

The Church.

TEXTS AND THOUGHTS FOR EVERY DAY.

JANUARY 7.—FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY.

I have formed thee; thou art my servant, O Israel; thou shalt not be forgotten of me.—Isai. xlv. 21.

The words of God to his Church and to all its members. It has its origin from him, and all our condition in it is from him. It is his instrument for good in the world, and each member is equally his instrument; therefore it shall not be forgotten by him; for there is a work for it to do, and he will take care that it shall perform that work. God grant that I may so accomplish his work, that I may be a monument of his mercy and not of his justice.

2. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and as a cloud thy sins; return unto me, for I have redeemed thee. Isai. xlv. 22.

God's dealings with us in his Church begin with forgiveness of transgressions. That is the gift of baptism; without it we could go no further. In it we have the continual remission of our transgression. Thus the way is opened for our continual returning to him, and we have the strongest motive to return. How inexhaustible is the mercy of God! Grant to me, O Lord, a heart full of gratitude to thee, that I may return to thee all the days of my life.

JANUARY 8.

1. That confirmeth the word of his servants, and performeth the counsels of his messengers. Isai. xlv. 20.

He himself is true and faithful, and gives no message but what he purposes to confirm. He is Almighty and full of wisdom, so that he can never want means to accomplish that which he purposes. He takes care that the counsels of his messengers shall be agreeable to his own will. Thence our faith may rest with assurance on every part of his holy word, and make it our rock and defence, our staff and support, our light and guide. God grant me grace so to use it.

2. That saith to Jerusalem, Thou shalt be built; and the temple, Thy foundation shall be laid. Isai. xlv. 28.

Twice have these words been fulfilled; to the earthly Jerusalem and temple, after the captivity; to the new Jerusalem and the spiritual temple, the Church and the faithful therein. The new Jerusalem, however, is still in building; but, like the old Jerusalem, it shall be completed, when all its living stones shall be transported to the heavenly Zion, and there laid together in union with the Corner-stone. May I be one of those spiritual stones.

JANUARY 9.

1. Even to your old age I am I; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you. Isai. xlvi. 4.

Such a promise is not unneeded; for without God, when age comes the strength of the heart droops; outward aids and comforts drop off; infirmity succeeds; and body comes on; dejection succeeds. Without God the soul would sink more and more, until it became in a manner extinguished. But with Him, although age may weaken the body, it strengthens the soul; by his presence daily renews its strength, may add to it. May I so continue united to Him, that in old age, this promise may be mine.

2. Present your bodies a living sacrifice; holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. Rom. xii. 1.

In the spiritual temple a service is offered, not merely outward, but the service of the reason and spirit of man. Yet it is offered by means of our bodies; not lifeless bodies, as in animal sacrifices; but bodies animated by an immortal spirit, and expressing its life. And if that spirit is quickened by the Divine Spirit and animated with holy desires and affections, then the service of the body likewise is holy and acceptable unto God. May my body be thus sanctified by a holy soul, so that it may day by day be a living, acceptable sacrifice.

JANUARY 10.

1. Be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds.—Rom. xii. 2.

It is most unsuitable to God's adopted children to be conformed to this world; for the world is directed by its prince, who is the great enemy of God; and accordingly, when we are taken for children of God, we are called upon to renounce the world. But to avoid this conformity to the world, it is necessary that we should be transformed by the renewing of our minds; because the natural carnal mind is in friendship with the world. And we must make this our own act, else it will not be accomplished. Lord, give me all ways to desire this renewal, and to strive after it.

2. We have many members in our body, and all members have not the same office. Rom. xii. 4.

The spiritual temple is likewise a body, composed of living members, united to Christ its Head. And the Father, who hath made us members of his Son, hath given to each of us his office, as he has to the parts of the natural body; that we may all work together for the growth and strength of the body, and therein for our own growth and strength. May God give me understanding and a will to seek ever the good of his Church; to do my own part in it faithfully; and to trust, that in so doing, He will impart to me, and by it, all that is requisite for my own salvation.

JANUARY 11.

1. I think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of grace. Rom. xii. 6.

To be a member of the Church of God is a grace; and to have any office assigned to us therein is a grace; and let me remember this, and value that office which God has allotted to me; but let me not raise that office out of its due place, in comparison with others; nor extend it so as to interfere with the duties of others; but think of it soberly, as God hath given it to me. For when every member of the body perform sufficiently the duty allotted to him, and no other, then the body is most profited, and every member of it has the highest benefit.

2. We, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Rom. xii. 5.

In the body of Christ we cannot rightly do anything by ourselves alone; for we are but parts of a great system, governed by its Head. We must therefore work for the whole and every part. We must acknowledge the good we derive from other members of the Church, and feel grateful to them for it; and in return we must labour to promote their good. In the natural body this is done spontaneously, but in the spiritual each member has a life and will of his own; and therefore to do his work he must direct his will, and direct it aright.

JANUARY 12.

1. When he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem, after the custom of the feast. Luke ii. 42.

Jesus was a member of the Church of the Jews; and as such, at 12 years old he had to be accustomed to a knowledge of the law, in order that he might begin to keep it at 13; and he was now at such an age and understanding that his acts were voluntary, and therefore his compliance with this customary rule was voluntary. And so we should voluntarily comply with the rules which have been settled in the Church; and especially with this of bringing our children to be full members of the Church, and of being willing to take our obligation fully upon us, when we come to years of discretion.

2. Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business? Luke ii. 49.

The business in which he was engaged was sacred, and therefore was God's; wherefore this answer shews that at this time Jesus knew that God was his Father. And yet he had sought instruction as a child in the appointed way, by hearing the doctors (teachers) of the law, and asking them questions; and in so doing he declares that he was engaged in the business of his Father. How much more should we seek to the appointed teachers of God's people, and learn the law at their mouths; seeing they are ordained for this very end.

JANUARY 13.

1. He came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them. Luke ii. 51.

He was subject to Mary as his mother in the flesh, and to Joseph as the guardian whom God in his providence had placed over him; and this, whilst he knew that God was his Father; nay the more for that reason, because bound to honour those whom He had placed over him. How much more should we be subject to our parents and governors, our rulers, our spiritual pastors and masters; for we are not of a higher nature, as Jesus was, but weak, ignorant and corrupt. God make me see the whole extent of their duty, and faithfully perform it.

2. Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. Luke ii. 52.

This increasing in wisdom shews that Jesus was really man in mind as well as in body; for wisdom came to him gradually, as to other children. And it came by the same methods, by the use of appointed ordinances and authorised means of instruction, and by submitting to take his place in the station in which God had placed him; all directed and aided by the Holy Ghost, by whom he was conceived in the womb. Let me follow the same course, that like him I too may increase in wisdom and in favour with God and man.

J. B.

[From the Gospel Messenger.]

C. V. V. } September 6th, 1854.

Rev. Wm. A. Matson.—The enclosed letter, written in reply to a letter from a youth who had been urged by me to consider the duty of entering the sacred ministry of the Church, is at your service, if you think its publication might be of benefit to any in helping to the seeing and embracing of the Truth.

Very sincerely,
Your brother in Christ,
J. A. C. V. V.

DEAR SIR,—I have received your communication, and so far from its lessening you in my estimation because of its free and honest expression, I rather for this esteem you the more. For, let me tell you, I do most heartily love straight forward honesty, and as heartily despise the contrary.

You will, however, permit me, as a duty, to make a remark or two bearing upon your third reason, my object being not to persuade you to alter your determination, but if possible to bring you to a clearer apprehension of the matter of Church membership and "change of heart (or purpose)" as in connection therewith, and the doctrine of Apostolic Succession.

You are a member I believe of the Temperance Society in this village, organized here we will say in 1830, and now having as organically connected with it branches in different places, French Creek, Sacket's Harbor, &c.

And now, first, for membership in said Society.—You hear of certain beastly drunkards,—your heart yearns to make of them Men. What do you do? You go in among them, and use what appear to you to be the best arguments to set them to thinking seriously of the benefits and duty of sobriety—the loathsomeness, discredit and pain of inebriety,—and then you tell them of the Society of which you are a member, for the promotion of sobriety or temperance, and you urge them to become members. Heretofore their "heart (or purpose)" has most evidently been with drunkenness. You have set them to thinking seriously. For what? That their "heart (or purpose)" might be changed,—that they might be converted from the error of their ways. You tell them you want none but such in your Society,—that it is intended for none but such. They make profession of hating drunkenness, and of determination to lead a new life, in other words, professions of "change of heart (or purpose)," of conversion. You regularly induct them into your Society. Are they now members, or are they not? You unhesitatingly say, they are members. But three out of five, will you suppose the five, the 4th of July, or some other festive day being immediately at hand, become then beastly drunkards, perhaps more drunken than ever before. What think you of their "change of heart

(or purpose)," their conversion? You, to say the least, have strong doubts about it; to be drunken immediately looks like more than backsliding—looks very much like lying in the very profession made of hating drunkenness, &c. Yet these men are members of your Temperance Society, if not as they should be in "heart (or purpose)"—organically. Are they not? You must say they are. Further, basing arguments perhaps on this very fact, you, showing their self-admitted duty, the increased power of their example for injury, and the disgrace they have brought not only upon themselves, but your Society, the Society of which they are members, you strive yet to bring about, or, in charity for their honesty in profession, to revive their "change of heart (or purpose),"—the conversion of these bad, rotten members. When found in error. But, as probably still longing for their conversion, you remind them of their profession, and that their last state, even as in view of this profession yet obligatory upon them, is worse than the first. Now, dear W., all this is what I call common sense. And I thank God that to the saving of me from the miserable gulf of Infidelity, I have learned to apply it all to Church membership. Put the Church in the place of your Temperance Society, and, by the blessing of God, your view of Church membership, and "change of heart (or purpose)" as in connection therewith may be clearer. "Change of heart (or purpose)" in this latter case, of course, being understood as with reference not to merely one sin, but all sin, and unto all goodness, God's requirements.

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Toronto, C. W., Feb. 23rd, 1854. 28-1f

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