

INTERNATIONAL S. S. LESSON.

November 13th.

LESSON VII.

THE FEAST OF TABERNACLES.—Lev. xxiii. 33-44.

GOLDEN TEXT.—Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.—Ps. ciii. 2.

CENTRAL TRUTH.—Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness.

LESSON EXPLANATIONS.

BY J. HALL, D. D. NEW YORK.

In this chapter we have a summary of the great feasts, the details of each being given elsewhere; and care is taken to see that they are additional to the Sabbaths. The uses of these are set forth here in part; in part we have their meaning and modes of observance in other parts of the law. The relations of the feasts one to another are here suggested.

Our attention is to be fixed on the *feast of tabernacles*. The Passover (Ex. xii. 6, 15, 17) kept alive the memory of the bondage and deliverance. It was part of a continuous national education. It was before the harvest work began.

Then, after the grain-harvest and before vintage, came the "day of Pentecost" (as it is called in the New Testament,) seven weeks after the Passover (vs. 15-21.) This Greek word, used in the New Testament means the fiftieth day. It lasted but a day, and the sheaf of first fruits, expressive of gratitude for the grain, was waved before the Lord. Animals were presented, but not offered on the altar. (See 1 Cor. xv. 20-23.)

The feast of tabernacles (vs. 33-36) began at full moon—"fifteenth day" (v. 34)—as did the Passover. It lasted for seven days; began with a holy convocation, *i. e.*, a solemn public religious meeting. Each day was marked by solemn offerings made by fire, decreasing in number as the week advanced, and winding up with a closing festival, called "solemn assembly" in our version (v. 36), in which no doubt, appropriate religious exercises were intended, and adapted to make the right impression on the people, and at the same time to be the expression of their devout gratitude to God for the blessings of the harvest now completed. This closing meeting would be peculiarly solemn, not only because it wound up this seven days "feast" or holy gathering, but because it was the closing up also of the special feasts of the year. The object of the recapitulation of vs. 37, 38, is to bring out this fact.

By turning to Num. xxix. 12-28 we find the order and kind of offerings to be presented. These details are not deemed necessary to be repeated here in the summary of the feasts of the year.

In v. 40 we have directions for what is distinctive in this feast, namely, the dwelling in booths or arbours of branches. The people were to take, "on the first day," boughs or "branches of goodly trees," specimens of which are named—the stately palm, the bushy shrubs, the waving willows of the brook—and under their shadow they were to stay, and, it would appear, also to carry them in procession. This was not a mere pleasure party, for it was now neither spring nor summer, but really late autumn. It was meant to reveal, when the people came to settled homes in the land, the period of dependence and homelessness, when the people had not even the tents which at a later time they no doubt provided, and when they had to do the best they could. See Hos. xii. 9 as fixing the meaning. It reminded them in their time of comfort, safety, and independence, in their land, that they had been brought through a period of unsettled wandering, that God gave them all, that He desired them to remember the past and feel continued dependence upon Him.

But this festival is not to be one of gloom and sadness, but of holy, grateful joy. "Ye shall rejoice" (v. 40) "before the Lord." He would have His people to be happy. It is as in the New Testament. His yoke (Matt. xi. 28, 29) is easy and His burden is light—such a yoke, says Augustine, as the bird's plumage is to it, by which it mounts upward toward heaven.

In v. 41 the perpetuity of the feast is enjoined. It is assumed that the reference is to the time of settlement in the land. It was a lesson in history to each succeeding generation.

In v. 42 the dwelling in "booths" is prescribed—made incumbent on all born Israelites. At the same time others would share in the joy, for no servile work was to be done during at least the first and last days of that week (vs. 35, 36).

The purpose of this is formally stated in v. 43—"that your generations may know," etc., God is jealous, and will not allow the people to forget that He is "the Lord their God." We must take care not to be betrayed into this forgetfulness (Eph. ii. 11).

V. 44 adds that "Moses declared," etc. He was God's prophet, and gave the law, not however as his own inventions, but the Lord's commands. Hence the spirit of our Lord's commands (John vi. 32).

The following points may be made clear to the pupils:

(1) Those were not the days of printed books, newspapers, schools, and colleges; but the people of God required teaching, as we do now. God appointed such means as they could use and as were adapted to their position. Nor were they so far behind us as might appear. Our assemblies, conferences, associations, and conventions for religious ends, serve much the same ends these convocations served in bringing men together, calling out the sympathy of numbers, diffusing thought and feeling, and promoting fellowship in the truth, and both with them and us are over and above the day of weekly rest and religious exercise.

(2) These feasts constitute, like New Testament sacraments, standing proofs of the historical facts of the Old Testament. Fancy the difficulty of originating a "Fourth of July" now if there had never been a Declaration of Independence!

(3) There are portions of the New Testament best understood by the knowledge of the feast. See, *e.g.*, Acts ii. 1; Rev. xxi. 3. (Perhaps also Peter's words, Mark ix. 5.)

(4) This feast taught that God's people are to rejoice in Him, and to feel that, if there be hardship now, there will be joy hereafter (2 Cor. iv. 17, 18).

(5) It reminded them, and should remind us, that we are out "pilgrims and strangers" on earth, that our home is in heaven; and while here we are to show to others of the goodness we enjoy. (See Deut. xvi. 11, 14).

(6) This lesson comes fittingly at this time. Harvest has been gathered, and *Thanksgiving* approaches. Let us keep it in the spirit of devout servants of God, children of the true Israel.

A DISTINGUISHED CONVERT.

The following is a translation of the letter to Cardinal Borromeo in which Mgr. Campello, Canon of St. Peter's, announces that he has abjured Roman Catholicism, and embraced Protestantism:—"Most Reverend Eminence,—During the last years of Pius the Ninth's Pontificate I was several times on the point of addressing your Eminence a letter to manifest what I set forth in the present, but was always deterred by fear of causing regret to a man so advanced in years, to whom I was bound in ties of gratitude. Mgr. Pecci having succeeded him in the Pontificate, I promised my-

self, like so many other men of good faith, a better future for the Church and for our country. But now that hope is altogether vanished, and nothing remains for me but to fulfil without hesitation the imperious duty arising from my convictions as a Christian and Italian citizen. These convictions will not allow me any longer to form part of an institution which in the secular contests vanquished by progress and liberty wishes its ministers to be placed like an Indian caste in the midst of modern society. I looked, as I say, to the new Pontiff for a truce, at least, to the evils which have long afflicted us, but the condemnation hurled against the recent publication of Father Curci, confirming to the full the precedent of Canon Audisio, tears away the veil, and shows that party ire is implacable. Yet history shows that such condemnations were inflicted in the past on the most illustrious men of this and every other nation, and that to-day priests venerable for learning and blameless lives, and of more than orthodox creed, are liable to them. Such condemnations, I repeat, have always turned out to the honour of the condemned and to the discredit and worse of their judges, but yet all this is manifest evidence of the worst tyranny, which, not content with imposing silence, longs to oppress and stifle the voices of the oppressed, as formerly the last wails of the victims. What more convincing proof and certain consequences can be drawn from these condemnations? No other, Eminence, but that the secular breach can never be healed, that we shall never see the reconciliation of Church and State cherished by every good Christian and citizen. Hence, if the breach is irreconcilable, owing to the necessary persistency of the ruler of Catholicism—necessary, owing to the constitution of the system into which the work of Christ has moulded and is nowadays maintained by the boundless cupidity of man, if the vanquished of the falling power want to continue the fight, armed, for want of wise counsels, with obstinacy, heedless not only of impending social breaches, but careless even of the defeat, were it possible, of the Christian idea, I do not hesitate to declare that this unheard-of blindness finds its counterpart only in that of Judaism. How true this is, apart from every other reason, is clearly proved by the last Allocution—a disingenuous medley of untrue or exaggerated facts with which it was attempted to involve with Papacy the ruin of Italy. Such evidence of facts causes all the scales of prejudice to fall from my eyes, and looses me from every tie. I quit the ranks of the Roman clergy to militate in those of the pure Gospel of Christ, thus remaining true to my vocation and convinced of finding peace for my soul, since strong in the doctrines of the Divine Master, not adulterated or counterfeit, it will be given me to profess myself a Christian without hypocrisy, and an Italian citizen without a taint of being a traitor to my country. No one, least of all your Eminence, will suspect that I am led to this step by hard treatment or unsatisfied ambition. On the contrary, I affirm that I was well received everywhere. I felt specially honoured by the goodwill of my colleagues, of whom I shall retain the most dear and imperishable remembrance. Moreover, the dignity of a canon of the first Church in the world was held by me in such esteem that no other object of ambition could have seduced me. I am spurred on by the above reasons, and if my whole mind is to be manifested, I am moved likewise by disgust of a life spent almost wholly in uninterrupted religious exercises, of five or six hours daily, which all sensible persons must regard as stupid fetishism and most degrading idleness; but above all else, what decides my course is the study of the faith in the unquestionable pages of Christian antiquity, and in the

modern ones of the immortal Rosmini, Gioberti, Ventura, and of the excellent Roman priest and curate De Sanctis. I therefore beg your Eminence to notify to the Pontiff my spontaneous abjuration of the Catholic faith."

THE JUBILEE SINGERS.

At the Saturday matinee, given by the Jubilee Singers in the Horticultural Hall last week, a very pleasing incident took place which was only partially alluded to in the city press. Before the interval Mr. Pellatt stepped on to the platform and presented a handsome bouquet to each of the ladies of the company, and afterwards read a letter from Mrs. Wm. Gooderham, of which the following is a copy. The letter was accompanied by a donation of ten dollars to the funds of the Fisk University:

Toronto, Ont.
22nd Oct., 1881.

To the Jubilee Singers.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I regret that, being an invalid, I am deprived the pleasure of attending in person your concert this afternoon in the Horticultural Gardens, but by the kindly forethought of my husband I have been enabled through the use of the telephone to be a delighted listener to your beautiful songs and charming music.

In your grand mission of placing the Fisk University on a permanent basis I am certain that you have the hearty sympathy of the Christian public of this city. It is my sincere desire that in all your efforts and aims you may be entirely successful. Be pleased to accept the accompanying sum as a slight acknowledgment of my personal appreciation of your labours and objects. Your rich melodies and effective pieces cannot, I am sure, fail to impress most favourably your willing listeners everywhere.

With best wishes for your individual happiness and the hope that God may prosper you in all your undertakings, believe me,

Yours most respectfully,
Margaret Gooderham.

YOU may depend upon it, religion is, in essence, the most gentlemanly thing in the world. It will *alone* gentelize if unmixed with cant, and I know nothing else that will.

1882.

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