

# Dominion Churchman.

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## THE ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

The first lessons for this Sunday are entirely occupied with the events in the career of that wonder-working witness for the truth of God, in the land of the ten tribes. He lived at a time, when, although there were seven thousand knees that had not bowed to Baal, and whose lips had not kissed his image, yet so fervent and so general was the adoration of the chief male divinity of Tyre, that the prophet Elijah thought he only was left as confessor of the ancient faith, among the mountains of Israel. The whole of the record we have of his acts, in the six chapters devoted to the account of his life, is unequalled in any department of profane literature, and is unsurpassed in Bible history for its simple beauty, its unalloyed grandeur, its touching pathos; and, if it can be said with due regard to reverence, it is difficult, if not impossible to find the events that have occurred in the history of the universe, which are any where given us with an equal amount of dramatic force.

His birth or his incarnation, whichever it may have been, brought him on the earth for the one purpose of witnessing to the fact which his name declares: Elijah, or *Eliyah* (Yahveh is God.) The first series of miracles in support of this principle begins in the seventeenth chapter (the lesson for Sunday last) which describes the prophet's hiding by the brook Cherith, where he was fed by the ravens with bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening. The conjecture hazarded by some, and supported by the authority of Bochart, that it was not ravens but a tribe of Arabs of a similar name that provided him with food, would not in the least deprive the event of its miraculous character. It is however inconsistent with the sacred text, and unsupported by all versions, except the Arabic, which is comparatively modern. Nor could he be said to be in any respect hidden, if his abode was known to the Arabs; especially as we learn from what Obadiah states in the next chapter, that his hiding place had been so diligently sought by Ahab among all the nations and kingdoms around, that an oath was taken of each that they could not find him.

The next recorded miracles, are given in connection with the widow of Zarephath, a city of Sidon, the narrative of which is so remarkable for its beautiful simplicity and its touching pathos; as well as for the incitement it gives to trust in God's Providence in the darkest hours of life. The eighteenth chapter,

which is the first lesson in the Mattins of this Sunday, gives an account of the sudden reappearance of Elijah, after an interval of three years and a half, during which all brooks of water had been dried up, and not a shower of rain had fallen. The beauty and interest, the sublimity and grandeur of this chapter and the succeeding one, are so greatly intensified, that all comment or description would only seem to mar their unapproachable excellence, whether considered in a literary or religious point of view.

The twenty-first chapter continues the history of Elijah, in narrating the testimony he continued to give to the wicked king of Israel, after the murder of Naboth by the equally wicked Jezebel. When Ahab thought he could triumph in the possession of his ill-obtained gain, the prophet by his sudden appearance before him, caused him to exclaim, "Hast thou found me, O my enemy?" And then he denounced against him and his family the bitterest woes that Heaven had in store for them, every one of which exactly came to pass.

In Ahab we see the sins of Jeroboam and the result of those sins, in the grossest and most positive idolatry of which the heathen nations could be guilty. From this wicked king we may learn the danger, not only of forsaking the worship of the true God, but also the danger of forsaking that worship of Him which is carried on in connection with the means and instrumentalities He Himself has appointed. We may fancy, as Jeroboam did, that we can worship Him just as well in our own way, and with just such teachers as we may choose to acknowledge. But we must remember that such a proceeding is our way, not God's way, and that it will very probably go on from bad to worse, until it ends in absolute unbelief. Such we find to be the case, in a multitude of instances, where the authorized ministry of the Church Catholic has been repudiated; where the institution which Christ and His Apostles inaugurated has been counted a thing of nought; where His sacraments have been treated with indifference; and where men have made an organization of their own, and have ranged themselves under teachers and guides of their own manufacture.

THE COLLECT for this Sunday testifies that the greatest exhibitions of Divine power take place when God manifests His mercy and pity. In the first creation everything was done by a word spoken; the morning stars sang together on the birth of innumerable worlds called into existence by the fiat of the Supreme God. But in the mercy and pity shown in the new creation, the Word was made flesh, humanity was taken up into the Godhead and every attribute and every feature of the Divinity was called into active exertion. Redemption was achiev-

ed at an infinitely greater cost than the work of creation; for the blood of Immanuel was the only expiation that could be offered for the sins and sufferings of humanity. The collect also establishes the inseparable connection between our running the way of God's commandments, and obtaining the gracious promises of the Gospel; in full agreement with St. Paul's memorable declaration:—"I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." All is shown, however, to come from God's grace, by the prayer:—"Grant us such a measure of Thy grace, that we, running the way of Thy commandments, may obtain Thy gracious promises." THE EPISTLE for the communion office likewise magnifies the grace of God, as the source of all good works; at the same time the whole of the selection appears to have been written for the purpose of urging the necessity of *holding fast* (A. V. keeping in memory) the word that has been received.

THE GOSPEL contains the short, but most instructive parable of the Pharisee and the Publican. The character of the Pharisee is one we meet with every day; but alas! where do we meet with the repenting Publicans? The Pharisee had been doing certain things right and proper to be done, and now was indulging in a sin as great as any that could be practised in the presence of his Maker—the sin of self-exaltation. The very successes he had achieved were his ruin. Because he had practised some of the more noteworthy virtues towards men and some of the outward duties he owed to God, he presumed that he could commute one virtue for another; and by an excess in the performance of one duty, nothing more need be done but make an ostentatious boast of it in the presence of his God. S. Gregory remarks on those who are so exalted with pride on account of their victory over certain temptations, that they are like Eleazar, who killed the elephant, but was himself crushed by his fallen body. The address of the Pharisee was one act of self glorification. But, says St. Augustine:—"Had he then no sins to confess? Yes, he too had sins, but perverse and not knowing whither he had come, he was like a patient on the table of a surgeon, who could show his sound limbs and cover his hurts. But let God cover thy hurts, and not thou; for if, ashamed, thou seek to cover them, the Physician will not cure them. Let Him cover and cure them; for under the covering of the Physician the wound is healed; under the covering of the sufferer it is only concealed; and concealed from whom? from Him to whom all things are known."

The Publican, as a man, just then, most deeply convinced of sin, singles himself out as the man above all others a sinner, or as St. Paul viewed himself, the chief of sinners, the man in whom