

Pass me not, O God, our Father,
Sinful though my heart may be;
Thou mightst have me, but the rather
Let thy mercy light on me.

Pass me not, O gracious Saviour!
Let me live and cling to thee;
For I'm longing for thy favour,
Withst'nd all our evil, oh! call me!

Pass me not, O mighty Spirit;
Thou canst make the blind to see,
With the word of Jesus' name,
Speak some word of power to me!

Lord of God, so pure and changeless,
Thou of Christ, so rich and free,
Grace of God, so strong and boundless,
Magnify it all in me!

Sabbath School Teacher.

LESSON XXII.

THE SMITTEN ROCK. Numbers xx. 1-13.

COMMIT TO MEMORY, v. 11, 12. PARALLEL PASSAGES.—Numb. xxvii. 1-4; Deut. iii. 26.

With v. 7, 8, read Ps. lxxviii. 15-16; with v. 9, read Num. xvii. 10; with v. 10, read Ps. cxi. 8; with v. 11, read 1 Cor. x. 4; with v. 12, 13, read Ps. xcix. 8.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—"That Rock was Christ."

LEADING TEXT.—They drank of that Spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.—1 Cor. x. 4.

We now enter on a new stage of Israel's history. Thirty-eight years of wandering have passed, marked by many a providence indeed, yet years of some weariness and gloom. The people would naturally be scattered over the surrounding region, after the manner of all wandering tribes, coming together at the central sanctuary, we may hope, for stated worship. Their history is nearly a blank, during the time, a sign, let us hope, of comparative happiness. This chapter opens with the rallying of the "whole congregation" in the wilderness of Zin, preparatory to the march towards Canaan, as it was now the first month of the fortieth year since leaving Egypt.

Miriam died there. Moses' wife was a foreigner, and Miriam his sister, a gifted woman in herself, seems to have filled the leading place, beside her great brother. The Lord honoured her among "the women" (Ex. xv. 20). Though she had not been faultless throughout (Numb. xii. 1), she was much to Moses, as the companion of a long and eventful life, and her death may well have affected him greatly, accounting perhaps in part for the veneration of spirit of which we study, to-day, the sad record.

The congregation crowded into one place, felt the want of water (v. 2), and the old complaint was revived. Peoples, like individuals, have their habits, and one hears the old seditious murmurings of a generation gone (v. 3, 4, 5) (see Numb. xiv. 2, 8). Their leaders, as before, appeal to God (v. 6), and God is faithful as of old, and his glory "appears." What little change thirty-eight years, with all its mortality, has made (Hos. vi. 4.) At this point our Lesson begins.

I. THE DIVINE COMMISSION.—Moses (v. 7) accompanied by Aaron, is to take the rod with which the miracles in Egypt had been wrought (Ex. vii. 9; viii. 5), and at Rephidim (xvii. 5) which had, it appears, according to some, been laid up "before the Lord" (v. 9).

He is to assemble the people (v. 8), and in their presence, "speak" to the rock (or rather cliff—not the same word as at Horeb), and water enough is promised for the people and cattle.

It has been argued by others that the rod here described is not the rod of power and authority used in Egypt, and at the river (Ex. vii. 20), but the rod of Aaron (Num. xvii. 5), the priestly rod; that the Rock (representing Christ) had been already smitten ("dying once") (Rom. vi. 9, 10), was not to be smitten again, but spoken to (as our High Priest). On this theory the rod was only a symbol of priestly office. If this could be sustained, it would simplify the matter greatly, and show that Moses' sin destroyed a symbol. But there is nothing in the word to put it beyond doubt; and when the sin of Moses and Aaron is mentioned, it is presented in a form less distinct and definite than this (Num. xxvii. 14; Deut. xxvii. 51.)

II. THE MANNER OF EXECUTING THE COMMISSION.—The congregation was collected (v. 10) by the brothers in front of the cliff. Moses appears to have been the speaker (Ps. cxi. 8), but whatever responsibility was involved Aaron shared it. Certainly the terms of the commission were exceeded. Moses lifted up his hand and smote the rock, not once only, but twice. He was directed to "speak" to it. He spoke to the people, on which he had no directions, and his tone was that of anger. "Ye rebels!" or probably "murmurers," a word akin, it is supposed, to "thou fool," of Matt. v. 22. This was part of the "unadvisedly" of the Psalm. Nor did his language honour God. Either he arrogated some share of the power "we," or had some distrust (some render it, "Can we") of God. This is sustained in part by v. 12, "believed me not;" yet it is not likely that they who saw so much should doubt divine power. More likely, the idea of self, rather than God, was too much dwelt on.

But, the default in the servant does not hinder the supply to the people. The water came out abundantly (v. 11) for man and beast.

III. THE DIVINE HONOUR MAINTAINED.—This is a sad record, but we shall see reason for it, and may receive good from it. It would seem that immediately after the relief of the people, the Lord announced to Moses and Aaron (v. 12) that for their sin they should not enter the land. It consisted, according to the statement, in unbelief, and failure to sanctify and honour God before the people. The Lord saw the state of heart in both, of which the outward expressions only appeared then, or to us; and we are left, in some degree, to infer from the outward acts what form of sin the Lord saw and described by the foregoing words.

(1) Moses was bidden to speak to the rock, or cliff. He did not, but spoke to the people. "Hear now, ye rebels," &c. (v. 10).

(2) His words were angry, petulant, and reproachful, in the highest degree. We miss in them the calm dignity and quiet trust in God, by which the meek Moses was usually marked.

(3) They moreover implied, in some degree, that Moses and Aaron were being burdened with the doing with this—"Must we?" God might have said, "It is I that fetch the water, and not you; and if I can endure the people, you well may."

(4) There was no instruction to strike the rock even once, but it was smitten twice. (If this were the rod of Aaron, with its unadorned buds and blossoms, there was obvious unfitnes in the act.) God must be served, if at all, in his own way. This is part of the service.

Now, how could the brothers thus sin? Possibly they had not quiet recovered the balance of feeling after Miriam's death. When we have some sore, near trouble, a public annoyance irks us, and seems an impertinence. The people of this new generation sorely disappointed them by repeating their fathers' sin. But perhaps (we can only conjecture) the two men, now aged, hoping all the time to settle the people in the land, saw in this new sin, and the now supply of water miraculously given, an intimation that another long delay was to be interposed, and so were betrayed into impatience and resentment. This idea is favoured by the language, "this rock!" "Are we to begin over again this weary round of penal wanderings?" It was a frightful provocation to the hoary veterans. This view is favoured by the form of punishment. "You are impatient to lead the people into the land—and you may be dead ere they reach it. You shall not lead," &c. Then why should God visit them with this punishment? Because they were eminently and openly his own. Judgment begins at God's house" (1 Pet. iv. 17). So it was with Aaron's sons; so with Miriam (see Ex. ix. 6). It is to be shown that God has no favourites. Judgments came on the people when they sinned. Their leaders cannot sin and go free. God is impartial and holy. He is no respecter of persons. His justice notes sin in Aaron and Moses as truly as in the blasphemer or the gatherer of sticks, and after its kind. So Moses tells the people (Deut. iii. 26) that the wrath was "for their sakes," that is a warning to them. God is "glorious in holiness," and the high or the place of his servants, the more bound they are "to do justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God" (Micah vi. 8).

Learn (1) the need of heart-keeping (Ps. cxli. 8).

(2) The imperfection of the best men, even in that in which they excel.

(3) Beware of making another sin. The people tempted Moses. See Deut. iii. 26, and Ps. cvi. 32.

(4) The higher our privileges, the greater our responsibility (Amos ii. 2).

(5) We must not allow sin in others. Aaron made no protest; shared the punishment.

SUGGESTIVE TOPICS.

—The time—place—recent death—Miriam—condition of people—their want—their feeling—their complaint—the directions to Moses—the place—rock or cliff—the promise—by whom water to be given—the act of Moses ordered—the act done—departure from order—in what respects—the miracle—the sin of Moses—how visited—why so severely—how divine honour guarded—the principle of this—other examples—the lessons to us.

Presbytery of Huron.

This Presbytery met in London, on Tuesday evening, 5th May, by permission of the Synod.

Mr. Gracey, on behalf of the Committee on the State of Religion, read a report based on the answers given by Sessions to the queries transmitted by the Convener of the Assembly's Committee. The report was received, adopted, and transmitted to the Clerk of Synod.

It was agreed to ask the General Assembly for leave to license Mr. Thomas Thomson, student. The Assembly at its last meeting granted leave to Mr. Thomson to complete his last theological year under the superintendence of the Presbytery.

A committee was appointed, consisting of Messrs. Goldsmith, McCune, Barr, Ministers, and Wilson and Matheson, Elders, to make arrangements for holding a Presbyterial Sabbath School Convention during the Summer.

Mr. Ure, on behalf of the Committee appointed to answer the reasons of dissent of Mr. Ross and others on the Union question, read answers to said reasons, which were read and adopted by the Presbytery. The following are the reasons of dissent of Mr. Ross and others, together with the Presbytery's answers to said reasons.

I. Reasons of Dissent.

1st. Because by the Union Basis of 1861, now forming the constitution of this Church, we are already under solemn vows and covenant engagements to the Lord, to his people, to one another, and before the world, regarding the Lord Jesus Christ as the King and Head of His Church, in the terms following: "That the Lord Jesus Christ as the only King and Head of His Church, that He has made her free from all secular or external authority in the administration of her affairs, and that she is bound to assert and defend this liberty to the utmost, and ought not to enter into such engagements with any party as would be prejudicial thereto." The exclusion of a like testimony from the Basis, just approved by this Presbytery, we cannot regard as a falling away from the testimony hitherto borne to the glorious Head of the Church, and a setting aside of our covenant engagements.

2nd. Because by the same Union Covenant we are under like vows and Covenant engagements, regarding the same Lord as the Lord of all in the following terms: "That the Lord Jesus Christ, as mediator,

is invested with universal sovereignty, and is, therefore, King of nations, and that all men in every capacity and relation, are bound to obey His will as revealed in His Word, and particularly that the civil magistrate is bound to regulate his official procedure as well as his personal conduct by the revealed will of Christ; and no similar place being allowed to him in the Basis just approved, we cannot but regard as a falling away from our present testimony to the Sovereign Ruler of all, and a violating of our existing Covenant.

3rd. Because the sweeping exception taken to the doctrine of the Confession and Catechisms regarding the power and duty of the civil magistrate, in the second Article of the Basis; the testimony which the said Confession and Catechisms bear to Christ as the Head of nature is stripped of authority and value.

4th. Because the Church sets aside the present testimonies to Christ as the Head of the Church and Lord of all, in our judgment, to please men, and in circumstances which cast doubt upon the integrity of the Church in the testimonies she has heretofore put forth in behalf of her King and Lord.

5th. Because by the Fourth Article of the Basis entangling relations to other Churches are made a term of communion and a fundamental provision of her constitution.

Signed,

JOHN ROSS, WILLIAM GRAHAM, JOHN FERGUSON, SAMUEL CARNOCHAN, JOHN KEIR, GEORGE WALKER.

Answers to reasons of dissent, by Mr. Ross and others, from the decision of the Presbytery on the Union question.

I. In their first reason the dissentients quote the third Article of the present Basis of Union, which is as follows: "That the Lord Jesus Christ is the only King and Head of His Church, that he has made her free from all secular or external authority, in the administration of her affairs, and that she is bound to assert and defend this liberty to the utmost, and ought not to enter into any engagements with any party as prejudicial thereto." And they affirm that the omission of a like article in the proposed Basis is a falling away from the testimony hitherto borne to the great Head of the Church and a setting aside of covenant engagements. In answer to this it ought to be sufficient to refer to the following quotations from the Westminster Confession of Faith, specified in Article 2nd of the proposed Basis as the chief subordinate standard of the United Church of the future; in which standard the testimony of the Church on the above noticed truth as well as on all other fundamental truths of Christianity is to be found.

1st. "There is no other Head of the Church but the Lord Jesus Christ." Cap. 26, Sec. 6.

2nd. "The Lord Jesus Christ hath therein (viz. in the Church) appointed a government in the hands of church officers, distinct from the civil magistrate." Cap. 30, Sec. 1.

3rd. "To these officers the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven are committed, by virtue whereof they have power respectively to retain and remit sins, to shut the Kingdom of Heaven against the impenitent, both by the word and censures, and to open it to penitent sinners by the ministry of the Gospel, and by absolution from censures, as occasion shall require." Cap. 80, Sec. 2.

4th. "For the better government and for the edification of the Church, there ought to be such Assemblies as are commonly called Synods and Councils." Sec. 31, Sec. 1.

5th. "It belongeth to Synods and Councils ministerially to determine controversies of faith and cases of conscience, to set down rules and directions for the better ordering of the public worship of God, and government of his Church, to receive complaints in cases of maladministration, and authoritatively to determine the same, which decrees and determinations, if consonant to the Word of God, are to be received with reverence and submission, not only for the power whereby they are made, as being an ordinance of God, appointed thereunto in His Word." Cap. 31, Sec. 8.

6th. "The civil magistrate may not assume to himself the administration of the Sacraments, or the power of the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven." Cap. 38, Sec. 3.

These quotations show the doctrine which the negotiating churches openly hold and profess, and to which the United Church of the future is prepared to pledge itself; and it is submitted that there is in these quotations, a much fuller and not less explicit declaration as to the spiritual independence of the Church, and its subjection to the sole authority of its divine King and Head, than that contained in the Article in question. While cherishing nothing but a feeling of respect for the form in which this Article is drawn up, the Presbytery can see no adequate reason for its reinsertion in the proposed Basis. And if it be, as the Presbytery believes it to be a much less perfect statement of the doctrine of which it treats, than that found in the Confession of Faith; this alone should be a sufficient reason for rejecting it to drop; and to do this, cannot, while the more perfect form of statement on the same point is maintained, affect the Church's testimony or impair its covenant obligations.

II. In the second reason, the dissentients quote the fourth Article of the present Basis, which is as follows:

"That the Lord Jesus as mediator is invested with universality Sovereignty, and is therefore King of nations, and that all men in every capacity and relation, are bound to obey His will as revealed in His Word; and particularly that the civil magistrate (including under that term all who are in any way concerned in the legislative or administrative action of the State) is bound to regulate his official procedure as well as his personal conduct by the revealed will of Christ."

The omission of this or a similar Article from the proposed Basis is alleged to be a further falling away from our testimony to the Sovereign Ruler of all; and an additional violation of our existing Covenant.

In reply to this, reference must again be had to the afore-mentioned authoritative standard recognized in the second Article of the proposed Basis in which we find the following statements on the points referred to.

1st. "God the Supreme Lord and King of all the world hath ordained civil magistracies, to be under him over the people for His own glory and the public good; and to this end hath armed them with the power of the sword, for the defence and encouragement of them that are good, and for the punishment of evil doers."

2nd. It is lawful for Christians to accept and execute the office of a magistrate when called thereunto, in the managing whereof they ought especially to maintain piety, justice and peace. Here let two things be observed, 1st. That the obligation to maintain piety as well as justice and peace here spoken of, shows how our Confession, in this as well as in a number of other places, sets forth the principle, that it is the duty of men in their public as well as in their private relations, or in their public as well as private spheres of life to conform their procedure and conduct to the revealed will of Christ. From this testimony there is and there can be no departure on the part of the United Church, so long as it holds as the various negotiating Churches now do hold the teachings of the Confessions of Faith. 2nd. It is equally true of this doctrine in respect to national responsibility to Christ, as it is of that relating to the Spiritual Independence of the Church, that as the one and the other are explicitly taught in our standards there is no necessity, for purposes of testimony, for the reassertion of either. There seems to be no reason for the plea they occupy in the present Basis, if regarded apart from certain mutual suspicions and alienations that had to be encountered in conducting negotiations with a view to the existing Union. There were in the former Presbyterian Church of Canada those who looked upon the then United Presbyterian Church, as holding views on the province of the civil magistrate in religious matters which tended to social infidelity. On the other hand, there were in the latter Church, those who regarded the former Church, as cherishing principles relative to the province of the magistrate, which were inconsistent both with liberty of conscience and with the Spiritual Independence of the Church. The Articles in question were due to these misunderstandings. Their omission therefore from the proposed Basis instead of being a falling away from any part of our testimony or covenant engagements, is a falling away rather from unpleasant recollections of past suspicions and misapprehensions.

III. The third reason states that "by the sweeping exception taken to the doctrine of the Confession and Catechisms regarding the power and duty of the civil magistrate, the testimony which the said Confession and Catechisms bear to Christ as the Head of Nations stripped of its authority and value. The "exception" or qualifying clause referred to, is expressed as follows: "It being distinctly understood that nothing contained in the aforesaid Confession or Catechisms regarding the power and duty of the civil magistrate shall be held to sanction any principles or views inconsistent with liberty of conscience." One of the three qualifying clauses in our present Basis which seems after considerable experience to be accepted by the Church as thoroughly safe in its operation, reads as follows: "That no interpretation or reception of these sections (i.e., the sections respecting the civil magistrate) is required by this Church which would accord to the State any authority, to violate that liberty of conscience and right of private judgment which are asserted in Chap. 22, Sec. 2, of the Confession; and in accordance with which this Church holds that every person ought to be at full liberty to search the Scriptures for himself, and to follow out what he conscientiously believes to be the teaching of Scripture without let or hindrance."

The Presbytery fail to see any difference in meaning between these two modifying clauses. Both contemplate the same object, viz., the securing forbearance in regard to the teachings of those portions of the Confession which assume the existence of an ecclesiastical establishment and takes it for granted, that the law of the land should require respect for the doctrines and obedience to the requirements of Christianity as a whole. Those portions of the Confession referred to are such as the following: "That the civil magistrate hath authority and it is his duty, to take order that unity and peace be preserved in the Church, that the truth of God be kept pure and entire, that all blasphemies and heresies be suppressed, all corruptions and abuses in worship and discipline prevented or reformed, and all ordinances of God duly settled, administered, and observed. For the better effecting whereof, he hath power to call Synods, to be present at them, and to provide that whatsoever is transacted in them be according to the mind of God." While the one modifying clause equally with the other has direct reference to such alleged applications of the principle as are expressed or referred to in the above extract. Neither of them strips that principle of any of those applications of it which in the circumstances of our country are really practical.

IV. The fourth reason which alleges that the Church sets aside the present testimonies to Christ as the Head of the Church and the Nations to please men, has been sufficiently answered under previous heads.

V. The last reason charges that by the fourth Article of the Basis, "entangling relations to other Churches is made a term of communion, and a fundamental provision of the Church Constitution." In reply to this it is to be observed, that no attempt is made to point out what is meant by the phrase "entangling relations," and that consequently no light is thrown upon the nature or import of the alleged, "new term of communion" and new "provisions" of the Church's Constitution.

The obvious truth is that the relations of the United Church even to those churches

holding the same standards are by this resolution left and purposely left, wholly undefined. The resolution is partly negative and partly positive. Negative, in so far as it refuses to pledge the United Church to definite relations to any foreign Church whatsoever, and positive in so far as it expressly states, that ministers from the Churches especially referred to, are not necessarily to be received into the United Church simply and as a matter of course by their presenting certificates of good standing in their own Churches; but in accordance with the terms and regulations which the Church in its wisdom may from time to time determine.—Athen. McLEAN, Pres. Clerk.

Don't Throw Stones.

Boys, don't throw stones. I have looked at it from every side, and it is a dangerous business. Nine times out of ten the spirit that whispers to boys who throw stones, and prompts them to do it, is an idle, mischievous, careless, wicked spirit. It says every time it sees a stone in Charlie's path, without giving him time to think what may come of it. "Now, just see how far, or how straight, or how high you will throw it." Away it goes, and "Oh! just my luck!" a window is broken.

I was once in a beautiful new church. The sexton came down from the gallery shaking his head and gritting his teeth. He had a little round stone in his hand. "I wish I had the boy who threw that," said he. "I'd jerk him out of his boots." I could scarcely blame him for being so rough, as he pointed up to one of the handsome windows that had a hole in it where the stone came through. I wondered how the boy who threw it felt when he heard it crash. I have no doubt that he looked first this way and then that, and then ran like a coward.

I pity the boy that finds any amusement in throwing stones at birds or their nests, or among a herd of cows or flock of geese. It's every time the old story over again of the frogs who said "to the boys, 'That may be fun to you, but it's death to us.'"

But I've known something worse to come of throwing stones than all this. A bright-eyed little boy was playing on the sidewalk one day; a larger boy wanted one of his playthings, and was refused. Quick as a flash light came the thought, "I'll pay you for that!" and a stone flying from the larger boy's hand struck the little fellow between the shoulders. If the boy who threw that stone could have seen one of the hours of suffering that followed that cruel, revengeful act, I am sure he would never be very happy again. It was not only one hour of suffering, but four long years, and then death.—S. S. Advocate.

The Shepherd Boy.

One beautiful spring morning a merry-hearted shepherd boy was watching his flock in a blooming valley between woody mountains, and was singing and dancing about for joy. The prince of the land was hunting in that neighborhood, and seeing him called him nearer, and said, "What makes you so very happy, my dear little one?"

The boy did not know the prince and roared, "Why shouldn't I be happy? Our most gracious sovereign is not richer than I am!"

"How so?" asked the prince; "let me hear about your riches."

"The sun in the clear blue sky shines as brightly for me as for the prince," said the youth; "and mountain and valley grow green, and bloom as sweetly, for me as for him. I would not part with my two hands for all the money, nor sell my two eyes for all the jewels in the royal treasury. Besides, I have everything I really need. I have enough to eat every day, and good warm clothes to wear, and get money enough every year for my labor and pains to meet all my wants. Can you say the prince really has more?"

The kind prince smiled, made himself known and said, "You are right, my good boy. Keep fast hold of your cheerful spirit."

Contentment makes one happy and rich as the greatest king.—Christian Weekly

Constant Boys.

The most constant boy in the Sabbath-school is always the best boy. He is sure to be the most interested in the lesson; first, because each lesson helps him to understand the one which comes next; and, instead of taking here and there a lesson, he has the grand truths of the Bible unfolded to him every week. The constant boy is sure to be the most loved and respected. The teacher can't help regarding him with peculiar love and care. He watches for this, "as it fills his thoughts through the week; it inspires his every prayer. Constancy implies the rarest virtue. God makes it a test of saving love: "He that endureth to the end shall be saved."

"Now, my dear boys, one and all, try this rare way of living. Stand out bravely; and whatever else may be true of you, however poor, however rich, however gifted, however lacking, this trait of constancy to duty, through love to God and his service, shall raise you above all earthly circumstances to the acceptance and love of God."—Old School Presbyterian.

Bird Houses.

Boys, if you want open-air concerts this summer, and upon your own grounds, now is the time to begin to prepare for them. With new little bird-houses here and there you can coax many a pair of birds to come and set up their housekeeping on your premises. But be sure to put them out of the reach of kitty's sharp claws, or the housekeeping, and the concerts with them, will come to an untimely end.—Advance.