

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL.

From the New York Observer.

INTERNATIONAL LESSON

BY REV. HENRY M. GROUT, D. D.

AUGUST 31.—God's Works and Word.—Psalm 19: 1-14.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.—Psalm 148: 2.

The author of this psalm was undoubtedly David, though of the date and circumstances of its composition nothing is known. It was probably written in his earlier manhood when the experiences and impressions of his life under the open heavens were vivid and fresh.

The psalm divides itself into three easily distinguishable parts. In it we have (a) God's glory as seen in His works; (b) The revelation God makes of himself in His word; and (c) The writer's prayer under the sense of distance from the author of both. The second part is the crown of the whole. From it the mind rises from the first; and from it thought passes to practical application in the third. Thus we observe that the perfection and preciousness of God's word is the central thought. With this in mind, note the chief things the psalm is fitted to impress:

1. Who is it that speaks in this word?—A being of wonderful majesty and power. His works tell us much concerning him. Paul reminds us that, in the things he has made, his "eternal power and godhead are distinctly seen" (Rom. 1:20). Particularly with this, as he gazed into the starry heavens. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament sheweth his handiwork." Whether all things were the creation of a day or week they may not tell. But they do declare that their author is a glorious being; conscious, intelligent, almighty, all-wise and good.

Then three striking things mark the testimony thus given. It is continuous, "Day unto day and night unto night" is the story repeated. It is silent, "There is no speech, no language; their voice is not heard." It is universal, "Their line (their measure or extent) is gone out into all the earth." Not even an angel's voice could so speak; for sometimes it would cease from exhaustion; being articulate it would be intelligible to a single race only; and it could be heard only in a single place. The shining orbs in the heavens speak always, to all, and everywhere.

"In reason's ear they all rejoice, And utter forth a glorious voice; Forever singing, as they shine, The hand that made us is divine."

But, of all this, the pre-eminent preacher is the sun. Behold him. The broad canopy in his tent. And, like an Eastern bridegroom coming forth from his robing chamber on the morning of his wedding day, or an athlete girded for the race, with what joyous splendor and strength does he issue from the eastern gate. Nor is his circuit vast and triumphant, a useless round. "Nothing is hid from the heat thereof." He carries comfort, blessing, vital warmth everywhere. How wonderful is such a Creator! The heathen, if they would but listen with attention and pure minds, might know that he is both almighty and holy. And so for their ignorance, "they are without excuse."

2. The character of the word spoken (7-11).—To designate this word six different names are used. It is the law, the testimony, the statutes, the commandment, the fear, the judgments of the Lord.

Note that the psalmist is not speaking of the ten commandments merely, nor of the statutory part of the scriptures only. He had the whole of revealed truth, so far as it had been revealed in mind. For the books of Moses contained history, prophecy, poetry, admonition, precept and promise.

Now, concerning this word, we have as many statements here as it here has names. It is "perfect, converting the soul"; and "sure, making wise the simple." It is "right, rejoicing the heart"; and "pure, enlightening the eyes." It is "clean, enduring forever"; and "true and righteous altogether." This is marvelous. On every sentence we might linger until weary. And yet the Psalmist had only a portion of the entire word in his hand; and that a portion which some would now disparage. How rich are we who have the whole!

But note the two things which the Psalmist adds respecting this word. To describe it he employs two striking figures. It is "better than gold." "Sweeter than honey." It has intrinsic value; to an uncorrupted taste it is a delight. Gold, we often think, buys all things; but the word comes more richly freighted. Honey palls upon the taste; the word, never.

Then, note a particular illustration the Psalmist gives of its worth and sweetness: "By them is thy servant warned; and in keeping of them there is great reward." A large part of the value of the word is in its admonitions, calls, cautions, and alarms. A part of

its sweetness is in its present and promised rewards. every true "servant" sees and feels. But with some it is otherwise. They wish the Bible had fewer warnings, fewer demands. It is precisely these to which they object. But for these—so they fancy—they could love it. Alas, they do not perceive its real worth; nor their own greatest need. Better than gold are the admonitions which would turn our feet from sinful paths; sweeter than honey are the words of promise and love addressed to all who welcome God's cry.

3. The cry this word awakes in attentive hearts (12-14).—From thoughts of God's majesty, wisdom, purity and grace, seen in His works and word, the Psalmist reverts to himself. And Oh what a contrast! God's word is a lamp. He turns this toward his own heart and life. He looks within. The light is penetrating, searching. And what a disclosure of sins—real, many and great! "Who can understand his errors!"

But sin is progressive. Easily, inevitably, the unrepenting goes from one degree to another. This also the word discloses. See how the Psalmist marks this: "Secret faults," "presumptuous sins," sin's "dominion," "the great transgression." First, heart sins, subtle, and often unnoticed; then conscious, deliberate disobedience; then the habitual mastery, the bitter yet cherished tyranny, of evil; and at length the deep plunge for which one may find no place for repentance, and mercy may have no pardon. All this the word discloses. Perceiving it, the Psalmist cries first a cry of confession.

But in the truly humbled soul, instructed by the works and word of God confession is never alone. With it springs up the cry for help. "Cleanse me; keep me! pardon the past. Restrain my wandering feet. Grasp me; hold me. Take me into thy all-powerful sure keeping." This is the soul's most eager cry. Nor is it without encouragement and hope. For, note how in the last verse, the Psalmist's cry loses its tone of sadness, and takes on that of trust. He would be wholly a new creature. He would be approved in word and thought. He prays for this. But there is confidence now, as well as deep humility, in his utterance. He feels his cry is already answered. And so his closing word is one of appropriating trust. Looking into the face of this glorious and holy One, he can yet say, "O Lord my Strength and my Redeemer."

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

- 1. How blind the eye that can see no God in nature.
2. The habit of connecting thoughts of God with all his works is uplifting and ennobling.
3. The heavens are, after all, but a partial revelation of God. They declare his glory, but cannot speak his grace.
4. How diligently and prayerfully should we read and study God's word; prizing its warnings as well its invitations and promises.
5. Retire and read thy Bible to day.
6. None of us have need to despair on account of our weakness or of the number and greatness of our sins. The Lord waits to be our Strength and our Redeemer.

In The Bonds of Iniquity.

SCATHING ARRANGEMENTS OF THE REPUBLICAN PARTY BY ITS FRIENDS.

When Blaine was nominated by the Republican Convention at Chicago in June, the Independent Republicans of Massachusetts held a conference and appointed a committee of One Hundred to manage their canvass, and they were authorized to issue an address, setting publicans who did not cease to be honest because a dishonest man has been nominated for President by their party. This address was issued last Saturday after the preliminary explanation of the origin, spirit, and purposes of the organization the report proceeds to say:

WHAT THEY HAVE SEEN.

We are told that the past of that party is glorious, and that we are therefore bound to support its candidate to-day. We yield to none in our pride at its great achievements as in our devotion to its principles, but when the lesson of its past is forgotten and its principles are abandoned its name alone cannot command our allegiance. The question is not what the Republican party has done, but what it will do; not what it was; but what it is; not whether Lincoln and Seward and Sumner and Andrew and Stanton and Fessenden were great men and leaders, but whether Blaine Robeson and Keifer and Elkins and Clayton and Kellogg are men to whom we can safely confide the future of our country.

For many years corruption in high office has been conspicuous. It has shown itself in every department of the public service. We have seen a Vice President driven into private life by proof of personal dishonesty; a Secretary of War impeached for participation in felony; a Secretary of the Navy charged with corrupt practices and leaving office under a cloud of suspicion,

only to appear as a Republican leader in the House of Representatives; a Secretary of the Interior forced from his office by charges affecting his personal and official character, an Attorney-General compromised by evidence of petty fraud. We have not forgotten Colfax and Belknap and Robeson and Delono and Williams.

WHAT MORE THEY HAVE SEEN.

In the Treasury Department we have seen prominent officers implicated in Sanborn contracts and suspected of complicity in the gigantic conspiracy to defraud the revenue known as the "Whiskey Ring," and the private Secretary of the President indicted as conspirator, while the Minister who sought to punish the criminals was dismissed from office. In the Post Office Department we have seen an Assistant Secretary conspiring with Senators of the United States in "Star Route" frauds and the conspirators boldly defying the Government which was powerless to secure justice in its own capital city.

We have seen the last Republican Speaker disgraced by proof that he had shamefully abused his appointing power and in face of this evidence, which has destroyed the confidence of his constituents, again the chosen candidate of the Republican party for the same high office. In the Signal Service we have seen a Superintendent in the Treasury Department a chief clerk, and in other departments trusted officers guilty of stealing the public money. We have seen the guilty protected, but we have yet to see them punished.

We have seen the whole patronage of the Federal Government used openly to support a leader in Virginia whose principle is repudiation and whose methods violate every rule of political morality. We have seen the public business neglected, the reform of the civil service sneered at, and political assessments levied in defiance of party promises and public opinion, until the wave of popular indignation forced a reluctant Congress to inaugurate reform. The evils of a debased currency have been disregarded; our navy is a monument of maladministration; the surplus, with all its temptations to extravagance, remains substantially undiminished.

Finally, we have seen the Republican party relying for its continuance in power, not on its own achievements but on the mistakes of its opponents, and we have seen its leaders not seeking to prevent, but to encourage these mistakes, in order that thereby, at their country's expense, they might be furnished with arguments for their continuance in power.

A CORRUPT CANDIDATE CONVICTED OF FALSEHOOD.

We have seen all these things, and have been told that the party must be reformed from within; that our remedy lay in its caucuses and conventions. For years we have yielded to this advice and have struggled against the men who have sought to use the party for base, personal ends. At times we have thought them beaten, and have hoped that the party, which was once so great might emancipate itself from the control of the men who had degraded it and reassert its original character. Instead we now see these men promoted and their influence increased, while under their inspiration the party turns its back upon its principles, and, in place of declaring in clear words its policy on the questions of the day, by equivocal declarations and unmanly appeals to a prejudice, seeks to secure votes only to perpetuate the power of its managers, and not to advance the prosperity of the country.

Its candidate for President is a man charged with the basest of public crimes—the abuse of official power for his own pecuniary advantage—who for eight years has never dared to demand that full investigation of the charges which his political associates would gladly have accorded, and by which alone those charges can be met. Upon the evidence already produced we believe him guilty, and we know that many of his prominent supporters share our belief. Their declarations before his nomination, their silence or their guarded language in public addresses since, are conclusive evidence of this.

He is convicted by his own statements of deliberate falsehood on the most solemn occasion. The men who in the past have disgraced the Republican party are united in his support, and admitted to a controlling influence in the conduct of his campaign, while of the honest men who are joined with these, the leaders are largely either holders of or candidates for public office, who urge their fellow citizens to follow them to preserve the party than because they approve its chief. In fine the Republican party has to-day no policy which it dares to avow and a leader whom it cannot defend. At this very moment it forms an alliance in West Virginia with the advocates of dishonest money; in Washington political assessments are attempted under disguise.

WHAT THEY WILL DO AND ADVISE.

It is idle to hope that, with such leadership, the abuses of the past can be corrected or the party reformed. Under the influences which now dominate its councils the tendency must be downward; and there is no clearer proof that this tendency exists than the facts that honest men are found ready to tolerate and excuse offences which a few years ago would have made the offender infamous. We see in increasing fidelity to party great dangers to our Government, and it is an omen of disaster when this fidelity leads of character and position to throw their influence in favor of dishonesty, and to mislead their fellow citizens by misrepresenting the facts and obscuring the issue.

The fascination of the name 'Republican' has made men blind of offences which otherwise they would condemn. It is our imperative duty, therefore, to disregard the appeals to party spirit, which in the language of Washington, it is "the interest and duty of a wise people to discourage and restrain," and to consider how best we can stay the progress of corruption in the Government of our country.

Leaving the Congress the great questions of policy, which must be questions of legislation, and reserving the right to vote in Congressional elections for such men as represent our opinion on these questions; intending in the State to vote in the future as we have in the past, we see in the Presidential contest a simple issue. Our platform is the single principle that none but men of proved integrity should be supported for public office, and that the use of official power for personal ends is a breach of trust which should disqualify for the public service those who are guilty of it. A party nomination which violates this principle must not only forfeit our support, but incur our unsweeping opposition.

By the nomination of James G. Blaine, the Republican party has thrown down the gauntlet for partisan government. The Democratic party answers the challenge, its candidate is the acknowledged champion of reform and political honesty. The issue is thus joined. The leaders are representative men, the foremost of their kind, and we cannot for an instant hesitate in our choice or doubt what the true interests of our country demand. We do not ally ourselves with the Democratic party, still less sanction or approve its past, but its present candidate has proved his fidelity to the principles we avow, and in the coming election he commands and will receive our support.

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