

Devotional Service.

By REV. T. J. PARR, M.A.

APRIL 9.—"THE HOLY GARMENTS."

Eph. 4: 20-25; Rom. 6: 4.

HOME READINGS.

Mon., Apr. 3. The priests' garments. Ex. 28: 1-5; 31: 30.
Tues., Apr. 4. The wedding garment. Matt. 22: 1-14.
Wed., Apr. 5. Putting on Christ. 1 Cor. 6: 37; 12: 25.
Thurs., Apr. 6. Putting on the new man. Col. 3: 1-11.
Fri., Apr. 7. The righteousness of the saints. Rom. 10: 9-19.
Sat., Apr. 8. They shall walk in white. Rev. 3: 1-6.

In many forms and by many figures of speech does the Great Book set forth the change which occurs in one's personal history when conversion to God takes place. The change is sometimes spoken of as a marked inward and outward transformation, e.g., "The old things are passed away; behold all things are become new." At other times it is referred to as leaving a dark and dangerous way, and entering upon a new and bright and beautiful path, e.g., "The way of the wicked is as darkness; they know not at what they stumble. But the path of the righteous is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." In other places, the new life in contrast with the old is described, as in our present topic, as the putting off the old garments, and the putting on of new ones, and the consequent alteration in external appearance, as the result of an internal change of mind, e.g.,

"Put away the old man, which is wicked and corrupt after the lusts and vices; and be renewed in the spirit of your mind; and put on the new man which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth." (R. V.)

1. "THE HOLY GARMENTS" IMPLY, THEREFORE, SEVERAL THINGS.—(a) The existence of old garments that are being coming "worse and worse," that is, the prevalence of the sinful life which, as time moves on, obtains increasing strength, and presents increasing hideousness to the eye of Him to whom all things are known.

(b) The teaching and example of Christ that these old garments should be put away, that is, the sinful life. "The former manner of life," should cease.

(c) The mind, including the feelings, intellect, and will, should be dominated by the spirit of Christ.

(d) And, as a consequence of this new spirit within, the pure, whole garments of the "new man" are to be put on, that is, the character and conduct are to be according to God's pattern and vested in righteousness and holiness of truth. These are "the holy garments."

(e) Notice that these new garments are not put on as a kind of covering to hide a multitude of sins, just as one might put on a rich dress, or a well-fitting suit of clothes, to have a fair exterior, and to hide a horrible skin disease underneath. No! these new garments of "righteousness and holiness of truth" are a result of the changed condition of the inner life by "the truth as it is in Jesus." And the inner life, the heart, the nature, being changed, there is a consequent change of outward conduct, represented by the new garment of the "new man."

2. "THE HOLY GARMENTS" ARE AN INDEX TO THE WORLD. Now, an index is that which shows, indicates, or manifests; and these garments indicate or manifest what the Christian is, what he *has*, and what he *does*. He is a changed man (new man); he has right principles (as the truth is in Jesus); he does right things (righteousness and holiness of truth). And it is the outward appearance of the garments, what a believer does, and

the way he does it, that the world observes. If the character and conduct do not correspond with the profession of a holy life, the world concludes, and has a right to conclude, that a "holy life," so far as this particular individual is concerned, is a "humbug," an imposition under fair pretences.

From life.—I was calling yesterday on a family, and upon inquiring about the husband's religious life, the wife told me he used to be a member of the Church, but became disgusted with the life and conduct of professed Christians, and went back into the ways of the world. This man had looked for the holy garments of a blameless life, for the character and conduct that one should expect from Christian men, and found it not. In all probability he was not blameless himself, spite. But the fact still remains, that he, and multitudes of others, are deterred from seeking Christ, and driven from Christ after they seek and find Him, by the inconsistent conduct of the unclean garments of professed followers of Christ.

A Serious Blunder.—Of course, these men are making a fatal mistake, a mistake that affects eternity as well as time. They argue from a particular to a general case, and thus commit the logical fallacy that so many people fall into. They say, in effect, this man, or these few men, who profess religion, are not true, therefore all men who profess religion are not true—a most absurd and fallacious conclusion. These evil men would try to find the real changes, the substantial transformations which Christianity has made in many lives that they meet every day, and in multitudes whom they might know about; if they would only seek for the good fruit of religion's tree, instead of the scrubs, a few of which every tree must have, they would find abundant reason for embracing Christ and Christian truth as the only hope of individual and social salvation.

The Solemn Fact.—Still the solemn fact stares us in the face, viz., that the inconsistent conduct of church members and professors of religion, the ragged garments of Christ's pronounced followers, keep many out of the Kingdom of God. Let the Epworth League stand for character and conduct that shall bear the closest scrutiny of friends and foes. Let us watch our outward lives, observed by the world, pray that we enter not into temptation, and resolve to make it manifest that we are epistles of Christ, remembering that we are not sufficient of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God. (See 2 Cor. 3: 2-5.)

SIDELIGHTS.

Fine feathers may not make fine birds, but if there is no correspondence between feathers and birds, we cannot but feel that we are imposed upon.

In Bible times, more than in modern times, did clothes represent the man. Every-one was expected to dress according to his rank. The apparel was regarded as a rough index of character. Moses was commanded to make holy garments for Aaron, "for glory and for beauty." His dress was to indicate his setting apart for holy purposes.

In the early history of Jerusalem, Isaiah, the prophet, exhorts the city to awake and put on her beautiful garments, by which he meant that the nation should change its habits, appearing unto surrounding people in the beauty of a holy life. New garments is not a patching up of the old character, nor a covering up of inward iniquity; it is a renewal, a regeneration by the divine spirit. "Ye must be born from above."

When spiritual renewal takes place, the mind remains as before, both in its emotional and intellectual structure—in memory, judgment, imagination and perception. God puts no new powers into the soul when He converts it. Regeneration brings no new faculties. The organism of the mind survives as it was. But the spirit which inhabits it and governs it is entirely changed.

The new man, what? (1) New thoughts. Formerly darkness, now light. Hitherto chaos, now order. (2) New motives. The glory of God and the welfare of man take the place of selfish and sinful purposes. (3) New dispositions. Anger, malice, evil heart, evil speech, and evil act are as habits banished forever. (4) New enjoyments. Surroundings are new, experiences are new, and hence joys are new, deeper, purer, grander. (5) New immortality. Before conversion, a prospect of immortality in separation from God; now, a rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.

BY WAY OF ILLUSTRATION.

Putting off comes before putting on. Stephen Grellet, the Quaker preacher, said once to an assembly of his brethren, "You are starched before you are washed. That is a bad thing, indeed, for however much starch may be used the original dirt will show through, and disgrace the well-got-up robe."

A short time ago a gentleman was preaching in the open air; his subject was growth in grace. At the close of the meeting a man approached him and said: "Our minister has been preaching some excellent sermons on that subject, and I have been trying to grow in grace this long time, but I find I never can succeed." The preacher, pointing to a tree, said: "Do you see that tree?" "Yes." "Well, it had to be planted before it could grow. In like manner you must be rooted and grounded in Christ."

A WORD WITH THE LEADER.

Begin your meeting sharp on time. Wait for nobody. Be sure to select your hymns beforehand, and have them bear upon the teachings of the topic. Select your Scripture readings from the Home Readings at the head of this article. Read responsibly if the passages selected are appropriate for the purpose. Encourage every member to bring his or her own Bible and take an interested, intelligent part in the reading and references. Be careful to keep the subject of study prominent in the meeting—the change from the old life of sin to the new life in Christ, and the vital importance of having the outward life conform to religious profession. Don't lose the opportunity of inviting the unconverted to the life of "the new man."

APRIL 16—"THE ETERNAL MORNING AND MODERN MISSIONS."

(A MISSIONARY MESSAGE.)

Isaiah 60: 1-2.

HOME READINGS.

Mon., Apr. 10. The Morning Star. Rev. 22: 16-21.
Tues., Apr. 11. The Dying Christ. Luke 1: 67-73.
Wed., Apr. 12. A light to the Gentiles. Luke 2: 32.
Thurs., Apr. 13. The Light of the world. John 1: 1-9.
Fri., Apr. 14. Lights in the night. Matt. 5: 14-16; Phil. 2: 13-18.
Sat., Apr. 15. The nations in the light. Rev. 21: 22-27.

One way to become interested in a cause is to study it. Ignorance gives the quietus to interest. General Lew Wallace became a Christian when his wife was compelled to study the life of Christ as presented in the New Testament in search of material for his book, "Ben Hur." He studied, he learned, he became sympathetic, then he loved Christ. But his love was a result of his knowledge. So in any great cause—no in missions. We study, we know, then we love the cause which finds its foundation in the Saviour's injunction to His disciples, "Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature." In our present topic we study the extension of the Gospel as foreseen by the Gospel prophet, Isaiah. He looks far down the centuries and sees the morning breaking, and the nations coming to God. Between himself and the approaching triumph, he sees darkness covering the earth and gross darkness the people, but the Lord