal—fixed and undisturbed for ever. No wonder St Bernard gives the counsel that "men should go alive into hell, that they may not go there when they are dead."

Lesson 20.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—2 THESS. ii. 13, "GOD HATH FROM THE BEGINNING CHOSEN YOU TO SALVATION."

Question XX. : Did God leave all mankind to perish in the estate of sin and misery ?

Answer :

GOD HAVING
OUT OF HIS MERE GOOD PLEASURE,
FROM ALL ETERNITY,
ELECTED SOME TO EVERLASTING LIFE,
DID ENTER INTO A COVENANT OF GRACE,
TO REDEEM THEM OUT OF THE ESTATE OF SIN AND MISERY,
AND TO BRING THEM INTO AN ESTATE OF SALVATION
BY A REDEEMER.

WE have seen the need of salvation ; we are this Sabbath evening invited to meditate on its origin and nature. Let our prayer be, "Show me Thy ways, O Lord."

Note first the moving cause of salvation. It was God's "mere good pleasure ;" not simply His pleasure, but His good pleasure, and His good pleasure alone. God loved sinners. Why did He do so ? Because of any excellence or merit in them, actual or foreseen ? No ; Scripture forbids any such thought. He loved men simply because He chose so to do. And this good pleasure dwelt in God and moved Him "from all eternity." His purpose of grace lies in the dateless past, ere time or the world was.

God's good pleasure gave birth to a gracious decree. He "elected some to everlasting life ;" not "some" in contrast to "many," but "some" as distinct from "all." These He made the objects of His special love in Christ. If there are certain difficulties which gather around this truth, there are more and greater involved in its rejection, for it is written large and plain on the page of Scripture. If any man seek to know whether he

be of the elect before accepting salvation as offered in the gospel, let him ponder this answer. There are three links of a chain between man and God. The first is election, half hidden in the clouds around the throne ; the next is effectual calling ; the third is faith. No man dare reverse or change that divine order. What then does God require of man ? To stretch his feeble hand and grasp the highest link first ? Would a drowning man so do with an iron chain ? No. Even so, the Scriptures say, Take the nearest link, Believe ; then shall you know your effectual calling : then and not till then, your election of God. By faith we make our calling, and so our election, sure.

Does it stagger any one to know that electing grace is sovereign ? What think you of this view ? Two rebel races lay beneath God's eye, that of angels and that of men. Either of these might God have chosen to save. Why not the angels ? They had many claims on God. Yet it was man whom He chose to redeem. Surely this is an aspect of His sovereignty in which all our race may rejoice.

He "did enter into a covenant of grace." In this covenant, of which Christ is the head, God offers to sinners full salvation, not only without merit, but in spite of deep demerit, on their part. If they believe in Christ, He will not only save them from sin and its misery, but give them pardon and acceptance now, and heaven in all its bliss hereafter.

This salvation was to be accomplished "by a Redeemer." No angel or archangel dare undertake the task. God's mighty Son alone could save. To take on His royal shoulders a burden no other could bear ; to put to His sinless lips a cup no other could drink ; to enter the lists against a foe with whom no other could cope ; to do all this and more, the Son of God said, "Lo, I come." The debt we owe to His great love is one we may feel and acknowledge, but which even through eternity we can never discharge. His love "passeth knowledge."

Lesson 21.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—1 TIM. II. 5, "THERE IS ONE MEDIATOR BETWEEN GOD AND MAN, THE MAN JESUS CHRIST."

Question XXI. : Who is the Redeemer of God's elect ?

Answer : THE ONLY REDEEMER OF GOD'S ELECT IS
THE LORD JESUS CHRIST,
WHO, BEING THE ETERNAL SON OF GOD,
BECAME MAN, AND SO WAS,
AND CONTINUETH TO BE GOD AND MAN,
IN TWO DISTINCT NATURES,
AND ONE PERSON FOR EVER.

EVEN the Sabbath rest of heaven must be broken that the poor sheep, man, may be delivered out of the pit. And by whom was the rescue effected ? By "the Lord Jesus Christ," "the only Redeemer." He saves, and He alone. To give and send His beloved Son as Redeemer was on God's part a deed of mercy without parallel, of grace without desert, of love without measure. God gave a gift equal to Himself. He took heaven's purest, fairest gem, and laid Him in Zion for a foundation stone.

Ere the Redeemer came to earth, He was "the eternal Son of God," one with Him in essence, and attributes, and glory. From what a height He stooped to save us ! Though rich in His divine nature and perfections, He took on Him the sin-burdened nature of man. Though rich as possessor and Lord of all, He lived on earth as one who had not where to lay His head. Though rich in the conscious favour of His Father, He lost for a brief space on the cross even the sense of the love in which He had ever delighted. All the manifested glory of his riches He laid aside, that we "through His poverty might be rich."

He "became man." What a wonder and mystery is this! He assumed our nature that He might take both our place and penalty. The Ancient of days became a little babe; the Law-giver bent His shoulders to the yoke of His own law. He became one of us, stooping beneath the roof of our common humanity. All this He did that He might obey the law which man had broken, and die the death which man had incurred. He who was perfect God became perfect Man that he might perfect the whole of man.

As He became man, He "so was," "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh." What He had been He did not cease to be—the eternal Son of God; what He became, He was—the Son of man; in the fulness of His glorious person He was Immanuel, God with us. Even in death He was still the God-man. If any ask, Can God suffer? Can God die? we reply, "The Godhead was in the Person pained but not in the pain." You may lift an axe to fell a tree on which the sunshine brightly falls. You may split the stem with a blow; but do you cut the sunbeams?

Though risen, ascended, glorified, He "continueth to be God and man." He is the Son of God "with power," and "the government is upon His shoulders." And He is the Son of Man—our brother—our living Head. Oh the tenderness and depth of His human sympathy! Well might the early Christians comfort themselves in times of trial with the thought, Is not our Head above water? Blessed Spirit, take of the things of Christ and show them to us. Show us His divine glory, His true humanity, His all-sufficiency, His sympathy, that we may adore and trust and love Him in some measure as we ought.

Lesson 22.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—JOHN I. 14, "THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH AND DWELT
AMONG US."

Question XXII.: How did Christ, being the Son of
God, become man?

Answer: CHRIST THE SON OF GOD BECAME MAN
BY TAKING TO HIMSELF
A TRUE BODY AND A REASONABLE SOUL,
BEING CONCEIVED BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY GHOST
IN THE WOMB OF THE VIRGIN MARY,
AND BORN OF HER,
YET WITHOUT SIN.

HOW did the Son of God become man? "By taking to Himself a true body and a reasonable soul." He assumed what He had not before—the nature of man. It was not man becoming God, as if the human nature were first in order or in action, but God becoming man, being "made flesh." His was "a true body," possessed of all its essential properties, and subject to all its sinless infirmities. He was an hungered, and came seeking food on the fig-tree; He was athirst, and said, "Give me to drink;" He was weary, and slept in the stern of the boat. In like manner, His was "a reasonable soul." He thought, He chose, He loved, He grieved; at one time He was "exceeding sorrowful," at another He "rejoiced in spirit." That human nature He took into living union with the divine in His glorious person. Though as Son of God infinite and eternal, yet did He enclose Himself like a creature within limits of space and time. He assumed this human nature that it might be the vehicle of His saving activity. The horse must be strong enough to bear his

rider, and the vessel to carry its freight; so was the curtain of His humanity made suitable to the glory which it held and yet concealed. Clothed in sinless manhood as in a suit of mail, the Captain of our salvation went forth to the conquest of evil.

How the mystery of the incarnation took place, Scripture briefly tells. He was "conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost." This is all we need to know. Let us not break, as one has beautifully said, "the delicate veil which the mouth of the angel has breathed over the mystery."

He was born of the Virgin, "yet without sin." Though truly human, yet He "knew no sin," being holy, harmless, undefiled. He could say of Satan, he "hath nothing in Me;" and in fearless challenge could ask His foes, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" Had He been sinful, He must needs have suffered for Himself. Like the dignity of His person, and the loving freedom of His sacrifice, His innocence is a main element in the value and merit of all His work.

In His love and condescension, the Son of God came down and became one of us that He might lift us up with Himself, even to the throne. If He be "formed in us," then shall we be "partakers of the divine nature," and share at length in His glory. Meantime, He has gone into Heaven with our nature to represent us, and left us on earth with His nature to represent Him. May we seek both union and communion with Him; then shall we daily be "changed into the same image from glory to glory," and be at last "for ever with the Lord."

'Twas to bring us endless pleasure,
He our suffering nature bore;
'Twas to give us heavenly treasure,
He was willing to be poor.

Lesson 23.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—1 TIM. I. 15, "CHRIST JESUS CAME INTO THE WORLD
TO SAVE SINNERS."

Question XXIII.: What offices doth Christ execute
as our Redeemer?

Answer: CHRIST, AS OUR REDEEMER,
EXECUTETH THE OFFICES
OF A PROPHET, OF A PRIEST, AND OF A KING,
BOTH IN HIS ESTATE OF HUMILIATION AND EXALTATION.

ON this His day what choicer, sweeter theme could occupy our thoughts than the saving work of our Redeemer? If we can claim Him as our Lord, how blessed to be able to say, "who loved me." That *He*, the Son of God, so high, so great, so holy, should love me; what a wonder! Then, that he should *love* me; not simply think of me, pity me, spare me, but *love* me; what a wonder! Yet again, that He should love *me*; not a fallen angel, or some new being whom He might create, but *me*, fallen, guilty, polluted *me*; what a wonder!

"My soul, the order of these words approve,
Christ first, me last, nothing between but love."

At His baptism, when the azure sky was cleft above Him, and an aërial form, like that of a dove, descended and rested over the person of Jesus, He was anointed with the Holy Ghost. In its downward flight from the opened heavens, in its sweet radiance, in its tender loveliness, that dove-like form was a symbol of the Holy Spirit, then especially bestowed on the chosen servant of God. He was anointed as Prophet, as Priest, and as King, to accomplish the salvation of men. Let us ponder these in order, for they meet all the necessities of sinners.

He is "a Prophet," a revealer, a teacher. Man is ignorant,

blind, foolish, for sin has made him so. He does not know God ; he does not know himself. He sees neither sin, nor the world, nor duty, in their true light. Only this Prophet, this teacher, can open the ears, the understanding, the heart, to the concerns of the soul, to the things of God and of eternity.

He is also "a Priest." He stands between God and men to atone and to intercede. Man is guilty, for he has broken the law and incurred its penalty. This high Priest alone could offer, and He has offered, one perfect sacrifice for sins for ever. The atoning blood without which there could be "no remission," is now before God ; and there, too, the Advocate ever liveth to intercede for His redeemed.

Once more, He is "a King." Seated on His throne, He wields the sceptre of universal empire, subdues the hearts of men, guards and governs His people, and will in due time defeat and destroy all His enemies. Man cannot break his own hard heart ; he cannot cope with the trinity of evil, the devil, the world, and the flesh. King Jesus alone can secure, for Himself and His people, full and final victory.

In these three offices a trinity of His attributes shines. We see His wisdom as a Prophet, His love as a Priest, and His power as a King. They are broadly represented in the great trinity of His name, as Christ, as Jesus, as the Lord. We need them all. What though we were taught by Him, if our guilt remained unremoved and our hearts unrenewed ? What though we were pardoned, if we were still left in ignorance and in bondage ? What though our hearts were changed, if our eyes were not opened nor our sins forgiven ? We need, and we have offered to us, a whole Christ in all His offices. Let us enter His school, let us wait at His altar, let us bow at His throne.

Lesson 24.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—JOHN I. 18, "THE ONLY BEGOTTEN SON, WHICH IS IN THE BOSOM OF THE FATHER, HE HATH DECLARED HIM."

Question XXIV.: How doth Christ execute the office of a Prophet?

Answer : CHRIST EXECUTETH THE OFFICE OF A PROPHET
IN REVEALING TO US,
BY HIS WORD AND SPIRIT,
THE WILL OF GOD FOR OUR SALVATION.

CHRIST is a "Prophet." He reveals and teaches as none else ever did or could. There was such authority, such boldness, such power, such grace, in the words which dropped like dew from His lips, that men were constrained to cry, "Never man spake like this man." As a Prophet, He is alone and unapproached. And why? Chiefly because of the source and spring of His teaching, for it was the fruit of direct and immediate knowledge of God and of His will. He came from the very bosom of the Father, and could say, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you." In His person, in His words, in His deeds, He has revealed God to man. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

How does Christ teach man? "By His word and spirit." The one is His instrument, the other His agent. He could dispense with an instrument had He so pleased, for He often did so in working His wonders here on earth. But in His gracious dealings with men He chose to use an instrument, even His own word of truth. But let us not err here. Many can point to chapter and verse, or to some definite statement of truth, which they believe God used for their spiritual good in the crisis of conversion. But others, though they cannot do the same, are not to consider their own experience either faulty or questionable.

God may often use His truth for our good when we may be scarcely, if at all, conscious of its operation. Again we must beware of another error. God may use a providence—some bitter disappointment, some sore bereavement, some painful sickness—as a means to salvation. But, in such a case, is the providence alone? Does not the Word explain and apply the dealings of God's hand? The providence was but an ally, or better still, a hand-maid, to the sword of the Spirit.

The Word of God as Christ's instrument, does not produce its effects naturally or necessarily, at all times, or in the same measure, on all whom it may reach,—as the sun enlightens, or the fire burns. It produces its blessed effects only when and as used by Christ's agent, the Holy Spirit. In His hand, it is "quick and powerful," able to convince and to convert, to comfort and to sanctify. If the Holy Spirit use the Word, it can do anything; if He use it not, it is powerless and profitless. He only whose sword it is, can wield it with effect.

The substance of Christ's teaching is "the will of God for our salvation." Does not our Lord Himself give us the very kernel of that will in twin sentences as follows:—"This is the will of Him that sent Me, that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on Him may have everlasting life;" and again, "This is the Father's will which hath sent Me, that of all which he hath given Me I should lose nothing but should raise it up again at the last day."

Is Christ our Prophet? Do we hear His voice? Do we sit at His feet like Mary, humble, docile, eager, to learn of Him? Who can compare with Him? There were, as one has said, "wise men before He was born, but they were just wise in this that they had visions and dreams of His coming." A teacher in Greece, after listening to Socrates, said to his pupils, "You must find a teacher for yourselves; I have found one." So may we turn from all others to Jesus. Lord, teach us daily to know and do Thy will; then shall the promise be made good to us, "Great shall be the peace of thy children."

Lesson 25.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—PSALM CX. 4, “THOU ART A PRIEST FOR EVER AFTER THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEC.”

Question XXV.: How doth Christ execute the office of a Priest?

Answer: CHRIST EXECUTETH THE OFFICE OF A PRIEST
IN HIS ONCE OFFERING UP OF HIMSELF A SACRIFICE
TO SATISFY DIVINE JUSTICE AND TO RECONCILE US TO GOD,
AND IN MAKING CONTINUAL INTERCESSION FOR US.

CHRIST is a “Priest;” that is, one duly qualified and authorized to deal with God, by way of mediation and intercession, on behalf of men. The office is a counterpart to that of prophet, whose function it was to speak to men on behalf of God. The priesthood of the Old Testament was neither perfect nor abiding, nor could its sacrifices really take away sins. They were but types of a glorious priesthood and an all-sufficient sacrifice yet to come. There is a Jewish legend that the face of a lion appeared in the curling smoke which rose from the burnt sacrifices. It is a faint image of the truth that any virtue they possessed lay in their connection with the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Christ’s priesthood is of a higher order than that of Aaron. It is kingly, like that of Melchizedec, and shall never pass away. In the dignity of His person, in the value of His sacrifice, in His special consecration, in His endless life, the priesthood of Christ is unique and perfect.

His first great work as Priest was “His once offering up of Himself a sacrifice.” He laid Himself an innocent yet willing victim on the altar. Three great sights are to be seen at Calvary. First, there is Christ on the cross, the Son of God, the spotless Lamb, bound on the tree; what a marvel is this! Then, there is sin on Christ, the foul and heavy burden of man’s iniquity

gathered on Him ; what a mystery is this ! Yet again, there is wrath on sin, for where sin lies, there the curse must fall ; what added wonder and mystery are here ! A dark shadow passed over the fair, pure Sun of Righteousness ; its first deep contact was in Gethsemane, its last was in Joseph's tomb. Now the eclipse is past, and life and peace secured for men.

This was the very end and design of the sacrifice ; it was "to satisfy divine justice and to reconcile us to God." He died to make it a righteous thing in God to act on the love He felt toward man. The full satisfaction which must by law be rendered for man's sin, Christ offered on the cross. Now God and man may be reconciled. Over the great sacrifice they may meet—God to pardon and accept—man to surrender and love.

Now, our Great High Priest is passed into the heavens. God's own hand hath rent the veil in the midst. The Priest and the blood of sprinkling have gone in together ; they appear before the face of God for us. As here on earth, so now specially in heaven, He intercedes for men. He deserves what He asks ; it is grace to us but debt to Him. In our weakness and folly and frailty, He stands there in our nature and in our name, to plead for us. By faith we may hear the tinkling of the bells on the garment of our merciful high Priest, a token and assurance that "He ever liveth to make intercession" for us.

Have we accepted and trusted the Redeemer in this office of priesthood ? Have we laid our hands on the head of the august victim, confessing our sins ? If His precious blood be on the lintels and door-posts of our hearts, then and then only are we safe from destruction. How precious also to His people is the intercession of Christ. In Him our persons, our prayers, our services are accepted of God. "Who is he that condemneth ?"

Lesson 26.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—PSALM II. 6, "YET HAVE I SET MY KING UPON MY HOLY HILL OF ZION."

Question XXVI.: How doth Christ execute the office of a King?

Answer: CHRIST EXECUTETH THE OFFICE OF A KING
IN SUBDUING US TO HIMSELF,
IN RULING AND DEFENDING US, AND
IN RESTRAINING AND CONQUERING ALL HIS AND OUR ENEMIES.

CHRIST hath executed all His offices in all ages, yet one has been at times more prominent than the others. Was He not in Old Testament times very specially the Prophet, training and educating men in the ways and purposes of God? Was He not, when here on earth, very specially the Priest, for everything prepared for, or centred round, His dying sacrifice. Is He not now very specially the King, to whom has been given all power "in heaven and in earth"? As such He administers the blessings which He came to proclaim and died to procure.

Christ is "a King." He is sole Head of His church, the fountain of life and authority and power; and He is head over all things to the church, subordinating everything else to her best interests and final triumph.

He executes His office as King, first, "in subduing us to Himself." Men are rebels and enemies both by nature and practice; but He can by His word break the hard and stony heart. Yet He will subdue us not by force of arms, but by the power of love. If men refuse to submit, they may, but they who will not be melted by His beauty and grace shall feel at length His rod of iron. From a human standpoint, Christ's is an elective monarchy. The Fiji islanders chose our Queen to be

their sovereign, and promised loyalty to her sway. So Christ will set up that kingdom of His which is "righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost" only where the gates are thrown open to Him and He is chosen to the throne. He exercises His royal functions yet further "in ruling and defending us." We are "under law to Christ." To secure our loyal obedience He has written His laws and imprinted His image on our hearts. We are His soldiers, ready both to serve and to suffer under His banner. The Spartan mothers stimulated the bravery of their sons by charging them to return *with* their shields, or *on* them. Shall we be less devoted or loyal to a Prince who, as Augustine said, "is not valued at all unless He is valued above all"? Nor is He indifferent to the fortunes of those who espouse His cause. He not only rules but defends us. Even if His servants fall in the struggle, their very death like His own is a victory both for them and Him. He asks us to ride no ford where He hath not gone through before us, and He ever secures to those who follow Him both triumph and reward in the end.

Even now He exercises His royal office "in restraining and conquering all His and our enemies." He curbs them so that they cannot utter a word or stir a finger save as He permits. He sets bounds to their wrath, and laughs at their deepest schemes. And what of the final issue? The victory is sure; in fact it is already won. He hath made an end of sin; He hath spoiled Satan; He hath overcome the world; He hath given even to death a mortal blow. What glory shall attend His ultimate triumph!

"Oh when my God, my glory, brings, His white and holy train,
Unto those clear and living springs, Where comes no stain,
Where all is light and flowers and fruit, And joy and rest,
Make me among them, 'tis my suit, The last one and the least."

Lesson 27.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—PHILIPP. II. 8, "HE HUMBLED HIMSELF AND BECAME OBEDIENT UNTO DEATH, EVEN THE DEATH OF THE CROSS."

Question XXVII.: Wherein did Christ's humiliation consist?

Answer: CHRIST'S HUMILIATION CONSISTED IN HIS BEING BORN, AND THAT IN A LOW CONDITION, MADE UNDER THE LAW, UNDERGOING THE MISERIES OF THIS LIFE, THE WRATH OF GOD AND THE CURSED DEATH OF THE CROSS, IN BEING BURIED, AND CONTINUING UNDER THE POWER OF DEATH FOR A TIME.

THE humiliation of Christ began at the throne and ended in the tomb. The steps are like a descent from the glowing sunshine of the Campagna to the dark Catacombs of Rome. Ever deepening gloom marks the footprints of mercy as she descends to save fallen man.

Christ was "born, and that in a low condition." Not in pomp and power did He come to earth. Not in His divine and kingly majesty, but in the weakness of infant life, did He enter the humble ranks of those He came to save. In the manger of Bethlehem, the house of bread, was the living Bread given to men.

"Mild He lays His glory by,
Born that man no more might die,
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give the second birth."

Nor is this all. It was "in a low condition" He was born; not of a royal mother nor in a stately palace. Only simple shepherds and wandering savants, not princes nor courtiers, gathered around His infant bed.

"Made under the law." From many of the laws made by the British Parliament, its own members are exempt. Yet Christ,

Himself the Lawgiver, came of free will under obligations to the divine law. He promised to yield to it not only a faultless obedience but a full satisfaction on man's behalf.

"Undergoing the miseries of this life." Of these we have spoken elsewhere. He tasted of all the wants, the frailties, and the sorrows of common experience. May His real and precious sympathy help us who are still in the "vale of tears."

"The wrath of God and the cursed death of the cross." The lost in hell have tasted of the cup of God's wrath; and, strange to say, there is One in heaven who has drunk of it deeply. It was that wrath which made the Father hide His face and wrung from the suffering Christ the cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken Me?" What humiliation that the Lord of life should die, what shame that it should be on the accursed cross! How deep were the waters through which He passed!

"The sun did lose its light and darkness reign,
And earth express a sympathy of pain;
No wonder nature can in ruins lie,
Nature must needs be sad, when God can die!"

One deep step more. "In being buried." Search all the universe of God and you will not hear of an angel's grave. Yet our Redeemer lay in a tomb, even a borrowed tomb. Night came, and day, and night again; and then, having sanctified the grave by His presence, He rose from it by His power. May we know the "power of His resurrection," and walk with Him in "newness of life."

Lesson 28.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—PHILIPP. II. 9, "GOD ALSO HATH HIGHLY EXALTED HIM AND GIVEN HIM A NAME WHICH IS ABOVE EVERY NAME."

Question XXVIII.: Wherein consisteth Christ's exaltation?

Answer: CHRIST'S EXALTATION CONSISTETH
IN HIS RISING AGAIN FROM THE DEAD THE THIRD DAY,
IN ASCENDING UP INTO HEAVEN,
IN SITTING AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD THE FATHER, AND
IN COMING TO JUDGE THE WORLD AT THE LAST DAY.

IN a garden Adam fell; in a garden Christ rose. In the one man shut against himself the gates of the earthly Eden; in the other the risen Lord opened for Himself and us the portals of the heavenly Paradise. Just where and when His humiliation ended did His exaltation begin. Here are the Santa Scala, the holy steps, which lead up to the throne.

"His rising again from the dead on the third day." Even in His burial Bengel marks in the conduct of Joseph and Nicodemus "already the beginnings of honour." What was the resurrection? Was it not "the leading back of the soul of Christ to the body so that these two parts, separated by death, coalesced again into the same nature." He burst the gates of Hades. What avail now the stone, the watch, the seal? As one has said, there is a sublime irony in the ease with which He brushes aside these elaborate precautions of men.

Another step of exaltation was "in ascending up into heaven." Near by that same Bethany whence He rode in triumph into the earthly Jerusalem, did He ascend in glory to the heavenly. As He passed angels by, when He stooped from His throne to save,

so now does He again pass them by, to rise far above their highest ranks.

“In His blest life
I see the path, and in His death the price,
And in His grand ascent the proof supreme
Of immortality.”

Having ascended, He is now “sitting at the right hand of God the Father,” the place of honour and power. The Anointed of God, Prophet, Priest, and King, now sits upon the throne. Through the cross He has won the crown. As before it was the day of His weakness, so now and for evermore it is “the day of His power.”

What shall be the final separate step of His exaltation? “His coming to judge the world at the last day.” As He ascended so shall He appear, personally, visibly, gloriously. Shall we not add “suddenly” as well? As the lightning flash which needs no one to cry Behold! so shall His second coming be. Do we love and long and look for His appearing?

Jesus is coming! For that joyful day,
In patient hope I watch and wait and pray.
The day draws nigh, the midnight shadows flee,
Oh, what a sunrise will that advent be!

And for what end shall He come? “To judge the world.” As the Son of Man, ordained of God to the high office, He shall judge men and angels, and shall, according to their relations to Himself and their works, declare their eternal destiny. Happy at that day and happy this Sabbath evening they, who have found safety and shelter under the shadow of His wings! If He be our Saviour now, who shall be our Judge then, blessed shall we be for ever.

“This I do find
We two are so joined,
He’ll not be in glory,
And leave me behind!”

Lesson 29.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—ROMANS v. 5, "THE LOVE OF GOD IS SHED ABROAD IN OUR HEARTS BY THE HOLY GHOST WHICH IS GIVEN UNTO US."

Question XXIX. : How are we made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ ?

Answer : WE ARE MADE PARTAKERS
OF THE REDEMPTION PURCHASED BY CHRIST,
BY THE EFFECTUAL APPLICATION OF IT TO US
BY HIS HOLY SPIRIT.

HITHERTO we have been concerned with the history of redemption ; now we have to consider its application to the souls of men, a work ascribed everywhere throughout Scripture to the Holy Spirit. What avails it to us that God has provided a great salvation if we obtain no share in its blessings ? What avails it to us that Christ hath purchased eternal redemption for us, if we secure no interest in it ? Now it is the work of the Holy Spirit to secure to men that personal interest and share in the benefits of salvation. Nothing therefore which relates to His person and attributes and operations can be without vital moment to us.

The Holy Spirit is very God of very God. Omnipresence, omniscience, and omnipotence, attributes which belong to Deity alone, are ascribed to Him in Scripture. He is the seven Spirits of God. Whether we take such a title to denote the perfection of His being, and the plenitude of His excellencies, or His varied and all-sufficient operations on the souls of men ; in any case, it is fitted to call forth our worship and praise. Think what He is in Himself,—God over all, blessed for ever. Think of His bright attributes. Wisdom, love, power, truth, grace, holiness,—all shine with dimless lustre in Him. Think of His blessed operations in the heart,—His enlightening, quickening, teaching,

comforting, sanctifying power. What honour do we owe to the Author of these blessed influences! This work is specially entrusted to the Holy Ghost, because "the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." The being and purposes of God are great deeps, but the Spirit searcheth and knoweth them all. The love of God is a great deep, but the Spirit shows us in the Word that he searcheth and knoweth it all. As a few years ago the *Challenger* was sent out to explore the great ocean depths of the world, and to bring home what she could of their wonders and beauties, so, speaking with all reverence, the Holy Spirit has sailed over the mighty ocean of God's love, and can tell us of its depths, and show us of its treasures. He carries the blessings of salvation home to the heart.

The special name here given to Him, the Holy Spirit, is chosen of set purpose. He is so called, not simply because He is essentially holy, though that is true, but because all His operations and motions in men are holy, both in their nature and in their ends. Conviction, regeneration, conversion, and sanctification shall all issue in the perfect holiness of Christ's people.

Blessed Spirit, breathe on our souls this Sabbath morning. May we be like John—"in the Spirit on the Lord's Day." Now that the Sun of Righteousness is set from man's view, may the Holy Spirit as the precious dew come from Him, and work in us all His holy fruits. In harmony with the homely Scotch lyric which says, "Ilka blade o' grass keps (catches) its ain drap o' dew," may each one seek for himself the presence and grace of the Spirit. The constant supplies of His influence are the food and fuel of all our graces.

Lesson 30.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—EPHES. II. 8, "BY GRACE ARE YE SAVED THROUGH FAITH."

Question XXX.: How doth the Spirit apply to us the redemption purchased by Christ?

Answer: THE SPIRIT APPLIETH TO US
 THE REDEMPTION PURCHASED BY CHRIST
 BY WORKING FAITH IN US,
 AND THEREBY UNITING US TO CHRIST
 IN OUR EFFECTUAL CALLING.

THIS day reminds us of the completion and perfection of Christ's redeeming work. The full price had been paid; and He went forth out of the prison house of death. What more suitable theme for us this sacred evening than the application of redemption to sinners generally and to ourselves? We are here invited to mark one definite line of the Spirit's gracious activity in men.

The Holy Spirit applies redemption "by working faith in us." That saving grace is His gift—a primary and precious fruit of His agency. The Spirit bestows upon us both the will and the capacity to believe. This might be proved from the nature of the case, or from the testimony of God's people; but let us take the plain testimony of one decisive passage of Scripture. Peter says, "To them that have obtained like precious faith with us." Mark the words. If of themselves they could at any time exercise faith, then why "obtain" it? If "obtained," as Peter declares it to be, then from whom? God and no other can bestow it, and He gives all such graces through His Holy Spirit alone.

What is this faith? In its widest sense it is an assent given to truth upon suitable evidence, in which case its object is the whole revealed will of God. But in the words before us faith is used in a more specific sense, for it is that whereby we are united

to Christ. In that aspect, it is a twofold exercise of *Reception* and *Reliance*; and its object is the Lord Jesus Christ in His person and work as Redeemer. This is what is meant by the rich and varied phraseology of Scripture, in such words as coming, believing, receiving, tasting, looking, following, trusting; all of which denote that gracious act of the soul by which it appropriates Christ and His saving benefits.

What end does the Holy Spirit accomplish by this faith? "Thereby uniting us to Christ." There is established between the sinner and the Saviour a vital spiritual union, in which he becomes Christ's and Christ becomes his. The believer is "in Christ Jesus;" "found in Him;" in Him as in an ark of safety; in Him as in a city of refuge; in Him as the branch is in the vine; in Him as the member is in the body. As on the cross his sins were imputed to Christ, so now Christ's righteousness is imputed to him. The believer has both union and communion with his Lord.

All this takes place "in our effectual calling." In the gospel there is a general call addressed to all mankind; but it is too often ignored or refused by those to whom it comes. Not so is it with those to whom the Spirit makes the call inward and effectual. They accept the offers of the gospel; they close with the Saviour; and in and by this exercise of saving faith, the Spirit makes them one with Christ and one with Him for ever.

"Stretch forth thine hand." He who gives the command will give both the will and the power. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ;" then being vitally united to Him, there can be no condemnation and no separation for ever. The bonds which unite the soul to Christ are such as neither death nor life nor any other creature shall ever be able to sever.

Lesson 31.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT : 2 TIM. I. 9, "WHO HATH SAVED US, AND CALLED US WITH AN HOLY CALLING."

Question XXXI.: What is effectual calling?

Answer :
EFFECTUAL CALLING IS
THE WORK OF GOD'S SPIRIT, WHEREBY
CONVINCING US OF OUR SIN AND MISERY,
ENLIGHTENING OUR MINDS IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST,
AND RENEWING OUR WILLS,
HE DOTHS PERSUADE AND ENABLE US
TO EMBRACE JESUS CHRIST
FREELY OFFERED TO US IN THE GOSPEL.

EFFECTUAL calling is the work of Him of whom it has been said, "He housed the Godhead in the soul." Let us mark its various stages.

"Convincing us of our sin and misery." In this work the Holy Spirit uses the law of God as His instrument, and the arrows of conviction are often both sharp and sore. Through what days of darkness and bitterness have some passed as they trode the low valley beneath the thunder-clouds of Sinai! Like the gate of Humility which was the entrance to a famous College at Cambridge, a low door indeed is poverty of spirit; yet it is blessed, for while it is the fruit of the law, it is also the germ of the gospel. We cannot relish the sweetness of God's mercy until we have tasted the bitterness of our own misery.

This work of conviction is followed by a further and a blessed operation: "enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ." It is the old story of the two prayers which a servant of God gave at different times to be used by a poor ignorant Highland girl, first, "Lord, show me myself;" then, "Lord, show me Thyself." Like the publican's prayer, there is first a glance inward, "me a

sinner ;” then a glance upward, “ God be merciful.” The hammer of the law may break an icy heart, but only the sunshine of the gospel can dissolve it into tears.

Another vital work doth the Spirit perform in “ renewing our wills.” Men by nature do not will to be saved, for they are prone to evil. Here lies the very crisis of the soul’s history. If our natural will refuses to yield, then we reject salvation and perish. If God’s love and pity prevail, then will the Holy Spirit work in us to will and to do, and we shall be saved. Well may we cry, “ Thy will be done.”

What is the happy issue of the Spirit’s work ? “ He doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ.” We are slow to yield, but He “ doth persuade ” us ; we are utterly powerless, but He doth “ enable us.” It is ours to will and to do, yet He works them in us ; and what is the result ? We “ embrace Jesus Christ.” We close with Him, we surrender to Him, we give Him what Rutherford called, “ the arm-chair and the board head ” in our hearts. And what is our warrant for so receiving Him ? It is this, that He is “ freely offered to us in the gospel.” His salvation is for all, inasmuch as it is sufficient for all, suitable for all, and freely offered to all. As “ whatsoever ” makes a full gospel, so “ whosoever ” makes a free gospel. To all men, of every race and rank, of every colour and creed, is the gracious call addressed, “ Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”

“ Come unto Me.” To what does He call me ?
 To peace through His blood and acceptance with God
 To holiness now and to heaven hereafter ;
 To rest from my labour, relief from my load.

“ Come unto Me.” But how, when He calls me,
 Can He give rest to a sinner like me ?
 Because He hath laboured, because He was laden,
 Because He hath suffered and died on the tree.

Lesson 32.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—1 CORINTH. I. 30, "WHO OF GOD IS MADE UNTO US WISDOM, AND RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND SANCTIFICATION, AND REDEMPTION."

Question XXXII.: What benefits do they that are effectually called partake of in this life?

Answer: THEY THAT ARE EFFECTUALLY CALLED DO IN THIS LIFE PARTAKE OF JUSTIFICATION, ADOPTION, AND SANCTIFICATION; AND THE SEVERAL BENEFITS WHICH IN THIS LIFE DO EITHER ACCOMPANY OR FLOW FROM THEM.

WE have here the chief privileges which believers enjoy in this present life. They are justification, adoption, and sanctification. We may profitably ponder their mutual relations.

As the fruits of living union to Christ, they are inseparably bound together; they do not, and cannot, dwell apart. No man is justified who is not also adopted, and who shall not be sanctified. No man is adopted, who has not been justified, and who shall not be sanctified. No man is sanctified, who has not first been justified and adopted. Nor can the order of these privileges be reversed or altered. In its nature, justification must precede, but is immediately accompanied by adoption. These again are always and necessarily followed by sanctification.

Between justification and sanctification important and instructive distinctions may be drawn. The former is a change of state; the latter a change of character. The righteousness of Christ imputed to us is the ground of our justification; the grace of God implanted in us is the source of our sanctification. The former is a hidden act of God; the latter may be evident to all. How are they related to God? In justification we are admitted to His favour; in sanctification we are conformed to His image.

How are they related to sin? Justification removes its guilt and consequences; sanctification cleanses from its defilement. The former provides us with a title to heaven; the latter, with a meetness for its service and its song. Both are needful to our full and final salvation. What though we possessed a title to the Jerusalem above, if our natures were not fitted for its sinless atmosphere? Again, what though our souls were made heavenly in affection, if we could show no right of access at the pearly gates? All that is needful is provided in the covenant, which is "ordered in all things and sure."

These three which are named are the chief benefits; but there are others, which "do either accompany or flow from them." Paul reasons nobly on this theme. God has not grudged nor spared but given His Son for man. After love so measureless and amazing, need we wonder at any additional deeds of kindness? He has given the living Bread; what if a few crumbs fall besides? If by faith we are one with Christ, we are pardoned and accepted of God; made His children and admitted to their privileges; and so renewed as to live unto holiness. Let us not allow Satan, or our own straitened hearts of unbelief, to rob us of these or any other blessings to which in Christ we have a blood-bought claim. The privileges of pardon, of sonship, and of holiness are all bound up in the Redeemer; all other blessings, though priceless in themselves, are poor in comparison. Yet, as God gives the great, so does He give the small; as He has given so much, so does He give all, freely, ungrudgingly, royally.

Lesson 33.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—ROMANS III. 24, “BEING JUSTIFIED FREELY BY HIS GRACE THROUGH THE REDEMPTION WHICH IS IN CHRIST JESUS.”

Question XXXIII. : What is justification ?

Answer : JUSTIFICATION IS
AN ACT OF GOD'S FREE GRACE, WHEREIN
HE PARDONETH ALL OUR SINS,
AND ACCEPTETH US AS RIGHTEOUS IN HIS SIGHT,
ONLY FOR THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST
IMPUTED TO US, AND RECEIVED BY FAITH ALONE.

TO justify, which in Scripture means to declare one just or righteous in the eye of the law, is an act of God. He alone can, and He alone does, justify ; and when He does so, it is a decisive mental act, performed once for all. We hear its echo in the words, “There is therefore now no condemnation.”

Justification is “an act of God's free grace.” To think of saving man at all ; to give and send such a substitute for the guilty ; to accept the work of another in the room of that of sinners : in all these deeds of love on God's part there was grace, abounding grace. But these displays are crowned, we had almost said eclipsed, when He declares an ungodly sinner to be righteous simply and solely because of the merit of One who stands in His stead.

In justifying, God does two things. First of all, “He pardoneth all our sins.” He “hides His face” from them ; “blots them” out ; “remembers them no more ;” makes them as snow or as wool. How sweet the assurance ever is, “Son,” “Daughter,” “Thy sins be forgiven thee.”

Earth has a joy unknown to heaven,
The new-born peace of sin forgiven !
Tears of such pure and deep delight,
Ye angels, never dimmed your sight.

God also "accepteth us as righteous in His sight." We are welcomed, favoured, "accepted in the Beloved." It is as if God said, "I have no love to spare outside of my beloved Son. All my love terminates on Him. If any would taste of that love, they must be 'found in Him.' Then and then only shall they taste its sweetness and feel its power."

How are we so pardoned and accepted? "Only for the righteousness of Christ;" that is, the merit of all His obedience and suffering. These are the warp and the woof in the garment of His righteousness. All His obedience was suffering because He was in an estate of humiliation, and all His suffering was obedience, because it was part of the work given Him to do. When we remember that He was the Son of God; that personally He "knew no sin;" and that He freely, willingly laid down His life for man, then can even our poor vision see something of the boundless riches of His merit.

That righteousness becomes ours, first of all, by an act on God's part; it is "imputed to us." As He set down our sins to Christ's account, so does He set down Christ's righteousness to ours; only it must be "received by faith alone." If we will but consent, He will drop that fair robe on our shoulders, and we shall stand complete in the loveliness of Christ.

As Luther called this doctrine "the Article of a standing or of a falling Church," so may we call it also of a standing or falling professor of religion. At the same time, let us never forget that while we are justified by faith alone, the faith which justifies is never alone; it is ever followed by works of love.

bestowed by the heavenly Father. What are some of these special blessings?

They wear His name, for they are "children of God," and that, as Calvin says, cannot be an empty title. It marks at once their near and blessed relation to God and their separation from the world.

They have access to Him. Not once a year only or through an earthly priest; not to a holy place, the figure of the true; but at any time, personally, we may enter into the Holiest, sure of a welcome and sure of a blessing.

They are protected by Him. Jesus tells us that none should pluck them out of His hand, nor, he adds, out of the hand of His Father, as if the latter would cover the former, and make assurance "doubly sure."

They are provided for as well. They feed day by day on the living Bread, and have "enough and to spare." They need not hunger for the husks or stones, which are all that the world can even offer, not to say bestow.

They are chastened of God. Never will the refiner be satisfied till He can see in us His own image. The stone must be polished ere it can shine as a gem; the leaf bruised ere it can yield its sweet fragrance.

They are taught of God. They are first of all instructed in the "first principles of the oracles of God;" then as they are able to bear it they are nourished upon "strong meat." At length they know even as they are known.

They are heirs of God. They became heirs by the death of their elder brother; yet lo! in grace He lives again, and they become joint-heirs with Him. God Himself is their inheritance; and they "enjoy Him for ever." How blessed are they out of whose new hearts there rises, from the Spirit in them, from them through the Spirit, the children's cry "Abba, Father."

Lesson 35.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—JOHN XVII. 17, "SANCTIFY THEM THROUGH THY TRUTH."

Question XXXV.: What is Sanctification?

Answer:

SANCTIFICATION IS
THE WORK OF GOD'S FREE GRACE, WHEREBY
WE ARE RENEWED IN THE WHOLE MAN AFTER THE IMAGE OF GOD,
AND ARE ENABLED MORE AND MORE
TO DIE UNTO SIN
AND LIVE UNTO RIGHTEOUSNESS.

THIS is the day on which is inscribed the legend, "Holiness unto the Lord." May God give us grace to sanctify all its hours to His own service and worship. Our theme this morning reminds us that as God would have His day, so would He have His people, to be holy unto Him.

To sanctify, as applied to man, is to make clean or holy. The Holy Spirit is the great agent in that work; and He uses the word of God as His chief instrument. Sanctification is "the work of God's free grace." It is not an act done once for all, but a long-continued process, begun at the new birth and carried on till the hour of death. Then God takes revenge upon evil in every child of His, for whereas sin brought in death, death shall carry out sin, and the work of sanctification be complete. All is due to free grace, no step in the process to man's merit.

First of all, "we are renewed in the whole man." We are born again, and this means a vital change in the whole inner life. The understanding is enlightened, the will renewed, the affections purified, the conscience cleansed. Even out of the ruined materials of fallen humanity, the image of God is restored. No hand but that of the Spirit could effect such a change.

"The statue, Buonarotti said, doth wait
Thrall'd in the block for me to emancipate."

What is the fruit of this inward and gracious renewal? We are "enabled more and more." Power long lost is restored to the will and other faculties of man. And the "enabling," "the power," goes out in two directions; we "die unto sin and live unto righteousness." This is practical daily duty. We are to be utterly lost to the influence and attractions of sin; and are on the other hand to interest and exert ourselves in following after righteousness. What sin did with Christ, we must do with sin, crucify it, put it to death; and we must cherish those fair graces of the Spirit, whose ripening fruitfulness never ends in decay. As a Jewish maiden had to weave her wedding dress ere the nuptial day arrived, so must the bride of Christ weave her pure linen garment of righteousness against the marriage supper of the Lamb. "Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." Let Him be not only your Captain but your costume. So, more and more shall sin and self be hidden from view, and Christ shall be all in all.

Paul said, "This also we wish, even your perfection." Its first elements are laid in pardon and the new birth. It advances in the growing maturity and sincerity of the new man. It developes in the powers of the soul as they are more and more subdued and pervaded by grace. It culminates in the ripe and mellow fruits of the Spirit which make the soul a fair garden of God. "Let us go on unto perfection." "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

"Who would be cleansed from every sin,
Must to God's holy altar bring
The whole of life—its joys, its tears,
Its hopes, its loves, its powers, its years,
The will and every cherish'd thing!"

Lesson 36.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—PSALM LXVIII. 18, "THOU HAST RECEIVED GIFTS FOR MEN."

Question XXXVI.: What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?

Answer : THE BENEFITS WHICH IN THIS LIFE DO ACCOMPANY OR FLOW FROM JUSTIFICATION, ADOPTION, AND SANCTIFICATION, ARE ASSURANCE OF GOD'S LOVE, PEACE OF CONSCIENCE, JOY IN THE HOLY GHOST, INCREASE OF GRACE, AND PERSEVERANCE THEREIN TO THE END.

WE are here called to note some out of many additional benefits which flow from union to Christ, namely, those more or less fully enjoyed by the people of God in this present life.

The first of these is "assurance of God's love." This is a blessing which it is the duty of believers earnestly to seek, which is most helpful to their comfort and progress, and which is within the attainment of all who in God's strength endeavour to reach it. There is the assurance of understanding, of faith, and of hope; and the Holy Spirit can lead us into the fulness of this blessing. Speaking of those who seemed beyond all fear, Rowland Hill said, "I am not there yet; I still rejoice with trembling." Yet faith and hope can see the haven even through the darkness of the storm.

Another blessing is "peace of conscience." When we are taught how God can justly pardon sin, and realise that He has pardoned ours, conscience is at rest. The sense of abiding guilt is gone, and a sweet and hallowed calm stills the soul.

“Joy in the Holy Ghost” is another of the “best gifts” which believers should “covet earnestly.” It is not a gladness which merely comes from or through the Holy Spirit. His presence and influence are the very atmosphere wherein alone this joy can be breathed, and outside of which it cannot be known.

“Increase of grace” is also promised and secured to those who are in union with Christ. God ever “giveth more grace,” yea “grace for grace.” By these expressions are meant not only the addition of one grace to another; not only grace abiding and abounding in its many forms; but grace also in its full maturity, ready to pass into glory. Richard Cameron thought of it when on the field of battle he prayed, “Lord, spare the green and take the ripe.”

Lastly, there is “perseverance therein to the end.” No true child of God shall ever fall away either totally or finally. Israel has fallen away, but not totally nor shall it be finally. So is it with individual believers. When one was asked, “Do you believe in the perseverance of the saints?” he replied, “Yes, but not in the perseverance of sinners.” Then, when further questioned, “May not a child of God sink very low and yet not perish?” he gave this significant reply, “It would be very dangerous to make the experiment.” A good bishop on his way to Jerusalem died between Jaffa and the city, but no true Christian shall fail to reach the place prepared for him in Zion above.

“I lift my eyes, the cloud grows thin, I see the blue above it,
And day by day the pathway smooths, since I have learnt to love it.”

A traveller tells how, when nearing Jerusalem, after dangerous journeyings through the Holy Land, the escort fired off all their pistols before entering the gates. It is a lesson for us. No child of God should be off his guard till he is about to enter the portals of the Zion above.

Lesson 37.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—LUKE XXIII. 43, "TO-DAY SHALT THOU BE WITH ME IN PARADISE."

Question XXXVII.: What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?

Answer : THE SOULS OF BELIEVERS ARE AT THEIR DEATH
MADE PERFECT IN HOLINESS,
AND DO IMMEDIATELY PASS INTO GLORY ;
AND THEIR BODIES,
BEING STILL UNITED TO CHRIST,
DO REST IN THEIR GRAVES TILL THE RESURRECTION.

NOT in this life only have believers hope in Christ. They have "sky to their picture." If a man have salvation not only secured but assured, he may say with Paul, "I am ready . . . to die," or sing like another,

"Come, death, shake hands, I kiss thy bands,
'Tis happiness for me to die.
What? Dost thou think that I will shrink,
I go to immortality."

Death is the separation of soul and body. The tenant quits his cottage of clay, and is gone. Of what remains we can say,

"'Tis but a casket that lies here,
The gem that filled it sparkles yet."

At death the souls of believers are "made perfect in holiness." From the new birth their inner man has been a battle-field, where nature and grace have striven for the mastery. Though in some of God's children a "Thirty years' war" and more, and though they have sometimes been pressed hard for a time, yet the issue is never doubtful. Grace goes on to conquer, till at last, when death comes, sin, the old nature, is driven for ever off the field.

The souls of believers at death "do immediately pass into glory." Of every believer who has fallen asleep in Jesus it may be said,

"His spirit at a bound, left its encumbering clay,
His tent at sunrise on the ground, a blackened ruin lay."

Guarded by an angel escort, the ransomed soul wings its flight to glory, there to be "for ever with the Lord," where they neither "want nor weep nor weary." Tribulation in this life cannot separate us from the love of God, but the time is coming when the love of God shall separate us from all tribulation.

Meantime, their bodies are "still united to Christ." Death cannot snap the bond that links the believer, soul and body, to the Saviour. Let us honour, therefore, the dust of them who sleep in Jesus. The grave is but a temporary wardrobe after all, where the bodies of believers rest.

"Take them, oh grave, and let them lie
Folded upon thy narrow shelves,
As garments by the soul laid by
And precious only to ourselves."

There shall they remain till the trumpet sound and the dead in Christ rise first. Meantime, what is there for us in the dark valley? Only the shadow of death if we be Christ's; He hath taken the substance. He will give us His rod and His staff, and His goodness and mercy shall see us safely home.

"Far away beyond the shadows
Of this weary vale of tears,
There the tide of bliss is sweeping
Through the bright and changeless years.
Oh I long to be with Jesus,
In the mansions of the blest;
Where the wicked cease from troubling,
And the weary are at rest."

Lesson 38.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—HEBREWS XII. 23, "THE SPIRITS OF JUST MEN MADE PERFECT."

Question XXXVIII.: What benefits do believers receive from Christ at the resurrection?

Answer :
AT THE RESURRECTION,
BELIEVERS, BEING RAISED UP IN GLORY,
SHALL BE OPENLY ACKNOWLEDGED AND ACQUITTED
IN THE DAY OF JUDGMENT, AND
MADE PERFECTLY BLESSED IN THE FULL ENJOYING OF GOD
TO ALL ETERNITY.

THAT immortality is possible may be proved from nature ; that it is probable, from the constitution of man ; and that it is certain, from Scripture. Christ hath "brought life and immortality to light."

Believers shall be "raised up in glory," for if the grave sanctify, glory will crown them. The body laid beneath the sod in corruption, dishonour, and weakness, shall be raised again in incorruption, honour, and power. The resurrection of Christ is both a prophecy and a pledge that the same shall be realised in the case of all His people. To every believer we may say,

"How could thy happiness be clearer?
Each footstep brings thy birthright nearer."

Then shall follow the great assize, the day of judgment, when believers shall be "openly acknowledged." The Judge, He whom they were not afraid or ashamed to confess here among men, shall Himself confess *them* before the Father and before His angels. "Come, ye blessed." What reversal then of earthly estimates! While many great ones shall bow their heads with shame, God's hidden ones shall be owned as children and heirs. They shall

also be "acquitted" fully and openly. In the balances of conscience, of the law, and of the Gospel, the believer in Christ shall not be found wanting. The Judge shall publicly proclaim his pardon, and confirm his title to heaven.

Moreover, believers shall be "perfectly blessed in the full enjoying of God to all eternity," attaining at length the chief end of man. Who can tell the bliss of such a future? "That Christ and the sinner should be one, and share heaven together, is the wonder of salvation; what more could love do?" The heaven upon earth which God's people often enjoy in duty or devotion shall be as nothing in comparison with heaven in heaven. All other joys, and they are neither few nor small, shall be eclipsed by the cloudless, sinless, endless vision of God. We do not go to heaven and find God there; we go to God and find it heaven.

Here on earth we are often tempted to cry, "I'm weary of straying, I'd fain be at rest." We long for a day without any setting sun, for a summer without any fall of the leaf. We desire a better country where there shall be no sin and no sorrow; no darkness and no death; no parting and no pain.

Oh, Paradise! oh, Paradise!
Who doth not crave for rest?
Who would not seek the happy land
Where they who love are blest?

Yet let us ever remember the great law of spiritual life, that only the pure in heart shall see God. They only *can* do so now; they only *shall* do so hereafter.

Lesson 39.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—1 SAMUEL XV. 22, "BEHOLD, TO OBEY IS BETTER THAN SACRIFICE."

Question XXXIX.: What is the duty which God requireth of man?

Answer :
THE DUTY
WHICH GOD REQUIRETH OF MAN IS
OBEDIENCE TO HIS REVEALED WILL.

OUR thoughts are here drawn back to the main substance of the Scriptures. They principally teach "what man is to believe concerning God, and what duty God requires of man." We have already considered the first of these branches; the second is now before us. True faith will manifest itself in loving obedience. Faith and practice in holy and happy harmony distinguished a minister of Jesus Christ, of whom it was said,

"Who heard him saw life in his doctrine shine,
Who saw him heard sound doctrine in his life."

Man's duty toward God is summed up in one comprehensive word, "Obedience." We owe it to Him who is our Creator, our Lawgiver, and our Sovereign. It is the wisdom of sinful man, who cannot be a law unto Himself, to accept the poet's dictum, "Let them obey who know not how to rule." Whether as innocent which he once was, or guilty as he now is, man is bound to obey God. The obligation is both universal and perpetual. Even the man Christ Jesus "learned obedience," and was in that respect not only our surety but our example as well.

God has given us a rule to guide us in "His revealed will." Fallen as we are, it would not do that we should be left to serve according to mere impulse or fancy. The will of God was first written as a law of nature on man's heart; it was expressly proclaimed by Jehovah's voice in the code given from Sinai; and it

is now fully and finally revealed in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Each of these have their lessons and their claims; and the voice of conscience tells us what "ought" and "ought not" to be done. To us this will of God has been fully revealed. On the tablet of the heart, from the mount of Sinai, in the cross of Calvary, He has made known to us all that is needful for our conduct here and our salvation hereafter.

As a matter of general experience, it is both easier and more common to know the will of God than to practise it. Have not even God's children too often to confess with shame,

"I see the right and I approve it too,
Confess the wrong and yet the wrong pursue"?

What is the sad secret, if secret it be? Is it not because of the power of sinful desires and passions, which should long ere now have been renounced and mortified? What if after his resurrection, Lazarus had still worn from day to day the grave-clothes with which he had been bound in the tomb? Why should he, a living man, wear any longer these habiliments of death? Are not many Christians in such a case? What are these corruptions which fetter us but the grave-clothes of spiritual death? May He, who alone can, speak the word, "Loose him and let him go." Then shall we enjoy a holy liberty in doing what God would have us to do. It has been said, "Self-will was Adam's fall; but self-will died on the cross." Oh for the Spirit of Him who either in duty or suffering could ever say, "Not My will, but Thine, be done."

It has been well said, "The area of duty is confessedly larger than our scanty powers can occupy. In this state of original helplessness accordingly, one resource only remains open to us,—to throw ourselves with all our infirmities on the Divine help."

Lesson 40.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—LUKE X. 26, “WHAT IS WRITTEN IN THE LAW? HOW READEST THOU?”

Question XL.: What did God at first reveal to man for the rule of his obedience?

Answer: THE RULE WHICH GOD
AT FIRST REVEALED TO MAN FOR HIS OBEDIENCE WAS
THE MORAL LAW.

Question XLI.: Where is the moral law summarily comprehended?

Answer: THE MORAL LAW
IS SUMMARILY COMPREHENDED IN
THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

GOD has specially revealed His will, first in the law, then in the gospel. With the former of these we have here to do. The law is moral in the sense that the things commanded are good and right in themselves, even if never made matter of precept. That being so, it is universally and perpetually binding on men; and Christ did not come to destroy but “to fulfil it.”

Recall the manner of its promulgation. Israel had been redeemed out of Egypt, and at Sinai expressed their readiness to enter into covenant with God. On the day appointed, wonderful manifestations of the Divine Presence took place. From the mountain, which seemed on fire, there rose the black smoke as of a furnace. Shocks of earthquake made all nature reel, while lightnings darted across the heavens in splinters of flame, and thunders made their dread voices heard over the roars of tempest. After the loud, long peal of a trumpet, the Most High uttered His voice, and the people listened with trembling. What God spoke was the Ten Words or Commandments, which are the sum of the Moral Law. No other words of God were heard by the

people ; no others were graven on stone by Jehovah's own finger ; and no others were deposited in the ark. These features mark off the Moral Law as a code always binding on mankind, either as a rule of righteousness or of life.

The Law is a reflection of Jehovah's character as well as of His will. It is so in its broad and massive perfection. As an embodiment of righteousness both full and faultless—the perfect work of a perfect mind—the bright attributes of God are displayed in every precept. There is a marked fitness and congruity between many of His perfections and His commands. Is there not a reflection, in the first commandment, of God's unity ; in the second, of His spirituality ; in the third, of His jealousy ; in the fourth, of His holiness ; in the fifth, of His love ; in the sixth, of His mercy ; in the seventh, of His faithfulness ; in the eighth, of His justice ; in the ninth, of His truth ; and in the tenth, of His bounty ? But in these commandments we have not only a reflection of what God is, but a declaration of what He would have man to be. It is a mirror, by which we may see, and a standard, by which we may measure, what we are in His holy sight.

We may learn precious lessons from God's law. It may discover to us our vileness, our guilt, our condemnation ; and, as a consequence, our need of Christ. If we be children of God, the law is still the rule of our life. It restrains the power of evil, shows us what our sins deserve, and is at once illustrated and glorified by the example of our Lord. Would that like the Psalmist we could say from our heart, " Oh how love I thy law ! it is my meditation all the day."

" A glory gilds the sacred page,
Majestic, like the sun ;
It gives a light to every age,
It gives but borrows none."

Lesson 41.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—ROMANS XIII. 10, "LOVE IS THE FULFILLING OF THE LAW."

Question XLII.: What is the sum of the ten commandments ?

Answer : THE SUM OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS IS
TO LOVE THE LORD OUR GOD
WITH ALL OUR HEART, WITH ALL OUR SOUL,
WITH ALL OUR STRENGTH, AND WITH ALL OUR MIND ;
AND OUR NEIGHBOUR AS OURSELVES.

ACCORDING to the express teaching of our Lord Himself, the duty of man is twofold ; it is love to God and love to his neighbour. All other duties are essentially included in these two great commandments.

First, we must "love the Lord our God," and that supremely. That love has been defined to be "the complete harmonious self-dedication of the entire inner man to God as to its highest good." It is not enough that we fear, or serve, or trust Him ; He desires and demands the settled inclination of the whole man to Himself. We must love Him with the heart, the entire inner sphere of personal consciousness ; with the soul, the whole faculty of feeling and desire ; with the strength, the full energy of every power ; and with the mind, that is, with all our capacities of thought and will. "The best Christian is not he who can spin the finest cobweb, but he whose heart beats with the purest pulse toward God." Another has quaintly said, "If we love Him, even the veriest trifles will have hooks and barbs to draw after them some thoughts of Him."

Next, we must love "our neighbour as ourselves ;" that is, no less than ourselves. The practical side of this duty lies in the

golden rule that we should not expect more of others than we ourselves are willing to do, and that we should be willing to do toward others all that we can in reason expect of them. Such love is surely "the fulfilling of the law," if it makes us like to Him of whom it is said, "God is love."

In accordance with this double duty of love, the commandments are divided into two parts, in the first of which are embraced our duties in relation to God, and in the second, our duties in relation to society. When we begin to fix the division, we have to face the question, To which table does the fifth commandment belong? Many would readily answer, Surely to the second. But are not parents in place of God to their children? An infant's first ideas of Him spring from his ideas regarding his parents; and father and mother are, all through the childhood of their little ones, the vicegerents of God to them. For this and other reasons we assign the fifth commandment to the first table, and then we have five relating to God, and five to men. In the first table we have our loving duty toward God as to I. His person, II. His worship, III. His name, IV. His day, and V. His representatives. In the second table we have our loving duty toward man, as regards VI. his life, VII. his chastity, VIII. his property, IX. his good name, and X. his whole belongings. This code begins and ends with the heart, out of which are "the issues of life."

Love to God is our first duty, love to man our second. If we love any other before God, or more than God, our religion is vain. Moreover, we must first love God before we can rightly love our neighbour. In love to God and man, only realised in and through Christ, we have the very secret of happiness, which Goethe defined to be "the fitting of self to its sphere."

Lesson 42.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—1 CORINTH. VI. 20, "YE ARE BOUGHT WITH A PRICE ;
THEREFORE GLORIFY GOD."

Question XLIII.: What is the preface to the ten
Commandments?

Answer : THE PREFACE TO THE TEN COMMANDMENTS IS IN THESE
WORDS,

*I am the Lord thy God,
which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the
house of bondage.*

Question XLIV.: What doth the preface to the ten
commandments teach us?

Answer : THE PREFACE TO THE TEN COMMANDMENTS
TEACHETH US
THAT BECAUSE GOD IS THE LORD
AND OUR GOD AND REDEEMER,
THEREFORE WE ARE BOUND TO KEEP ALL HIS COMMANDMENTS.

THE first words uttered by God from Sinai were a declaration
of His own Being, and His relation to His people.

"I am the Lord," or better still, I am Jehovah. This is God's covenant name, and expresses His absolute and eternal existence. Then He adds, "Thy God," for Israel had already expressed their willingness to enter into covenant with Him. In contrast to the "gods many and lords many" of the heathen nations around them, Jehovah had become their God and they His people. Still further, He proclaims Himself as their redeemer who had delivered them from Egypt. He had set them free from degrading and irksome toil ; from hard and cruel oppression ; and from gross corruption and idolatry. Not yet at least could they forget the mighty deeds and wonders of their salvation. Therefore as His ransomed people, they were bound to love and trust Him, and

render loyal obedience to His revealed will. Does not a similar obligation bind us? We acknowledge Jehovah to be the one living and true God; we address Him as "our God;" and we look to Him for redemption from bondage and death. Are we His creatures, His people, His redeemed? Then surely we are under solemn obligations to obey. We remember what Jesus said, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments."

There are rules of interpretation which must be applied to the law if we would understand it aright. We quote them here on the threshold of our study of the commandments in detail. First, When a duty is commanded, the contrary sin is forbidden; and when a sin is forbidden, the contrary duty is enjoined. Second, In every duty commanded, all the causes and means to it are included; so in every sin forbidden are embraced all temptations and occasions to it. Third, Whatever sin is prohibited in the higher degree is prohibited in the lower. These simple rules are based on the fact that, while human laws take cognizance of outward action only, the law of God sweeps the whole range of man's heart and state and conduct. "Thy commandment is exceeding broad."

This law demands perfect obedience. If at any one moment, if in any one particular, if in the faintest inward motion of the soul, we fail to obey, then all hope of a righteousness of our own is gone for ever. Already this is our case. Only in Christ, who is "the end of the law for righteousness," can we find divine favour now. Oh that in the Beloved we may be accepted of God! Then shall He be "our God"—His infinity the extent of our inheritance, His eternity the duration of our happiness, His unchangeableness the rock of our rest; yea, all His blessed attributes engaged for our salvation and security.

Lesson 43.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—MATT. IV. 10, "THOU SHALT WORSHIP THE LORD THY GOD,
AND HIM ONLY SHALT THOU SERVE."

Question XLV.: Which is the first commandment?

ANSWER: THE FIRST COMMANDMENT IS,
THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME.

HERE the idea of God is foremost and supreme, standing on the very threshold of the law, as it does of the gospel—"God so loved,"—and indeed of the whole Bible—"In the beginning God created." In this law God speaks to men; speaks to all men; speaks to every man personally, individually, as if there were no other on earth. He does not say Ye, and so allow us to hide under cover of a crowd, but Thou, with as unerring an aim as when Nathan sternly proclaimed to David, "Thou art the man."

"Thou shalt have no other gods before me." No one can mistake the necessity and significance of this command in the case of Israel. All the nations around them, or among whom at any time they dwelt, had their many false and foolish gods whom they blindly feared and served. But God gave to Abraham and his seed the knowledge of Himself as the living and true God—a precious heritage which He would have them to maintain and cherish. But the tendency to hasten "elsewhere than to" God alone, as the Hebrew has it, is innate in fallen man; and through Israel God addresses the same charge to all His creatures, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me." In the heart, if not in the home or the temple, there are many, too many, objects, which compete with God for service and worship.

"And still from Him we turn away,
And fill our hearts with worthless things;
The fires of avarice melt the clay,
And forth the idol springs!"

Ambition's flame and passion's heat,
 By wondrous alchemy transmute
 Earth's dross, to raise some gilded brute
 To fill Jehovah's seat."

As we shall see in next lesson, it is man's duty to know, acknowledge, and glorify the true God and Him alone. But mark the form of expression in the command. It is literally, "There shall be to thee;" in English, "Thou shalt have." If God had said, Thou shalt love, or Thou shalt serve, or Thou shalt worship, some aspect of duty might seem to be excluded. But "Thou shalt have" covers everything, every right and suitable affection, every becoming exercise and duty. To think of Him, to remember Him, to choose Him, to trust Him, to love Him, to walk with Him; all are embraced in the simple formula of the precept.

Again, the words mean, "Thou shalt have Me as thy God and no other—no other either in place of Me or along with Me." Satan is the "God of this world;" we must renounce his authority and service. Self is many a man's "household god;" it must fall before Jehovah. The natural man has his trinity of Pleasure, Profit, and Praise; but they promise what they never give, even lasting joy; and they give what they never promise, everlasting pain. Only in Christ can we truly know God, only through Christ can we worship and serve Him as we should.

"There's not a leaf within the bower,
 There's not a bud upon the tree,
 There's not a dew-drop on the flower,
 But bears the impress, Lord, of Thee !

"Yes, dew-drops, leaves, and buds, and all,
 The smallest, like the greatest things,
 The sea's vast space, the earth's wide ball,
 Alike proclaim Thee King of Kings."

Lesson 44.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—JOB XXII. 21, “ACQUAINT NOW THYSELF WITH HIM, AND BE AT PEACE.”

Question XLVI.: What is required in the first commandment ?

Answer : THE FIRST COMMANDMENT REQUIRETH US
TO KNOW AND ACKNOWLEDGE GOD
TO BE THE ONLY TRUE GOD AND OUR GOD,
AND TO WORSHIP AND GLORIFY HIM ACCORDINGLY.

OUR first inquiry must be, What is “conformity to” this commandment, what duties does it enjoin, what does it require of man ?

It is our duty, and should be our desire, “to know” God. Even Voltaire declared that if God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent one. But what is it to know Him ? To see the evidences of His existence in the world of nature ; to listen to the voice within which witnesses for Him ; to mark the action of His controlling hand in human history ; this is much, but it is far from all. To recognize Him as the God who gave His son to die for sinners ; to believe in Him as a God of mercy and grace, now waiting and willing to receive back the lost ; this is far more, but it is not all. Those who believe in Christ have an intimate, spiritual, heart knowledge of God. This and this alone is worthy of the name, but it is such as “flesh and blood” cannot reveal.

Moreover it is our duty to “acknowledge God.” We remember the scene on the top of Carmel ; the multitudinous gathering—the proposed test—the frantic, almost fiendish appeals of the false prophets to their god—the descent of the fire on Elijah’s altar—and finally, the issue of the trial, when, falling on their faces, the multitude cried, “Jehovah, He is the God ; Jehovah,

He is the God !” Even if it be deemed the fruit of sight as well as of faith, it was a noble and national tribute to the God of Israel. So must we own God by our lips and in our lives. A profession of religion is the best of coats, but the worst of cloaks. If we truly know God, we must neither be afraid nor ashamed to confess Him openly.

“And our God.” Even Israel at the crisis mentioned did not add, “and our God,” though we trust many of them said so in their hearts. In our land and in our day it costs little to own God as God ; but if He be “our God” and Father in Christ we may find the duty harder to discharge. Is there not often the fear of man to be faced, and the favour of man to be forfeited, if we “confess with the mouth” Christ as Lord ? It is that same Peter who denied his Master, who in his epistle gives us the counsel, “add to your faith courage.” He would have his own bitter experience made profitable to us.

Knowing Him, confessing Him, we must “worship and glorify Him accordingly.” What is this but to love God and behave as those who do ? for to love God is the be-all and end-all of true religion. How hard to realise is this supreme duty ! We feel that we ought to honour our parents, to pray, to read the Scriptures, to respect the life and property of others ; but do we feel, in anything like the same sense or degree that we ought to love God ? Few will say Yes to such a question. How profoundly wrapt in sleep, if not utterly dead, are the consciences of men as to this great duty !

Ere this Lord’s day closes, we cannot do better than firmly, closely, determinedly press home on our own consciences this first and greatest of duties. Do we love God, and love Him supremely ? If so, where are its evidences and its fruits ? “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”

Lesson 45.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—EPHESIANS II. 12, “HAVING NO HOPE, AND WITHOUT GOD IN THE WORLD.”

Question XLVII.: What is forbidden in the first commandment?

Answer: THE FIRST COMMANDMENT FORBIDDETH
THE DENYING, OR NOT WORSHIPPING AND GLORIFYING
THE TRUE GOD, AS GOD, AND OUR GOD; AND
THE GIVING OF THAT WORSHIP AND GLORY TO ANY OTHER
WHICH IS DUE TO HIM ALONE.

BESIDES “any want of conformity unto,” there is also “transgression of,” the law of God. With sins of commission against this commandment we have now to do.

First of all, “the denying” of God, which is atheism—no-god-ism—is forbidden. It may be either speculative or practical. One may declare that having studied both the book of nature and the constitution of man, he sees no evidences of a God. No words written here will meet such a case, but we cannot forbear quoting the words of Lord Bacon, “God never wrought a miracle to convince atheism, because His ordinary works convince it.” Then there is the atheism of which the Psalmist tells us, “The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.” Mark the double statement. He who says so does it in his heart; it is the old story of the wish father to the thought. It would suit him well for many reasons if he could find or make an end of God. The steps of his thinking are traceable. What began with Would there were no God, became by and by, Perhaps there is no God; later still, it developed into, Surely there is no God; and finally came the full-blown declaration, “There is no God.” One qualifying word after another drops off in the frequent

repetition, but the permanent quantity—"No God"—remains, and it becomes his creed. God says of such an one that he is a fool. A fool because he wants to keep his sin but part with his God; a fool, because he shuts his eyes to the plain print of nature; a fool, because his parrot cry cannot alter the greatest of all facts; and a fool, because if he stands by his creed he will lose his soul.

The commandment also forbids the "not worshipping and glorifying Him" in accordance with His nature and relations. We have a concrete example of this sin in Belshazzar. "The God in whose hand thy breath is and whose are all thy ways hast thou not glorified." Could we ourselves meet such a charge? In the inner temple, where mind and will and conscience are the worshippers, has sincere homage been paid to God? But another offence, even more glaring, must be noted. If it be sin to withhold from God the worship and glory due to Him, surely it is an aggravation of the sin to give these to any other. God is jealous in this matter; and no man will give God's place to any other object, whether it be self, or riches, or pleasure, or wife, or child, without smarting for it. If God break not our idol in pieces before our eyes, it will some day crush us in its fall. We shall be compelled, like the Israelites, to drink the waters which have been strewn with the ashes of our false gods. How blessed they who can in Christ say that God is their portion and their all!

But oh! Thou bounteous Giver of all good,
Thou art of all Thy gifts, Thyself the crown!
Give what Thou canst, without Thee we are poor,
And with Thee rich, take what Thou wilt away.

Lesson 46.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—PSALM CXXXIX. 1, "O LORD, THOU HAST SEARCHED ME
AND KNOWN ME."

Question XLVIII.: What are we specially taught by these words (*before me*) in the first commandment?

Answer: THESE WORDS (*before me*) IN THE FIRST COMMANDMENT
TEACH US

THAT GOD, WHO SEETH ALL THINGS,
TAKETH NOTICE OF, AND
IS MUCH DISPLEASED WITH
THE SIN OF HAVING ANY OTHER GOD.

IN the original the words rather mean "beside" me, or "in addition to" me, but the rendering "before me" contains a great truth from which we shall gain much if we carry it all through our study of the commandments.

"God seeth all things." Let us try to realise this omniscience. As to mere space, there is no obscure corner of His universe where He does not see everything. But how does He so entirely know man's heart? Men know more or less of each other, less rather than more; but all such knowledge is from without; it is not immediate or direct but mediate or indirect. By looks, by words, by deeds, we reveal to our fellows what we are. Angels, whether good or evil, can possess similar knowledge of man but no other. For instance, does Satan directly, entirely know man's heart or thoughts? He does not. He knows generally the constitution and circumstances of man, even of every man. With clear intelligence, to which is added long experience, he can note every glance of the eye, every whisper on the lips, every turn of the hand or foot, and guess with almost infallible accuracy what in any given circumstances we are likely to think

—above all—for that is the force of the declaration here—to say or do. Beyond this he cannot go ; for only God who has made it, seeth and knoweth immediately and absolutely the heart of man. It is one of His prerogatives in which no other, no creature, can share.

Now this all-seeing God “taketh notice of” any breach of His commandments. Though He seems far away, He knoweth all. In many steamers there is what is called a tell-tale compass. It hangs face downwards from the roof of the captain’s cabin, so that even from his berth he may lift his eyes and mark the course of the vessel. The steersman knows well that though not by his side the master can note at any moment whether he is keeping the course or no. Faint image this of the invisible but watchful eye of Him with whom we have to do !

If God sees sins against this commandment, how does He regard them ? He is “much displeased.” To set up anything as an object of worship other than Himself is an affront to Him who will not give His glory to another nor His praise to graven images. Against this sin, as against all the ungodliness of men, “the wrath of God is revealed.” Let us flee to Him who bore that wrath for sinners, so that, like Indians among the prairie flames, we may “stand where the fire has been,” and then we shall be safe. Those who seek and find shelter in the Rock of Ages are glad rather than otherwise to realise that their heavenly Father knoweth not only them even to the inmost thought, but everything, good and evil alike, that can affect their comfort or their joy.

“The presence of God’s glory is in heaven, the presence of His power on earth, the presence of His justice in hell, and the presence of His grace with His people. If He deny us His powerful presence, we fall into nothing ; if He deny us His gracious presence, we fall into sin ; if He deny us His merciful presence, we fall into hell.”

Lesson 47.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—LEVITICUS x. 3, " I WILL BE SANCTIFIED IN THEM THAT
COME NIGH ME."

Question XLIX.: Which is the second commandment?

Answer: THE SECOND COMMANDMENT IS,
THOU SHALT NOT MAKE UNTO THEE ANY GRAVEN IMAGE
OR ANY LIKENESS OF ANYTHING THAT IS IN HEAVEN ABOVE,
OR THAT IS IN THE EARTH BENEATH, OR THAT IS IN THE WATER
UNDER THE EARTH.
THOU SHALT NOT BOW DOWN TO THEM, NOR SERVE THEM ;
FOR I THE LORD THY GOD AM A JEALOUS GOD,
VISITING THE INIQUITY OF THE FATHERS UPON THE CHILDREN
UNTO THE THIRD AND FOURTH GENERATION OF THEM THAT HATE ME,
AND SHOWING MERCY UNTO THOUSANDS
OF THEM THAT LOVE ME AND KEEP MY COMMANDMENTS.

THE first commandment tells us whom we are to worship, the second teaches us how we are to worship.

"Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image." The suggestive words, "make unto thee," might well awaken thought, for they remind us that graven images are simply "made" things, conceived in the brain and wrought by the hand of man himself. We remember with what solemn sarcasm Isaiah describes this manufacture in chapter xlv. 16, 17, "He burneth part thereof in the fire," &c. Let us paraphrase the passage, and hear the maker of idols speak. "Here is so much wood, a large piece ; I must make a fire, for I am cold. Here is another piece, not any less ; I must use it to cook food, for I am hungry. I must first be warmed and filled before I make my god. Now, I have still some wood left, as much as I could spare, quite sufficient for a God." Then when the cutting and carving of the idol are

completed, the prophet in abrupt sentences of horror and amazement cries, "Look at him? He is kneeling before the stump of his tree! He clasps his hands in worship! He prays to it, for we can catch the very words, 'Deliver me, for thou art my God!'" This making of images is forbidden.

But there is more, for we read, "nor any likeness of anything," &c. So jealous is God regarding His own worship, that He prohibits, as objects of devotion, any and every thing within the wide universe, anything "in heaven above," angels, saints, sun, moon, stars; or "in the earth beneath," men, beasts, trees, fire; or "in the water under the earth," rivers or seas, with the living creatures they contain. Nowhere but in God, nowhere in all space, is man to seek an object of worship.

Now mark what follows. "Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them nor serve them." For purposes of art or amusement man may make what he pleases if it be becoming and lawful in itself, but as objects of worship or essential elements of devotion, nothing is permitted. And why? Because in worshipping God who is a Spirit, sensuous materials and methods may kill the inward purity and sincerity which alone are pleasing to God. All outward acts and forms must be, as one has said, "only a jet thrown up from the worship of the spirit."

We are called this day to wait on God in His ordinances. May we be of the new order of those who "worship God in the Spirit." Then and then only shall this holy day be a foretaste of the perfect homage and praise above.

"God's worship is
That only He inspires; and His bright words,
Writ in the red-leaved volume of the heart,
Return to Him in prayer, as dew to heaven."

Lesson 48.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—DEUT. XII. 32, “WHAT THING SOEVER I COMMAND YOU,
OBSERVE TO DO IT.”

Question L.: What is required in the second commandment?

Answer: THE SECOND COMMANDMENT REQUIRETH
THE RECEIVING,
OBSERVING,
AND KEEPING PURE AND ENTIRE
ALL SUCH RELIGIOUS WORSHIP AND ORDINANCES
AS GOD HATH APPOINTED IN HIS WORD.

UNDER the covenant of Sinai, idolatry was condemned in three aspects. Religiously, it was a sin; nationally, it was a crime; and personally, it was a wrong done against God. The words above refer to the first of these views.

God's worship is here represented as a gift, a trust, a heritage, which we must honour first by “receiving” it. He has shown us in His word the worship which He desires; be it ours to say, This and nothing else, this and nothing less, shall it be my endeavour to offer to God. Moreover, His worship is a privilege or trust, which we must honour by “observing” it. We must not be like the son who said, I go, yet went not; we must recognise and practise all the obligations it involves. Then it is also a heritage, which has been committed to us by God, and transmitted to us through the ages, and which it is our duty now to maintain in its purity and entirety.

What are that “religious worship” and those “ordinances” which He has appointed in His word? Prayer is part of the worship we owe to God; prayer in secret and in public; prayer for ourselves and for others; fervent, believing prayer, prompted by the Holy Spirit, and presented in the name of Jesus. Praise

also is a duty we owe to God. Our souls must not be as wingless birds, that cannot mount to heaven; rather should we ever present to God the incense of adoration and gratitude. The reading and preaching of the Word are main elements in His worship, and are to be performed with diligence, reverence, and faith. The observance of the Sacraments and of the Sabbath is a duty by which we openly and suitably express our relations and obligations to Him, as our God and Redeemer. These forms of worship and service, and many more, are defined and prescribed in Scripture. Through them, His people receive from God and He from them; even as they give to God and He to them; for this is communion with Him.

God's worship must be kept "pure and entire." This condemns both hypocrisy and deficiency. How empty and lifeless is the homage of many! It is like a Scotch castle, which though attractive and imposing to look upon, is utterly hollow within,—no staircases, nor chambers, nor inmates to be found. Again we must see that our worship also be entire. We must neglect no part of it, for all are due and pleasing to Him, and all are needful and helpful to us.

What a happy paradox we may find here! We are commanded to worship an image after all, even Him who is "the brightness of the Father's glory and the express image of His person." All angels and men are called to worship Him. Let us give our whole hearts to Him, for He is worthy.

" Even he his all in alms who spends
With heart defiled, secures no meed;
The disposition—not the deed
Has value—all on it depends."

Lesson 49.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—MATT. XV., “IN VAIN THEY DO WORSHIP ME.”

Question LI.: What is forbidden in the second commandment?

Answer: THE SECOND COMMANDMENT
FORBIDDETH
THE WORSHIPPING OF GOD BY IMAGES,
OR ANY OTHER WAY NOT APPOINTED IN HIS WORD.

IT is a solemn commentary on human nature that God should have expressed eight of the commandments in a negative or prohibitory form. He knows our proneness to evil, and would stop us on the very threshold of every iniquity by the warning voice “Thou shalt not.”

This commandment forbids “the worshipping of God by images.” Some might suggest that it would have been better to say, “the worshipping of images instead of God.” But the words are well chosen, for men have often set up images as the representatives of the true God. Was not this the case with Aaron’s golden calf, and the idolatrous worship established by Jeroboam at Dan and Bethel? Probably they were regarded as forms “in, with, and under” which Jehovah might be worshipped, or, at least, as visible aids to devotion. All such second-hand worship God prohibits and condemns. He will have none of it; it is abomination in His sight. What shall we say of Romish worship in view of this command? Gross corruption from purity of doctrine and worship together characterizes the Church of Rome. Her ritual and ceremonies have no kinship with pure, simple, and spiritual worship.

But the commandment covers a yet wider range, for we are forbidden to adopt “any other way not appointed in His word.” We remember how God’s jealousy burst forth in the case of

Uzzaï, because, as David said, they "sought Him not after the due order." The main lines and features of His worship God has laid down in His word; but minor details are left to the decent ordering of Christian wisdom and discretion.

A question may here be raised. Some may ask, Is all art to be proscribed? Are sculpture and painting to be denounced even when they profess to lay some tribute at God's feet? Nay, verily; if wisely and reverently practised, they may be true *Ancillæ Domini*, handmaids of the Lord. They have done and do signal service in the elevation of the thoughts and tastes of men, and help them to understand better and appreciate more both the works and ways of God. The commandment does no more than limit their legitimate province in one direction. Let those noble arts deserve the praise bestowed on one of their votaries—

" His pictured morals mend the mind
And through the eye improve the heart.

This Sabbath morning we would not forget how often we cherish low and unworthy thoughts and pictures of God in our minds, and how often we offer to him empty unspiritual worship. Jesus was tempted in like manner when asked to bow in homage before the god of this world. The bait of immediate universal empire was dangled before His eyes if He would but consent. He was tempted grievously, but he triumphed gloriously. Now He is able to succour us. May we seek on this holy day very special nearness to God, and may we worship "in spirit and in truth." May "all that is within" us, mind, will, heart, memory, conscience, be stirred up, like a holy and harmonious choir, to bless His name. "Unite my heart to fear Thy name."

Lesson 50.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—EXODUS xxxiv. 14, "THE LORD, WHOSE NAME IS JEALOUS, IS A JEALOUS GOD."

Question LII.: What are the reasons annexed to the second commandment?

ANSWER: THE REASONS ANNEXED TO THE SECOND COMMANDMENT ARE GOD'S SOVEREIGNTY OVER US, HIS PROPRIETY IN US, AND THE ZEAL HE HATH TO HIS OWN WORSHIP.

THE authority of God in giving a law to man is absolute, and should be received without question. In this respect we should resemble those British soldiers on the field of battle of whom the poet sings :

"Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do or die."

Yet in the case of this and the three following commandments, God does kindly and condescendingly tell us the why and the wherefore of the duty He enjoins. His reasons here are based on the principle that though God cannot be injured, yet He may be wronged, by His creatures.

In the first place, we are reminded of God's "sovereignty over us," for He speaks as "I the Lord." As creator He claims, as an absolute right, obedience on our part to His laws. As man was not his own beginning, so he must not and cannot be his own end. If, as one has said, "we expect even a dog to come when he is called, and a clock to go when it is wound up," how much more is man as an intelligent creature, bound to do as God requires in His law?

Next, the Lawgiver says of Himself, "Thy God," which in a general sense is true of all mankind. But it applies in a very

special and blessed sense of those who are His children in Christ Jesus. They are His by creation and His by redemption; His by conquest, and yet His by their own voluntary choice. On all these His people God has claims which they can neither deny nor ignore.

But again, He speaks of Himself as "a jealous God." Here God speaks after the manner of men, for we must not associate either frailty or fury with Him. As the Husband of His bride the Church, He is profoundly stirred by all her interests and His relations to her. He is jealous over His people, His word, His name, His day; and here, His worship. In all that regards the homage due to Him, He claims the right to punish those who transgress, even the children suffering for their parents' sin, and at the same time, to reward those who love and obey Him. We have examples in the case of Saul regarding Agag in the Old Testament, and Ananias and Sapphira in the New. Does not Paul also plainly hint to the Corinthians that bodily ailments, if not death itself, were in many cases connected with unworthily partaking of the Lord's Supper?

How striking the twice-repeated display of this holy jealousy in our blessed Lord, when, in kingly indignation, He cleansed the temple courts of their vile abuses! It was His Father's house; He would not suffer it to remain or to be made, "a den of thieves." Ah! what of ourselves? If we be temples of the Holy Ghost, God shall be equally jealous over us and our worship. Come, Lord Jesus, whatever it may cost us, and cleanse the hearts that are thine own. Let not our souls deserve the sad description given by John Howe of man's nature. "The stately ruins are visible to every eye that bear on their front (yet extant) the doleful inscription, 'Here God once dwelt.'"

Lesson 51.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—REV. XV. 4, "WHO SHALL NOT FEAR THEE, O LORD,
AND GLORIFY THY NAME?"

Question LIII.: Which is the third commandment?

Answer: THE THIRD COMMANDMENT IS
THOU SHALT NOT TAKE THE NAME OF THE LORD THY GOD IN VAIN ;
FOR THE LORD WILL NOT HOLD HIM GUILTLSS
THAT TAKETH HIS NAME IN VAIN.

IN literal form and as a concrete precept, this commandment forbids perjury and blasphemy. According as we understand the expression "in vain," it may mean either, Thou shalt not swear falsely, that is, to cover a lie; or, Thou shalt not swear foolishly, that is, in an empty, rash, hollow manner. Now, according to one of our rules of interpretation already laid down, if an unlawful and unworthy use is made of God's name in all perjury and blasphemy, then everything inconsistent with the high honour and reverence due to it is forbidden. What is meant then by God's "name"? We must mount several steps which form a climax.

Sometimes the "name" of God denotes simply some epithet or designation by which He is personally marked off from all other beings. In the case of all these titles, such as Lord, Most High, Jesus, Lamb of God, and many, many more, the precept means, "Thou shalt not" lightly, thoughtlessly, profanely, use any "name" of God.

Sometimes the "name" of God means His worship and service. Of both the tabernacle and temple, He declared, "I will put my name there." In this sense the command runs thus, "Thou shalt not" neglect and despise but observe and reverence all that relates to the worship due to Me.

Sometimes the "name" of God means His glory, the fame of

His attributes and actions. "In Judah is God known; His name is great in Israel." In this light, we hear a voice say, "Thou shalt not" neglect or refuse to ascribe to God the glory of His mighty works, whether in creation, providence, or grace.

Most frequently in Scripture, and in this comprehensive sense we understand it here, the "name" of God means *His whole character and will as revealed to men*. In this sense, the Scriptures and other means of grace are but a part of its wide significance. Agur asked, "What is His name, and what is His Son's name, if thou canst tell?" Christ reveals the "name" of God. In His person, in His teaching, in His sinless life, in His atoning death, all the great and gracious perfections of God are displayed, and His will regarding man's salvation made known.

Now the commandment declares, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." If God's name be as described, how shall we paraphrase the precept? Thou shalt reverently regard and use this whole revelation of God's character and will. "The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and is safe."

"Thy great name,
In all its simple brevity, doth bless
The tongue that uses it; for me,
I ask no higher office than to fling
My spirit at Thy feet, and cry Thy name,
God! through eternity!"

Was it not Coleridge who said that in giving us the weekly Sabbath, God seemed to him to have given us fifty springs in the year? If during the past week our souls have been in a state of coldness and deadness like that of winter, what a blessing should the return of a spring-time be! Let us seek it to-day that our faith and hope and love, renewed like May flowers, may be quickened and beautified.

Lesson 52.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—PSALM XXIX. 2, "GIVE UNTO THE LORD THE GLORY DUE UNTO HIS NAME."

Question LIV.: What is required in the third commandment?

Answer: THE THIRD COMMANDMENT
REQUIRETH
THE HOLY AND REVERENT USE OF GOD'S
NAMES, TITLES, ATTRIBUTES,
ORDINANCES, WORD, AND WORKS.

IF in the first commandment we have set before us the object, and in the second the manner, we have in this third the spirit of worship. One has well defined it in this counsel, "Breathe over all the movements of your intellectual and social life just such a reverent, tender, and devout aroma as befits the closet and the secret hour of prayer." We need a worshipful spirit, so that all our works and ways may be pervaded by sanctified feeling. Is it not remarkable and significant that this is the only commandment of the ten, which may be said to have in the Lord's prayer a petition, and that the very first, all to itself? "Hallowed be Thy name." May the reverent and worshipful spirit which stands at the very threshold of true prayer be the atmosphere of all our lives!

In order to help our sluggish spirits, and quicken our too easy consciences, let us put in concrete form some details of the duty which this commandment enjoins. What reverence we owe to the names and titles of God! The Jews seldom, if ever, uttered the name Jehovah, the covenant designation which He assumed in relation to Israel. This may have been superstition, but it may teach us with what holy delicacy we should regard and

employ every title of Him who is Most High. These names are as vessels of the Lord ; they must be clean who would bear them. What less shall we say of His attributes? Legend and art have told us that when Cecilia, called patron saint of music, heard above her the anthems of angel choirs, she ceased her own praise and dropped her instrument as if to say, How poor and worthless my homage compared with theirs! Shall our reverence be less than hers? and our devotion less lowly and unselfish? How, moreover, shall we regard His ordinances? Should they not ever be to us instinct with the thought of God, tokens of His presence, channels of His grace, and as such be prized and observed with holy thankfulness and care. May we never approach them without feeling that the very air of heaven is wafted to our faces. Once more, think of His word and works? Mark the order, first, His word, then, His works; what does it mean? God has impressed His character on all that is His; we may see it in nature, in conscience, and in providence. But we may behold it most amply and clearly as displayed in His word. "Thou hast magnified Thy word above all Thy name." Surely if pious Mahometans cautiously pick up even stray scraps of paper lest they should contain some portion of the Koran, we may well treasure and reverence His holy word. Let every thing that is related to His voice to men, or His presence among men, be precious in our eyes. A reverent and devout spirit is in God's sight of great price.

"Heaven asks no surplice round the heart that feels,
And all is holy where devotion kneels."

Let us hear a word from the noble Leighton ere we close. "He pours out His grace plentifully upon humble hearts. His sweet dews and showers of grace slide off the mountains of pride, and fall on the low valleys of humble hearts, and make them pleasant and fertile."

Lesson 53.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—MAL. I. 6, "IF THEN I BE A FATHER, WHERE IS MINE HONOUR? AND IF I BE A MASTER, WHERE IS MY FEAR?"

Question LV.: What is forbidden in the third commandment?

Answer: THE THIRD COMMANDMENT FORBIDDETH
ALL PROFANING OR ABUSING
OF ANYTHING
WHEREBY GOD MAKETH HIMSELF KNOWN.

DOES this command forbid absolutely and in any circumstances the use of oaths? Certainly not; the condemnation is directed against their common, general, irreligious employment. Oaths may be taken on just occasion, as we see more than once in the case of our Lord Himself and of Paul.

In its outward and grossest form, the sin here condemned is false swearing and open profanity. The oaths and curses with which many interlard their common talk are degrading to themselves and still more hateful to God. To express annoyance or surprise; to buttress that word of man which should be as good as any bond; to strengthen an appeal; to give one's opinions a flavour of decision or authority; to make a show of courage and determination; to invoke the wrath of God on the tools in our hands, on the brutes who serve us, on the bodies or souls of others, yea, even on our own; to do any of these things, by the unholy use of any name of God or by any fancied spell, is madness and vanity as to its ends, and a sin of deepest dye in the sight of heaven. No sin can more defile the breath of society, the very air of the world. Well may we pray God to set an armed watch, lest one unguarded word escape the door of our lips.

But are we guiltless of this sin if we be not addicted to pro-

fane swearing? Nay, verily; the "commandment is exceeding broad." The mean grovelling thoughts we entertain of God; the falseness and hollowness of our religious professions and acts; our neglect and formality in regard to worship and ordinances; the poor value we set upon God's word, and the poorer use we make of it; the levity with which we handle sacred subjects, and the sport we make of sin; our lurking suspicions of providence; our pride in prosperity and fretfulness in adversity; our unbelief and doubts and fears; these are all breaches of the spirit, if not of the letter, of this commandment. Yet they are but a few specimens after all. If our hearts were more entirely right toward God Himself, and if we were careful to live day by day in closer unbroken fellowship with Him, then should we regard and use in a more worthy manner all that concerns His service and glory.

Even in the most selfish aspect, the "name" of the Lord should be "as ointment poured forth" to sinful men. Why has He revealed it? For His own glory, no doubt, but also for our good. He desires and invites us to use everything "whereby He maketh Himself known"—every name, every attribute, every ordinance, every word, every work—for our salvation and comfort. May the Holy Spirit give us both the will and the skill to reap full advantage from every form and element of God's revelation to men.

This is the day on which it is our special duty, publicly if at all possible, privately in any case, to seek the true knowledge of God. If our hearts' cry be, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him," the answer is not far to seek. We may find Him at the footstool, in His word, in His ordinances, and in the fellowship of His people. We shall only fail to find Him if we seek Him not with our "whole hearts."

Lesson 54.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—ISAIAH I. 20, "IF YE REFUSE AND REBEL, YE SHALL BE DEVoured WITH THE SWORD."

Question LVI.: What is the reason annexed to the third commandment?

ANSWER: THE REASON ANNEXED TO THE THIRD COMMANDMENT IS THAT HOWEVER THE BREAKERS OF THIS COMMANDMENT MAY ESCAPE PUNISHMENT FROM MEN, YET THE LORD OUR GOD WILL NOT SUFFER THEM TO ESCAPE HIS RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT.

THE reason here annexed assumes the form of a warning, and it may be asked, Why give no motive but an appeal to fear? We answer, there are reasons unconnected with any threat embodied in the command itself. Is He "the Lord"? Is He "Thy God"? If so, surely it becomes thee to reverence His name. But there is another reason here, and it *is* a warning. The truth is, men need warnings; perhaps they should not, but they do. Many a wholesome fear has ended in a noble faith. God utters no warnings simply to terrify; their end is to awaken and persuade.

The reason contains an admission. "The breakers of this commandment may escape punishment from men." They may, and that for various reasons. There may be no written national law or no unwritten social law to make this sin an offence among men.

"How few of all the ills that men endure
Are those which kings or laws can kill or cure."

In many lands there are no laws against profanity whatever; even where they exist, men may escape them; and no human statute can cover the broad field of this command, for it takes cognizance of the inmost heart. What then? Shall men sin with impunity? Nay, verily; for listen further.

“The Lord will not hold him guiltless.” The word “hold” covers two things. It means, will not *consider* and will not *treat* him as guiltless. God will account him and deal with him as deserving punishment. We have spoken of the superstitious fear of using the name of God among the Jews. The Talmud says, “Those who utter the name of God (Jehovah) according to its sound have no position in the world to come.” If this were a just judgment in the view of Jewish elders, what sentence shall God pass and what punishment shall He inflict on those who wantonly, habitually, or irreverently, take His holy name into their sinful lips? Let Scripture and conscience give the answer.

One who had been a professed infidel and had won many disciples lay a-dying. Those around him naturally watched for some indication of his thoughts in that solemn crisis. For a time he gave none; but at length requested that when all was over he should be buried out on a bare lonely headland by the sea. When pressed for a reason, his reply was, “That I may be forgotten in the day of judgment.” After all it would seem that even to him religion was not wholly a lie! How vain a thread on which to hang a hope! Not so shall men escape even the reapers, much less an all-seeing eye and an avenging hand! How solemn to hear God say, “Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee?”

“ The last loud trumpet’s wondrous sound
Shall through the rending tombs rebound,
And wake the nations underground.

Nature and death shall with surprise
Behold the pale offender rise,
And view the judge with conscious eyes.

Prostrate my contrite heart I rend,
My God, my Father, and my Friend,
Do not forsake me in my end!”

Lesson 55.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—LEVIT. XIX. 30, "YE SHALL KEEP MY SABBATHS."

Question LVII.: Which is the fourth commandment?

Answer : THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT IS,
REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY TO KEEP IT HOLY.
SIX DAYS SHALT THOU LABOUR AND DO ALL THY WORK,
BUT THE SEVENTH DAY IS THE SABBATH OF THE LORD THY GOD ;
IN IT THOU SHALT NOT DO ANY WORK,
THOU, NOR THY SON, NOR THY DAUGHTER, THY MANSERVANT, NOR
THY MAIDSERVANT, NOR THY CATTLE, NOR THY STRANGER THAT
IS WITHIN THY GATES.
FOR IN SIX DAYS THE LORD MADE
HEAVEN AND EARTH, THE SEA, AND ALL THAT IN THEM IS,
AND RESTED THE SEVENTH DAY ; WHEREFORE
THE LORD BLESSED THE SABBATH DAY AND HALLOWED IT.

LOOK first at the original institution of the Sabbath. God had in six days finished His work of creation. On the seventh He rested, not because He was weary, for "He fainteth not," but because His work was done. So He blessed and sanctified the seventh day. For whom? For Himself? No, for every day is alike holy to Him; He has no week-day and Sabbath. If not for Himself, for whom then did He hallow this day? For the Jews? Not so; for as yet there was no distinction of Jew or Gentile. God set apart the day as holy for the use and good of man, and under him, of the other creatures. Surely there are indications of this in the traditions of the early origin and universal spread of the Sabbatic rest, which are to be found even among the heathen nations of the world.

Consider next the express appointment of the Sabbath in the

moral law given from Sinai. Among the precepts uttered by God's own voice, written on the tables of stone with His own finger, and treasured by His explicit command in the ark, the Lawgiver gave the Sabbath its place. And why? Because, if not in outward form yet in its inner nature, it is, like the other nine, a moral law. The necessary and universal relations of man to God—the very conditions of our existence—demand it, if we would do our duty aright to our Maker and our fellows. Therefore it is a law, which was not abrogated like the national and ceremonial enactments which followed; but remains universally and perpetually binding upon men. Mark one word which confirms this view. God does not say, Set apart, or, Thou shalt establish, as of something new; but "Remember," as of something already existing and in force. Forget it not, neglect it not, keep it pure and entire; such is the spirit of the words.

It is well for us still to keep in mind the line of connection between the commandments as we consider them one by one. In the first we have the supreme and only object of worship; in the second the mode or manner of the worship He requires; in the third the spirit and temper of that worship; and now in this fourth, a day or season of worship, founded on a law of nature, but also expressly appointed and enjoined by God Himself.

“ Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright,
Bridal of earth and sky,
The dew shall weep thy fall to-night,
For thou alas! must die.

Be wise then, Christian, while you may,
For swiftly time is flying;
The thoughtless man may laugh to-day,
To-morrow may be dying!”

Lesson 56.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—ISAIAH LVIII. 13, "CALL THE SABBATH A DELIGHT, THE HOLY OF THE LORD, HONOURABLE."

Question LVIII.: What is required in the fourth commandment ?

Answer : THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT REQUIRETH
THE KEEPING HOLY TO GOD
SUCH SET TIMES AS HE HATH APPOINTED IN HIS WORD,
EXPRESSLY ONE WHOLE DAY IN SEVEN,
TO BE A HOLY SABBATH TO HIMSELF.

THE fourth commandment, closely examined, contains three requirements, and sets forth the relations and proportions between them.

First, it commands "labour," tells men to do their work earnestly, diligently, faithfully. This is enjoined as in accordance with their own interest and happiness as well as with God's will. The limits of labour are, however, defined ; for the precept says, "Six days shalt thou labour." Crowd these days as best thou canst with honest toil, forgetting not the relaxation of innocent enjoyment and needful rest ; so shalt thou be the better able to sanctify and improve what God claims as His own.

Next comes the command to rest ; "in it thou shalt not do any work." This also is both man's interest and duty. The substance of the precept so far is this, Labour on six days as thou hast opportunity, but rest alway on the seventh. The law is one of intermittent labour and repose, with a fixed proportion between them. Six sevenths to labour and ourselves, one seventh to rest and to God ; such is His will and decree.

But mark, there is a third element in the commandment, and that the highest of all. Labour on six days by all means, but be sure you rest on the seventh. But why rest on the seventh ? Is

it to be rest for the mere sake of resting? By no means. Keep the day "holy;" keep it "to sanctify it;" the rest is not for itself, but in order to worship. The seventh must be set apart for God; it is to belong expressly to Him.

Here let one important point be noted; it is expressly brought out in the words above. What God requires is the setting apart of "one whole day in seven." The commandment does not expressly and absolutely bind man to observe *the* seventh rather than the first or third or sixth. What it demands is "one in seven;" but which of the seven is left an open matter, which God decided in one way for the Old Testament Church, and in another for the New. In either case the principle and the proportion are untouched.

But now we must ask, Is this command binding on Christians in Gospel times? We might derive proof that it is from many passages of Scripture; but must confine ourselves here to our Lord's declaration, "The Sabbath was made for man." It was called into existence, ordained, for the sake of man as a means to his highest good, both temporal and spiritual. So long, therefore, as man exists, and under such conditions as he does here on earth, so long will the need of the Sabbath exist, and so long will the law apply. "It is an everlasting ordinance. It travels with every age; it coalesces with every economy. Circumcision may pass into baptism. The passover may pass into the Lord's Supper. But the Sabbath is the Sabbath, and nothing but the Sabbath can it be. Whatever is wanting, whatever is superseded, it endures. It is established in the foundations of immutable morality and religion."

As the shades of Sabbath evening fall, it is wise and meet that we should question our own hearts how we have spent the day. Have we kept it holy to the Lord, and so used its hours and opportunities as to advance the life divine in our souls? Pardon, gracious Lord, wherein we have sinned, and bless to our eternal interests every holy impression and influence.

Lesson 57.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—REV. I. 10, "I WAS IN THE SPIRIT ON THE LORD'S DAY."

Question LIX.: Which day of the seven hath God appointed to be the weekly Sabbath?

Answer : FROM THE BEGINNING OF THE WORLD
TO THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST,
GOD APPOINTED
THE SEVENTH DAY OF THE WEEK TO BE THE WEEKLY SABBATH ;
AND THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK EVER SINCE,
TO CONTINUE TO THE END OF THE WORLD,
WHICH IS THE CHRISTIAN SABBATH.

GOD has arranged this world as to time on a definite plan. Its basis is a sevenfold division, in which six parts are to be given to labour and one to rest. Men of commanding eminence in science declare this system to be admirably adapted to the constitution of man, and history tells of the failure of any other attempted division of time.

Now we have to ask, On what grounds do we observe the first day of the week instead of the seventh as the divinely sanctioned day of rest under the new dispensation? After the resurrection, the Apostles, while not neglecting altogether or at once the seventh day, observed the first as a day of worship, and this became in time their common practice. What was the cause of the change? It was the resurrection of our Lord from the dead on the first day of the week. As God on the seventh day rested from His work of creation, so Christ on the first day completed His work of redemption by rising from the tomb. If creation was a work the consummation of which was worthy to be commemorated, the new and higher creation was a yet greater work, and its completion still more worthy of special celebration. The

one day's rest in seven remained, but the Sabbath was a new day, with a great and special object of commemoration. The Apostles made the change under the direction of their risen Lord and the special influence of His Spirit, and their example is binding on us. In such a matter, what they did is to us an indication of "the mind of Christ."

This change was anticipated in the Old Testament. In the 118th Psalm we read, "The stone which the builders refused is become the head of the corner. . . . This is the day which the Lord hath made." When was our Lord, after being refused by the builders, made the head of the corner? Was it not when He was raised from the dead? Then did God the Father do that mighty deed which is marvellous in our eyes, and it was the making of a new day of joy and gladness to men. Many also find express sanction for the change in Hebrews iv. 9, where the original runs, "There remaineth therefore a *Sabbath-keeping* to the people of God." It is a better rest than that of Canaan, a better rest than was promised in David's day, a near type and earnest of the eternal Sabbath above. Hath not Jesus ceased from His own works, as God did from His? The day He rose is a Sabbath-keeping to those who spiritually share in His rest.

"It is a day of heaven upon earth! Life's sweetest calm, poverty's birthright, labour's only rest! Nothing has such a hoar of antiquity upon it! Nothing contains in it such a history! Nothing draws along with it such a glory! Nurse of virtue, seal of truth, the household's richest patrimony, the nation's noblest safeguard! The patent of our manhood's spiritual goodness! The harbinger of our soul's sanctified perfection! The glory of religion, the watch-tower of immortality! The ladder set up on earth, and the top of it reacheth unto heaven, with the angels of God ascending and descending on it!"

With what desire should we look forward to this happy day of rest and worship! With what joy should we greet its dawn and enter on its sacred duties!

Lesson 58.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—ISAIAH LXVI. 23, "FROM ONE SABBATH TO ANOTHER SHALL ALL FLESH COME TO WORSHIP BEFORE ME."

Question LX.: How is the Sabbath to be sanctified ?

Answer : THE SABBATH IS TO BE SANCTIFIED
 BY A HOLY RESTING ALL THAT DAY,
 EVEN FROM SUCH WORLDLY EMPLOYMENTS AND RECREATIONS
 AS ARE LAWFUL ON OTHER DAYS ;
 AND SPENDING THE WHOLE TIME
 IN THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EXERCISES OF GOD'S WORSHIP,
 EXCEPT SO MUCH AS IS TO BE TAKEN UP
 IN THE WORKS OF NECESSITY AND MERCY.

THE Sabbath is one of the things of God ; in its origin, authority, nature, and ends, it belongs to Him. Therefore "the world" will neither prize nor love this sacred day in its true character. Only new hearts and right spirits will delight in it as a privileged season of holy service. Ewald believes that the central lampholder in the great golden candlestick stood higher than the three on either side of it. He regards it in this lofty position as a symbol of the Sabbath, which should occupy a similar place of honour among the days of the week. If this were so, what a change should we see in its practical observance.

We must keep the Sabbath by "a holy resting all that day." As God ceased from His work, we are to cease from ours. All ordinary labour is forbidden. God hath ordained this season of glad release to such as are

"Hackneyed in business, wearied at that oar,
Which thousands, once fast chained to, leave no more."

Both to those who toil day and night through the week for daily

bread, and to those who are equally harassed by the cares of business, what a privilege to enjoy a day of rest devoted to the contemplation of higher things ! Nor must we spend the day in mere recreation. Let us have what is reasonable of happy relaxation through the week ; the Sabbath was given for weightier, holier purposes. We must not spend on ourselves a season which God claims as His own.

How then are we to employ the precious hours ? “ In the public and private exercises of God’s worship.” Must we then be every moment engaged in reading or praying or meditating ? No ; yet see that you *do* give to these and similar duties an actual and worthy place. Above all see that your whole temper be raised above the week’s level. The day is best employed when the soul gets all and God gets all. Our Sabbaths should be “ stepping-stones ” on our way to heaven ; true oratories ; “ Bethel-like retreats,” where we may be alone with God. A true Sabbath spirit of repose from self and the world would spread its delicate aroma over our characters and lives ; and the dew of a holy influence fall upon others around. God gives us the blessing of rest and the day of rest now ; He will give us a heaven of rest hereafter ; and all through our blessed Saviour, the Lord of the Sabbath.

The sacred day, with its precious talents of time and opportunity for which we shall be called to account, has once more run its course for us. What if it should prove our last ?

“ Sabbaths are threefold, as St Austin says ;
The first, of time, or Sabbath here of days ;
The second is a conscience trespass-free ;
The last the Sabbath of eternity.”

Lesson 59.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—NEHEM. XIII. 18, "YE BRING MORE WRATH UPON ISRAEL,
BY PROFANING THE SABBATH."

Question LXI.: What is forbidden in the fourth
commandment ?

Answer: THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT FORBIDDETH
THE OMISSION OR CARELESS PERFORMANCE OF THE DUTIES REQUIRED,
AND THE PROFANING THE DAY
BY IDLENESS, OR DOING THAT WHICH IS IN ITSELF SINFUL,
OR BY UNNECESSARY THOUGHTS, WORDS, OR WORKS,
ABOUT OUR WORLDLY EMPLOYMENTS OR RECREATIONS.

ONE has said of the Sabbath, "For one day in seven the perpetual grind of life ceases; the wheels stand still; the labourer lays down his burden. This is a blessing disguised as a command, a divine benediction on an overburdened world." Man is indeed foolish if he sell it for pleasure or barter it for gain. May the Sabbaths ever be to us

"Days fixed by God for intercourse with dust,
To raise our thoughts, and purify our powers;
Periods appointed to renew our trust;
A gleam of glory after six days' showers."

What does this commandment forbid? All needless labour and worldly recreation. Needful labour is permitted, such as belongs to the supply of man's common wants and comforts. For high and holy ends even more may be allowed, for the priests in the temple profaned the Sabbath (by menial work), and were guiltless. Deeds of mercy also are in blessed keeping with the spirit and design of the day. With these exceptions we must fence the day around against every encroachment of useless labour and levity, for this remnant of Eden and bud of a happy world to come must be kept sacred to God.

The range of what is "forbidden" is yet more extended. Idleness, mere vacancy of mind and heart is out of all harmony with the day, for the whole man should be alive and alert in seeking after God. But if idleness be condemned, still more is any form of active sin. Evil done on this holy day is heinous and aggravated. Shall the very hours be filled with iniquity which should be consecrated to God? Surely that were sinful and base indeed! Nay more, we must guard against every thought or word or work which, intruding on the sacred enclosure of the Sabbath, might prove a temptation and a snare. We shall not go more closely into detail. We claim to interpret the Sabbath as our Master taught us to do. In details of circumstance and duty no man has a right to judge another. We know from Jewish history what restrictions a Pharisaic spirit could impose. Many of them were senseless burdens "grievous to be borne." As Christian freemen we claim liberty, but let us not use it for "an occasion to the flesh."

The Sabbath, this Sabbath, is a day on which to make the word of God the man of our counsel; a day for holy meditation and prayer; a day better than a thousand if spent in God's courts; a day for the sweet communion of saints; and a day for family instruction and every deed of mercy. May it ever be to us an oasis in this desert world, a welcome gleam of light through the clouds of this dark and stormy earthly sky from the unbroken eternal day.

"God of Sabbaths! Oh forgive,
That we use Thy gifts so ill;
Teach us daily how to live,
That we ever may fulfil
All thy gracious love designed,
Giving Sabbaths to mankind."

Lesson 60.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—LEV. XXII. 3, "IT IS THE SABBATH OF THE LORD IN ALL YOUR DWELLINGS."

Question LXII.: What are the reasons annexed to the fourth commandment?

ANSWER: THE REASONS ANNEXED TO THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT ARE
GOD'S ALLOWING US SIX DAYS OF THE WEEK FOR OUR OWN EMPLOYMENTS,
HIS CHALLENGING A SPECIAL PROPRIETY IN THE SEVENTH, HIS OWN EXAMPLE,
AND HIS BLESSING THE SABBATH DAY.

THE first reason why we should remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy, is, because God has allowed us "six days of the week for our own employments." Of the time that is all His own, the Lord of the Sabbath has freely given us these six parts to be spent for secular purposes. Would it not then be both unreasonable and ungrateful to grudge Him the limited proportion which He desires to have reserved as His own? Shall we lay greedy and selfish hands on the one day which He would have us keep for Him? Even science tells us that God's claim is reasonable, for what is the judgment of one of its eminent chiefs? "It is a crude and imperfect physiology which opposes itself to the fourth, or indeed to any, of the ten commandments." The annals of crime also bear witness that the day should be hallowed to God, for Sabbath profanation is a prolific source of vice. If in needless labour on that day men's rights are sacrificed for the alleged good of society, no wonder if many of them feel themselves doomed, as some such have said, to find "rest" only in their graves.

Briefly notice two other reasons. First, "It is the Sabbath of

the Lord thy God." He calls as well as claims the day as His own. Shall we try to filch one of His treasures away? Again, God presents "His own example," as a motive to us. God rested after His work of creation, and Christ entered into rest when His redemptive work was accomplished. We too are invited to enter into rest; through Jesus' finished work, we may have Sabbath rest in our souls. Of that rest within, and the final rest beyond, the earthly Sabbath is a shadow and a type.

Once more, God has blessed and sanctified this pearl of days; He has given it His benediction. The holy oil has been poured upon its head; it is God's anointed among the days. How hallowed and how helpful has it been in the experience of His people in all ages! Hear the thrilling words of Dr James Hamilton. "It is the day when with our sinless progenitors you may take the tour of Paradise, and listen to the anthems of a newly created world. It is the day when with Enoch you may feed the flame of devotion, and imbibe the ardour of a walk with God. It is the day when you may mourn with Abraham at Machpelah, or meditate with Isaac in the fields of Mamre, or go down to Egypt to see Joseph in all His glory. It is the day when you may fill your ear with draughts of melody from David's sounding lyre, or let your spirit mount on Ezekiel's flying wheels. It is the day when you may take a pleasant walk to Bethany or Emmaus, or ascend Tabor with Peter and James and John. It is the day when with many you may clasp that cross which quivers no longer, and look up to those pale and painless lips which need never repeat, It is finished. It is the day when in the upper chamber you may listen to a sermon of Paul, or, a pilgrim to Patmos along with the beloved disciple, see Jesus again."

The Sabbath is to the rest of the week what summer is to the rest of the year. Do we make the most of it? Let us be careful to lay up stores of spiritual knowledge and power which may stand us in good stead all the week through, however dark and dreary our life's path may be.

Lesson 61.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—EPHES. VI. 1, "CHILDREN, OBEY YOUR PARENTS IN THE LORD."

Question LXIII. : Which is the fifth commandment ?

ANSWER : THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT IS,
 HONOUR THY FATHER AND THY MOTHER,
 THAT THY DAYS MAY BE LONG UPON THE LAND
 WHICH THE LORD THY GOD GIVETH THEE.

WE are still occupied with the first table of the law, the duties we owe to God. We have here laid the basis of legitimate authority : first, in the family ; then, by implication, in society and the world. Why should this precept belong to the first table ? Parents are to their children in the place of God. No wonder if the reverence we owe to Him should take under its wing the reverence we owe to them. Man should honour God, and every man should honour those in whom is embodied all that as a child he could know of Him. Moreover we find that rulers are also in the place of God to their subjects. From Him they derive their authority ; so that our loyalty and obedience go back to them, and through them to God Himself. On these grounds, among others, we consider this command one of the first table.

Let us now ponder the commandment itself. "Honour thy father and thy mother." The family, as an ordinance of God, and the very foundation of society, took its rise in Eden. Like the Sabbath, it was made for man. What is the honour here required ? May we not find a parallel in the duties we owe to God ? It is man's duty to know and acknowledge and worship God. In like manner it is the duty of children to recognise the place and rights which God has bestowed on their parents ; to acknowledge their own dependence and obligation to obey ; and finally to behave as those who occupy such relations. Respect and obedi-

ence are the main ideas embraced in the word Honour. Nature itself blends with the voice of God in enforcing this duty. Its only limitation lies in the addition made by Paul that such obedience must be "in the Lord."

Ere we go further, we cannot fail to notice the place given in this divine law to the name of "mother." Among Eastern races, the mother, if her husband should die, became subject to her eldest son; but here the son is enjoined to honour his mother no less than his father. God's law gives woman her just place, and prepares for the still loftier recognition accorded to her under the gospel. How much truth is there in the crisp adage, "An ounce of mother is worth a pound of clergy!" The great Napoleon said on one occasion, "The empire is at the fire-side;" and on another, "The great want of France is mothers." The influence of a godly mother can never be wholly obliterated from the memory or heart of man.

Happy they who have had the privilege of a father's wise authority and a mother's loving prayers! How fearful the responsibility of those who, despite such precious advantages, shall fail finally of salvation! Can we ever forget—alas! yes, we too often do—the blessed example of Him who went down with Joseph and His mother to Nazareth, and "was subject unto them."

"A Son that never did amiss,
That never shamed a mother's kiss,
Nor crossed her fondest prayer.
Even from the tree He deigned to bow
On her His agonized brow,
Her His sole earthly care."

There is much truth in the words of Lord Bacon, "Children sweeten labours, but they make misfortunes more bitter; they increase the cares of life, but they mitigate the remembrance of death."

Lesson 62.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—EPHES. v. 21, "SUBMITTING YOURSELVES ONE TO ANOTHER
IN THE FEAR OF GOD."

Question LXIV.: What is required in the fifth commandment ?

Answer : THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT REQUIRETH
THE PRESERVING THE HONOUR
AND PERFORMING THE DUTIES
BELONGING TO EVERY ONE
IN THEIR SEVERAL PLACES AND RELATIONS,
AS SUPERIORS, INFERIORS, OR EQUALS.

THERE is always a principle underlying every moral duty as laid down in God's law. Here, for example, what is the very kernel of the precept? Is it not this, Find out every one's true place and relation to you, and act toward them accordingly. When this principle is applied, we see at once the far-reaching sweep of this commandment.

The law begins with those with whom we have first to do in life—our parents. God sets them side by side in honour, and appoints us our place at their feet. We are bound to give to them at all times and in all things the honour, the love, and the obedience which heart and lips and life alike can render. If in one sense we owe all this to them, how much do we owe in another? What thanksgivings to God are due from some of us for the love, the care, the example, the prayers, the chastisements, of a father, or mother, or both, now shining in the light of God!

Let us now apply the principle to other relationships. First come the duties of husband and wife. "Husbands, love your wives," and let your love in its spirit and in your measure resemble that of Christ to His bride the church. "Wives, submit your-

selves unto your own husbands," and let your obedience be like to that which you would render to the Lord Himself.

Next come relationships which are not far removed from those of parents, namely, those of masters and rulers toward those who are under them. In place and station they are our superiors ; what duties do we owe them ? "Servants, be obedient to your own masters," and let your obedience be careful and sincere and whole-hearted, for in your very service to them, "ye serve the Lord Christ." As citizens, we are bound to be "subject unto the higher powers," for they are ordained of God for the government and good order of society.

Again, what are our duties toward those who in place and relation are beneath us ? "Ye masters, do the same things unto them," that is, act on the same high principles as are required of those who are your servants, for ye yourselves own a divine Master. "Parents, provoke not your children to wrath," but be as gentle and kindly as if the "nurture and admonition" came from the Lord and not from you.

How then are we to behave toward our fellow-citizens and brethren, who are socially our equals ? Here our obligations are infinitely varied. Be loving, be courteous, be just, be true, be unselfish. No more all-embracing counsel could be given than that of Paul, "submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." Sir Thomas More has said, "To be humble to superiors is duty ; to equals, is courtesy ; to inferiors, is nobleness ; and to all, safety ; it being a virtue that for all her lowliness, commandeth those souls to which it stoops."

As to our brethren of the household of faith, we must love them, as the Master Himself tells us, "as I have loved you." Only the Holy Spirit can teach us the length and breadth and depth and height of that love, which in its greatness and fulness "passeth knowledge."

Lesson 63.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT — PROV. XIV. 21, "HE THAT DESPISETH HIS NEIGHBOUR
SINNETH."

Question LXV.: What is forbidden in the fifth commandment?

Answer: THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT FORBIDDETH
THE NEGLECTING OF
OR DOING ANYTHING AGAINST
THE HONOUR AND DUTY WHICH BELONGETH TO EVERYONE
IN THEIR SEVERAL PLACES AND RELATIONS.

THIS commandment takes its rise in the reverence and obedience which we owe to God Himself, and it flows through family and home outward to all who are our neighbours. If its spring be in the first commandment, we can trace its current right onward to the tenth. In principle it covers all our duty to our fellows, so that to render to it full obedience would be to love our neighbours as ourselves.

Consider how much is involved in neglect of duty under this commandment. Parents dishonoured and disobeyed; husband and wife at bitter variance; masters imperious and servants rebellious; rulers tyrannical and citizens disloyal; children insubordinate and wilful, and neighbours unkindly and quarrelsome: these are features of social life which this commandment condemns. Let each man give to his fellow the honour, and do to his fellow the duty, which as a neighbour he has a right to claim and expect. Only supreme allegiance to God limits this obligation. Take the command in its literal concrete form. Are children bound always, and in everything, to obey their parents, no matter what the nature of their commands? No, not absolutely; for Paul is careful to add, "in the Lord." If they demand one

thing, while He enjoins another, then we must echo Peter's brave words, and say even of a father or a mother, "We ought to obey God rather than men."

Let husbands and wives eschew all bitterness, and, moved by love, exercise mutual forbearance, and bear one another's burdens. They need not look for perfection one in another, for

"The kindest and the happiest pair
Will find occasion to forbear ;
And something every day they live
To pity, and perhaps forgive."

Neglect of duty on the part of parents toward their children will sow a crop of sorrows. All the weight of authority, all the leverage of holy example, all the faithfulness of instruction and counsel, are needed to keep the feet of the little ones on the right path. No plea of want of time or opportunity can be allowed, nor do any efforts on the part of others relieve parents of their responsibilities. Let there ever be "the church in the house ;" then in another world, if not in this, may a father or mother reap the harvest of their prayerful solicitude for their children.

"Oh, when a mother meets on high
The babe she lost in infancy,
Hath she not then, for pains and fears,
The day of woe, the watchful night,
For all her sorrows, all her tears,
An overpayment of delight?"

The great principle of authority is embodied in this precept : authority in the family, authority in the state, authority in the church ; and in so far as it is legitimate, God hath "fixed His canon" against all contempt and insubordination toward those who have been ordained of Him to rule. "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers."

Lesson 64.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—EPHES. VI. 3, "THAT IT MAY BE WELL WITH THEE, AND THOU MAYEST LIVE LONG ON THE EARTH."

Question LXVI.: What is the reason annexed to the fifth commandment?

Answer : THE REASON ANNEXED TO THE FIFTH
COMMANDMENT IS
A PROMISE OF LONG LIFE AND PROSPERITY,
SO FAR AS IT SHALL SERVE
FOR GOD'S GLORY AND THEIR OWN GOOD,
TO ALL SUCH AS KEEP THIS COMMANDMENT.

"CHILDREN, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right." The word "right" in that passage means, not "in accordance with moral law," nor "proper" or "becoming," though both these are true, but "in accordance with the laws of nature." The meaning is, They are parents and you are children; find then in that very relationship your motive to obedience. The light of nature teaches us to honour father and mother.

But in the command itself there is another reason, namely, the promise which is attached to it. There is a virtual promise contained in the second commandment; but here there is one which is express and definite. Among the Mosaic commandments, of which the Ten Words are the greatest and most prominent, this fifth is the first precept to which an explicit promise is attached.

Now look at the reason annexed in itself; "that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." Paul gives us a valuable paraphrase on these words. He broadens out the idea of "the land" into that of "the earth," showing that the command applies to men all the world over; and he introduces from Deuteronomy a clause, "that it may be well with thee," which is most helpful to a right understanding of

the promise. What then does it mean? It is a promise of "well-being," and that well-being associated with long life. When the book of providence is opened and interpreted by the Lamb, we shall find many instances of lengthened days, as the gracious reward of obedience to this command. Yet we may well ask, Is the life of a man worth anything unless devoted to holy ends? No; it may be well with a man even if his life be short; but it is well with him in an ampler sense if God spare him and use him for many days. Like all promises of temporal blessing, this one has its limits. If God deems it better for you, being what you are and where you are, and better also for His own great ends, to cut short your life's thread before your prime, as men call it, then He will take you to a "better country," and gloriously fulfil it there. We often see broken columns in our cemeteries. They are out of place over a Christian's dust. All our lives are complete in God's sight, whether long or short in man's eyes. Each life is a whole, and we shall see it so in the clear light of eternity.

In Christ we have the one perfect example of obedience to this commandment. From those early days when He went down to Nazareth with His mother and Joseph, onward to that dark hour when He said, "Mother, behold thy son," His heart and life were a perfect reflection of its holy requirements. In His being "subject unto them," we see the gathered fruit of thirty quiet years; in His commission to the loved disciple at Calvary, the rich, ripe cluster of a perfected life. May He Himself give us grace and strength to "follow in His steps!" May this blessed feature of His character be reproduced in us who profess to be His disciples!

"Example is a living law whose sway
Men more than all the written laws obey."

Lesson 65.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—1 JOHN III. 15, "WHOSOEVER HATETH HIS BROTHER IS A MURDERER."

Question LXVII.: Which is the sixth commandment?

Answer: THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT IS,
THOU SHALT NOT KILL.

WE now enter upon the second table of the law, embracing the duties which man owes to society. The first of these is, to respect human life; "Thou shalt not kill." The precept loses nothing because of its brevity; there is a stern sharpness in it which will let no one evade it. Uttered from Sinai, the great words rolled over the hearts and consciences of the trembling people in the plain. What the poet says of Freedom we may say of Law,

"Of old sat Freedom on the heights,
The thunders breaking at her feet;
Above her shook the starry lights,
She heard the torrents meet.

Within her place she did rejoice,
Self-gathered in her Prophet-mind!
But fragments of her mighty voice
Came rolling on the wind."

"Thou shalt not kill." Life is a precious heritage; and every man has a right to live, a right as strong and inalienable as any other can claim. Having a right to live, he is justly entitled to the protection of society and of law from all wilful harm. These claims rest on two grounds. First, man was created in the image of God; and in that likeness lies the sanctity of human life. Then again, man was created for a great end, even to

glorify and enjoy God. The man who is all for self and the world, weakens his very right to live; but the man who seeks God's glory can lift his head and say, The Creator has made me, not simply to live but to live for Him, and in order to the fulfilment of that lofty design, my life must be kept sacred. If this estimate of life were cherished, suicide and murder would be unknown. Thou art made like God and for God, and so is thy neighbour; therefore respect and value both his life and thine own.

But is the command absolute? It is not; for human life may be taken in several ways without breach of the law. A life may be forfeited to public justice for adequate crime; it may be unwillingly taken by one who is acting in self-defence; and it may be lost in righteous war. With these exceptions, the law covers all the harm one can do to his own life or that of his neighbour.

All offences against this precept are in open contrast to the spirit of Christ and of His gospel. He came "not to destroy but to save;" to make men kind, gentle, merciful; to teach them how to forgive an injury seventy times seven, and lavish kindness even on an enemy.

"It is the duty of a man,
To bless his greatest foe,
And shield the arm that late was raised,
To work his direst woe.

Just so the scented sandal tree,
In all its pride and bloom,
Sheds on the axe that lays it low,
A sweet and rich perfume."

As we enter on the duties and privileges of this holy day, may we seek grace to put away from us all malice, all hatred, all unkindly feeling, and all thought of resentment. If weeds such as these be rooted out, our hearts shall be more like the "good ground" in which the seed of the word may sink deep and bring forth abundant fruit.

Lesson 66.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—ROMANS XII. 10, “BE KINDLY AFFECTIONED ONE TO ANOTHER WITH BROTHERLY LOVE.”

Question LXVIII.: What is required in the sixth commandment?

Answer: THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT REQUIRETH
ALL LAWFUL ENDEAVOURS
TO PRESERVE OUR OWN LIFE
AND THE LIFE OF OTHERS.

WE must use “all lawful endeavours to preserve our own life.” As Seneca has declared, “a regard to our own bodies is implanted in us,” and acts, unless in cases of temporary or permanent insanity, as an instinct of self-preservation. In this the light of nature and the law of God are at one. When the jailer at Philippi, fearing that his prisoners had escaped, and dreading the shame and death which in that case his neglect must entail, drew his sword to take away his own life, Paul cried, “Do thyself no harm.” The words in a sense contain the heart and marrow of the gospel, and they are the very essence of this commandment. Avoid everything which would either impair health or endanger life. But mark a limit and caution here. While careful of life and of the health which conduces to its safety, our endeavours must be “lawful.” Our Lord said, “whosoever will save his life shall lose it.” May the martyr then save his own life by renouncing the faith of Christ? If faithful, he cannot and dare not, for to do so would be to lose life in a sadder sense still. If called in God’s providence to confess Him before men, we must neither flinch nor fail.

Then again, we must put forth equal endeavours to preserve “the life of others.” Do thy neighbour no harm any more than

thyself; such is the spirit of the precept. Each man is his "brother's keeper," and must not do toward him anything which would injuriously affect his bodily weal, still less lead to his death.

This commandment requires the due and timely use of food, raiment, and medicine; the diligent prosecution of labour or business; and the prudent enjoyment of rest and recreation. We must also maintain such an inward temper and outward demeanour as shall further our peace and comfort, and encourage the same in all around us. Here we approach the realm of the heart, wherein lies the seat of every unloving and unneighbourly feeling. The teaching of our Lord regarding this commandment is very clear and very searching. "Whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause" is a breaker of the law, and "shall be in danger of the judgment." Unrighteous anger and its outbursts of injurious language are manifestations of that criminal unlovingness, of which John has said, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer, and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him." If we cherish enmity, it will sink us beneath those who are its objects, and make us like in spirit to him who was "a murderer from the beginning."

Oh for the loving, gentle, unselfish spirit of Christ! Then should we learn a homely art, how to make a slow answer to a hasty question; and know from experience that a kind word quenches more than a bucket of water. Let love enter and show the expulsive power of a new affection.

"Love is the happy privilege of mind—
Love is the reason of all living things.
A trinity there seems of principles,
Which represent and rule created life,
The love of self, our fellows, and our God."

Lesson 67.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—ACTS XVI. 28, “DO THYSELF NO HARM.”

Question LXIX.: What is forbidden in the sixth commandment?

ANSWER: THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT FORBIDDETH
THE TAKING AWAY OF OUR OWN LIFE
OR THE LIFE OF OUR NEIGHBOUR UNJUSTLY,
OR WHATSOEVER TENDETH THEREUNTO.

IN relation to the great object to which this precept has respect, —human life—the sin may be one of neglect on the one hand, or violence on the other. First of all, because grossest of all, “the taking away of our own life or that of our neighbour unjustly” is prohibited. To the first clause, regarding our own life, the qualifying word “unjustly” does not apply. In no case, under no pretext, are we to lay violent hands upon ourselves. Then, as to others, in the execution of justice, in self-defence, and in righteous war, life may be taken, but for any other cause, or in any other way, never, and by no one. Very noble was the spirit of Columba regarding this theme. When asked to bless a soldier’s sword, he used the striking words, “Heaven grant, then, that it may never shed a drop of blood.” Even when war seems a necessity, let the aim be to secure a speedy and permanent peace. On the capture of Prague, in 1744, a medal was struck, on one side of which was inscribed—

“By war, Oh Lord, make wars to cease,
And let this victory end in peace.”

A little girl took in hers the hand of a dying brother, and raising it, said, with deep feeling, “That hand never struck me.” Would that the same could be said of every hand, young and old!

What was the direst breach of this commandment ever committed by man? There can be but one answer—the death of God's Son on Calvary. God gave Him, and He gave Himself, to die, yet none the less was it the deed of men. It was preceded by forms of trial which were illegal and hypocritical. The chief priests could see the colour of blood on the coins which Judas cast at their feet, but not on their own dead hearts. Are we as blind as they? Was it not our sins which nailed Him to the tree? May His blood be upon us, not any longer as a fatal stain, but as a healing salve for all our ills and woes!

The commandment also forbids all such neglect as may endanger either health or life. It prohibits everything in our hearts which might tend to any open outbreak. Every ungenerous thought, every bitter passion, every evil wish, everything short of such love as shall balance the wise self-love we should bear toward ourselves, all this does God declare contrary to His law. When will men learn, as bitter experience may often teach them, that

“ Disputes, though short, are far too long,
When both alike are in the wrong ” ?

When shall Christians so ripen in grace, that, like a noble baronet and servant of God, they may be able to say, “ I hate a man fewer every day ” ? May we learn to bring sweet music out of these four strings of charity's golden harp, “ Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you,” so that we may be the children of our Father which is in heaven. Christ has shown us in the parable of the good Samaritan who is our neighbour ; and that neighbour we must love, whatever he be. “ No cord or cable can draw so forcibly, or bind so fast, as love can do with only a single thread.”

Lesson 68.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—1 THESS. IV. 3, "THIS IS THE WILL OF GOD, EVEN YOUR
SANCTIFICATION."

Question LXX.: Which is the seventh command-
ment?

Answer: THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT IS,
THOU SHALT NOT COMMIT ADULTERY.

BISHOP WILSON says, "He that would prepare for heaven must honour the Sabbath on earth. He that would hope for the spiritual joys there, must acquire a taste and aptitude for them here." May our meditations on this holy day ever be to us a means of sanctification, and so of preparation for an eternal Sabbath above.

In the Jewish commonwealth, the penalty of death was inflicted on all transgressors against the first seven commandments, so that in that respect human chastity is put on the same footing as human life. This precept, like an angel, watches over the moral purity of both sexes and all ages.

The grossest form of transgression is here attacked. "Thou shalt not commit adultery." The precept rests on the sacredness of the marriage relationship, and unfaithfulness on the part of husband or wife is the sin expressly denounced. Marriage is a divine ordinance for the promotion of human happiness, the preservation of our race, and the prevention of impurity; and in it lies the best safeguard of personal virtue. In its nature it is, or ought to be, "an absolute mutual surrender to each other of man and woman," a surrender flowing from mutual devotion, involving an entire blending of their lives and interests, and imposing solemn obligations on both husband and wife. It is an image and illustration of the glorious and mystical union which subsists

between Christ and His church. This command forbids as a deep and dark offence any unfaithfulness one to another either of husband or wife. Regarding this evil, and wrong, and iniquity, for it is all these in one, the precept raises its voice and says, Thou shalt not sin thyself, nor tempt others to sin.

But offences against chastity are not confined to husband and wife. Either through them, or of their own accord, others also may fall into such sin. Now this command absolutely prohibits all carnal intercourse between the sexes outside the bonds of matrimony. Neither a promise of marriage, nor the force of passion, nor the licence unjustly claimed for youth, afford any palliation of guilt. No "sowing of wild oats" in the one sex, or so-called "misfortune" in the other, can excuse the sin, or detract from its heinousness and evil desert. Fornication is a sin, and the same sin, in man and woman, in young and old, in rich and poor, in prince and pauper; and there should be no distinction in the condemnation pronounced upon it in society, as there is none in the law of God.

Through the grace and mercy of God this sin can be both pardoned and prevented. Some of the Corinthians who had been guilty of it were "washed and sanctified and justified," and the same blessings are open to all. To believers the grand preventive lies in the counsel, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." If we do the first we cannot do the second, for they are mutually exclusive. If filled and taught and led by the Holy Spirit, the lusts of the flesh shall lose their dominion over our hearts. "They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." May we seek to be both in spirit and in habit,

"Chaste as the icicle
That's curdled by the frost from purest snow,
And hangs on Dian's Temple."

Lesson 69.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—1 PETER III. 2, "WHILE THEY BEHOLD YOUR CHASTE CONVERSATION COUPLED WITH FEAR."

Question LXXI.: What is required in the seventh commandment?

Answer: THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT REQUIRETH
THE PRESERVATION OF OUR OWN
AND OUR NEIGHBOUR'S CHASTITY
IN HEART, SPEECH, AND BEHAVIOUR.

CHASTITY is both good in itself and right according to law. The holy law of God requires it, and threatens with death every offender. In its usual stern imperative it declares, Thou shalt not be unchaste.

"This is the will of God, even your sanctification." Paul applies that great declaration to this very subject of individual chastity, for he goes on to enforce as a special duty that "every one should know" how to use the body only for pure and honourable ends. From all youthful lusts, and from every evil desire which might lead to the sin of uncleanness among the rest, the man of God is to flee with abhorrence and alarm. He is to keep his "garments always white," for personal virtue is a palladium, on the preservation of which depend the safety and happiness of the soul. Let every man see to it that no stain fall on "the white flower of a blameless life." In one of the provinces of Italy there existed a society formed for fellowship among literary and art connoisseurs. Their emblem was a sieve; and their motto, "Till all the impure part be gone." Let every child of God pray and labour till within him the words of that aspiration be realised. How noble the example of Joseph who, when tempted, cried in the indignation and horror of manly virtue, "How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God!"

As a man should guard his own chastity, so should he also respect that of others. Christian love and wisdom must guide us as to the best means to be employed in order to that end. This clear line of duty applies equally, and to all men, that we do nothing to assail or endanger the personal purity of another, for that is the very minimum of duty which in this matter love to our neighbour demands.

Christ has thrown the electric light of His sinless vision on this law, and has shown its spirituality and heart-searching power. Who can stand unabashed and unafraid? Are our hearts clear even if the sin have not appeared in our outward life? Those who know themselves best will boast least. Regarding this evil alone, we may all say with Augustine, "Lord, take my heart for I cannot give it Thee; keep it for I cannot keep it for Thee." But the law does not ignore the life. Evil though a man's desires be, there is added evil if they find vent. "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth." So of the outward conduct. Of man no less than of woman does God require "chaste conversation coupled with fear." Let our whole manner of life be scrupulously pure, and let there be a holy shrinking from the very appearance of evil.

In Rome there stood a temple of virtue and honour. To the former of these was dedicated the outer shrine, to the latter the inner. Only by passing through the chamber of virtue could entrance be gained into that of honour. So is it in the spiritual life. It is only by well-doing in its every form that we shall ever attain to "glory and honour and immortality." God only can answer the aspiration,

"Make my breast
Transparent as pure crystal that the world,
Jealous of me, may see the foulest thought
My heart does hold."

Lesson 70.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—1 PETER II. 11, "ABSTAIN FROM FLESHLY LUSTS WHICH WAR AGAINST THE SOUL."

Question LXXII.: What is forbidden in the seventh commandment?

Answer: THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT
FORBIDDETH
ALL UNCHASTE THOUGHTS, WORDS, AND ACTIONS.

THE law of God is holy and just and good; and every true Christian serves it "with the mind," that is, the inner, the new man, even though not yet free from the trammels of evil affections. He mourns that he is yet carnal and not "already perfect," but he presses toward the mark of entire freedom from sin. The memoirs of a Russian Princess contain on the front page a striking vignette. A butterfly, bursting from its caterpillar condition, stretches its half-opened wings to free itself from its imprisoning chrysalis, that it may soar unencumbered into the pure air. "That object, half-worm, half winged insect, with partially unfolded wings, is a type of the Christian life." "It doth not yet appear what we shall be."

No man who knows his own heart will be surprised to hear in this seventh command the stern expressive note, "Thou shalt not." The law soon discovers an evil which only grace can put away. All "unchaste thoughts" are forbidden, and we know too well how readily sin can give birth to these beginnings of impurity. Ruled by that tyrant power, the mind contemplates evil, the will designs it, the imagination pictures it, the heart inclines to it, the memory cherishes it, and even the conscience may condone it. Such evil in the soul is the sacrilege and defilement of a temple which God would have to be kept sacred to Himself.

The law also condemns all unchaste "words." As when a thief, unable to gain access by a window, sends a child in first to open the way, so does a thoughtless word often admit a flood of evil. There was force in the warning of an old woman, addressed to some who were engaged in questionable conversation, "Sirs, you are making work for repentance."

Again, the law condemns all unchaste "actions," including both those which are or may be more or less known to men, and those which are secret and may be known to God alone. We are warned against all such behaviour as may prove a temptation to ourselves or others. There are avenues to uncleanness through almost all the senses, and these must be jealously guarded if we would beat back the enemy. From the doubtful footstep or the glance of an eye to full-blown deeds or courses of shame, all impurity is highly displeasing to God, and merits His condemnation. Even David was, through the eye, "drawn away of his own lust and enticed." Then when lust had conceived, it brought forth sin, and only the preventing grace of God saved His servant from its ripened and natural fruit, even eternal death. Though forgiven and restored, he did not escape chastisement for his sin, and no power in heaven or earth can wipe the dark blot off his memory. It shall stand for ever a black flaw on the polished granite of his great character. Let us ever remember that

"Virtue alone hath that to give
For which 'tis worth our while to live ;
For if we live, our life is peace,
And if we die, our joys increase.

Now vice can only that supply
In which 'tis death to live or die ;
For if we live, 'tis pain to-morrow,
And if we die, 'tis endless sorrow."

Lesson 71.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—EPHESIANS IV. 28, "LET HIM THAT STOLE STEAL NO MORE."

Question LXXIII.: Which is the eighth commandment?

Answer: THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT IS,
THOU SHALT NOT STEAL.

DUTY has been defined to be "the relation of the law to the individual subject." An able writer lays great stress on what he calls the "moment of individuality in duty," in which he includes what God requires of each man according to his innate characteristics and special gifts, and also what He requires of each man in each particular case or situation. This idea will admirably apply to this eighth commandment, for it is one which enters into the very thick of life's business and battle.

"Thou shalt not steal." While the two last commands had respect to man's life and chastity, this precept rests on the notion of property. That idea must spring into being whenever men begin to live together in twos or threes or greater numbers. At once, the questions, Which is mine? and Which is thine? will demand settlement. Because it develops material prosperity, and exercises the intellectual and moral faculties of man, God has sanctioned property and attached to it certain rights. What are these? First, the undisturbed use or enjoyment of what a man possesses, and next, the liberty to give away what is his own according to his pleasure.

In this matter it is well to act on the homely counsel, Set not thy watch by the town clock, but by the dial of Scripture, for that is always true to the Sun of righteousness. The notions of honesty and justice prevalent in the world are often notoriously

at variance with God's law, while strict and scrupulous integrity is sneered at as over-conscientiousness or weak simplicity. If the golden rule were rigidly applied, and all conduct regulated thereby, injustice and unfairness would be impossible. But what is the demand of the law? What a man has a just right to claim as his own, no other must touch or tamper with; and what he has a right to expect, no other must deny or withhold. This principle covers all dealings between man and man, all labour and commerce and law, all social and public opinion, and all relations and dealings among the nations of the world. The proverbial saying, "Let justice be done though the heavens should fall," does not go one inch beyond the sharp and pregnant demand of the law, Thou shalt not steal. Let honesty be so rooted in our very natures that we shall never even ask whether it be the best policy or no, for there is much force in the statement that

"The man who pauses on his honesty
Wants little of the villain."

On the temple area at Jerusalem stood what was called the dome of the chain, because over that spot hung a chain suspended from heaven. When two disputants were unable to come to an agreement, and an appeal was carried to the temple, the chain swung over toward him who had right on his side. Such a decision was esteemed final and irreversible. It is but a fable indeed; but may we not see in it at least an illustration of that divine justice to which, whether men will or no, every cause must in the end be submitted. The supreme Judge, the Son of man, shall in the great day defend the right and punish the wrong; and shall both exercise and display that inflexible justice which consists in giving every man his own. "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God."

Lesson 72.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—MATT. VII. 12, “WHATSOEVER YE WOULD THAT MEN SHOULD DO TO YOU, DO YE EVEN SO TO THEM.”

Question LXXIV.: What is required in the eighth commandment?

Answer: THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT REQUIRETH
THE LAWFUL PROCURING AND FURTHERING
THE WEALTH AND OUTWARD ESTATE
OF OURSELVES AND OTHERS.

“**A**N upright posture is easier than a stooping one, because it is more natural, and one part is better supported by another: so it is easier to be an honest man than a knave.” The command, Thou shalt not steal, can never be grievous to a renewed man. What is its substance? To deprive a man of what is his, or to keep back from him that to which he has a just claim, is to steal. What then is the contrary duty? We must do all that we can to secure our neighbours in the undisturbed possession of their rights, and must not keep back from them anything which they may justly claim at our hands. Now notice some of the ramifications of duty from this common root of honesty.

It may in some cases demand restitution. If a man have found anything, he must seek to discover the owner that he may give him his own. If a man have wronged another he must fully and promptly repair the injury. This was the just feeling which prompted the penitent resolutions of Zaccheus the publican.

Again, the commandment prescribes diligence as the duty, not of some or of many, but of all. If a man do “not work neither should he eat;” for we must not live on “the bread of idleness.” Hard honest work is a cure for many ills and a preventive of many more. It is both a root and an offspring of honesty.

But neither diligence nor honesty are ends in themselves; they

are only stepping-stones. What is the teaching of the classical passage in Ephesians? "Let him that stole steal no more." What then must he, instead of stealing, do? "Rather let him labour, working with his hands." And for what end? Simply to earn his bread honestly? That indeed, but something more. "That he may have to give to him that needeth." What is the sum of all this? Be honest, and that you may be honest, be diligent; and when you are diligent, let it be that you may be able to be charitable as well. If we truly seek to secure that every one may get his own, let us be generous and self-denying ourselves. "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver."

" They that do much themselves deny
Receive more blessings from the sky."

It is but a step further to the view that this precept calls for unselfishness. Subject to justice and our own fair interests, we must do all we can to promote the temporal prosperity of our neighbour, and to shield him from all loss and damage.

Once more, obedience to this command may demand patience and meekness, for we may have to suffer much injustice and wrong. Among the heathens the virtues we have named were accounted no virtues at all, but only evidences of contemptible weakness. The teaching of our blessed Master is that it is better at any time, or in any thing, to suffer ill than to do ill. "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good."

Antoninus has well said, "Put it out of the power of truth to give you an ill character; and if anybody reports you not to be an honest man, let your practice give him the lie; and to make all sure, you should resolve to live no longer than you can live honestly, for it is better to be nothing than a knave." Honesty and integrity bestow influence and bring respect to him who exhibits them.

" Justice, like lightning, ever should appear
To few men's ruin, but to all men's fear."

Lesson 73.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—2 THES. III. 10, "WE COMMANDED YOU THAT IF ANY WOULD NOT WORK NEITHER SHOULD HE EAT."

Question LXXV.: What is forbidden in the eighth commandment?

ANSWER: THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT FORBIDDETH
WHATSOEVER DOTH OR MAY UNJUSTLY HINDER
OUR OWN OR OUR NEIGHBOUR'S
WEALTH OR OUTWARD ESTATE.

AN eminent writer has said, "He that remembers not to keep the Christian Sabbath at the beginning of the week, will be in danger to forget before the end of the week that He is a Christian." May our thoughts and hearts be turned away this day from those things which are seen and temporal, and fixed on those which are unseen and eternal. May our resolve be, "I will hear what God the Lord will speak."

This commandment lays its strong hand upon theft, and holds it up as a sin against God and man. It relates to all forms of open robbery—theft from the person, burglary, rapine, piracy, and such like—in which violent hands are laid on the property of others. These forms of evil, which fill the annals of crime with saddening monotony, are explicitly condemned in God's law.

Above this stratum of transgression—some might say, below it—is a mass of dishonesty and injustice with which every profession and occupation are in some measure tainted. Labour, commerce, and daily life are too often found to be honeycombed with deception and unfairness. Short weight and short measure; scamped and inferior work; abuse and embezzlement of funds; indolent waste of employer's time; falsehood in sale and purchase; overcharges and underpay; adulteration in manufactures,

food, and beverages ; fraudulent bankruptcy and debts contracted through a show of wealth ; false reports and hollow transactions to influence the markets : these things suggest evils too commonly known and felt. No ingenious or delicate cloak can conceal their true character ; and no rank in society can in this matter point an innocent finger of scorn at another. Every such departure from justice and fair dealing God will expose and condemn in the day when He judges the secrets of men.

There are also forms of evil which minister to dishonesty. Is not idleness one of these ? If the sluggard will not learn from the ants, he deserves the other alternative, "neither shall he eat." Do not extravagance and luxury often tempt to dishonesty ? They make heavy demands even on ample means ; and we all know the sometimes questionable shifts which many have to adopt in the miserable work of keeping up appearances. Do not greed and the haste to be rich often prompt to dishonesty ? If a little sharp practice will bring them even a day sooner to the goal of affluence, some men will not hesitate to adopt it. How often is it true that God has a small share in a large house, and a large share in a small one ! He "only looks to pure and not to full hands."

There is much weight in Matthew Henry's words : "That which is won ill will never wear well, for there is a curse attends it which will waste it ; and the same corrupt dispositions which incline men to the sinful ways of getting will incline them to the like sinful ways of spending." Here, if anywhere, the counsel is wise, "Keep thine heart with all diligence," for it has been well said that he who would purposely cheat a neighbour or friend would cheat his God if he could. Let us see to it that we be willing to accept and prefer loss, even great loss, before any gains which may have been unjustly acquired. The former may cause temporary distress and sorrow ; the latter, unless forgiven, entail grief and ruin that shall be eternal.

Lesson 74.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—ZECH. VIII. 16, "SPEAK YE EVERY MAN THE TRUTH TO HIS NEIGHBOUR."

Question LXXVI.: Which is the ninth commandment?

Answer: THE NINTH COMMANDMENT IS,
THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE WITNESS
AGAINST THY NEIGHBOUR.

THE sin here forbidden is the utterance of false testimony against our neighbour. The form of the precept suggests a court of justice. The good name of a brother is at stake, and we are called upon to give our testimony. If we falsely traduce his character, speaking evil against him which we know to be untrue, we commit a distinct breach of this commandment. But the range of the precept is wider far than any formal seat of justice. No one of us escapes for a moment from the sweep of the commandment. We are all of us in another tribunal from day to day, namely, that of society. We are influenced by the opinions of others, and they by ours. Each man contributes his share to general views and impressions regarding men and things. In this open and informal but very weighty and real court we may defame or vindicate a neighbour's character. By deeds as well as words, by attitudes and gestures if not by abusive language, we may be guilty of slander.

"The hint malevolent, the look oblique,
The obvious satire, or implied dislike,
The sneer equivocal, the harsh reply,
And all the cruel language of the eye;
These, and a thousand griefs minute as these,
Corrode our comfort, and destroy our ease

Have we not constant need to bear in mind that a wise head has a close mouth? And even when we ourselves have not given birth to slander or detraction, we must not aid and abet by promoting its circulation. He who spreads an evil report is guilty along with its author, just as he who passes bad coin is held guilty along with him who made it.

This canon of God's law demands in principle absolute and universal veracity. We must be true "as flowing tides are to the moon," and scorn to tell a falsehood, even if when told it might do injury to no one. As one has well said, "a man has a right to have nothing but the truth told *to* him as well as *of* him." Mark both the teaching and the argument of Paul on this theme. He is illustrating by practical examples what it is to "put off the old man," and to "put on the new." "Wherefore putting away lying," that is dying unto sin; "speak every man truth with his neighbour," that is living unto righteousness; and then he presents his motive or argument. "For we are members one of another." It is based on the solidarity of the body of Christ, who is Himself the Truth. All His members have common interests and responsibilities; why then should one wrong another? Why should the hand tell a lie to the foot, or the foot to the hand? They are members in the same body and therefore members one of another.

Let us remember that veracity is the fruit of a guileless and sincere spirit like that of Nathanael. How useless, to rise no higher, is any deception before Him whose ear is close to our lips so that He knows the faintest whisper. With a deceitful heart within and a deceitful world without, how wisely and warily have we need to walk!

"Truth is the bond of union and the basis of human happiness. Without this virtue there is no reliance upon language, no confidence in friendship, no security in promises and oaths."

Lesson 75.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—JOHN I. 47, “AN ISRAELITE INDEED, IN WHOM IS NO GUILF.”

Question LXXVII.: What is required in the ninth commandment ?

ANSWER : THE NINTH COMMANDMENT REQUIRETH
THE MAINTAINING AND PROMOTING OF TRUTH
BETWEEN MAN AND MAN,
AND OF OUR OWN AND OUR NEIGHBOUR'S GOOD NAME,
ESPECIALLY IN WITNESS-BEARING.

THE statement before us places foremost the cardinal virtue of truth in all its breadth ; then enforces its bearing on character ; and lastly lays down its special obligation in the matter of witness-bearing. Truth is the genus ; truth respecting character the species ; and truth in witness-bearing the particular. Each has its place and relative importance.

Truth is an integral part of the love we owe to our neighbour. It must be without defect, or evasion, or concealment ; for truth is worth nothing if it be not pure and genuine. Its necessity and utility in society are manifest. There can be no friendship if truth be not its atmosphere. There can be no happiness if character be wantonly and wickedly assailed. Even life and death may be in the power of our tongues. We must speak the truth in our hearts, and show that we honour and love it.

Then, see the application of truth to character. Burke said, “The chief advantage of character is that it is a shelter against calumny.” Surely this is neither a Christian nor a worthy view. Truth is its own reward apart from all use and expediency. It may also in the course of providence be a man's duty in the interests of truth modestly but manfully to defend himself against unjust aspersions on his good name.

“ Who steals my purse steals trash,
But he who filches from me my good name
Robs me of that which not enriches him
And leaves me poor indeed.”

Now the circle of loving duty here as elsewhere embraces our neighbour, and places him on equal terms with ourselves. His good name must therefore be to us as sacred as our own. It is our duty to repel every unjust and malicious attack upon him ; and in any case to be very chary how we act to his prejudice or disgrace. Still higher does the gospel lift our level of duty in this matter. “ In honour preferring one another,” “ let each esteem other better than himself.”

As to the particular application of the duty in witness-bearing, stress must be laid on the nature of the oath. We must never regard it as we would a mere assertion, for it should cover no utterance regarding the truth of which we have a shadow of doubt or uncertainty. We may well remember that for every idle word—surely still more for every unjust, unkind, uncharitable word—God will call us into judgment.

No one can tell to what sad ends one untrue word may lead, nor can any one estimate the evil done even at the moment of its utterance. There is a grievous wrong inflicted on him of whom falsehood is spoken, there is a gross injustice done to him into whose ears the slander is poured, and, most of all, the very utterance of such evil against a neighbour causes a deep, it may be, a deadly wound to the moral nature of him who is guilty of it.

“ Think truly and thy thoughts
Shall the world’s famine feed ;
Speak truly, and each word of thine
Shall be a fruitful seed ;
Live truly, and thy life shall be
A great and noble creed.”

Lesson 76.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—PROVERBS XII. 22, “ LYING LIPS ARE ABOMINATION TO THE LORD.”

Question LXXVIII.: What is forbidden in the ninth commandment?

Answer : THE NINTH COMMANDMENT
 FORBIDDETH
 WHATSOEVER IS PREJUDICIAL TO TRUTH
 OR INJURIOUS TO
 OUR OWN OR OUR NEIGHBOUR'S GOOD NAME.

HOW have we used this day of rest? Have we spent its precious hours in fellowship with God? Have we heard His voice, and has He heard ours? Have we tasted of his love, and has ours risen like incense to Him? These are fitting questions to mingle with the gratitude we owe for the privileges and mercies of the day.

“ Welcome the hour of sweet repose,
The evening of the Sabbath day ;
In peace my wearied eyes shall close,
When I have tuned my vesper lay,
In humble gratitude to Him
Who waked the morning's earliest beam.”

In this commandment, truthfulness, veracity, in all its length and breadth, is the duty required. Now note the expression “prejudicial to truth.” What is forbidden is not simply what is “contrary to truth” or “hostile to truth;” the precept covers a much wider range. Every departure from veracity, however slight in appearance, every offence against it, however trivial in the world's eyes, is condemned by the commandment which is “exceeding broad.” Consider how this bears on character?

Condemnation is passed upon all calumny, all tale-bearing, all backbiting, all evil insinuations, all rash and unfair judgment, in short, everything by which we may convey to others an unfavourable or unkind view of our neighbour's character.

In accordance with the concrete form of the precept, falsehood in witness-bearing is expressly condemned. Scarcely anything too severe can be said of such a moral crime. To lie in any case, in any form, for any end, is bad ; but to lie to the hurt and damage of a neighbour is far worse, and to do so when under oath in a court of justice is worst of all. No wonder God has said, "A false witness shall not go unpunished."

" Be slow to speak, look well within
To check what there might lead to sin,
And pray unceasingly for aid,
Lest unawares thou be betrayed."

One great offence against this commandment cannot be ignored. If the precept means anything at all, it assuredly condemns hypocrisy in every shape and form, whether toward God or man. What sin more vile than this, the only one which walks the earth unseen but to God alone ? Hollow pretence, proud assumption, empty profession—no wonder such sins as these drew from our Saviour the bitterest, hardest words He ever used ! A man is what he is before God, *and no more*. Divest yourself in thought of all and everything that a wife, a husband, a sister, a brother, a servant, yea, even a dog or bird may see, and what are you, then, in the sight of the Holy One ? Be true in the highest sense to thyself, be true to thy neighbour, be true to God, and thou shalt not be far from full integrity. Remember the warning—

" Hear the just law, the judgment of the skies—
He that hates truth shall be the dupe of lies,
And he that will be cheated to the last,
Delusions, strong as hell, shall bind him fast."

Lesson 77.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—HEBREWS XIII. 5, “LET YOUR CONVERSATION BE WITHOUT COVETOUSNESS.”

Question LXXIX.: Which is the tenth commandment?

Answer: THE TENTH COMMANDMENT IS,
THOU SHALT NOT COVET THY NEIGHBOUR'S HOUSE,
THOU SHALT NOT COVET THY NEIGHBOUR'S WIFE,
NOR HIS MAN-SERVANT, NOR HIS MAID-SERVANT,
NOR HIS OX, NOR HIS ASS,
NOR ANYTHING THAT IS THY NEIGHBOUR'S.

THERE is at least one marked difference between this commandment and the four which precede it. Murder, fornication, theft, and perjury make a man a criminal before men as well as a sinner before God. The civil magistrate takes cognizance of these evil deeds, and sits in judgment on those who do them. But see the contrast here. “Thou shalt not covet.” The evil in this case is beyond his province and beyond his power. If the covetous desire become a covetous deed, he may have something to say and do, but so long as it keeps within doors in the soul, he cannot reach it. In short, this precept relates chiefly to the heart, which God alone can know and judge. There is a further significance in this aspect of the precept. In this tenth and last of the commandments, the Lawgiver points His stern finger at the heart as if to say, There the evil lies. From the first, which required loyalty of the inner man to God, we were led in those which followed out into the daily life and conduct; but now the circle returns again to the heart, as if to remind us that it must be at the beginning and end of all our obedience. Evil desire is at the root of all sin, and this command drags it to the

light. Look at the experience of Paul. His outward conduct was so blameless that conscience did not chide him for any breach of the first nine commandments. But the tenth revealed to him the inward working of lust—of evil desire—and then he began to realise his sinful state. What does he say? “I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.” “When the commandment came, sin revived, and I died.”

But we must not forget the outward and concrete form in which the precept comes to us. “Thou shalt not covet.” Its range is expressed above in the words, “Anything that is thy neighbour’s.” The law demands full contentment with that which is our own, and denounces every unholy longing after what belongs to another. It prohibits the unhappy greed of the hungry miser, for while

“Others press onward, haply heaven to find,
Alas! the miser leaves his heaven behind.”

But that is not all. The law condemns all envy, all discontent, all unholy ambition, all repining and murmuring. How subtle is the power of temptation here! The vague longing, the tinge of envy in our admiration, and such like seem harmless enough, yet to what sin and misery may they lead ere all is done. Years before the Franco-German war, Count von Moltke was quietly looking over the fortifications of a French city. An officer became alarmed, and hinted to a neighbour that there was no saying what use might be made of what the German soldier saw. But the other only said in a careless tone, “Oh! let him alone; it’s only little Moltke.” The world knows the wonderful part which the “little Moltke” played when the great war came. Let us seek to bar the progress of evil within our souls in its very first stages, for unless by God’s grace we do so, it will increase and expand to mischief greater and sadder than we dream of. “Enter not into temptation” is the best practical application of the command, “Thou shalt not covet.”

Lesson 78.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—HEBREWS XIII. 5, “BE CONTENT WITH SUCH THINGS AS YE
HAVE.”

Question LXXX.: What is required in the tenth
commandment?

Answer: THE TENTH COMMANDMENT REQUIRETH
FULL CONTENTMENT WITH OUR OWN CONDITION,
WITH A RIGHT AND CHARITABLE FRAME OF SPIRIT
TOWARD OUR NEIGHBOUR AND ALL THAT IS HIS.

THE demands of this law have a double termination. They have respect first of all to ourselves, then to our fellows. As to ourselves the commandment requires “full contentment with our own condition.” This does not mean that if a man is sick, or poor, or in prison, or in debt, he must be content to remain in any such circumstances. To desire better things in such cases as these is as natural for us as to breathe. It is wise and holy contentment that is demanded, contentment without envy toward men, and without murmuring toward God. If we realise our Lord’s great lesson that a man’s life consisteth not, either as to its continuance or its happiness, in the abundance of the things which he possesseth, we shall soon reach Paul’s spirit, “I have learnt in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.” Let greed of gain tempt no child of God; but let him covet earnestly the best gifts.

“For earthly blessings moderate be thy prayer,
And qualified; for light, for strength, for grace,
Unbounded thy petition.”

It has been well said, “When the heart is full of God a little of this world’s goods will go a far way with us.” The same spirit will check on the lips of the Christian, even when he is sorely

afflicted, any fretful or complaining word, and will teach him rather to sing even in the severest trials,

“ Afflictions may damp, but they cannot destroy,
One glimpse of Thy love turns them all into joy,
And the bitterest tears, if Thou smile but on them,
Like dew in the sunlight grow diamond and gem.”

Zimmerman has said, “That happy state of mind, so rarely possessed, in which we can say, ‘I have enough,’ is the highest attainment of philosophy. Happiness consists, not in possessing much, but in being content with what we possess. He who wants little always has enough.”

What then is the attitude of mind required of us toward our neighbour? We must cherish “a right and charitable frame of mind.” We must be just and loving both in heart and conduct. So far from laying unholy hands on anything that is his, we are required carefully to guard against even the faintest desire to have it as our own. Bacon has said, “The desire of power in excess caused the angels to fall; the desire of knowledge in excess caused man to fall; but in charity there is no excess.”!

During the Carnival at Rome, riderless horses were lashed onward in wild career through the serried ranks of sight-seers in the Corso. Maddened with terror and excitement, they would have dashed themselves to death against a wall at the end of their strange race course; but nets of strong rope were thrown across the street, and in these they were caught and saved. Do we not need some spiritual check on our unholy desires? How often do the children of God grieve and groan over the motions of indwelling sin? How often have they to cry, “Oh wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me?” Happy they if not once or twice only but daily they can say, “We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us.”

Lesson 79.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—1 CORINTH. X. 10, "NEITHER MURMUR YE, AS SOME OF THEM ALSO MURMURED."

Question LXXXI.: What is forbidden in the tenth commandment?

Answer: THE TENTH COMMANDMENT FORBIDDETH
ALL DISCONTENTMENT WITH OUR OWN ESTATE,
ENVYING OR GRIEVING AT THE GOOD OF OUR NEIGHBOUR,
AND ALL INORDINATE MOTIONS AND AFFECTIONS
TO ANYTHING THAT IS HIS.

DISCONTENTMENT on the part of a creature, and still more on the part of a Christian, is both unreasonable and foolish. It argues a want of confidence in the wisdom, power, and love of God, and unfits a man for the right discharge of duty. Whatever our condition or circumstances be, we must beware of all fretfulness, all murmuring, and all hard thoughts of God. "We cannot be too thankful for small mercies, but we may be too much troubled about small miseries." Let us seek to cherish always a heart superior to our circumstances.

"A little bird I am,
Shut from the fields of air,
And in my cage I sit and sing,
To Him who placed me there,
Well pleased a prisoner to be,
Because, my God, it pleaseth Thee."

Still more does the command condemn "envying and grieving at the good of our neighbour." What wrong and sorrow have been wrought by "lean-faced envy in her loathsome cave"? She is blind and has "no other quality but that of detracting from virtue." Our great poet tells us how low the envious man may sink.

“ Men that make
 Envy and crooked malice nourishment
 Dare bite the best.”

They deserve a fall who, in vaulting ambition, would mount over the heads and necks of their fellows to rank and fame. How often they prove the truth of the adage that “He who would strive to touch a star oft stumbles at a straw.” Envy and false ambition are lusts which “drown men in perdition.”

Nor is the statute less severe with the “hidden man of the heart.” Every selfish desire, every lawless longing, every covetous fancy, every affection which is either unfriendly or unfair toward our neighbour is condemned at its bar. Even in this life evil desires have often become a scourge to those who cherished them. Surely there is evidence of this in the lament,

“ My days are in the yellow leaf,
 The flowers and fruits of love are gone ;
 The worm, the canker, and the grief
 Are mine alone.”

To the finally impenitent the unholy desires of the natural heart, which can never find fuel for their flame, shall be “the fire that never shall be quenched.”

Our review of the commandments is over. What are its final lessons? The law is holy and just and good ; but as a means of life or salvation, it is impotent because of the “weakness of the flesh.” Man cannot keep it, and therefore it worketh wrath and condemns him. Only in Christ is there hope. He yielded a perfect satisfaction to the law ; and now His righteousness, as full as it is faultless, is offered to us. May we indeed find Him to be “the end of the law for righteousness.” If His righteousness be imputed to us, as our sins were imputed to Him, then shall we be freely and fully “accepted in the Beloved,” and found “complete in Him.” We shall find Him to be “made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.”

Lesson 80.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—ECCLES. VII. 20, "THERE IS NOT A JUST MAN UPON EARTH,
THAT DOETH GOOD, AND SINNETH NOT."

Question LXXXII.: Is any man able perfectly to
keep the commandments of God?

Answer :
NO MERE MAN
SINCE THE FALL
IS ABLE IN THIS LIFE
PERFECTLY TO KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS OF GOD,
BUT DOTH DAILY BREAK THEM
IN THOUGHT, WORD, AND DEED.

EVERY word here is full of meaning. "No man" is able to keep the commandments of God. As regards all our race now on earth this is absolutely true. Man has lost the power, as he has lost the will, to do that which is spiritually good. When a poor sinner attempts, even agonizes, to do good, he falls back again and again in failure and shame. We are prone to evil, and cannot keep the commandments of God.

But are there, have there been, no exceptions to this sad uniformity of sin? There have been, and for one such case there is provision made in the words, "No mere man." One who was man did keep the commandments of God, but he was "no mere man," for He was God as well as man. In Him and in Him alone we see God acting out His entire and perfect will through the faculties of man; but He was more than man. Then there is another exception implied in the words, "since the fall." In his innocence Adam was able to keep and did keep the commandments of God. Being wise and holy and good, his life was in perfect harmony with the will of His Creator. But through the fall, he became impotent toward good; and since then no mere man has ever followed in the footsteps of his original holiness.

Now mark the expression, "in this life." Are there any, even mere men, able at this moment to keep the commandments of God? Certainly there are—"a great multitude"—but they are not "in this life"; they are the redeemed in heaven. Here on earth there are none such to be found. Even the holiest of God's servants will be the first to confess and mourn over their many transgressions.

Then follows another significant word, "perfectly." Are there any who are able in this life—imperfectly if not "perfectly"—to keep God's law? There are, but they are those and those only whose hearts have been changed and their wills renewed—who are new creatures in Christ. They cannot do God's will so fully as they ought or so constantly as they desire, but they long after perfect conformity to the holy law.

So far from keeping, man does by nature daily break God's commandments. In heart if not in word and deed we are all transgressors. We cannot tell nor number nor weigh our many sins. How vain then all thought of self-righteousness on the part of man! It is forbidden—for God has declared that by works no man shall be justified; it is impossible, even if not forbidden—for one flaw ruins all, and our sins are numberless; and it is useless, even if not impossible or forbidden—because no matter what our state now, we cannot wipe out the black record of the past. Only in Christ can we find a sinless obedience, a stainless righteousness. Only in Him can we stand accepted before God. May we "sit down under His shadow with great delight," and may His fruit be "sweet to our taste." While we look to Him for pardon and peace and purity, may we hate and forsake all sin. "Mercy is not for them who sin and fear not, but for those who fear and sin not." "There is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared."

Lesson 81.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—MATT. XI. 22, "IT SHALL BE MORE TOLERABLE FOR TYRE AND SIDON AT THE DAY OF JUDGMENT THAN FOR YOU."

Question LXXXIII.: Are all transgressions of the law equally heinous ?

Answer :
SOME SINS
IN THEMSELVES,
AND BY REASON OF MANY AGGRAVATIONS,
ARE MORE HEINOUS IN THE SIGHT OF GOD THAN OTHERS.

THE dictum of the poet,

"Vice is a monster of such hideous mien
As to be hated needs but to be seen,"

may be true or not true. If by "seen" is meant the recognition of evil simply as an act or fact, it is to be feared that men do not so readily hate it; but if we understand by the word such a view of sin as the Holy Spirit gives in and through the Word, then the declaration is in accordance with truth.

All sins are not alike evil, in the sight either of God or man. Some sins are "in themselves," that is, in their very nature, more heinous than others. Take examples from Scripture. There is the sin against the Holy Ghost, in which a man deliberately and consciously spurns and treats with contempt an unmistakable revelation of the Spirit of God. No one who has done so will be much troubled about his sin. It "hath not forgiveness;" and why? Not because God cannot pardon it or Christ's blood wash it away, but because in such a soul all further susceptibility to the influences of the Spirit is hopelessly lost. Another sin to which Scripture ascribes even fatal heinousness is unbelief, for it shuts the door against the pardon of all other sin. Like the Pharisees, it will neither go in itself, nor suffer others to enter, at the gate

of mercy. If one remain finally impenitent, unbelief seals his doom—for it rejects the only remedy, the precious blood of Christ. How slow we are to realise the desperate nature and evil of unbelief !

“ Sin, not till it is left, will duly sinful seem,
A man must waken first, ere he can tell his dream.”

Unbelief is exceeding sinful because of the dishonour it puts upon God as one not worthy to be loved, or served, or trusted.

Then think of the “many aggravations” which may or do attend our sins. If we sin knowingly, wilfully, against the light of God’s Word and the voice of conscience ; if we have been the children of many and long-continued mercies ; if we have been chastened and warned again and again ; if we have solemnly professed and vowed to be the servants of God ; if circumstances call for special and careful obedience ; then our transgressions are aggravated, and become doubly base and deadly. Especially should we feel how heinous our sins are, if we have tasted of the love of Christ. What hearts have we if they be not melted at the cross ! May we not well echo Bonaventura’s wish that our hearts might be stone and rock, for even these were broken and rent when the Saviour died. Man only seemed not to suffer for whom alone Christ suffered. Now He can save, and saves, the very chief of sinners, for His blood “cleanseth from all sin.” He will receive and heal and bless all, no matter how guilty, no matter how unworthy, no matter how base they be, who come unto Him. His character and honour are staked in the promise, “Him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.”

“ The mistakes of my life are many,
And my soul is sick with sin ;
And I scarce can see for weeping,
But the Lord will let me in.”

Lesson 82.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—ROMANS VI. 23, “THE WAGES OF SIN IS DEATH.”

Question LXXXIV.: What doth every sin deserve?

Answer :

EVERY SIN DESERVETH
GOD'S WRATH AND CURSE
BOTH IN THIS LIFE
AND THAT WHICH IS TO COME.

THERE is significance here in every word. It is not said, “all sin,” or “the mass of sin,” but “every sin.” Whether great or small in the weak and erring sight of man, every sin has in its very nature the same evil desert. If we could realise this, surely we should be more careful to flee from temptation, for it is like the deadly viper of which Cleopatra said,

“Dost thou not see my baby at my breast
That sucks the nurse to sleep.”

Now mark the word “deserveth,” for it has a double force. It denotes the moral character of sin as something to be hated and condemned ; and it marks also the fact that as a transgressor, man is “liable to punishment.” Look at the case of Adam. He had no tenant right of Paradise, and when he sinned he knew what he had incurred, and was both ashamed and afraid. So within us all, that conscience which can make a king a slave and a slave a king, tells us that we deserve to die. If we own and feel our sin, and sorrow for it, there is a ray of hope. There was never a *Gloria in excelsis* which did not begin with a weeping *Miserere*.

What does every sin deserve? “God’s wrath and curse,” that is, His holy displeasure against evil, and, as the fruit of that, the condemning sentence of the law. Every attribute of God is against sin. His wisdom disapproves it ; His holiness abhors it ;

His justice condemns it. On every sinner by nature, the wrath of God abides; and the curse of God shall fall, if grace prevent not. Only the blood of Him who was made a curse for us can deliver. When Luther asked a dying student, "What do you think you can take to God," the answer was, "Everything that is good." "How so?" inquired the Reformer. The student replied, "I take a humble penitent heart sprinkled with the blood of Christ." No wonder Luther responded, "Go, dear son, you shall be a welcome guest to God."

Even "in this life" sin does not escape its evil desert. Trouble and sorrow come to all alike, but do not come alike to all. To the children of God they come as kindly, loving, chastisements from a Father's hand; but to the unbelieving they are an instalment, though a small one, of sin's full desert.

If in this life sinners escape the wrath and curse of God, they shall taste of them in the life "which is to come." God's patience is lasting but not everlasting. When Russian criminals are sent to Siberia, they cross the ferry of the Irtish, which means, according to the teaching of experience, that they go to hopeless captivity and death. If we flee not to Christ, the end of life shall be to us also to "cross the ferry of the Irtish" and meet our deserved and eternal doom.

"Wreck'd and struggling in mid-ocean,
Clinging to a broken spar,
Darkness round me, billows o'er me,
Not the glimmer of a star.

All the evils of a life-time
Bearing down on my dark path,
And I sinking! Oh, I tremble,
Thinking of the night of wrath."

May the "powers of the world to come," judgment—heaven—hell—eternity—so prevail over us, that we shall be shut up to Christ, and find safety in the clefts of the Rock of Ages.

Lesson 83.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—MARK I. 15, “REPENT YE AND BELIEVE THE GOSPEL.”

Question LXXXV.: What doth God require of us that we may escape His wrath and curse, due to us for sin?

Answer: TO ESCAPE THE WRATH AND CURSE OF GOD
DUE TO US FOR SIN,
GOD REQUIRETH OF US
FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST,
REPENTANCE UNTO LIFE,
WITH THE DILIGENT USE OF ALL THE OUTWARD MEANS
WHEREBY CHRIST COMMUNICATETH TO US
THE BENEFITS OF REDEMPTION.

WE have seen the evil desert of sin and the danger to which man is exposed. But God has provided a full and free salvation in His Son, and if we would escape His wrath and curse, our first duty is “faith in Jesus Christ.” It is not strictly a condition, but it is a *sine qua non*, an exercise of soul without which we cannot be saved. Not only must we believe Him to be able, willing, and ready to help us, but we must personally and cordially surrender ourselves to Him. In so doing we can and need bring no merit or price. The law forbade anyone to approach God empty-handed; the gospel can bless only those who *are* empty-handed. In this market of free grace the poorest may be as good a merchant as the richest, and may go away laden with good things. And how blessed to think that He seeks us before we seek Him, for if the Way had never found us, we had never found the Way!

God also requires of us “repentance unto life.” He will not save us *in* our sins; he desires to save us *from* our sins. We need

hearts broken for sin, and we need quite as much, if not more, hearts broken *from* sin. The strait gate is wide enough for penitence, but too narrow for guilt. Oh to be willing, heartily willing, to say of all sin, "What have I to do any more with idols?"

" Lord, I hear thy gentle call,
Follies, sins, I leave them all ;
I am strong to break their thrall,
Lord, if Thou wilt go with me."

Tears of genuine grief for sin are among those which God prizes and treasures. God does not despise, but delights in, the broken and contrite heart.

" See the signs of grace appear,
See the soft relenting tear
Trickling at sweet mercy's call,
Catch it, angels, ere it fall."

Faith and repentance are the weightier matters of the gospel; but they are not everything. God enjoins "the diligent use of all the means" whereby blessings come. We must trade wisely with the pounds and the talents; we must dig the springs in the valley of Baca that the gracious rain may fill them; we must find our way to the wells of salvation if we would drink of the living water. So may it be with us this Sabbath morning. We may hear the preached gospel, we may search the Scriptures, we may make many errands to the throne of grace, we may seek the communion of saints, we may long for solitude to meditate, we may busy our hands in some work for the good of others; for these are duties appropriate to the day. May all such means of grace further the ends of the Sabbath and the eternal good of our souls.

" Saviour, who this day didst break
The dark prison of the tomb,
Bid my slumbering soul awake,
Shine through all its sin and gloom ;
Let me, from my bonds set free,
Rise from sin, and live to Thee."

Lesson 84.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—ACTS XVI. 31, “BELIEVE ON THE LORD JESUS CHRIST, AND THOU SHALT BE SAVED.”

Question LXXXVI.: What is faith in Jesus Christ?

Answer:

FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST
IS A SAVING GRACE, WHEREBY
WE RECEIVE AND REST UPON
HIM ALONE FOR SALVATION,
AS HE IS OFFERED TO US IN THE GOSPEL.

MAN by nature is “without Christ;” by grace he is “in Christ;” in glory he shall be “with Christ.” We mark here that particular step, namely faith, by which a sinner passes out of the first condition into the second, and begins to cherish a good hope of the third.

Faith is God’s first and grand demand of men under the gospel; it is the root of all other graces, and the sphere or atmosphere of the whole Christian life. We have to do with it here as that gracious exercise by which the soul is saved.

Faith is a “grace”—that is to say, while as an actual exercise of the soul it is and must be man’s own, yet he can and does only put forth that exercise when taught and enabled by the Holy Ghost acting upon him. It is a “saving grace,” for it is that whereby we apprehend and appropriate Christ. On the temple area at Jerusalem there is what is known as the colonnade of Aksa. On a wall within it, there is a stone which devout Mahometans long to touch. The worshipper is blindfolded, and if on advancing he is fortunate enough to lay his finger on the stone, his place in Paradise is secure. It is a poor superstition, but may remind us of something better. Christ is the living stone, and those who by the touch of faith come into contact with Him, are secure of a place in the heavenly Jerusalem. He is the grand object of faith;

not even the truth or record regarding Him—nor the mercy of God offered through Him—but Christ personally and in all His fulness as prophet, priest, and king.

What then is the nature of faith? It is the assent of the understanding and the consent of the will and affections. The gospel presents a view of what Christ is and has done; and to that view the opened understanding gives assent. Its voice is "Amen, it is even so. All is true and good." But the gospel contains overtures as well—in which Christ is offered to men. To these proposals the consent of the will and affections is given. Their voice is "Amen, so let it be. We receive Christ as the only Saviour." From that time the soul rests on Him alone, and can echo the words of a dying Christian, "Jesus only, Jesus always, Jesus enough."

This exercise of faith is very different from sense, for we cannot in a corporeal or carnal manner apprehend Him; neither is it feeling, for then were its object within us, not without us. It is the hand of the soul to take hold of Christ; the foot to come to Him; the eye to behold Him; the ear to obey Him; and the mouth to taste of His sweetness. It will bear up and bear on the Christian through all doubts and all darkness. Faith has a lion's heart, full of courage, to meet every evil and danger; and an eagle's eye, full of hope as to future and eternal good. God give us grace to exercise this faith! He gives every bird his food, but He does not throw it into the nest. We must each one for himself receive and rest upon an offered Saviour.

"Faith hath two hands; with one it pulls off its own righteousness and throws it away, as David did Saul's armour; with the other it puts on Christ's righteousness over the soul's shame, as that in which alone it dares see God, or be seen of Him."

Lesson 85.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—ACTS XI. 18, "THEN HATH GOD ALSO TO THE GENTILES GRANTED REPENTANCE UNTO LIFE."

Question LXXXVII.: What is repentance unto life?

Answer:

REPENTANCE UNTO LIFE
IS A SAVING GRACE,
WHEREBY A SINNER,
OUT OF A TRUE SENSE OF HIS SIN,
AND APPREHENSION OF THE MERCY OF GOD IN CHRIST,
DOTH, WITH GRIEF AND HATRED OF HIS SIN,
TURN FROM IT UNTO GOD
WITH FULL PURPOSE OF AND ENDEAVOUR AFTER
NEW OBEDIENCE.

PHILIP HENRY said of repentance, "I think it so necessary that if I should die in the pulpit, I wish to die preaching repentance, and if out of the pulpit, practising it." "Repentance unto life" is a scriptural and significant phrase. All repentance is not unto life; it is often only the sorrow of the world, which worketh death. We have in Scripture eight different characters who made the confession, "I have sinned," but only in a minority of these was there true turning from sin unto God. Pharaoh, Balaam, Achan, Saul, and Judas uttered the words; but in these cases we fear they were words and no more. On the other hand, we have the same formula of confession from Job, David, and the prodigal son, but in them we have evidence of a real change of heart and life. With these latter, repentance was not a mere preliminary to a salvation which might never follow; it was an essential part of the salvation itself. It was "repentance unto life."

Note the elements or stages of repentance. First, the sinner comes to a "true sense of his sin." Under the conviction and

teaching of the Holy Spirit, he sees more and more plainly his guilt, his vileness, and his helplessness. Yet the sight of all this might lead only to despair. But the Spirit then reveals to him the mercy of God in Christ, so to melt down the frozen coldness of the heart. Then comes that sincere and hearty repentance of which it has been said, "You shall see her ever sitting in the dust, her knees bowing, her hands wringing, her eyes weeping, her lips praying, and her heart beating. She could wash Christ's feet with as many tears as Mary did of old."

Then comes the kernel of repentance, when a man, grieving over and hating his sin, doth "turn from it unto God." The slightest sorrow for sin may be sufficient if it lead to this decisive "turning"; the greatest shall be insufficient, if it do not. His face was toward sin, and his back toward God; but now his back is toward sin and his face toward God. This is true repentance; and it is a duty which we are both called and commanded to perform. It is a work as urgent as it is necessary. There is wisdom no less than force in the counsel, "Delay no time—go quickly—get thee alone—wear thy knees, wring thy hands, beat thy breast, know as little measure in thy sorrow as thou didst in thy sins."

But not even there does repentance terminate, for it respects the future as well as the past and the present. The sinner resolves and endeavours to yield a new obedience. He will, by a holy consistent walk, try to show that sin forsaken is the best proof of sin forgiven. May the exalted Prince and Saviour give to us repentance and the remission of sins.

"To thee alone the privilege is given,
By earthly woe to kindle joy in heaven;
For God Himself descends to soothe the heart
That weeps o'er sin and struggles to depart;
And deeper transport swells the bliss above,
As seraphs sing the triumphs of His love."

Lesson 86.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—MATT. XXVIII. 20, "TEACHING THEM TO OBSERVE ALL THINGS WHATSOEVER I HAVE COMMANDED YOU."

Question LXXXVIII.: What are the outward means whereby Christ communicateth to us the benefits of redemption?

Answer: THE OUTWARD AND ORDINARY MEANS WHEREBY CHRIST COMMUNICATETH TO US THE BENEFITS OF REDEMPTION ARE HIS ORDINANCES, ESPECIALLY THE WORD, SACRAMENTS, AND PRAYER; ALL WHICH ARE MADE EFFECTUAL TO THE ELECT FOR SALVATION.

LET us seek to close this day of rest in a worshipful spirit. The holy employments of the Sabbath should purify and elevate our souls. Oh that we might be enabled to rise above earthly things and end the day in fellowship with God!

"Let us say to the world, should it tempt us to wander,
As Abraham said to his men on the plain—
There's the mountain of prayer, I am going up yonder,
And tarry you here till I seek you again."

We have here to do with the means of grace, of which some are inward and special, others outward and ordinary. To the former class belong the varied operations of the Holy Spirit, and the exercises of faith and repentance, for all these have their sphere in the soul, the hidden man, and are not common to all our race. There are certain means of grace, namely the events of providence, which, strictly speaking, do not belong exclusively to either class, for they are not "inward" like those already men-

tioned, nor are they "ordinary," but in many cases very special and personal. The outward and ordinary means are God's "ordinances," which He has expressly chosen and appointed for the great ends of salvation. They are wells of living water in this desert world, and God can open our eyes to behold them as He did those of Hagar when her child was ready to die. They are not streams of Babel by which to sit down and weep, for they overflow with mercy and grace. They are not like the wells for which the herdsmen strove, for the gospel springs have in them enough and more than enough for all. Such peace and joy and strength have they ministered to the people of God in all ages, that one like Rutherford could say, "I cannot but speak what I have felt, seeing my Lord Jesus hath broken a box of spikenard over His poor prisoner, and it is hard to hide a sweet smell."

Among the means of grace the place of honour belongs to the Word of God. He hath magnified it above all His name.

"This lamp from off the everlasting throne
Mercy brought down, and in the night of time
Stands casting on the earth its azure bow
And evermore beseeching men, with sighs and tears
And earnest prayers, to read, believe, and live."

The sacraments and prayer are also precious means of grace, sparkling wells of salvation. Ever near, ever full, ever free, are the soul-satisfying waters! How can these means be made effectual to us? Only by faith—living, active faith, for that is the pitcher by which the living water is raised and put to the parched lips. We know that the wells are deep, but we have something wherewith to draw. Oh for a sanctified thirst and a strong faith, then should we with joy "draw water out of the wells of salvation," and be refreshed and stimulated and strengthened for the bustle and the battle of life. "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money."

Lesson 87.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—PSALM XIX. 7, "THE LAW OF THE LORD IS PERFECT, CONVERTING THE SOUL."

Question LXXXIX. : How is the word made effectual to salvation ?

Answer :
THE SPIRIT OF GOD
MAKETH THE READING,
BUT ESPECIALLY THE PREACHING OF THE WORD
AN EFFECTUAL MEANS
OF CONVINCING AND CONVERTING SINNERS,
AND OF BUILDING THEM UP IN HOLINESS AND COMFORT
THROUGH FAITH UNTO SALVATION.

THE Word of God is not a natural instrument, producing its effects of itself and uniformly, as the sun warms or fire burns. It is a savour of life unto life to some, and of death unto death to others. If a man receive and obey the Word, the Spirit of God will use it to his salvation ; if he reject and despise it, he will find it a means to his condemnation. The Word has no inherent or necessary power of its own, but it is the sword of the Spirit, for He has made it, and alone can use it for its blessed ends. In His hands the page of inspiration is a living, life-giving, and omnipotent instrument.

" It was a two-edged blade, Of heavenly temper keen,
And double were the wounds it made, Where'er it glanced between."

It is the weapon supplied to the Christian warrior for his defence against all enemies. It is the chariot in which the Spirit goes forth to win the world for Christ. We have the high privilege of reading the Bible in our mother tongue. Hidden in an unknown language, it is as a sword within its sheath ; drawn by translation from its scabbard, it is ready for its work. Well may all

of us hear a voice like that which spake to Augustine, "Tolle, lege," take it, read it ; for it is the word of eternal life.

Especially does the Spirit of God bless the preaching of the Word. No Excalibur, with the brilliance of thirty torches, could compare with this light from heaven. It can subdue the most stubborn will ; it can break the hardest heart ; it will yet lay the world prostrate at the Redeemer's feet. The very foolishness of preaching is the power of God. Though proclaimed even by men of little learning and feeble powers, it proves in the Spirit's hand effective for its gracious ends.

" They argued not but preached,
And conscience did the rest."

What effects, then, does the Spirit work through the Word ? "The conviction and conversion of sinners." He opens the eyes, He awakens the conscience, He renews the will, He wins the heart. Like sunbeams, which, by their own sweet light, awake the sleeper, so do the truths of the gospel arouse the soul to life. The Word gains the ear, persuades the mind, subdues the heart ; in a word, converts the soul. Then it becomes a trowel in the Spirit's hands. By means of the Word He builds up believers in holiness and comfort on their most holy faith, till the great spiritual temple is complete. "This Book of stars leads to eternal bliss." Wherever read or preached on this holy day, may it produce its saving and sanctifying effects upon men ! May the Holy Spirit prepare and enable us to receive it with meekness, that it may be to us the engrafted word, and may dwell in us richly !

" Let thy heart be fair and clean,
Ready for the Spirit's pen,
Gladly waiting to receive
Just the teaching God would give,
All His purpose and His will
Learning daily to fulfil."

Lesson 88.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—HEBREWS IV. 2, "THE WORD PREACHED DID NOT PROFIT THEM, NOT BEING MIXED WITH FAITH IN THEM THAT HEARD IT."

Question XC.: How is the word to be read and heard, that it may become effectual to salvation?

ANSWER: THAT THE WORD MAY BECOME EFFECTUAL TO SALVATION WE MUST ATTEND THEREUNTO WITH DILIGENCE, PREPARATION, AND PRAYER, RECEIVE IT WITH FAITH AND LOVE, LAY IT UP IN OUR HEARTS, AND PRACTISE IT IN OUR LIVES.

WHILE the Spirit is willing and waiting to do His work, what must *our* attitude be toward the Word of God? "We must attend thereunto." We must not be indifferent to the Scriptures, but honour them for the sake of Him from whom they come, of whom they speak, and to whom they lead.

"Oh happy they of human race
To whom their God hath given grace
To hear, to read, to fear, to pray;
But better they had ne'er been born
Who read to doubt or read to scorn."

We must be diligent in reading and hearing the Word. Let no dust of idleness or neglect rest either on our Bibles at home or on our places in the house of God. Though it speak unwelcome truths, let us admit the light. That philosopher was indeed a fool who would not look through Galileo's telescope at Florence lest his own opinions should be proved to be false. Let us read the Word not as a lawyer does a will—merely to understand its contents—but as an heir to whom every provision is full of

interest. May we learn the blessed art of turning every truth, every promise, every counsel, into matter of devotion.

We must receive the word "with faith and love." Faith must have the word or it has nothing on which to rest; the word must have faith or it cannot influence the heart. Unbelief is the stone on the well's mouth; it must be taken away. Faith discovers the beauties of God's word. Like drusic stones which without are dark and unattractive, but within are full of exquisite crystals, many parts of Scripture must be broken open with the hammer of faith ere we can see their value. And as we believe, so must we also "love." May the word of God be written deeply and indelibly on our souls and become our "joy and rejoicing." Nay more, we must "lay it up" in our hearts. It must be hidden there as a precious treasure; we must seek to have it dwell richly within us. In another aspect, the Scriptures are green pastures in which the great and good Shepherd maketh His flock to lie down and rest in the noonday heat of this world. The hundred and third Psalm—the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah—the fourteenth of Hosea—the fifth of Matthew—the fourteenth of John—the eighth of Romans—the second of Ephesians—are not these rich pastures in which Christ's sheep have ever found food and refreshment for their souls?

We have yet to notice a further and most vital duty toward the word of God. We must "practise it in our lives." "If ye know these things happy are ye"—yes, but we must not forget what follows, "if ye do them." We must translate the commandments into living visible action such as not God only but men can see. Only so can we "adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things."

"Read them, but first thyself prepare
To read with zeal and mark with care,
And when thou read'st what here is writ
Let thy best practice second it,
So twice each precept read shall be,
First in the book and next in thee."

Lesson 89.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—JOHN VI. 63, “IT IS THE SPIRIT THAT QUICKENETH; THE FLESH PROFITETH NOTHING.”

Question XCI.: How do the sacraments become effectual means of salvation?

Answer: THE SACRAMENTS BECOME EFFECTUAL
MEANS OF SALVATION
NOT FROM ANY VIRTUE IN THEM,
NOR IN HIM THAT DOTHT ADMINISTER THEM,
BUT ONLY BY THE BLESSING OF CHRIST
AND THE WORKING OF HIS SPIRIT
IN THEM THAT BY FAITH RECEIVE THEM.

THE word of God is the chief means of grace, and acts upon sinners and saints alike. The sacraments are appointed for the edification of those who are within the kingdom. Yet the secret of their efficacy is the same; it depends entirely on Him whose instruments they are.

We are warned that the sacraments do not become effectual through “any virtue in them.” We remember how, when Jesus was on His way to the house of Jairus, a woman long afflicted with a loathsome disease pressed in among the throng until, with her out-stretched but trembling hand, she touched the hem of His garment. Her noble faith, first cherished in secret—then boldly manifested—then humbly confessed—was in the end gloriously rewarded. She was made perfectly whole. Was it because of any magical power in the tissues of His robe? No; for many had touched as well as she. Was it because she believed as she touched Him? Yes; but her faith only prevailed because Jesus willed to give and gave the blessing. So it is with the sacraments. The power and virtue are not in the water, or the bread, or the

wine ; but only in Him who can use them for His own loving and gracious ends.

Nor does any virtue reside in him who dispenses the ordinance. Even his personal piety is no guarantee of blessing. Augustine speaks of the public fountains on which were carved the gaping mouths of lions or other wild beasts, and asks if the sparkling water were any less refreshing because it came from these. Then in reference to preaching he inquires if the living water be not living water still, even if it come from one who is himself a stranger to its power. Grace in the administrator will not command the blessing ; nor will the best intentions accomplish any more. Paul may plant, most devoutly desiring a harvest in due time, and Apollos may water, longing to see the seed fruitful and ripe, but God alone gives, for He only can give, the increase.

Now we come to the positive side. The sacraments are made effectual only "by the blessing of Christ." As the Head of the church, He is the fountain of all life and comfort. It is He who alone can fill the pools or cause the showers to fall. We remember what followed the administration of word and sacraments at the Kirk of Shotts in Scotland long ago. As if to give visible evidence of the preacher's theme which was, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you," the glorified Redeemer sent down showers of blessing. No fewer than five hundred professed to have passed from death to life that day, and witnessed ever after a good confession. It is by His Spirit Christ accomplishes these great ends, for it is He who makes the ordinances to flow as with a flood of grace. Like the cooling fountain outside the Colosseum at Rome where the wearied gladiators refreshed themselves ere returning to the arena, so do His ordinances minister to the people of God more abundant life and strength for the battle of life. Let us use these means of grace wisely and earnestly, for this is our sowing time, and if we be not diligent, we need not look for the golden sheaves in the days to come.

Lesson 90.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—EXODUS XII. 26, “WHAT MEAN YE BY THIS SERVICE?”

Question XCII.: What is a Sacrament?

Answer: A SACRAMENT IS
AN HOLY ORDINANCE INSTITUTED BY CHRIST,
WHEREIN BY SENSIBLE SIGNS
CHRIST AND THE BENEFITS OF THE NEW COVENANT
ARE REPRESENTED, SEALED, AND APPLIED
TO BELIEVERS.

Question XCIII.: Which are the Sacraments of the
New Testament?

Answer: THE SACRAMENTS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT ARE
BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER.

“**A** SACRAMENT is an holy ordinance instituted by Christ.”
It is a ceremony prescribed and ordained by the great
Head of the church to be observed by His disciples till He come
again. By His command certain elements are used, and these
represent certain spiritual realities. The former we call signs;
the latter are the things signified. The use of signs is common
in Scripture and in our daily life. The fat and lean cattle in
Pharaoh's dream; Jeremiah's girdle; Ezekiel's sticks: these and
many more of a like kind are signs, and no intelligent reader of
Scripture can fail to see what they signify. We have seen in a
picture a long sweep of angry, crested waves breaking on a beach.
Among the seaweed and rubbish, carried now in and now out in help-
less folds, lies a royal banner. Do these noisy waters know what
it means? Not they; the sign is nothing to them, no more worth
than the brown tangle that mingles with its colours. “What
care these roarers for the name of king?” To the mind and

heart untaught by the Spirit, the sensible signs in the Sacrament are no more than the banner to the breakers ; but they who have faith to discern their spiritual significance know how precious these symbols are. The senses have much power through the imagination to affect the heart ; and God has ordained the sacraments as effective aids to our feeble faith.

What, then, are the things signified by the water and bread and wine ? They are Christ Himself and the spiritual blessings He bestows. The outward elements exhibit, convey, and apply to believers the inward benefits of the covenant. These latter are pictured or mirrored by the elements ; they are sealed, that is, made to come home as blessings flowing from Christ personally to us personally ; they are applied, that is, made channels of the good things of which they are signs. By faith alone, by believers alone, are all these effects realised, to their comfort and joy. In this ordinance the soul is lifted far above itself, above earth, above time and sense, and enjoys a very foretaste of heaven. In privileges such as these does the soul pour forth its best harmonies.

“ Oh how divinely sweet
The tones of earthly harp whose chords are touched
By the soft hand of piety, and hung
Upon religion’s shrine, vibrating
With solemn music in the ear of God.”

The sacraments are means at once of growth and of gladness to the people of God. They are oases in the wilderness, spots regarding which it may be said of true wisdom,

“ Where, with her best nurse, contemplation,
She plumes her feathers and lets grow her wings.”

“ They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength ; they shall mount up with wings as eagles ; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

Lesson 91.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—MATT. XXVIII. 19, "TEACH ALL NATIONS, BAPTIZING THEM
IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON,
AND OF THE HOLY GHOST."

Question XCIV.: What is Baptism ?

Answer :

BAPTISM IS A SACRAMENT
WHEREIN THE WASHING WITH WATER
IN THE NAME OF THE FATHER, AND OF THE SON, AND OF THE
HOLY GHOST,
DOTH SIGNIFY AND SEAL
OUR INGRAFTING INTO CHRIST,
AND PARTAKING OF THE BENEFITS OF THE COVENANT OF GRACE,
AND OUR ENGAGEMENT TO BE THE LORD'S.

THE sacraments of the New Testament are two, and two only, namely, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. There are not a few points both of comparison and contrast between them. They have the same author, and embody the same substance, and belong to the same covenant. Both shall be continued till the coming of our Lord. Yet they differ as well. Baptism is to be observed once only in each case ; but the disciples are to partake frequently of the Lord's Supper. The outward elements to be employed are not the same. Baptism may be lawfully administered to little children, but the Lord's Supper only to adults. The former represents specially the work of regeneration ; the latter, the remission of sins. Both alike testify of Christ and His benefits.

Now of Baptism itself ; and let us begin at the beginning. The church of God on earth is one, owning one Head, purchased with one blood, claiming the same blessings and promises, and seeking the same grand ends. Admission to this one church has been given to the same persons, and in a similar manner, under

the Old and New Testament. Like many other ordinances of the Church's minority, circumcision, the old rite of admission, has been replaced by another, namely baptism, more in keeping with completed and universally-proclaimed salvation. According to our Lord's commission, discipleship was to be expressed and consummated in baptism. The rite indicated a relation of dependence on and fellowship with Christ; and the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, assumed and confessed, was the symbol and token of that new relation. The washing with water was an outward sign of the inward blessing promised in the words, "Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you." The use of the name was not a mere formula; it was the acknowledgment and confession of a covenant relation to the three-one God. As an expression of personal faith and obligation, it may be rendered thus, "I desire to own, worship, and serve the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ as my Father in Him; the Son of God as my Saviour and Lord; and the Holy Ghost as my teacher and sanctifier." God's name is put upon His people; they are marked as His property and bound over to His service. If in adult life we have been baptized into Christ, it is an engagement which nothing can weaken or terminate; and if we prove unfaithful to it, who can measure our guilt? If in infancy, as the children of believing parents, we were recognised in baptism as members of the visible Church, then on our own heads be the shame if we renounce so blessed a standing, and by our conduct repudiate its obligations. May there abide upon our souls alway the blessed baptism of the Holy Spirit! This ordinance

" Speaks of the Spirit's power to cleanse
The human heart by sin depraved ;
And points us to the gracious means
By which alone the soul is saved."

May we through fellowship in the death of Christ seek and obtain that inward cleansing of the whole man by His Spirit which is symbolized by the outward washing with water.

Lesson 92.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—ACTS II. 39, “THE PROMISE IS UNTO YOU AND TO YOUR CHILDREN.”

Question XCV.: To whom is baptism to be administered ?

Answer :

BAPTISM
IS NOT TO BE ADMINISTERED
TO ANY THAT ARE OUT OF THE VISIBLE CHURCH
TILL THEY PROFESS THEIR FAITH IN CHRIST AND OBEDIENCE TO HIM ;
BUT THE INFANTS
OF SUCH AS ARE MEMBERS OF THE VISIBLE CHURCH
ARE TO BE BAPTIZED.

“THE Scriptures lead thee to Christ by the ear—by words ;
the sacraments lead thee to Christ by the eye—by signs.”
Such are the simple but beautiful words of the Scotch divine
Robert Bruce. The sign is designed to lead to that which it
signifies, the visible to the spiritual, the shadow to the substance,
the emblem to the reality.

“The visible Church consists of all those throughout the world
that profess the true religion, together with their children.”
Into that church as an organization upon earth, as the outward
fellowship of saints, admission is obtained through baptism. By
the portal of this ordinance all those who have hitherto been with-
out, whether Jew or Gentile, must enter. And what is demanded
of those who desire this privilege ? A profession of their faith and
obedience. If that be made, and there be nothing known of the
candidate's character or conduct to discredit his avowal, no one
can be refused the privilege he asks. Whether living in a
Christian country but as yet unbaptized, or a Jew now ready to
own the Messiah, or a convert from some form of heathenism, he

enters by the washing with water into the Christian church. This is believer's baptism; and regarding the rite in that form it is most important for us to remember—for many would seem to forget it—that almost all sections of Protestants are agreed both as to faith and practice.

Then follows the last clause. "The infants of such as are members of the visible church are to be baptized." Children have always belonged and been recognised to belong, to the visible church. Abraham entered into covenant with God and his son with him, and they were both alike circumcised. Israel with their children were God's covenant people, and they were all baptized in the cloud and in the sea. Now the gospel has not narrowed but enlarged the blessings and privileges of God's kingdom. We "receive one of these little ones in the name of Christ;" as the children of believing parents we esteem them "holy" as Paul did; and we find them recognised and addressed in the epistles as an integral portion of the various churches. As therefore a Christian father has given himself to God, so does he in similar faith commit his child to the covenant mercies of the same Father, Redeemer, and Sanctifier. If it was fitting to bring even the Lord of the temple to the temple of the Lord for a similar service, how much more should we bring the children of sinful parents and in whom the seeds of evil lie! How blessed to know that our little ones are in any case safe in God's hands! Well might it be said over the grave of little babes,

"Your peaceful sleep, dear ashes, here is such
Our faith's too little if our grief's too much."

To every one who doubts regarding the salvation of infants, who are called away in early years, we commend the pithy counsel,

"Revere the Bible's sacred page; the knot's untied,
They died for Adam sinned, they live for Jesus died."

Lesson 93.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—1 CORINTH. XI. 26, "YE DO SHOW THE LORD'S DEATH TILL HE COME."

Question XCVI.: What is the Lord's Supper?

Answer: THE LORD'S SUPPER IS A SACRAMENT,
WHEREIN BY GIVING AND RECEIVING BREAD AND WINE,
ACCORDING TO CHRIST'S APPOINTMENT,
HIS DEATH IS SHEWED FORTH,
AND THE WORTHY RECEIVERS ARE,
NOT AFTER A CORPORAL OR CARNAL MANNER, BUT BY FAITH,
MADE PARTAKERS OF HIS BODY AND BLOOD,
WITH ALL HIS BENEFITS,
TO THEIR SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT AND GROWTH IN GRACE.

THE Lord's Supper serves many gracious ends. It is a great feast for pilgrim saints here on earth; it is a badge or token of Christianity; it is a means to the public profession of religion, and to the communion of saints. But most of all, it is a precious commemoration of Christ and of His work. As the Lord's day is a standing memorial of His resurrection, so the Lord's Supper is a standing memorial of His death.

The bread as broken and the wine as poured forth represent the body of Christ broken for us and His blood shed for us. But the actions required of us are also symbolic. As we take that bread and eat of it, as we take that cup and drink of it, so do we, if we worthily partake, receive Christ crucified as our Saviour, and by faith feed upon Him. The bread and wine give us, as in a picture or photograph, the death of Jesus and the fruits which flowed from it; and our eating and drinking are a visible sermon on the faith by which Christ and His benefits are appropriated by the soul. Only by faith can we see in the signs the things signified. Only by faith can we feed upon Christ Himself and

find in Him "bread enough and to spare." Faith and faith only can behold, and faith and faith only can receive, the emblems of the great sacrifice in a spiritual manner, and only when so beheld and received can they benefit the soul.

What are the fruits of this ordinance? "Spiritual nourishment and growth in grace." They feed on Him who is the living bread. His atoning sufferings bring life, peace, strength, and joy to the believing soul. It is said that when first the palm tree was introduced into Europe, it was liberally watered with wine. The righteous man who flourishes like the palm tree is nourished day by day on the shed blood of Christ, and grows in beauty and fruitfulness thereby.

But we must not forget that the Lord's Supper is a bond of holy union among the disciples of Christ. At a meeting of the Evangelical Alliance at Berlin, crystal cups were used to hold the communion wine. In addressing that remarkable assemblage of Christian men—black, white, European, American, African, of all creeds and conditions, the presiding minister raised the cup before his eyes, and looking through it said, "In this blood I see you all of one colour." Oh that this union were more generally and more fully realised! When Arabs drink out of a common cup in which blood has been mingled, they become sworn brothers in life and death. May we know that "we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren."

"The table spread—the symbols placed—
The record read, and blessing given;
With holy psalms, we slowly paced
These sacred courts, a type of heaven.

'That you might live, He bled and died,
Now lives and reigns High Priest above;
Here let your vows be ratified,
Your victim, sin; your incense, love.'"

Lesson 94.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—1 CORINTH. XI. 28, "LET A MAN EXAMINE HIMSELF."

Question XCVII.: What is required to the worthy receiving of the Lord's Supper?

Answer: IT IS REQUIRED OF THEM
THAT WOULD WORTHILY PARTAKE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER
THAT THEY EXAMINE THEMSELVES
OF THEIR KNOWLEDGE TO DISCERN THE LORD'S BODY,
OF THEIR FAITH TO FEED UPON HIM,
OF THEIR REPENTANCE, LOVE, AND NEW OBEDIENCE ;
LEST, COMING UNWORTHILY,
THEY EAT AND DRINK JUDGMENT TO THEMSELVES.

MARK the duration of this ordinance: "till He come." While faith looks back to Calvary and rests on Christ's finished work, while love breaks her alabaster box on a Lord present spiritually in the symbols, hope keeps her clear bright eye on the future. She looks and longs for the coming of her Lord, and for the fulfilment of the many promises which are clustered like stars in a constellation around that great event. In proportion as this aspect of the Supper is realised, it is a standing prophecy of the second advent.

How are we to prepare for this ordinance? David and his people found how jealous God is of those who seek Him not "after the due order." Paul expressly declares, "Let a man examine himself and so let him eat," and this is the duty of every intending communicant. Self-examination is a reflex act, by which we look backward to scan our past and see its character, and inward to discover what are our sins, our wants, our motives, and our aims. Consider some of the questions we must put and seek to have answered. First as to knowledge. Do we so under-

stand these signs and their meaning as to be able through them to discern the Lord's body? Then as to faith. Are we able spiritually to appropriate Christ and His benefits? Of other graces also must we inquire. Have we truly turned in heart and life from sin unto God? Have we given Him the throne of our affections? Do we serve Him in newness of spirit and life? The real presence of any of these marks is a token for good, while the entire absence of them may well awaken deep and anxious searchings of heart.

Why all this preparation? It is in order to avoid the danger of "coming unworthily." If we are still dead in sin, the table of communion is not for us. What a mockery to see bread in a dead man's mouth! And where is the profit? Water may refresh a withering plant, but not a withered one. According to Paul's explicit teaching, judgments both temporal and eternal are the natural consequences of the abuse of this ordinance. May God forgive us, and avert from us the chastisement we deserve!

Those who partake of this ordinance should live and act as consecrated ones. May sacramental feeling be ever on our spirits, so that whatever trial or misfortune befall us, we shall show ourselves true and loyal still.

" You may break, you may ruin the vase if you will,
But the scent of the roses will cling to it still."

If we worthily partake, it shall be to us a foretaste of the marriage supper above, and we shall be fain to sing

" Oh if this glimpse of love
Be so divinely sweet,
What will it be, O Lord, above,
Thy gladdening smile to meet?"

Instituted "the same night in which He was betrayed," the Lord's Supper was a striking prophetic type of His death on the morrow, and has ever since been its grand and blessed memorial.

Lesson 95.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—PHILIP. IV. 6, "LET YOUR REQUESTS BE MADE KNOWN UNTO
GOD."

Question XCVIII.: What is prayer?

Answer:

PRAYER IS
AN OFFERING UP OF OUR DESIRES UNTO GOD
FOR THINGS AGREEABLE TO HIS WILL,
IN THE NAME OF CHRIST,
WITH CONFESSION OF OUR SINS,
AND THANKFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF HIS MERCIES. †

PRAYER is both a means and an evidence of grace. As a mirror is held before the lips of one who is dying, to see if any breath be thrown on the surface which may indicate remaining life, so is true prayer an invariable proof of grace in the heart. None of God's children are born either deaf or dumb. They hear His voice, and He hears theirs.

Prayer is "an offering up of our desires unto God." It includes "the whole range of Godward feeling from a faint unformed yearning to the highest wrestling."

" High thoughts and words, and music strong and sweet
Are worship's token ;
But tears that drop in love at Jesus' feet
Are prayers unspoken."

As one has beautifully said, " Prayer is helplessness casting itself upon power ; it is infirmity leaning on strength, and misery wooing bliss ; it is unholiness embracing purity, hatred desiring love ; it is corruption panting for immortality ; it is the flight of the soul to the bosom of God." We must plead with fervency, with frequency, and with faith, ever remembering that prayer is not overcoming God's reluctance, but taking hold of God's willingness.

We must ask for "things agreeable to His will." If for things temporal, we must leave Him to decide whether they be good for us or fitted to advance His glory. Even if for things spiritual, we must remember that He is sovereign, and may answer us very differently in many ways from our ideas or expectations.

We have a precious and potent plea to present, even "the name of Christ." That name is as "ointment poured forth" to God as well as to man. What we receive in Jesus' all-prevailing name is debt to Him, though it be grace to us. As we say that

" Letters in England have no grace,
Unless they wear Victoria's face,"

so it is only when we lay the name of Jesus beside our petition on God's altar, that we can hope to receive those answers which are echoes from the Rock of Ages.

When we pray we must also confess our sins and express our gratitude. Seeking to leave in ourselves no "continent of undiscovered character," let us freely, fully, frankly tell all to God. Even though the old ashes of the sins of our youth be now fires of sorrow to us, let us lay them beneath our Father's eye. Let us seek to hide nothing, not even the skeletons in our chambers, from Him. And as we pray, let us also praise. We may not remember all God's benefits, but at least let us not forget them all. May our gratitude for mercies received rise as a continual incense from an undying fire to God. These are fitting accompaniments of believing prayer.

" But that from us aught should ascend to heaven
So prevalent as to concern the mind
Of God high blest, or to incline His will,
Hard to believe may seem ; yet this will prayer."

What a record can we gather, both from the pages of Scripture and the experience of God's people in all ages, of the power and the victories of prayer !

Lesson 96.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—ROMANS VIII. 26, “ WE KNOW NOT WHAT WE SHOULD PRAY FOR AS WE OUGHT.”

Question XCIX.: What rule hath God given for our direction in prayer?

Answer : THE WHOLE WORD OF GOD
 IS OF USE TO DIRECT US IN PRAYER,
 BUT THE SPECIAL RULE OF DIRECTION IS
 THAT FORM OF PRAYER WHICH CHRIST TAUGHT HIS DISCIPLES,
 COMMONLY CALLED THE LORD’S PRAYER.

WHEN a diver is at work in comparatively shallow water, a circle of air bubbles may be seen on the surface just over where he is. They are visible evidence of his life and his situation. Prayer is a similar proof in the case of God’s children. There can be no active life, no real growth, no worthy service, and no true joy without the constant cultivation both of the spirit and duty of prayer. Let us seek to be like one of whom it was said that he beheld the face of His heavenly Father before that of any other in the morning, and after that of every other at night. He who lies down to sleep without prayer does so without a pillow beneath, or a roof above, his God-forgetting head.

In this duty the word of God is our guide and teacher. There is no part of it which may not be used for devotion or petition. Its direct teaching on the subject is most comprehensive. That prayer should be private and public, secret and social, personal and intercessory ; that we may freely ask for both temporal and spiritual blessings ; that it may be clothed in language or breathed only in the heart ; that it should be offered to the three Persons of the Trinity, but to the Father and the Spirit only through the Son ; that it should be intelligent, believing, and unceasing ; there are some of the Scripture lessons in the

holy art of supplication. May our desires at white heat ever rise up to God, and may we ever remember that the heavens are never deaf except when man is dumb.

Besides the word generally, Christ gave to His disciples a compact model, commonly called the Lord's Prayer. Tertullian called it a breviary of the whole gospel, and no wonder, for it sweeps the whole field of God-ward feeling in the soul. There is no want which it does not embrace. The prayer consists of an invocation, six petitions (some would say, seven), and a doxology. In the petitions, the things of God, those which are heavenly, come first, *Thy* name, *Thy* kingdom, *Thy* will ; then the things of man, those which relate to earth, Give *us*, forgive *us*, lead *us* not ; and these form two natural divisions, like the first and second tables of the law. Beginning with the things of God, the prayer spirit rises upward even to heaven itself ; then beginning again with the needs of man, it mounts over want and sin and evil to a region of adoring praise. If we follow one by one its various petitions, we may trace the spirit it inculcates. We must be, first, filial and brotherly ; second, reverent ; third, zealous ; fourth, submissive ; fifth, dependent ; sixth, penitent and forgiving ; seventh, watchful and hopeful ; and finally, thankful and adoring.

The primitive Christians called this prayer "the daily cleansing," and "the daily healing." No child of God can ever get beyond the need of it ; he must, even if already cleansed, daily "wash his feet." May our prayers this Sabbath evening be like vessels trading to the Holy Land, and may they return in stores of blessing infinitely exceeding all "the wealth of Ormus or of Ind." May our best thoughts and whole hearts be in all our approaches to the throne of grace, for the deepest flaw which can be found in our prayers is mere formality.

" My words fly up, my thoughts remain below,
Words without thoughts never to heaven go."

Lesson 97.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—ROMANS VIII. 15, "YE HAVE RECEIVED THE SPIRIT OF ADOPTION WHEREBY WE CRY, ABBA, FATHER."

Question C.: What doth the preface of the Lord's Prayer teach us?

Answer: THE PREFACE OF THE LORD'S PRAYER
(WHICH IS, *Our Father which art in heaven*)
TEACHETH US
TO DRAW NEAR TO GOD
WITH ALL HOLY REVERENCE AND CONFIDENCE
AS CHILDREN TO A FATHER ABLE AND READY TO HELP US;
AND THAT WE SHOULD PRAY WITH AND FOR OTHERS.

"OUR Father." There is a true and deep sense in which God is a Father to all men. By creation and preservation, they are the creatures of Him who is the Father of spirits. But this is far short of the teaching of our Lord. In a special, blessed, holy sense, God is a Father to those who are in Christ Jesus. In Him alone can we apprehend and approach God as Father. The tender, holy, loving relation implied in the word respects only those who are regenerate. Only they in whom the Spirit of adoption cries Abba, and who themselves in the Spirit of adoption cry Abba, know what the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ can be and do as a Father unto them. Their spiritual life is from Him; they wear His image; and they are adopted into His family. In prayer therefore the children of God use no empty title and appeal to no useless relation. In Eastern countries it was death to approach a monarch uninvited, but we may freely draw near as children to a Father—all the more that we are so encouraged to come. Queen Elizabeth once asked Sir Walter Raleigh when he meant to desist from asking favours, and was honoured with the reply, "When your Majesty ceases to

bestow them." All that we or any have ever yet gotten at the footstool, is as nothing to the riches of grace, unmeasured and as yet unclaimed, which are the glory of "Our Father."

Mark the word "our," for it has a double significance. Luther said that the sum of divinity lay in the pronouns. In the broad sense already spoken of, all men can say "our" Father; but in the truest and highest sense only believers can claim Him as theirs. If a man is born again, then he allows unbelief or Satan to rob Him of much blessing and privilege if he cannot say assuredly, "my" Father. But, further, the word has here the common interest of all God's true children. The "our" reminds us that "the whole family in heaven and earth" can in the same Spirit of adoption use the same blessed invocation. They are among the "many sons" as well as we. We must never despise nor be ashamed to own him for a brother whom God will own as a son. We are not like marbles which lie together in a heap, yet have no closer relation to one another than that of mere contact; we have one Spirit, one nature, one faith, one home. The children of God in this world are like drops of quicksilver fallen on the floor but severed one from another by the dust. The day is coming when the element of separation, the dust of error and prejudice, shall all have passed away. Then shall Christians realise our Lord's profound prayer, "that they, Father, may be one in us."

This is the sacred day of rest and worship. The Father gives special audience to His children, and spreads a table, laden with costly and heavenly viands, for their nourishment and comfort. May the Spirit of adoption be upon us and in us, that we may have the humility and the docility, the confidence and the openness, which our gracious Father in Christ desires to see in all the members of His family.

Lesson 98.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—PSALM LI. 15, "OH LORD, OPEN THOU MY LIPS, AND MY MOUTH SHALL SHOW FORTH THY PRAISE."

Question CI.: What do we pray for in the first petition?

Answer:

IN THE FIRST PETITION
(WHICH IS, *Hallowed be thy name*)

WE PRAY

THAT GOD WOULD ENABLE US AND OTHERS TO GLORIFY HIM
IN ALL THAT WHEREBY HE MAKETH HIMSELF KNOWN,
AND THAT HE WOULD DISPOSE ALL THINGS TO HIS OWN GLORY.

WE begin with part of the invocation which we have left over for study, namely, the words, "which art in heaven." The expression here denotes, not the sky in which birds fly and clouds roll, nor the blue vault above where move and shine the vast luminaries of the night, but the highest heavens, the "city of the skies." As God dwelt symbolically in the temple, as He dwells essentially in Christ, as He dwells spiritually in His people, so does He dwell, as to personal presence and majesty, in heaven. When, therefore, we say, "which art in heaven," our thoughts should be raised above earthly things, and our hearts should be filled with comfort to know that One so mighty and glorious is our Father, who will help and care for us. To call God Father is the greatest privilege of a creature, and to do so with suitable faith and reverence is the highest attainment of a Christian.

The first petition is, "Hallowed be Thy name." Remember that the "name" of God means in Scripture His revealed character and will; the prayer means, Let all the worship, service, and glory due to Thee, as Thou hast graciously made Thyself known, be rendered always and by all. An old divine divides

this Lord's Prayer into, first, those petitions which concern the ends of religion ; and secondly, those which concern the means. In the former class he places the first three, which relate to the glory of God's name, the triumph of His kingdom, and the accomplishment of His will, the other three referring to the means by which these ends may be attained. Having as its aim the glory of God, this petition leads the van. Why do we pray for the coming of His kingdom, for the doing of His will, for daily bread, for the pardon of sin, and for deliverance from temptation and all evil ? In every separate case the answer ought to be, That God may be glorified. In heart and in life, in work and in worship, in prosperity and in adversity, may we have a single eye to His glory. Any thing that concerns us must be entirely subordinate to this grand object. Only then shall God's name be hallowed as we pray that it should.

The petition covers a wide field, for it embraces man's whole nature and life. We pray that in everything, and everywhere, and at all times, and by everybody, God's name may be hallowed. As revealed in nature may He be recognised and honoured ; as revealed in providence may He be trusted and feared ; and as revealed in Christ, may He be loved and served. If the object of our prayer be also the object of our lives, it will bring us in all things very near to God. There is a deep lesson, even if there be no authenticity, in a saying ascribed by tradition to our Lord, " He that is near Me is near the fire." If we live near to Him our evil thoughts and desires will be scorched by His presence, and a hallowed influence pervade both our souls and our services. We shall never know the secret of the Lord unless we be much in secret with the Lord. Not even the Master Himself could utter a higher prayer than this, " Father, glorify Thy name."

Lesson 99.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—REV. XII. 10, “NOW IS COME SALVATION, AND STRENGTH,
AND THE KINGDOM OF OUR GOD.”

Question CII.: What do we pray for in the second petition ?

Answer :

IN THE SECOND PETITION
(WHICH IS, *Thy kingdom come*)

WE PRAY

THAT SATAN'S KINGDOM MAY BE DESTROYED,
AND THAT THE KINGDOM OF GRACE MAY BE ADVANCED,
OURSELVES AND OTHERS BROUGHT INTO IT AND KEPT IN IT,
AND THAT THE KINGDOM OF GLORY MAY BE HASTENED.

THIS petition has, suitably to the state of the world, a destructive and a constructive side. First of all, we pray “that Satan's kingdom may be destroyed.” Satan is, in actual fact, though not by right, the god of this world. He rules all men in their natural state, whether they realise it or no. He blinds and ensnares those who, being his subjects, are his slaves, and uses their evil lusts as his weapons. Here, then, we pray that he whose head was bruised when he bruised Christ's heel, may be finally overthrown, and all his works in us, around us, and in the world, utterly destroyed.

We also pray that on the daily-crumbling ruins of that kingdom of evil, “the kingdom of grace may be advanced.” God has set up a kingdom, through Jesus Christ, in the hearts of men. It is to come to us, we are not to go to it. As a kingdom of grace, in which God's free favour to the undeserving rules over all, it is outwardly proclaimed to men in the gospel, and as a kingdom of grace it is inwardly realised by those whom Christ lovingly subdues to Himself. In its visible form this kingdom is the universal

Christian Church. The growth of this kingdom, whether as developed in revelation, or realised in history, or experienced in the soul, is ever from small to great, like that of the mustard seed; and its pervasive power shall, like leaven, gradually regenerate the whole heart, the whole world. May we, and all whom we love, and all our race, be included and kept safe in this blessed kingdom.

God has promised to His exalted Son the final triumph of His reign. It is said that when Constantine was tracing the boundaries of the great city which bears his name, he beheld the figure of the Saviour going before, and as he followed he found that he was insensibly led to describe a circuit wider far than he had intended. Certain it is that Christ's kingdom shall yet outgrow both its present limits and our poor expectations. Do we believe the promises of His certain and final victory as we should? When the Carthaginian troops were investing Rome, the spot of ground on which stood the tent of the dreaded Hannibal was put up to auction within the walls of the city. After brisk competition it was knocked down to a citizen who offered for it a large sum of money. What a proof of his faith in the certainty of victory for Rome! Never should any believer doubt the ultimate and glorious triumph of God's kingdom.

Once more, the kingdom of grace shall be a kingdom of glory by and by. Let those who pray, "Thy kingdom come," help to answer their own prayers. When, at the battle of Alma, a Highland serjeant was rebuked for pressing too fast up the heights with the colours, his reply was, "Bring your men up to the colours." May we see to it that we ourselves be "up to the colours" in the battle against evil, and that our motto be, "Christ for the world, and the world for Christ."

Lesson 100.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—LUKE XXII. 42, "NOT MY WILL BUT THINE BE DONE."

Question CIII.: What do we pray for in the third petition?

Answer : IN THE THIRD PETITION
(WHICH IS, *Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven*)
WE PRAY
THAT GOD, BY HIS GRACE,
WOULD MAKE US ABLE AND WILLING
TO KNOW, OBEY, AND SUBMIT TO, HIS WILL IN ALL THINGS
AS THE ANGELS DO IN HEAVEN.

THE will of God as made known to man in conscience, in Scripture, and in providence, must be the guide and measure of ours. Whether in service or in suffering, whether in great things or in small, His will must prevail.

"No service in itself is small,
None great though earth it fill ;
But that is small that seeks his own,
And great that seeks God's will."

As applied to ourselves, the petition invokes divine aid, for we are through sin both wilful and weak. Both the will and the power to please God must come from Himself. At times the believer may be honestly inclined to do His Father's will, but have to groan over His impotence toward good. At other times he feels the matter of God's will opposed by his own stubborn inclinations to evil. So may his prayer be enlarged thus : I am ignorant, teach Thou me ; I am wilful, incline Thou me ; I am powerless, enable thou me, to do and bear Thy will.

"I would not have the restless will
That hurries to and fro,

That seeks for something great to do,
Or secret thing to know ;
I would be treated as a child,
And guided as I go."

Our obedience must be, like that of the Master, both active and passive ; we must learn both to do and to bear. If God wills us to be holy, let it be our will also. May we be living epistles of Christ ! May His will be ours not only in practice but in providence. In every form of trial may we say like our Captain, "Thy will be done." Though we groan may we not grumble ; though we suffer, may we learn to submit. Take the case of bereavement as one in which we must exercise patience and meekness. Regarding the children of God, the matter has been put thus, "You say of a loved one, Father, I will that they be with me where I am. Christ says, Father, I will that they be with me where I am." Which will ought to prevail—yours or His ? Oh for such perfect trust and love that we could lie passive and pleased in His all-wise hand.

Now mark the manner and measure spoken of. "As it is in heaven." We are not to think of comparing ourselves with ourselves. How do angels and the redeemed above do God's will ? Cheerfully, constantly, perfectly. Oh that it were so done among men ! It shall soon be so with every child of God. God requires no other qualification of admittance to heaven but those holy dispositions which will fit us for His service, and these, if we will have them, He is graciously willing to bestow. How should we long to be able to say, like Dr Payson, when he lay a-dying, "Oh what a blessed thing it is to lose one's will. Since I have lost my will, I have found happiness." May we express our ready obedience and submission in the comprehensive words of Thomas à Kempis, "Lord, as Thou wilt—what Thou wilt—when Thou wilt."

The word translated "daily" may mean either "bread of subsistence," or "to-morrow's bread;" the latter seems most correct. It teaches us to trust God for the future, and limit our desires by present necessity. As we may come, and are invited to come, day by day, we need not extend our anxious care to the time to come. So also we are taught to seek not wealth or luxury, but only what is needful to our moderate comfort. We must pray in the spirit of Bishop Hall's words, "I am sure that I shall receive either what I ask or what I should ask." If God withhold anything, or take it away, He Himself is either worth all we can lose for Him or nothing at all. Let the rich beware of the pride and insolence to which they are tempted, and the poor of the envy and jealousy they may be prone to cherish. Let all be diligent in using every means to promote their own comfort and prosperity. Foresight is at all times a Christian duty; it is foreboding that is a sin.

Lastly, let us seek God's blessing on all our mercies and comforts, for that alone can make them truly sweet. We must temper our desires for daily bread by our spiritual condition. We must ask for temporal blessings in proportion as they will not hinder but help our soul's prosperity. Our first care must be regarding the journey's end, then for comforts by the way. He may see poverty to be better for us than riches, sickness than health, losses than gains, loneliness than the presence of loved ones. The care of the soul is the "one thing needful." A man may lose health, or means, or home against his will; but if he forfeit heaven, it must be with his own consent. We pray in this petition for the necessaries of life; we confine our requests to the present; and we ask all in so far as consistent with His glory and our best interests, submitting to His providence either in granting or refusing them.

Lesson 102.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—HOSEA XIV. 2, "TAKE AWAY ALL INIQUITY AND RECEIVE US GRACIOUSLY."

Question CV.: What do we pray for in the fifth petition?

Answer: IN THE FIFTH PETITION (WHICH IS,
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors)

WE PRAY

THAT GOD, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE,

WOULD FREELY PARDON ALL OUR SINS ;

WHICH WE ARE THE RATHER ENCOURAGED TO ASK,

BECAUSE BY HIS GRACE

WE ARE ENABLED FROM THE HEART TO FORGIVE OTHERS.

ACCORDING to an old writer, "we are now done with the supplications of this prayer and are come to the deprecations." What he means is, that the former class of petitions have respect to the obtaining of that which is good, the latter to the removing of that which is evil.

As offences against God require satisfaction, so do offences against man require restitution; therefore both are here called debts. But they are in other respects very different. Offences against men are only of equals against equals, and are both few in number and modified in nature compared with our sins against God. Our rebellion, our ingratitude, our enmity, and our unbelief are debts of such enormity as cannot be reckoned or conceived.

Yet we pray that God "would freely pardon all our sins," and we may boldly and believingly ask Him to do so, "for Christ's sake." He, the innocent Son of God, hath died for our sins, and His merits are greater than even all our ill deserts. The broken-hearted sinner looks on his sin and cries, How can God pardon? God looks upon the atoning blood and cries, How can

I not pardon? May the words, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins," be our daily creed, and this petition our daily prayer. How full is the forgiveness bestowed by God! If forgiven at all, we are forgiven altogether. And as it is full, so is it free! We have no merit, and God asks none, for He puts salvation into none but empty hands. Moreover, forgiveness is a present blessing. A woman who was a slave came on board a British steamer off the coast of South America. A gentleman asked the captain if she would be free when she reached the shore of Britain. The reply was that of a sailor and a patriot, "When she touches this deck, she is free; this is British soil." So is it with believers. If we be in Christ, we are forgiven and accepted now, and do not need to wait for these blessings till we reach the eternal shore. Here and now we may seek and find the forgiveness of sins.

If we ask forgiveness of God, we must be ready to say, "as we forgive our debtors." We must cherish the forgiving disposition which our own pardon calls for and deserves. It is our duty to forgive every one's faults but our own, and to write injuries in dust but kindnesses on marble. He is below himself who is not above an injury. A gentleman was once called upon to act as arbitrator in a hot dispute. His decision was both striking and significant, Let the innocent forgive the guilty. We must not cry for pardon and yet ourselves display a spirit of revenge. May the forgiveness we have obtained for innumerable and immeasurable sins against God prompt us to grant unlimited remission of the trifling debts which a brother may owe.

The Sabbath hours again are near a close. What is our condition after this season of privilege and opportunity? Are we unforgiven and unforgiving? Such a state and spirit must end in the doom of the lost. We cannot look for inward peace or happiness unless we be at peace both with God and our fellow-men. Forgive us, Lord, and help us to forgive others.

Lesson 103.

SABBATH MORNING.

TEXT—MATTHEW XXVI. 41, “WATCH AND PRAY, THAT YE ENTER NOT INTO TEMPTATION.”

Question CVI.: What do we pray for in the sixth petition?

Answer: IN THE SIXTH PETITION
(WHICH IS, *And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil*),
 WE PRAY
 THAT GOD WOULD EITHER KEEP US FROM BEING TEMPTED TO SIN
 OR SUPPORT AND DELIVER US WHEN WE ARE TEMPTED.

WE need such a prayer as this on the morning of the Lord's Day. We seldom want allurements to sin even when engaged in the worship and service of God. Satan has no love to this holy day, and will mar its design if he can. If delivered from temptation and the power of the wicked one, our waiting on God in His word and worship shall be blessed indeed. Such deliverance is the matter of this petition.

We now turn our eyes from the past to the future. We are in a world of sin and danger. Around us, within us, beneath us are bitter enemies. How shall we prevail? Let one resource at least be prayer. “Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.” The words remind us of those which fell from an eminent saint, “Lord, pardon what I have been; amend what I am; and direct what I shall be.”

Sometimes the word “temptation” means any form of trial, as when James says, “Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;” but generally in Scripture it denotes any suggestion of, or solicitation to, that which is evil. Now God may place His people in circumstances bristling with allurements to sin. But let us remember that temptations are only evil if we yield to

them. To be tempted is not sinful ; to give way to the temptation is where our guilt lies. If resisted and repelled, even incitements to evil may be over-ruled as a precious discipline. Fuller says of Satan, "He cannot constrain if I do not consent. If I do but keep possession, all the posse of hell cannot violently eject me ; but if I cowardly surrender to His summons, there needs no more to be my undoing but myself."

In this petition we ask to be protected not from all and every form of trial, but from such trials as might make our perseverance not only difficult but doubtful. The surges of temptation may be sent not to break us but to heave us on to the rock Christ. They may even be among the "all things" which work together for good. There is a species of plover found in the East, which has been described as

"That bold bird on the banks of Nile
That picks the teeth of the crocodile."

So does the Christian reap benefit oftentimes even from so foul and dangerous a thing as temptation to sin. To Jesus above should we look and flee for grace and strength.

"When Satan by my sins made bold
Strives from Thy cross to loose my hold,
Then with Thy pitying arms enfold
And plead, oh plead for me."

"Deliver us from evil." This may be understood either of evil in its widest sense, or of him who is its head and personal embodiment, the devil, the evil one. The latter view seems most scriptural. The great adversary can tempt and trouble, hamper and harass, as no other can ; and to be delivered finally and for ever from his power would be heaven itself to many of God's children. Fuller says, "Satan, as a master, is bad ; his work much worse ; his wages worst of all." May "the Stronger than he" deliver us from his power and make our souls His own eternal abode.

Lesson 104.

SABBATH EVENING.

TEXT—ROM. XI. 36, “OF HIM, AND THROUGH HIM, AND TO HIM ARE ALL THINGS; TO WHOM BE GLORY FOR EVER. AMEN.”

Question CVII.: What doth the conclusion of the Lord's Prayer teach us?

ANSWER: THE CONCLUSION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER
(WHICH IS, *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever, Amen*)

TEACHETH US

TO TAKE OUR ENCOURAGEMENT IN PRAYER FROM GOD ONLY,

AND IN OUR PRAYERS TO PRAISE HIM,

ASCRIBING KINGDOM, POWER, AND GLORY TO HIM,

AND IN TESTIMONY

OF OUR DESIRE AND ASSURANCE TO BE HEARD

WE SAY,

AMEN.

THIS doxology, as found in the received text of Matthew, is entirely without authority. The words are probably taken from some old liturgy. Yet as a fitting and beautiful ascription of praise, they may teach us some useful lessons.

Prayer and praise can never be rightly disjoined, at least here on earth. If we pray we shall not want abundant reason for praise, and if we praise we can never forget what reason we have to pray. The Dead Sea receives the Jordan into its bosom, yet is not any the sweeter; but it should not be so with our new hearts. In every circumstance of life and at every hour of the day we shall find, if our eyes are open, occasion for praise.

“ Oh Thou whose blessing fills my cup with every blessing meet,
I give Thee thanks for every drop, the bitter and the sweet,
I thank Thee for both smile and frown, and for the gain and loss,
I praise Thee for the future crown and for the present cross.”

Now mark the notes in this song. "Thine is the kingdom." In nature and in providence, but most of all in grace, He reigns and reigns alone. Christ is Head of His church and Head over all things to His church. His kingdom may have its "horas" and its "moras," its seasons and its delays; but its final triumph is secure. To Him also belongeth "the power." He only is able to rule over the forces of nature, the hearts of men, and the events of history so that the interests of His kingdom may be supreme. His also shall be "the glory for ever." This world and its history has been from first to last a great theatre for the display of God's character and attributes. His glory is as one clear radiant beam in which all His excellences shine with their own peculiar lustre. What praise we owe to Him who died for us! Should we not both long and labour to see Him King and Lord of all? That glad day is drawing nigh.

"Come then, and added to Thy many crowns,
Receive yet one, the crown of all the earth,
For Thou alone art worthy. It was Thine
By ancient heritage ere nature's birth,
And Thou hast made it Thine by purchase since,
And overpaid its value with Thy blood."

The prayer closes with one pregnant word, "Amen." When related to a desire or petition, it means, So let it be; but when related to a truth or a promise, it signifies, So shall it be. In the one case it is the language of prayer; in the other of assurance and hope. Let us use it in both ways. As our desires, Lord, have ascended to Thee; Amen, so let it be to us in our blessed experience. As the truth and promises of Thy word declare; Amen, so shall it be all through human life and history. Every promise is in Christ Jesus, not if, or perhaps, or peradventure, but Yea; and they shall also be Amen in Him "unto the glory of God."

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