

The Quiet Hour.

Gentiles Received into the Church.

S. S. LESSON—April 27, 1902; Acts 11: 4-15.

GOLDEN TEXT—Acts 10: 43. Whosoever believeth on him shall receive remission of sins.

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But Peter expounded the matter, v. 4. Peter has learned the lesson of gentleness in the school of Christ, and teaches us, by his example, the same virtue. We owe to Christian brethren a patient, courteous explanation of our conduct as workers in the church, and ought, so far as possible, to conciliate them. If all the members of a congregation would manifest the spirit of Peter in discussing its affairs and enterprises, there would be few church quarrels. A great many disputes arise out of misunderstandings, and when the case is explained, the cause of disagreement vanishes.

I was praying: I saw a vision, v. 5. It is the men who pray who see visions. Prayer is a real cause in the spiritual world. It brings down an answer from heaven. The testimony of men to the fact of intercourse with God, is entitled to as much respect as their testimony to facts in the physical universe. It is not a good reason for rejecting testimony that it does not correspond with our own experience. We accept as true the conclusions of some great mathematician concerning the path and speed of the heavenly bodies, although we cannot follow him in his reasonings. It is equally reasonable for us to believe the statement of Peter, that, when he prayed on the housetop in Joppa, there was vouchsafed to him a heavenly vision.

I heard a voice, v. 7. In the city of Edinburgh at one o'clock each day, a cannon in the castle overlooking the city booms out the hour. In the colleges and shops and pleasure gardens, people set their watches by the cannon. The cannon itself is connected by an electric wire with the observatory, so that it simply announces the time determined by the sun. Conscience is like the cannon, giving the time to our duties and pleasures. But conscience receives the time from God. It is when we are acting under His control and direction that we shall be in the right path. "Conscience is the voice of God in the soul of man."

What God hath cleansed make not thou common (Rev. Ver.) v. 9. Apply these words to daily life. Think of your food as the gift of God, and every meal will be a sacrament, calling out gratitude and love to the generous Giver. Accept all the joys of life as expressions of the Heavenly Father's love, and they will be doubly sweet and satisfying. Remember that the ills of life are sent to develop and strengthen character, and querulous murmuring will give place to sweet submission. Take up all the duties of each day as assigned you by Him, and instead of being mere routine drudgery they will become a divine mission. Look beyond all second causes to the great First Cause and view your life as part of His great plan, then nothing in your life will appear common. It will reflect something of the divine glory and express in its own measure the character of God.

Making no distinction, v. 12. The Gospel of Jesus Christ is a universal Gospel. Its blessings are intended for all mankind. Its

horizon was not limited by the boundaries of race or country, and He sent forth His apostles with a Gospel for all men, of every color and country and degree of culture. And this Gospel proved itself to be fitted, as it was intended, for the whole world. It checked the vices of Rome, it gave civilization to the Teutons. In modern days it has opened the vast regions of the East to Western thought and enterprise. There is scarce any land in which its triumphs have not been chronicled, in which its enduring monuments have not been built in the lives and institutions of the people. It has reached the uttermost parts of the earth.

Queries on Teacher Training.

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The question may be asked, how do you know that our Teachers require training? The answer is simple, that knowledge comes from personal observation. For several years, it has been my duty to visit about seventy different schools a year, remaining throughout the session: the difference in the hours permits frequently of two visits in one day. These visits give a certain amount of information. A Superintendent reads questions on the lesson out of his quarterly; and the scholars with their quarterlies answer back. What do you call that? Several teachers in a school teach from quarterlies and have no Bibles. What do you call that? A teacher finishes his lesson in fifteen minutes, and for fifteen minutes leans back on his chair and allows his boys to do what they like. What do you call that?

The Bibles in the class box, on being examined, are found defective, most of them not having the lesson in. What do you call that? Girls in a class say they memorize nothing, and do not take the lesson; the teacher tells them stories, (on inquiry, any kind of story). What do you think of that? Boys in a class do not open Bibles whilst the rest of the school reads, they just continue their interesting conversations. What do you think of that? A girl is asked to teach a junior class of girls, who never went to a Sabbath School herself, nor to a teachers' meeting of any kind. What is her prospect of success; specially, as in this particular school they have no teachers meeting or training class? I have seen all these and heard teachers say they had no time to visit scholars; it was all they could do to go to school; there were so many meetings.

Another question: How do you know that teachers are willing to be trained? The answer again is simple, that knowledge comes from personal trial.

This winter I have conducted four such classes on week evenings, and the teachers continue to come with a steady average.

Another question: Is it any use? It is of use, for they come and they say, the instruction helps them. Of course, such instruction is only undertaken with the approval of the minister interested; and most of them are very glad to have such assistance rendered to their teachers.

Another question: What is given for a course? First, what helps the current lessons; Second, what helps the individual study of the Bible; Third, supplement a work, to give scholars a general knowledge

of the Bible: Fourth, the history of the Bible itself and its lands; Fifth, general principles, as to presenting a lesson or teaching; Sixth, class and school management, and so on, just according to the length of time. How is this instruction given? By practical teaching, question and answer, reviewing; going from one subject to another, to give variety and to hold attention. They are thus given something to make use of at once; are shown how to do it; are shown how to study for themselves; and are given some ideas as to the importance, privilege and responsibility of this work.

What text book is used? The Bible mainly; our Church has not laid down a course yet, nor prepared a text book; these will come in due time; at present we have to use what we have got, and to the best of our judgment.

Why are not more such classes started? That question is hard to answer. More than one superintendent was offered such a training class for his school, and answered that their teachers were busy and worked ten hours a day and had no time for training to teach Sunday School lessons; another, said there were too many meetings in their church to find time for another; another had teachers just as good as the average; two schools had training classes by a member of another denomination, with a text book of his denomination, and so on. Every school does not wish to be assisted. But it must not be inferred that the four classes referred to are in defective schools, far from that; they were interested in their work and would do it better.

Undoubtedly the "many meetings" is a difficulty; teachers are pressed to take part in all sorts of associations, a chronic difficulty through the church; school work does not receive its proper position, it ought to come first, and other things, however good, ought not to be allowed to push out that work. There may be numerous ways of teacher training. One way has been given: the experiences of others in this line would be instructive.

In a recent book on "Teachers," you can read the following: "The teacher who is not a Christian discredits the sacred place he holds; his first duty is to get right with God; he should speak from experience and with the earnest purpose to save souls. The teacher who has no conversions in his class is an anomaly: The teacher should use the means of grace for growth and exercise self-denial as an example. A teacher is better for a back bone of denominational conviction; he should be an intelligent church member and a loyal supporter of his own denomination, in all practical ways; not merely a conviction that his church is right and knowing its doctrines; not only a helpful member himself, but growing a crop of loyal and helpful church members.

Although this writer is not a Presbyterian, we do well to act upon such common-sense principles, the result of long experience, not only in denominational but in "union" work. No man, I know of, has a better right, today, to express his opinion in regard to Sabbath School work—and he gives it clearly in favor of denominations doing their own school work. The Pan-Presbyterian Council in London, in 1888, said the same thing, and our Assembly has concurred. As that prominent Maritime Province minister said, in the General Assembly, "In our Sabbath Schools we have a great work to do; we can do it, we ought to do it."

Teacher-training, by our own men, will cause a great advance in our church, with God's blessing on our efforts.