

SUNDAY
SCHOOL

The Quiet Hour

YOUNG
PEOPLE

THE SEAL ON PETER'S CONFESSION.

By Professor James Stalker, D.D.

For Jesus the Transfiguration was a reward for his faithfulness up to this point and a preparation for the still more difficult duties still before him. Amidst the contradictions of His enemies and the doubts of His friends, He enjoyed intercourse with two figures from the other world, who could enter into His plans and hopes with perfect sympathy; and His Father's testimony was meant and drink to His filial mind. To the Three, likewise, the scene was of unspeakable value. It was the seal of heaven on their testimony to Jesus borne through the lips of Peter. There lay before them trials only inferior to those of their Master Himself; but on the Holy Mount their faith was steeled against all the assaults of unbelief; and their admiration of the lowliness and patience of their Master must, ever after, have been the higher the more aware they were of His real glory. For us the Transfiguration is of value as affording one of the most authentic of all glimpses into the upper world, as well as an indication of what we shall be, when we shall be like Him.

THE TRANSFIGURATION OF HUMANITY.—The date with which the incident opens is important, as connecting this occasion with that of the great confession. But the place is uncertain. When the Three awoke from sleep on the mountain-top, Jesus, who had been awake before them or had spent the whole night in prayer, was already in process of being transfigured. The glory came partly from within, as it comes to any human face through prayer and the beauty of holiness, and as it came to the face of Moses on Mount Sinai; but partly it came from without, as is manifest from the shining of His garments; it was a mingling of internal and external, as all true glory is.

The second stage, introduced by "behold," was the advent of two visitants from the heavenly world—the one the representative of Law, the other of Prophecy. Both were predecessors of His, having worked at the problem which He was finally to solve; so that it is no wonder that, as one of the Evangelists informs us, their conversation with Him was about that which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem. In His death He magnified the law and made it honorable, while at the same time He brought all the prophecies of the Old Testament to glorious fulfilment. To the Three these two figures were the most venerable of human kind, as they would have been to every Jew; and Peter made, in the name of all, a reverent if not very felicitous offer to be serviceable. He thought that Elijah had come to stay, as prophecy was understood to have predicted that He would reappear upon earth as forerunner of the Messiah; and He may have thought that Moses also had come back again to play a part in the Messianic drama. Meantime, He would accommodate them and Jesus with tents, fashioned from the surrounding brushwood.

But He was interrupted and silenced by the next development, also introduced by "behold," which was the enveloping of the whole company in a luminous cloud; and what this betokened they learned when there issued from the centre of it, in thunder, the words, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him." They knew that they were in the immediate presence of God; and, as mortals must always do in such a case, "they fell on their face, and were sore afraid." They could not, however, but recognize their own confession, taken up into God's mouth, or escape the force of the command to "hear Him," and be guided by Him through all the confusions

of the future, however loud or urgent might be the voices calling them in other directions. By the kindly human touch of the hand of their Master they were roused from their trance; and, when they looked up, the vision had vanished; and, in the light of the morning, they saw "no man save Jesus only."

THE DISFIGURATION OF HUMANITY.—Raphael, the greatest painter of all time, has painted the Transfiguration in what is accounted by many the greatest picture in the world, now preserved in the Vatican at Rome. But the single canvas includes not only the scene on the mountain-top, the figure of the Saviour in the centre; those of Moses, with the tables of the law, and Elijah, with the scroll of prophecy; and the wonderfully foreshortened figures of the three, lying on the ground and shading their eyes from the light—but also the scene at the mountain foot: the poor, naked boy, in an access of his horrible disease; the agonized father and mother, seeking assistance from those unable to grant it; the Nine in their helplessness and dismay; and the disappointed and sneering onlookers. But the most prominent object in this part of the picture is a hand uplifted by one of the group, near the possessed boy, and pointing up to the mountain-top. The picture is an artist's sermon.

Humanity's transfiguration above, till it is almost divine and almost in heaven; humanity's disfiguration below, till it is almost in hell, and hell is in it. Such are the opposite possibilities of human nature. But in that uplifted hand and pointing finger is embodied the gospel: from humanity at its highest and heavenliest must come help for humanity at its lowest and worst. The Three had their lesson; but this was the lesson of the Nine. Like the Nine, may a Christless and prayerless Christianity stand discomfited in presence of a sinning and suffering world. But any one of the Three who had been with Jesus in the Mount could have performed the miracle on the tormented boy.

ABERDEEN, SCOTLAND.

BEHOLD, HE SHALL COME.

Shall we know Him if we see Him
When He comes?
Shall we fear Him, shall we flee Him
When He comes?
Shall we love Him and believe Him,
Will His own at last receive Him,
Or will slighting coldness grieve Him
When He comes?

Shall we dare to stand before Him
When He comes?
Shall we worship and adore Him
When He comes?
Or will pride presume to try Him,
Will our craven fear deny Him,
And our sins cry, "Crucify Him,"
When He comes?

May our feet be swift to meet Him
When He comes!
May our hearts leap up to greet Him
When He comes!

May our lips be fit to sing Him,
May our hands be clean to bring Him
All we have and all to crown Him
When He comes!

Anger is poison to the soul. It hinders the soul's largest development and prevents the accomplishment of noble ends in life. Martin Luther said that the man who cherishes anger in his soul can never hope to prevail with God in his prayer.

PRAYER.

Our Father, we bless Thee that Thou dost call us to Thyself, and invite us to incline our ear unto Thee, that our souls may live to hear and accept Thee, that we may eat that which is good. We thank Thee that Thou hast not waited to be entreated, but Thy benedictions and Thy gifts come down upon an unconscious and thankless world, like the dew upon the grass, which tarrieth not for man. Help us, then, gladly to come to Thee, stretching out believing hands to grasp the gifts which Thou hast given us and which are all treasured in one gift, the unspeakable gift of Thy dear Son. How much more than we need is stored in Him! May our daily experiences teach us that there are riches beyond all count, and beyond all spending, in that great Lord and to us may the more and more, be the wealth and blessedness of our daily lives, the Light for our understanding, the Foundation of all our beliefs and thoughts, the Guide for all our strivings and efforts, the Pattern to which we shape ourselves, the indwelling Power which harmonizes all the discords within, and makes us peaceful, blessed and strong, our Advocate and Intercessor before the Throne, the Pledge of Heaven, and the Pattern and source of Life. Amen.

POWERFUL PERSONALITY.

By C. H. Wetherbe.

There are men whose personality is so full of moral and spiritual energy that their very presence among their fellows has a weighty influence upon them. The men themselves do not seem to be aware of the extent of the power which they possess, and it is well that they are unconscious of the largeness of their spiritual strength, for if they did know it, they might spoil it by spiritual pride. There is a secret connected with their power which is unknown to both themselves and others.

The late D. L. Moody was eminently a man of this character. His personality was so dynamic that he exerted a controlling influence over people who were intellectually strong and much better educated than he was. President Woodrow Wilson, of Princeton University, in a recent address, said: "I was always a believer in Mr. Moody, as a great Christian leader, because he was always endeavoring to come into contact with one person at a time. I was once in a barber shop, and, as I was being served, I was aware that someone had come in. The man had come in on the same errand on which I had come. Every word he uttered, although not didactic, showed a personal and vital interest in the man serving him; and before I got through I was aware that I had attended an evangelistic service, because Mr. Moody was the man in the chair. I purposely lingered and noticed the effect the conversation had on the barbers in the shop. They did not know his name, nor who had been there, but somebody had sobered and lifted their thoughts, and when I left the place I felt that I had left a place of worship."

These words give us some idea of the power of Mr. Moody's remarkable personality. But comparatively few men possess such a magnitude of power and impressiveness. Many others have a fullness of spiritual power, yet lack the courage and the art of expressing it. It would seem that his sons, although godly and gifted men, do not exert so strong a direct influence upon others as their father did. Not all of us can be spiritual Samsons, yet we may wield a greater influence than we think we do.