

The Church Times.

"Evangelical Truth--Apostolic Order."

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Calendar.

CALENDAR WITH LESSONS.

Day	Date	MORNING.	EVENING.
S. Dec.	11	St. John. Mat. 23. Luke 14. Isaiah 28. 1 Pet. 3	
M.	12		
T.	13		
W.	14		
Th.	15		
F.	16		
S.	17	Ember Day.	
S.	18		
S.	19		
S.	20	Ember Day.	

* One of the Ember Week Collects to be used on this day and each day in this week.

Poetry.

NO NIGHT THERE.

WAND'ERER full of doubts and fears,
Travelling through this vale of tears,—
Pilgrim! in the path of life,
Seeking pleasure,—sifting strife,
Though earth's shades are darkly creeping,
Though thine eyes are dim with weeping,
Lift thy tearful gaze above,
To that better home of love;
There shall come no withering blight,
There shall be no gloomy night.

Voyager! on life's troubled sea,
Sailing to eternity;
Though the billows wild and dark,
Overwhelm the sinking bark;
Though hope's light hath all departed,
And thou art weary, broken-hearted;
See! amid the deepening gloom,
Far beyond the dreary tomb,
A glorious beacon star is shining,
Angel hands for thee are twining
An immortal wreath of flowers,
And within those heavenly bowers,
There shall come no withering blight,
There shall be no gloomy night.

There no mournful wail of sadness
Mingles with the strains of gladness;
Tears, for human grief no more;
But a glorious song is swelling,
Of a Saviour's mercy telling;
Angel choirs the song repeat,
And cast their crowns at Jesus' feet.
Oh, that world is ever bright,
There shall be no gloomy night!

Earth! thy storms are dark and dreary,
And our hearts grow faint and weary;
As with faltering steps we stray,
Through life's tangled, devious way;
Often cherished friends forsaking,
Leave our hearts with sorrow aching;
Often we are led to weep,
For the loved ones called to sleep;
And on our pathway falls the gloom,
Of the dark and dreary tomb.

But a star still shines above us,
Telling one is left to love us;
And we know that when at last,
All life's weary days are past;
We shall join the angel band,
In the brighter, better land;
Where the angel choirs are singing,
Where immortal flowers are springing;
Never chilled by earth's dark blight,
Where there comes no gloomy night.

Religious Miscellany.

ADULT BAPTISM.

I will not suppose, then, I can not suppose, that any reader really doubts the authority for baptism. But some who do not doubt its authority, are accustomed to view it as only an act of profession. They sometimes add that religion may be possessed, where it is not professed; and often the thought is plainly cherished, that it is safer as well as easier not to assume the responsibility of a profession which must be sustained by a religious life. They who thus reason are mistaken indeed in their idea of the Christian profession itself, as if it were designed, not so much to honor Christ as to distinguish Christians. It is honorable to him that his name should be confessed by men; and he has made it the bounden duty of all. They who do it make no profession of their own holiness, but they declare his power and love, and acknowledge their obligation and propose to be his servants. Whoever shrinks from this shrinks from religion itself. He might as well be afraid to promise allegiance to his country, or faithfulness to his consort. Both are acts of profession; and yet no honest citizen or true husband ever refused to promise, as in the presence of the Searcher

(Continued from last week.)

of hearts, the duty which he meant to perform. If baptism were but an act of profession, it would be binding still upon all who hope for salvation through Christ; and it could not be refused by any to whom Christ and his cause are dear.

But baptism is not merely nor chiefly an act of profession. It is a test of obedience. To receive it is to obey him who has a right to command the observance of any test. It is like the charge to Naaman to bathe seven times in Jordan. It is like the charge to the blind man to wash in the pool of Siloam. The great Healer of all the diseases of our souls, may, if he see it best, couple a like charge with their restoration to holiness and peace; and it is not for us to discuss, in the spirit of Naaman, the fitness or necessity of the arrangement. It is enough if he has bidden us "wash and be clean." Do we wish to be healed of our moral leprosy and our spiritual blindness? We must not disobey, because we can not see the nature of the connection between baptism with water and baptism with the Holy Ghost. We must not say that if some great thing had been required of us, we would have done it; but that, since the yoke which is laid upon us is so easy, we will shake it off, and hold ourselves blameless.

Baptism is not merely a sign of the Christian profession, and a test of obedience, but a seal of the grant of forgiveness. The title of that which was administered by John was, "baptism for the remission of sins;" and it was administered by him as the forerunner of our Saviour. "Repent and be baptized for the remission of sins," was the exhortation of Peter on the day of Pentecost. "Arise, and be baptized," said Ananias to Saul, "and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." In many grave transactions, amongst men, there is some outward sign, without which the transaction is not legally valid and complete. A spot of land is not transferred till a formal deed has been signed, sealed, and delivered. A marriage has not taken place, till hands have been joined, and vows have been uttered, with some solemn ceremonial, in the presence of witnesses. A right to the privileges of naturalization is not conferred till the oath of citizenship has been taken. A grant of pardon cannot release the prisoners, till it has the seal which represents the supreme authority. In bestowing his mercies, and establishing his covenant with men, God could surely, if it seemed good to him, fix some such sign or form, through which the grant of forgiveness should be sealed and perfected. It is a simple question of fact, whether he did ordain a sign like these, when he commanded that some should be baptized. If he commanded that he should be "baptized for the remission of sins," that question is decided. His command was expressed by his apostles in these very words; and therefore baptism is to the grant of Divine forgiveness what the seal is to the warrant of release from prison; what the deed is to the transfer of land; what the oath of citizenship is to the right of citizenship; what the marriage ceremony is to the marriage union.

Baptism is more than a sign of profession, a test of obedience, and a seal of forgiveness; it is also the means of a gift of grace. By grace alone are we saved. God may dispense his grace in any manner which may be approved by his perfect wisdom; and the mode which he has ordained must always be the best and the most effectual. Is prayer his appointment? Baptism is as clearly his appointment. Are we required to hear and believe his word? So are we required to be baptized. Prayer is a means of grace, in one form; the word is another means in another form; and baptism is still another means in another form; but through them all works one and the self-same Spirit. Does any doubt the operation of the Spirit through baptism? "By one Spirit," says St. Paul, "are we baptized into one body." Does any say that the inward work of the Spirit is enough without the outward sacrament? The same apostle has associated them in the closest union of language. "According to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost." Can we not explain the connection, and shall we therefore doubt? Our Lord has at once asserted the connection, and refused the explanation. "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he can not enter the kingdom of God." "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest

the sound thereof, but thou canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." Is this to make baptism a saving ordinance? St. Peter answers, that like the ark of Noah, "the like figure, even baptism, doth now save us; not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God." There is a grace, a spiritual blessing in this sacrament, which can not be lightly valued till we have learned our belief elsewhere than from the Scriptures.

Baptism is not only a sign of the Christian profession; not only a test of obedience; not only a seal of forgiveness; not only a means of grace; it is likewise the gate of the Christian communion. Within that communion, as in a sacred school, the faithful are to be trained up for the employments of heaven. They are to dwell together in unity and brotherly love. They are to contend, as one embattled host, against the evil that is in the world. They are to offer together as with one voice and heart, the perpetual sacrifice of praise to God and to the Lamb, as it is for ever offered in the celestial temple. The Church is much divided; and at different periods and in different parts, it has been much darkened and corrupted. But it has always been purer than the world beside; it has always included the best of men: within it have always been those who were united by that love which was the proof that they were born of God. It is as surely the abode of the divine presence as was the temple at Jerusalem, so often defiled yet always the chief resort of all pious Israelites, and the seat of the divine promises, and the spot which the Lord had chosen to place his name there, till the Desire of all nations had come and consecrated it more than ever by his entrance within its courts. I do not speak of any preference of one portion of the Church before another, as more pure in practice, more spiritual in doctrine, or more perfect in organization. But into no portion of the Church can you enter without the baptismal sacrament: Christ placed it at the porch, as it were, of his sanctuary. You may possibly have been accustomed to think of the Church as only a society of more advanced Christians. "A church member" is sometimes mentioned as one who has entered into pledges of his own, and even superfluous pledges, to exhibit a holiness which others need not attain. His faults are condemned with little mercy, while the same faults in others are taken as matters of course, because they are not of the body of Christian "professors." The modest and humble might avoid such a position. They would choose to be better than they seem, rather than hazard the blame of seeming better than they are. But the Church was intended to be the home, not of the most mature and holy of Christians, only, but of all believers, small and great, young and old, weak and strong. All are called to be there: none is at liberty to be absent. Whoever hopes for salvation through the blood of Jesus is bound to be numbered with his disciples; and therefore, if still without the washing of water, to ask, like every convert in the days of the apostles, "what doth hinder me to be baptized?"

It is the very question which, at times, you have been asking. The reply of your heart has probably been that you doubted whether you ought to seek baptism, because you doubted whether you were prepared to receive it, as your Saviour meant that it should be received. The objection is sufficient, if the doubt is well founded. It is not an excuse, but an obstacle; an obstacle not to be surmounted, but to be removed. Whether baptism be viewed as a sign of profession, as a test of obedience, as a seal of forgiveness, as a means of grace, or as an admission to communion, no one could wish that a profligate or an unbelieving man should, without a change, present himself for this act of consecration; and the same cause must shut out others, less wicked, but wicked still. He certainly did not intend that all men without distinction should be admitted to his sacraments. You are right in desiring, before you take a step like this, to know whether you can believe yourself to be one of those whom he intended to admit, and whom his apostles would have admitted; and for this end, to know what are the qualifications for baptism which the word of God has imposed, and which it is the duty of his Church to demand.