

Department of Christian Endeavor

"For Christ and the Church."

Consecration Meeting for September

BY THE EDITOR

TOPIC FOR WEEK OF SEPT. 4: Lessons from the migrating birds. Isaiah 31: 5.

The Scriptures contain numerous references to natural phenomena for the illustration and enforcement of spiritual truth. Both the Old and New Testaments deduce important and great lessons from common object studies in Nature. Our Topic is one of such. Two meanings have been attached to it by way of explanation. First, it has been held to show that God protects His people in their danger and extremity, as birds fly to defend their young when assailed by an enemy. Second, it is understood as referring to birds when migrating, and as such this article deals with it.

The season will soon be here when the feathered tribes, or many of them, will assemble and leave us, and we shall miss their cheerful presence and joyous songs. Recent researches by eminent ornithologists, as tabulated by Dr. Reichel of the American Science Association, suggest many lessons, of which the following are a few, and on which the leader may enlarge very easily, illustrating with appropriate Scripture and hymns.

1. Birds, when migrating, always seek a warmer climate. Leaving the more northerly zone where frost and snow will soon reign in icy coldness, they seek a land of more moderate temperature, of sunshine, and of flowers. In this they teach us to look for "a better country," and to face expectantly the "heavenly" toward which millions of God's Saints have already gone. In the meantime, and while on the way, God inspires and strengthens His people by assuring them of the bright future, the congenial clime, the perfect home, awaiting them beyond. To steadily set one's face towards the heavenly land of promise, and by faith and prayer, through trial and tribulation, to press onward in a well-grounded and assured hope of Heaven—this is our calling, duty and work. (Dr. Arnot once remarked, "Careful for nothing, thankful for everything, ready for anything." Such is the secret of abiding joy, of true resignation, and herein is surely a source of Divine protection.)

2. Birds, migrating, always follow well known and defined lines of flight. We are informed that past generations of birds went the same way that birds go now, that the routes have not changed, and that over the same aerial courses, the congregated flocks will go this year, that their antecedents went long centuries ago. So God protects His people by teaching them unchangeable and permanent principles of truth, well tried and tested experiences, age-abiding and dependable plans and processes, and only as we follow His way of life can we make a success of living, or obtain a happy entrance into a more glorious life beyond. It is well for our young people to remember that there are no improved or short-cut methods of Salvation, no patented or get rich quick processes of spiritual wealth, no palace-car routes to Heaven, such as our Christian ancestry never knew. The great facts of human choice, of wilful

transgression, of sin's enormity, of the consequences of unrepented wrongdoing, are the same as they ever were. The need of repentance, of faith, of a new heart, of sins forgiven, of peace with God, of the witness of His Spirit, of a holy life, and of consecrated talents—all are as imperative now as ever in the past. The essential truths of life and death, of sin and penalty, of heaven and hell, are unchanged, and if we reach Heaven we must go the one and only way there, for "neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved."

3. Birds, migrating, fly at high altitudes. We learn that from one to three miles above the earth, in the rarified atmosphere far aloft from the solid world beneath them, they fly on and on to their distant and awaiting home.

In such a lofty height they enjoy immunity from many dangers, and have a wide range of vision. What lessons for God's children! Because, so often, we live on too low a plane, and are content with a very limited horizon, our experiences are not what they would be if we sought high elevations of desire, of purpose, or of progress. The birds teach us of what Christianity ever holds before us in calling us to such aspirations as are found in many passages like "seek those things that are above," and similar numerous exhortations. Thomas Moore well sang:

The bird let loose in eastern skies,
When hastening fondly home,
Never stoops to earth her wing nor flies,
Where idle warblers roam;
But high she shoots through air and light,
Above all low delay,
Where nothing earthly bounds her flight,
Nor shadows dim her way.

So grant me, God, from every care
And stain of passion free,
Aloft through virtue's purer air,
To hold my course to Thee!
No sin to cloud, no lure to stay
My soul, as home she springs:
Thy sunshine on her joyful way
Thy freedom in her wings.

4. Birds, migrating, fly with surprising accuracy towards their destination. A keen sense of sight by day, and an acute sense of hearing by night, and the "sense of direction" at all times, combine to guide their course. In similar manner, to direct us through our earthly progress, it may be shown how human reason, intelligent judgment, well-regulated conscience, unite with God's word and the Divine Spirit to show us the way. (The student may easily enlarge this. Space does not permit of it here. But make very clear that life need not be an experiment, or Heaven a mere speculation. Both are sure to those who go God's way.)

5. Birds, migrating, always fly in flocks. Without the stimulus of a numerous company, thousands who would never reach their journey's end alone, are strengthened for the long flight and saved from disaster. So the value of our helpful association with like-minded Christians, is evident. The lessons are plain. Cheerful, inspiring, strengthening fellowship is needed. Mutual encouragement and support will sustain and hearten. Let the strong help the weak, and let none fall by the way for want of a word of cheer.

To our Epworth Leaguers this should strongly appeal, for not to reach Heaven ourselves, but to help others there, is our great purpose in following Christ.

Sample Social Song Services

Bright, attractive and profitable Bible Readings and Song services may easily be arranged, if only the Leader will put a little time and thought in preparation. We give two outlines below, one of Abraham, the other of Moses. The hymns are from the Methodist Hymn Book, the readings are selected from the Scripture records. Such services are most helpful if the hymns be well sung, and the Scripture Story read with expression. Try something similar:

I. ABRAHAM.

1. Hymn 295.
2. Psalm 95: 1-7.
3. Prayer.
4. Genesis 12: 1-7.
5. Hymn 96.
6. Genesis 13: 1-18.
7. Hymn 38.
8. Genesis 15: 1-6.
9. Hymn 613.
10. Genesis 17: 1-8.
11. Solo, such as "The Better Land."
12. Genesis 18: 20-33.
13. Hymn 755.
14. Genesis 22: 1-14.
15. Hymn 480.
16. Galatians 3: 7-29.
17. Hymn 367.
18. Prayer.
19. Hymn 513.
20. Benediction.

II. MOSES.

1. Hymn 498.
2. Prayer.
3. Acts 7: 17-29.
4. God in the Burning Bush, Exod. 3: 1-14.
5. Hymn 8.
6. Signs of Authority, Exod. 4: 1-17.
7. The Passover, Exod. 12: 21-28.
8. Hymn 158.
9. The Red Sea, Exod. 13: 17-22.
10. Hymn 101.
11. Exod. 14: 5-31.
12. Hymn 467.
13. Manna, Exod. 16: 1-15.
14. Hymn 214.
15. The Ten Commandments, Exod. 20: 1-17.
16. Moses' Death. Deut. 34: 1-12.
17. Hymn 609.
18. Prayer.
19. Hymn 14.
20. Benediction.

"Poor Christians"

Are you inclined to try the experiment of being as poor Christians as you can and yet escape hell? Cut it out! You may tumble and fall in. When the ice has formed along the shores of the river, while the middle of the stream is open, the adventurous boy delights to see how near he can come to the open water and still escape a ducking. The folly of the boy should not be duplicated in the Christian man. "Can I do this thing and still save my soul?" is no question for a good man to consider. "Is it right?" That, and that only, should determine our action. Many a man has toyed and played with evil, proposing to avoid real wrongdoing, only to find himself engulfed. It is safe to keep as far from that which is questionable as is possible. If you are trying to live as far from Christ as you can, you are in danger. If you are skirting the edges of the untrue and the unjust and the unbrotherly, in your relations with others, cut it out!—The Standard.

"We cannot undo sin, but God can prevent sin from undoing us."