

The Quiet Hour.

Peter and Cornelius.

S. S. LESSON—April 20. Acts 10: 34-44.
GOLDEN TEXT—Acts 10: 34. God is no respecter of persons.

BY REV. A. S. MORTON, B. D., ST. STEPHEN, N. B.

God is no respecter of persons, v. 34. This was no new truth, although it came to Peter at this time with new force and clearness. Eight centuries before the birth of Christ, Amos combated the belief of the typical Israelite that the interest of Jehovah in human affairs was bounded by the confines of his own land. This first of the prophets whose writings have come to us, declared that God was concerned with the joys and sorrows, the uprisings and down-fallings of all mankind and not merely with those of the few millions whom He had brought out of Egypt and placed in Canaan. If God had brought Israel out of Egypt, He had equally brought "the Philistines from Caphtar and the Syrians from Kir," Amos 9: 7. God's regard for men is not bounded by degrees of latitude and longitude. His love embraces every land on which His sun shines. He bestows special blessings on particular peoples, that they may be reservoirs and channels to convey these blessings to the whole world. The fire is confined in the stove only that it may heat the room. We light the lamp to illuminate the place around.

In every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness is acceptable to him, (Rev. Ver.), v. 35. Every great change in the natural or spiritual world seizes us to search for some cause sufficient to account for the change. The story of the Acts describes a remarkable revolution in the minds of the apostles. Up to a certain time they showed the narrow national prejudices of their countrymen. They thought of the kingdom proclaimed by Christ as an earthly Jewish Kingdom, Acts 1: 6. After that time we see Peter offering salvation to all who call on the name of the Lord (Acts 2: 21) and now preaching the Gospel to a company of Romans in the house of Cornelius. It is as if all their old imperfect notions about salvation had been swept away by a powerful wind or burned up in a consuming fire. It is the descent of the Holy Ghost that accounts for this radical change. It is a moral miracle wrought by divine power.

The word which God sent, v. 36. Peter told Cornelius that story of Jesus Christ, but he did not tell it just as interesting history, but as "the word which God sent"; that is, Jesus is a messenger of God to the world. His "doing good" is a message of God's kindness. His power over the devil a token of God's power to deliver us. His sorrow on the cross is more than the tragic end of His life. It is God's message or word of forgiving love given the world.

We are witnesses, v. 39. The work of the apostle, which is alike the duty of every Christian, is to bear witness to Jesus, not simply tell the story, but to be a living witness of its power to save.

Him God raised, v. 40. A living church witnesses to a living Christ. The testimony of Peter and the other apostles to the resurrection of Jesus was irresistible, because they were able to point to miracles wrought to human lives transformed, to a church made pure and joyful and strong by His

power. It is our duty, also, to bear witness to a risen Saviour. Our witness will be real and powerful if we have found the living Christ to be a force in our hearts, saving from sin and compelling to righteousness. It is out of the fulness of our own experience of Him that we are enabled so to witness that others are persuaded to make trial of His grace and power.

Ordned . . . to be the Judge of quick and dead, v. 42. Three thoughts are suggested by the declaration that Jesus is to be the Judge of all mankind. 1. A man will subdue the rebellion of mankind. In God's plan, redemption is not only for man but also through man. See Gal. 4: 4, 5; 1 Cor. 15: 22. The final blow to evil will be dealt by a man. 2. The fact that Jesus will be our Judge destroys all excuse for sin. We shall not be able to say to Him that our temptations were too great for us to endure. For He endured temptations equally great, and His grace was offered to enable us to resist. We shall not venture before Him to compare ourselves with others to our own advantage. For His perfect life has been before us for our imitation. The secret thought that God is a hard master will die away before the memory of His love and gentleness. There will be no excuse for sin, because our Judge shared and overcame our temptations and was willing that we should share His strength. 3. The announcement beforehand that Christ is the Judge removes from His people all terror of that great day. That must be a solemn day for us when we think of our sins before and after conversion, and the imperfection of our service. But we need not fear it, because the Judge is our Saviour. Those who abandon the plea of innocence and rest on the finished and accepted work of Christ on that day will face the Judge without dread;

"Teach me to die that so I may
With joy behold the judgment day."

Whatsoever believeth . . . shall receive remission of sins; v. 43. Faith brings us into union with Christ, as the Suspension Bridge spans the chasm at Niagara. It is the way along which the blessings of salvation come into our lives.

The Holy Ghost fell on all, v. 44. God recognizes no aristocracy in the church, but bestows His choicest gifts on the humblest of His children.

God Knows Best.

BY REV. JOSEPH PARKER, D. D.

God is often hungering me down; but I love to be treated so after a while. I know at certain moments what I should like to do, and I feel that God must be on my side, but the Lord sends me a sign and says, "No"; and I take my little programme and put it into the fire, and the next day I say, "Lord, I thank Thee for that 'No'; Lord, into Thine hands I commit my spirit." If we do this in the right tone of mind, we shall never be wrong; if momentarily misapprehended or misunderstood, God will cause our night to break forth as the morning, and our judgment shall go out as the noonday. O, rest in the Lord; have no life of thine own to pester thee; let it be God's life in Christ.

Children's Day.

BY D. TORRANCE FRASER, MONTREAL.

In the course of my regular visitation of Sabbath Schools, I have been present, during the last two years, at six or seven Children's Day Services (perhaps more), and it does seem that we might improve on what we are doing. Children's day ought to be a "rally day," to use a United States phrase, for renewed interest and attendance in the school.

Two principles should be laid down, 1st. To get the people out, 2nd. To give them something to come for; i.e. instruction and interest. We should make good intimation of the meeting, not only from the pulpit but by sending special invitations by cards to every home, so as to bring out all the parents, as well as young people and children. In some cases, I have seen the church decorated with fruits and flowers, as a harvest festival; in any case it is possible to have the church to look a little different from ordinary. It is a special occasion. The exercises should be conducted in a suitable manner; music bright, seasonable, well prepared, and words familiar. It is suitable to have the school and the teachers in the centre and the parents and older people at the sides.

Then some part should be given to each section of the gathering; it is a meeting of common interest, so let all participate, and give variety. As to speaking, what we need is to secure increased interest in our work; now this can be done in various ways.

The C. E. plan of a roll call of classes is useful; the teacher and class, on being called, can stand and recite together some text; or the teacher can reply, so many present, so many absent, so many sick, so many away from home. The Home Department and Cradle roll can also be reported. This gives interest, but also information.

The superintendent can give a brief report of the whole school: total roll of teachers, roll of scholars, and attendance of each. Total collections, so much used for the school, so much given to missions. So many memorize Scripture and so many the Catechism. What papers are used; the condition of the library; what improvements are needed; what help the parents can give the teachers. How many have joined the church: all this, in brief would give the parents knowledge of the condition of the school, and of its needs. Then the addresses should be varied, for example—What the last term, (3 or 6 months) has taught me, or a preview of the coming lessons, or what our church is doing for its schools, or for missions at home or abroad: or what the collection of the day is for; or other kindred subjects connected with school work.

It may be suggested, that the minister, the superintendents, the teachers, the session, the managers, even the scholars, abound to take some part, and although stumbling over it increase the interest. This is a special event, make the most of it to benefit the school, and through it the congregation and the families. A form is provided for exercises, but that can be adapted to suit the particular circumstances of the school or church.

It may be said, all this would give trouble, so it would; but are not our young people worth it all? We need increased interest in our school work, and well arranged exercises would add much to the interest and produce good effect. It may be well to state how many had joined the church. Many more ideas could be given, but these may suffice to induce superintendents and teachers to use more care in carrying out a very useful