

# SUNDAY SCHOOL BANNER

for  
**TEACHERS**  
 AND  
**YOUNG PEOPLE.**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS.

	PAGE.		PAGE.
Hymn for the New Year .....	1	SUNDAY-SCHOOL LESSONS .....	4
Slipping Away .....	1	MUSIC .....	32
EDITORIALS .....	2		

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



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# SUNDAY SCHOOL BANNER

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VOLUME XIV.]

JANUARY, 1881.

[No. 1.]

## Hymn for the New Year.

BY H. DORNTON.

Harp, awake ! tell out thy story  
Of our love and joy and praise ;  
Lute, awake ; awake our glory !  
Join, a thankful song to raise !  
Join, ye, brethren, faithful-hearted,  
Lift the solemn voice again  
O'er another year departed  
Of our threescore years and ten !

Lo ! a theme for deepest sadness,  
In ourselves with sin defiled ;  
Lo ! a theme for holiest gladness,  
In our Father reconciled !  
In the dust we bend before Thee,  
Lord of sinless hosts above ;  
Yet in lowliest joy adore Thee,  
God of mercy, grace, and love !

Gracious Saviour, Thou hast lengthened  
And hast blessed our mortal span,  
And in our weak hearts hast strengthened  
What Thy grace alone began !  
Still, when danger shall betide us,  
Be Thy warning whisper heard ;  
Keep us at Thy feet, and guide us  
By Thy Spirit and Thy word !

Let Thy favour and Thy blessing  
Crown the year we now begin ;  
Let us all, Thy strength possessing,  
Grow in grace and vanquish sin !  
Storms are round us, hearts are quailing ;  
Signs in heaven, and earth, and sea :  
But when heaven and earth are failing,  
Saviour, we will trust in Thee !

## Slipping Away.

They are slipping away—these sweet, swift  
years,  
Like a leaf on the current cast ;  
With never a break in their rapid flow,  
We watch them as one by one they go  
Into the beautiful past.

As silent and swift as a weaver's thread,  
Or an arrow's flying gleam ;  
As soft as the languorous breezes hid,  
That lift the willow's long golden lid,  
And ripple the glassy stream.

As light as the breath of the thistle-down,  
As fond as a lover's dream ;  
As pure as the flush in the sea-shell's throat,  
As sweet as the wood-bird's wooing note,  
So tender and sweet they seem.

One after another we see them pass,  
Down the dim-lighted stair ;  
We hear the sound of their steady tread  
In the steps of the centuries long since dead,  
As beautiful and as fair.

There are only a few years left to love ;  
Shall we waste them in idle strife ?  
Shall we trample under our ruthless feet  
Those beautiful blossoms, rare and sweet,  
By the dusty way of life ?

There are only a few swift years—ah, let  
No envious taunts be heard ;  
Make life's fair pattern of rare design,  
And fill up the measure with love's sweet wine,  
But never an angry word !

—Selected.

Jan 9

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The Sunday School Banner.

REV. W. H. WITHROW, M.A., EDITOR.

TORONTO, JANUARY, 1881.

On the Threshold.

Now, dear Sunday-school fellow-workers, we stand on the very threshold of another year. Before we lift the latch and enter in, let us reverently and solemnly seek that Divine aid which alone can enable us to walk wisely and well down the dim corridors of the future. We know not what may await us in those unknown chambers; but with God as our guide, whate'er betide, naught can bring us scath or harm.

Let us address ourselves with fresh diligence to the holy task of studying God's word, so as to learn His mind and will to us; and let us then seek so to impress those truths upon the hearts and minds of the youthful immortals committed to our care, that they be to them a savour of life unto life and not of death unto death.

Never were the facilities for the study of God's word so brought within the reach of the Sunday-school teacher as they are to-day; and we believe never were they better presented than in the pages of our own BANNER. But all those helps are of no avail without diligent study on the

part of the teacher; and the first and most important pre-requisite of study is the preparation of the heart, which cometh alone from God.

As Sunday-school workers let us labour for results—for present results. Let us not be satisfied unless the great object of our teaching is accomplished, and the children are brought to Christ. Let us make each boy, each girl in our classes, the subject of prayer—of that fervent effectual prayer which availeth much. Let us seek to influence them individually, by personal conversation, by kindly attention, by lending or recommending suitable books; but above and beyond all let every effort be actuated by an intense desire for the conversion of your scholars. Fail not, dear fellow-worker, on your part, and God will be faithful to His covenant, for ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

The International S. S. Convention.

We had the pleasure of attending lately a meeting convoked for making arrangements for holding, in this city, the Triennial International Sunday-school Convention in June next. Vice-Chancellor Blake occupied the chair, and Daniel Maclean, Esq., reported his interview with the Executive Committee at New York. A programme of great interest has been prepared, embracing addresses by the foremost Sunday-school workers of this continent, and some from Great Britain. Indeed, we anticipate an occasion of little less importance than the great Raikes Centenary at London. Committees on Finance, on Entertainment, on Music, etc., etc., were appointed. It is expected that the world-famous Ira D. Sankey will be present, and will conduct the large choir to be organized in singing those glorious songs of battle and victory which have belted the globe with their sweet chorus. The meetings will be held in the pavilion of the Horticultural Gardens—a building that will hold between 3,700 and 4,000 persons. The Hon. Edward Blake and the Hon. G. W. Allan have kindly consented to give the address of welcome on the part of the citizens. We expect that this Convention will not only knit in closer bonds of Christian

we were on the 18th of Jan. 1881

To each of our readers in the high

And sure, we wish a happy New Year!

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brotherhood the two kindred nations which dwell side by side on this continent, but also give a great impulse to Sunday-school work throughout this land and throughout the neighbouring Republic. Further particulars of this important Convention will be announced when the arrangements are more definitely completed.

WE are glad to learn that Dr. Vincent is this winter to visit our city. All who heard his admirable lecture, replete with blended wit and wisdom, on "That Boy," will be glad to learn that he has consented to give his famous lecture on "That Boy's Sister."

We have received from J. B. Boustead, Esq., the energetic Superintendent of the Metropolitan Sunday-school, a copy of an excellent Christmas Service of Responsive Readings, Singing, and the like. We hope that many schools will hold such a service.

THE Rev. Dr. Stewart, Professor of Theology in the Theological College of our Church at Sackville, N. B., has prepared for the January number of the *Methodist Magazine* an admirable paper on "The Gospel of the Angel," or the Birth of Christ, the subject of the International Lessons for the month of January. It is, we think, the best discussion of this important subject that we have ever read. No Sunday-school teacher could fail to derive therefrom a profounder insight into God's plan of redemption than he had before.

PROFESSOR W. J. SHAW, of our Montreal Theological College, will present in the February number a paper on "The Boyhood of Jesus," a prominent topic in the Lessons for that month. Other discussions of important Lesson topics by some of the best writers of our Church will follow.

BESIDES Dr. Stewart's paper, the January number, now ready, contains the following: Jottings in the East—Constantinople, with nine engravings, by the Rev. D. G. Sutherland; Picturesque Canada, with five splendid engravings of Montreal, Ottawa, British Columbia, etc.; Valeria,

the Martyr of the Catacombs, also illustrated; Men Worth Knowing; the grand life-story of "Sister Dora," etc., etc. The announcement for 1881 is the best yet made: Twenty-three fine engravings, several of them full-page, to illustrate Mrs. Brassey's visit to Cyprus and the Levant, have been received. As an additional inducement to take the *Magazine*, the twelve numbers for 1880 will be given to new subscribers for 1881 for half-price. They may thus obtain the whole of the story of "Barbara Heck," together with "Great Reformers," "Nathaniel Pidgeon," "A Canadian in Europe," and Dr. Ryerson's "Canadian Methodism," for \$1. This is a chance which will not occur again, as we will not print in excess of the demand. A few sets of the twelve numbers for 1879, containing the story of "Neville Truman, the Pioneer Preacher," may also be had at the same rate. This story alone sells for 75 cents. This is an opportunity to get good and cheap reading that no Sunday-school should neglect.

In response to several requests for more reading matter in *Pleasant Hours*, it will henceforth contain about one-eighth more matter than heretofore, in the same-sized type, without any increase of price. With its growing circulation we will make still further improvements.

WE have received from the office of the *S. S. Times*, Philadelphia, an admirable Sunday-school calendar, containing a "Home Reading" and question for each week-day, and the Title, Text and Outline of the Lesson. A capital thing for keeping the Lessons constantly before the eye and mind. Sent post free by publisher for 25 cents.

THE BERAN LESSON BOOKS FOR BEGINNERS, and FOR INTERMEDIATE and SENIOR CLASSES, are again published and are for sale at our Book Rooms for 15 cents each. They are wonderfully cheap and valuable helps to the study of the Lessons.

OUR CANADIAN SCHOLAR'S QUARTERLY has had a very cordial reception, and has been pronounced the missing link needed to make up the perfect chain of our Lesson System. No school need be without it on the score of price—it is only 2 cents per quarter. Send for specimens.

# INTERNATIONAL BIBLE LESSONS.

## FIRST QUARTER—STUDIES IN THE GOSPEL OF LUKE.

### JANUARY, 1881.

January 2.

B. C. 7.

#### LESSON I.—ZACHARIAS AND ELISABETH; or, Righteous before God.

GENERAL STATEMENT.

Four hundred years have passed away since the last promise of the Old Testament—that Elijah the prophet should appear as the forerunner of the Lord; and now when the world is ripe for its fulfillment the prophetic chain is again taken up, and a new link is added, announcing that the herald of the King is at the gates, and soon to appear. In a time of universal neglect and unbelief, while iniquity sits on the throne, and scepticism stands at the altar, and formality stalks abroad in the Church, there are yet priests who pray in sincerity, and homes where God is honoured, and hearts that are waiting for the "consolation of Israel." The aged Zacharias stands with his censor in the Holy Place, and through the cloud of fragrant incense he beholds God's messenger, with his angelic face, beaming by the golden altar. His rising alarm is allayed by the gentle words of his celestial visitant, and with mind too overwhelmed fully to believe, he hears the glad promise that his prayers, offered, are to be answered at last; his wife shall clasp a son in her withered arms, and his child shall be the destined messenger of the Lord, to take up the trumpet of prophecy, sacred from the lips of David, and Isaiah, and Malachi, and proclaim the coming of the King.

Luke 1. 5-17.

[Memory Verses 13-16.]

5 There was, in the days of Herod the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia; and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.

1 Chron. 24. 1, 5, 7, 10: Now these are the divisions of the sons of Aaron.... thus were they divided by lot... the first lot came forth to Jehoiarib, the second to Jedaiab... the seventh to Hakkoz, the eighth to Abijah.

6 And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.

Psa. 119. 1: Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord.

7 And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren; and they both were now well stricken in years.

8 And it came to pass that, while he executed the priest's office before God, in the order of his course,

9 According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.

**Verse 5. Days of Herod.** An Idumean by birth, the last king of Judea, and a man of great ability and force, but cruel and unscrupulous. He caused his wife Mariamne, and his own sons, to be put to death without cause, and shed much innocent blood. But, despite his crimes and the hatred of the people, he held power for nearly forty years by his political skill and the favour of the Romans. **Judea** This word strictly refers to southern Palestine only; but Herod's realm included all the four districts of Judea, Samaria, Galilee and Perea, besides some of the surrounding provinces. **A certain priest.** The priests were descendants of Aaron, of the tribe of Levi. Their duties were the offering of sacrifice, the care of the temple, and, to some extent, instruction in the law. **Zacharias.** His name means "remembrance of the Lord." His home was in the hill-country of Judea, (ver. 39.) probably near Hebron, which was a priestly city. **Course of Abia.** The priests were divided into twenty-four courses or classes, each of which served in the temple a week in every half-year. The course of Abia, or Abijah, was the eighth in order, and was on duty in April and October. **Daughters of Aaron.** The priests were required to choose wives from among the descendants of Aaron, that the sacred blood might remain unmix'd. **Elisabeth.** The Greek form for the name Elisheba, meaning "the oath of God." As the coming Messiah sprang from the royal line of David, so the coming forerunner from the priestly line of Aaron.

**6, 7. Righteous before God.** Not perfect in character, but sincere in their service of God, and that in a time of wide-spread corruption, both in Church and State. 1. Pharisaim may seek to be righteous before men; but true piety seeks to be righteous before God. 2. Those who lead in the services of religion should themselves set an example of holiness. 3. Blessed is that home where the husband and wife are together in God's service. **Commandments and ordinances.** One word refers to the precepts of the law, the other to the ceremonies of the Jewish Church. **Blameless.** Not with absolute sinlessness, but with heart fixed in the purpose of rectitude. **No child.** By all Orientals, childlessness is regarded as a great affliction; and to the Jews it was especially so, as each family cherished a hope that the Messiah might be found in its number.

**8, 9. The priest's office.** During the week of their ministration the officiating priests occupied chambers in the temple, and after it they returned home. **Before God.** In the temple where God dwelt among his people. **His lot.** The various duties con-

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10 And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.

Rev. S. 4: And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God.

11 And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

12 And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.

Rev. I. 17: And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead.

13 But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.

Dan. 10. 12: Fear not, Daniel... thy words were heard, and I am come for thy words.

14 And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.

15 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.

Matt. 11. 9, 11: A prophet? Yes, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist.

16 And many of the children of Israel shall be turned to the Lord their God.

Matt. 3. 5, 6: Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.

17 And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.

1 Kings 18. 21: And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How

nected with daily offering were assigned by lot. **To burn incense.** The incense was composed of fragrant gums and spices, held in a bowl, which was placed on the golden altar. These were lighted with coals of fire from the altar of burnt offering, and filled the Holy Place with a fragrant cloud, an emblem of the prayers of God's people. **The temple.** The third temple, built by Herod, was surrounded by four courts, one inside another, all surrounded by porticoes and open to the sky. In the innermost, called "the court of the priests," rose the temple building, divided into two parts—the Holy Place, in which stood the altar of incense, and the Holy of Holies. The office of burning incense was regarded as so sacred that a priest was permitted to perform it but once. 4. "The perfume was sweeter which ascended up from the hand of a just Zacharias."—*Bishop Hall.*

10, 11. **The whole multitude.** From the numbers in attendance, some have supposed that this was on a Sabbath, or a feast-day. **Praying without.** While the offering was laid on the brazen altar in the priest's court, and the cloud of incense-smoke arose from the golden altar in the Holy Place, the people from the courts of Israel and of the Women, and even from the outer court of the Gentiles, lifted up their prayers. **There appeared.** This angelic appearance was the first event of the Gospel dispensation. **An angel of the Lord.** Gabriel. As we learn from ver. 19, an angel who is peculiarly the bearer of good tidings to men. **On the right side.** That is, on the south side of the altar, between it and the golden candlestick, close by the veil which covered the Holy of Holies. **The altar of incense.** Two altars were in the temple—one of bronze in the court of the priests, on which the daily sacrifice was offered; the other, covered with gold, within the Holy Place, reserved for incense. 5. At the place of prayer God's messenger comes to answer prayer.

12, 13. **Troubled.** Men are of the earth, and, however brave, must tremble when one from the invisible world appears in their presence. In every case when angels have come to mortals, they have been beheld with fear, even by the courageous Gideon and the holy Daniel. **Fear not.** 6. The opening words of the Gospel dispensation are words of encouragement and cheer. **Thy prayer is heard.** The angel attests his supernatural origin by his knowledge of Zacharias' prayers, and his promise of an answer. The prayer had been for a son, and, in common with all pious Jews, for the coming of the Messiah, both of which supplications are soon to find answer. 7. God hears our prayers even when he delays answering them. **His name John.** "The gift of God," a suitable name for one whose birth was thus promised, and who was to appear as God's messenger among men.

14, 15. **Thou shalt have.** More precisely, "And he shall be joy and gladness to thee." 8. "The child of prayer is likely to be a source of joy to his parents."—*Clarke.* **Many shall rejoice.** Not "at the time of his birth," but "shall have occasion to rejoice in after years on account of his birth," ushering in the Gospel and its privileges. 9. Every life has in it the possibility of bringing happiness to other lives. **Great in the sight of the Lord.** As the succeeding clauses explain, great in self-conquest, great in spiritual endowment, great in power among men, and great in his mission as Christ's forerunner. 10. Not often are the same men great in the eyes of God and of men. **Wine.** While the use of wine was permitted to people in general, the Nazirite or a person under a vow abstained, not only from fermented wine, but even from grapes, as a mark of peculiar self-control and consecration. **Strong drink.** All stimulating liquors other than wine. **Filled with the Holy Ghost.** "Illuminated, sanctified, and guided by its influence."—*Barnes.* **From his mother's womb.** From earliest infancy under a divine influence. None may know at how early an age the Spirit enters a human heart.

16, 17. **Many... shall he turn.** A prediction of success which was amply verified. Matt. 3. 5, 6. **Power of Elias,**

long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him. Mal. 4. 5; Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. Mark 9. 13; I say unto you, That Elias is indeed come, and they have done unto him whatsoever they listed.

To be in his own age what Elijah had been in his, a bold preacher and a mighty reformer; and, moreover, like him in the simplicity and austerity of his habits. **Fathers to the children.** As had been prophesied in the closing words of the Old Testament. Mal. 4. 6. A figurative expression, meaning a revival of true religion among young and old. **Wisdom of the just.** True wisdom being shown by obedience to God. **To make ready.** The mission of John was to prepare the nation for the more searching words and the greater work of Christ.

**Time.**—About a year and three months before the birth of Christ, (B. C. 7,) according to the common chronology. At this time Augustus Cæsar was emperor of Rome, and Herod the Great, king of Judea.

**Place.**—The temple at Jerusalem.

#### GOLDEN TEXT.

**And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.**—Luke 1. 6.

#### LESSON HYMNS.

No. 393, *New Hymn Book.* C. M.

Lord, I approach the mercy-seat  
Where thou dost answer prayer:  
There humbly fall before thy feet,  
For none can perish there.

Thy promise is my only plea,  
With this I venture such:  
Thou callest burdened souls to thee,  
And such, O Lord, am I.

Bowed down beneath a load of sin,  
By Satan sorely pressed,  
By war without, and fears within,  
I come to thee for rest.

No. 395, *New Hymn Book.* C. M.

Increase our faith, almighty Lord!  
For thou alone canst give  
The faith that takes thee at thy word,  
The faith by which we live.

Increase our faith, that we may claim  
Each starry promise sure;  
And always triumph in thy name,  
And to the end endure.

Increase our faith, O Saviour dear,  
By thy rich-sovereign grace,  
Till, changing faith for vision clear,  
We see thee face to face.

No. 402, *New Hymn Book.* S. M.

I want a heart to pray,  
To pray and never cease;  
Never to murmur at the stay,  
Or wish my sufferings less.

This blessing, above all,  
Always to pray, I want,  
Out of the deep on thee to call,  
And never, never faint.

I rest upon thy word,  
The promise is for me;  
My succour and salvation, Lord,  
Shall surely come from thee.

#### HOME READINGS.

- M. Zacharias and the angel. Luke 1. 5-17.  
Th. Abraham and the angel. Gen. 18. 1-19.  
W. Manoah and the angel. Judg. 13. 6-15.  
Th. The women and the angel. Matt. 28. 1-10.  
F. Cornelius and the angel. Acts 10. 1-20.  
S. Peter and the angel. Acts 12. 1-19.  
N. John and the angel. Rev. 22. 1-10.

#### QUESTIONS ON THE OUTLINE.

- I. **The Holy Pair,** v. 5-7.  
Who were they?  
When did they live?  
Where was their home? v. 39, 40.  
What was the vocation of Zacharias?  
To what course did he belong?  
What was his character?  
Was such the general character of the priesthood at that time?  
To what extent was this pair "blameless"?  
What privilege had thus far been denied them?  
What subject of their prayer is indicated in v. 13?

#### 2. **The Hour of Prayer,** v. 8-10.

What was the duty of Zacharias?  
Where was this duty performed?  
Of what was incense a type?  
How is this represented in Rev. 8. 3?  
Of whom was the priest, while offering incense, a type?  
How did the people show their interest in the service?  
What example do we find in their conduct?  
At what hour did this service take place?

#### 3. **The Heavenly Prophecy,** v. 11-17.

What took place in the temple?  
What is the effect of heavenly appearances upon human minds, and why?  
How were the fears of Zacharias relieved?  
What was the promise made to him?  
What character was predicted of his son?  
What was indicated by the words concerning strong drink?  
What was to be John's office and work?  
What influence was he to exert upon the people?

#### TEACHINGS OF THE LESSON.

What does this lesson show—  
1. As our example in worship?  
2. As our example in character?  
3. As our example in zeal for God?

**Subjects for Study.**—The influence of parental character upon their children... The office and significance of the priesthood... The ministry of angels... The mission of John the Baptist.

#### The Lesson Catechism.

- (For the entire school.)  
1. Who was Zacharias? A priest in the time of Herod.  
2. What was his character? He was righteous before God.  
3. Who appeared to him in the temple? An angel of the Lord.  
4. What did the angel promise to him? A son who should be a prophet.  
5. Who was this son? John the Baptist.  
6. What duty do we learn from the first lesson? Faithful obedience to God.

#### ANALYTICAL & BIBLICAL OUTLINE.

##### The Priest and the Prophet.

- I. **THE PRIEST.**  
1. **Righteous.** "Righteous before God." v. 6.  
"Righteousness... of God by faith." Phil. 3. 9.  
2. **Obedient.** "Commandments... ordinances." v. 6.  
"Blessed... undefiled... walk in the law." Psa. 119. 1.  
3. **Unspotted.** "Blameless." v. 6.  
"Blameless and harmless, the sons of God." Phil. 2. 15.  
4. **Prayerful.** "Prayer is heard." v. 13.  
"From the first... thy words were heard." Dan. 10. 12.  
II. **THE PROPHET.**  
1. **His Honor.** "Great... sight... Lord." v. 15.  
"Not... a greater than John the Baptist." Matt. 11. 11.  
2. **His Self-denial.** "Neither wine," etc. v. 15.  
"Not drunk with wine, but filled... Spirit." Eph. 5. 18.

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3. **His Endowment.** "Filled... Holy Ghost." v. 15.  
"Full of the Holy Ghost." Acts 11. 24.
4. **His Influence.** "Many... shall he turn." v. 16.  
"Went out to him... all Judea." Matt. 3. 5.
5. **His Work.** "To make ready." v. 17.  
"Behold the Lamb of God." John 1. 29.

**ADDITIONAL PRACTICAL LESSONS.**  
*Messages from God.*

1. God's messages come to men when great events in the spiritual history of the race are about to take place.
2. God's messages come only to the righteous, whatever their state in life. v. 6.
3. God's messages come to some while in sacred duties, but to others, (the shepherds,) while in secular. v. 11.
4. God's messages begin with words of cheer and encouragement to the troubled in spirit. v. 13.
5. God's messages come as answers to prayer, unexpected, and larger than our thoughts.
6. God's messages recognize the unity of revelation, by taking up the thread of prophecy where it was broken, after four hundred years. v. 17.
7. God's messages have direct relation to Christ, the great central theme of the Gospel. v. 17.

DOCTRINAL SUGGESTION—The ministry of angels.

**CATECHISM QUESTIONS.**

1. How many sacraments hath Christ ordained in his Church?  
Christ hath ordained two sacraments in his Church; baptism and the supper of the Lord.
2. What mean you by the word sacrament?  
I mean by the word sacrament an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, given unto us, ordained by Christ himself, as a means whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof.

**ENGLISH TEACHER'S NOTES**

BY EUGENE STOCK, ESQ.

"Where were you born?" "And you?" "And you?" This would be a good question with which to open these lessons on the Gospel of Luke; and all the better because the class would certainly not see the drift of it at first. Probably scarcely one of my readers sees as yet my object in asking the question.

The answer is, "Boston," "Albany," "Chicago," etc. Then comes the question, "How do you know?" I can imagine the puzzled faces of the class. "How do I know, teacher?" asks a boy—as much as to say, "What do you mean?" "Yes," I reply; "how do you know you were born at Boston?" "Well, mother says I was." "Exactly so: she told you; you did not read it in a book, did you?" "In a book!

O, no!" says my young friend, laughing. "Then," I go on, "it came to you by oral tradition." The class is puzzled again; but my task is now easy, to show them that a great part of their knowledge comes, not by reading but by hearing; not by books, but by oral communication or delivery.

So it was with the knowledge of the early Christians concerning the life of their Lord, before the time when the Gospels were written. The converts of Philip in Samaria, of Peter at Cæsarea, of Barnabas at Antioch—what did they know about Jesus? Of course, they heard in the first instance of his being the promised Messiah, of his rejection and death, and of his resurrection; and on this testimony they embraced the Gospel. But then how eager they would be to know more about this crucified and risen Galilean whom they accepted as their Lord and Saviour! The apostles and some others could, of course, tell them what they had seen and heard while he was yet on the earth; but as their numbers multiplied, the want seems to have been supplied by the handing on from one to another of a regular summary of teaching or "catechizing" (as the word "instructed" means in Luke 1. 4,) comprising our Lord's principal miracles, discourses, etc., and the events that led to his death. In course of time, as Luke tells us in the first verse of this chapter, "many took in hand to set forth in order" a written narrative, more or less complete, of the events thus summarized, with such additions as their individual knowledge would enable them to make. So in the present day, if a great man dies, all the newspapers give us hasty biographies of him; and we then learn facts about him which before were only known to the few who knew him, or who had opportunities of hearing from those who did. Written narrative soon supersedes oral tradition.

But this is not all. By and by, one or more complete "Lives" of the great man appear, carefully compiled after due research and inquiry, which become more or less standard works, and the newspaper sketches are forgotten. And so came the four Gospels to be written, and to survive all the other accounts. Of course, over and above this, we hold them, and them only, to be divinely inspired. But this does not affect the foregoing illustration of their origin as human compositions.

The present seems to me a good opportunity to make all this plain to our scholars. We are beginning Luke's Gospel: how came he to write it? He himself was a Gentile convert, a man of superior education, who would naturally desire to find out for himself more of the Lord's life than the current

oral teaching or the incomplete accounts in circulation would tell him. There are many passages peculiar to his Gospel which afford interesting indications of his having obtained information from special sources; but I must not now dwell on these. I refer to it merely to introduce one important fact, which does concern us in these opening lessons, namely, that from the fifth verse of the first chapter to the end of the second chapter is written in a very peculiar style, and is almost certainly a translation into Greek of a Hebrew document which did not come into the hands of Matthew and Mark, but which Luke did obtain, very probably from some of the Galilean women whom he frequently (and he alone) mentions, and who may have received it from Mary herself. Luke seems to come forward to the early Christians with his manuscript, and to say, See what I have found for you; you have never fully known about the birth of John Baptist and of Jesus; now, here it is. Now let the class look at the beginnings of the other three Gospels, and then see what we should have lost if Luke had not recovered and translated that precious fragment; and let these two chapters always be read with thankfulness to God for their preservation.

And a very striking picture it is which Luke presents to us in the opening verse of the chapter now before us. One ought really to prepare oneself for looking at it by a previous course of reading in Josephus. In his pages we see the condition of Palestine in the reign of Herod the Great. Intrigue, violence, bloodshed, continually prevailed. The massacre of the infants at Bethlehem is not mentioned, for it was but a small thing by the side of other horrors. Were there, then, no religious people? Yes, and we see them in the Gospels, making broad their phylacteries, praying at the street-corners, despising the poor and the sinful, "scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!" One might suppose there were no quiet, humble, godly people in the land at all. One might cry with the Psalmist, "Help, Lord! for there is not one godly man left!" And then Luke comes forward and shows us Simeon and Anna, Joseph and Mary, Zacharias and Elisabeth—all in this precious bit of domestic Hebrew narrative.

In mountain districts, you sometimes ascend a steep and rugged pass, where the towering rocks on either side get wilder at each step. Vegetation seems left behind, and you fancy the regions of perpetual snow must be near; when suddenly, through a dark and narrow defile, you emerge into a bright, green, smiling valley, with a meandering stream and pleasant meadows, lying under these embosomed in the mountains. I

am thinking of the valley of Andermath, on the St. Gothard route over the Alps; but my American readers doubtless know of similar spots on their side the Atlantic. Just like the sight of so peaceful and unexpected a scene seems to me the picture, "in the days of Herod the king," of that good old praying couple, "walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless," Zacharias and Elisabeth.

Nor were they alone in their lowly godliness. Luke shows us a "whole multitude of people praying" in the temple court while Zacharias is offering within the sanctuary the incense that symbolizes their supplications as it rises with a "sweet savor" toward heaven. In that crowd, no doubt, you may see many a proud Pharisee; but is there not the mercy-seeking publican, too? and are not Simeon and Anna there, "departing not from the temple," "serving God with fastings and prayers night and day," "waiting for the consolation of Israel?" and many others like them? Might not God have said in the days of Herod as he said in the days of Ahab, "Yet have I left me seven thousand in Israel?"

We know there was at this time an expectation among the Jews that Messiah would soon come. And we may well believe that the cruelties of Herod, the selfish intrigues of the Sadducee priests, and the arrogance of the professedly righteous Pharisees, would lead humble people like the solitary old couple in their home in the Judean hills to pray the more earnestly and continually that the long-deferred Promise might quickly be fulfilled. I think we see a hint of this in the angel's words to Zacharias, "Thy prayer is heard." Was that a prayer for a child? Hardly. They had given up that expectation, humbly submitting to the Lord's will in the matter. Was it not a prayer for Messiah? And was it not this prayer that was answered? True, Elisabeth did have a son; but the stress is rather on what and whom that son was to be. "Great in the sight of the Lord"—and great because he was to do exactly what Malachi had prophesied of Messiah's forerunner. Compare the angel's words in vers. 16, 17, with those of Mal. 3: 1; 4: 6, and remember Gabriel's revelation comes after Malachi's in the scroll of prophecy; for during the intervening four hundred years no message came from God to man. And mark the child's divinely-given name—John—that is, "Jehovah is gracious."

But of John's mission we shall see more in another lesson. What is the practical teaching of this passage for our classes? I would put it thus: Would you like rich and unexpected blessings while you live, and a

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respected memory when you die? Seek not to be Herods, lordly leaders of men; but just take the quiet unnoticed position God has given you; strive to be "blameless" in it; and God's angels may have messages for you beyond all your conceptions.

#### BEREAN METHODS.

##### Hints for the Teachers' Meeting and the Class.

Note the condition of the world at that time, in Judea, in the Roman Empire, socially, religiously, morally, spiritually.... The persons of the lesson, and character and station—Herod, Zacharias, Elisabeth, John.... A description and rough diagram of the temple, showing courts, altars, and the place of the angel's appearance.... Angels and their work.... What is related elsewhere concerning Gabriel.... The promise, what it included, and how it was fulfilled.... The mission of John as here presented.... Teachings concerning righteousness. (See Lesson Commentary, page 27).... Lessons concerning God's messages to men. (See Additional Practical Lessons.).... Duties here taught: 1. Righteousness; 2. Prayer; 3. Faith.

#### Blackboard.

BY J. B. PHIPPS, ESQ.



We learn from this lesson that to be righteous before God we must keep to the line of duty, and be patient. Faith and patience go hand in hand. Prayer may not be answered immediately, but it is not forgotten, and in God's good time he will grant that which is right.

#### Primary and Intermediate.

BY MRS. E. J. KNOWLES.

INTRODUCTORY. This is the first lesson of the year. A Happy New Year, dear children! What do you think will make this year a happy one for each of us? One says, "To be good." That is true. It always has been and always will be true that "the way to be happy is to be good." How pleasant it is to have for the first lesson of the year the story of a man and his wife who were truly good people. How do we know they were good? Listen what God's word

says about them. [Class repeat Golden Text.] What were the names of these good people? Repeat after me, Zacharias, Elisabeth.

LESSON STORY. Here is a picture of the temple in Jerusalem. [Teacher may show model, or picture, or sketch upon blackboard, and describe briefly the altar of incense and its use.] Zacharias was a priest, whose duty it was to offer incense upon this altar. On this day, when our story begins, he was in the temple attending to his duty. [Bring out here the thought that the best things in life, and those which makes us most truly happy, always come to us when we are doing what God wants us to do.] Zacharias was standing by the altar, and an Angel of the altar came and stood by him. [When we are doing God's service we always have the company of angels, though we may not see them.] This was the angel Gabriel, whose name means "the great power of God." He came from the presence of God in heaven to bring glad news to Zacharias. Zacharias was afraid when he saw the angel. So were Abraham, and Daniel, and other men of whom the Bible tells us, when angels spoke to them. If they felt so in the presence of these great and holy beings, how reverent and thoughtful should we be when we come into the presence of God in prayer, or to hear what he says to us in his word. The angel said, "Fear not, Zacharias, thy prayer is heard," and then he told him God would give him the very thing he had asked him for. What do you think that was? A son. Zacharias and Elisabeth had no children. A home is very lonely without little children—and they wished so much for a son. So they went to God, their Father, and asked for the thing they wished for most. The angel had come to tell them that the son should be given them, and they should call his name John, which means "the gift of God." Do you suppose God would have heard their prayer, and sent his angel to tell them this good news, if they had not been good people trying to please God? No, for the Bible says, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." [Teacher may explain in a brief word that God's covenant is to give special blessings to those who are obedient to him.] The angel also told Zacharias that his son should be "great in the sight of the Lord." That is much better than to be great in the sight of men.

LESSON THOUGHTS. 1. Our best things in life come to us when we are in the way of duty. 2. Reverence in the presence of God at worship. 3. We may ask God for whatever we want. 4. God always hears and answers our sincere prayers.

January 9.

B. C. 7.

## LESSON II.—THE SONG OF MARY; or, Rejoicing in God.

## GENERAL STATEMENT.

Zacharias has finished his ministration in the temple, and at home awaits in silence the fulfilment of the angel's prophecy. In the Galilean village of Nazareth, a hundred miles to the north, is dwelling a maiden, related to Elisabeth, and named Mary. Though lowly in estate, her lineage is of the noblest, since she is a descendant of King David. She is betrothed in marriage to Joseph, a carpenter, who comes of the same royal ancestry. Six months after the angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias in the temple, he enters Mary's dwelling, and salutes her with the wondrous tidings that the Messiah-Prince, so long expected, is at last about to come, and that she is destined to be his mother. The manner of his advent is revealed, and his name is announced to be Jesus, the Saviour. The angel also informs her of the joyful event so soon to occur in the home of cousin Elisabeth. The maiden bows meekly to her high destiny, with all its strange accompaniments, and soon, bearing her mighty secret, hastens toward the priestly home in Judaea. As she enters its door, the aged Elisabeth also feels the prophetic impulse, and in a burst of song hails her as the mother of her Lord. Mary responds in the *Magnificat* of our lesson, a strain echoing the prophecies of the Old Testament, and exulting in the triumph of God's cause over all its enemies.

## Luke 1. 46-55.

[Memory Verses, 51-55.]

46 And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,

Ps. 34. 3: O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.

47 And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.

48 For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden; for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.

Ps. 138. 6: Though the Lord be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly. Luke 11. 27: Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked.

49 For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.

50 And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.

Ps. 103. 17, 18: The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; to such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

51 He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

## Explanatory and Practical.

**Verse 46. Mary.** The virgin mother of Jesus, she is yet almost unmentioned in the history, and few are the facts concerning her. After the birth of Christ, she appears to have had other children, (Mark 6. 3,) some of whom were afterward disciples, and even apostles. 1 Cor. 9. 5. At the crucifixion she was committed to the care of John, (John 19. 25, 26,) and appears to have been present in the company after the ascension. Acts 1. 14. She may have died at Jerusalem, or perhaps at Ephesus, after John removed to that city. **Said.** The characteristics of this hymn are just such as would naturally belong to the time when Christ was expected, as a temporal sovereign, for the Jewish people especially if not exclusively. **My soul.** "Soul" and "Spirit" in these two sentences are not used in a nice psychological meaning, but poetically, to indicate the whole inner being. **Magnify the Lord.** As the bestower of the highest honour upon herself, and blessing upon the world. 1. We too may praise God for the same Saviour with the virgin mother.

**47. Hath rejoiced.** Hers was the rejoicing of faith, for the Saviour, though promised, had not yet appeared. 2. While she praised God for a Saviour to come, we may be grateful for One who has come. **In God my Saviour.** She not only recognizes the One who is to come as the temporal redeemer of her people, but as a Divine Being who is to save herself. 3. Even the mother of Christ can be saved only by faith in Christ.

**48. He hath regarded.** Literally, "hath looked upon." **The low estate.** Referring to condition, not to character. That God should look upon one of humble life, passing by the noble and rich, seemed to Mary wonderful; but the cave of Elijah was nearer to God's heart than the ivory house of Ahab, and the lowly cottage of Nazareth was of more importance in the eyes of heaven than the palace of Herod. 4. God's interest is always in character, rather than station. **All generations shall call me blessed.** A prophecy which has been more than fulfilled, since multitudes have paid to the Virgin Mary idolatrous honour which is unwarranted by Scripture.

**49. 50. He that is mighty.** "The Mighty One." **Done to me great things.** Both in the fact of the Saviour's coming, through her, and in the manner of his birth by a virgin. **Holy is his name.** The thought of her own honour is lost in the thought of God's glory. **His mercy.** The divine grace toward the lowly. **Them that fear him.** Not with the terror of guilt, but with the loving reverence of faithful service. 5. Those who look up to God with a filial fear, are looked upon by God with a father's favour. **From generation to generation.** Rather, "unto generations of generations;" that is, forever. 6. Man's favor changes, but God's abideth evermore.

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January 9.

**52 He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.**

Ps. 113. 7, 8: He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that he may set him with princes. James 4. 10: Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall lift you up.

**53 He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.**

Isa. 65. 13: Thus saith the Lord God, Behold, my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry; behold, my servants shall drink, but ye shall be thirsty.

**54 He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy.**

Isa. 44. 21: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me.

**55 As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed forever.**

Gen. 22. 18: In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice. Gal. 3. 16, 29: Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made; ... and if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

**51. He hath shewed.** According to the Hebrew usage, in prophecy, the past tense is used for the future, as if the event foreseen had already taken place. **Strength with his arm.** The arm is referred to as the natural symbol of power. God's power was shown in triumph over his enemies by the coming of the Son. **Scattered the proud.** Her first thought was doubtless of the Edomite usurper, Herod, who was sitting on the throne of David; but the Roman conquerors of her country were also in her mind. The prophecy was fulfilled in spirit to the utmost by the triumph of the Gospel over the world. **In the imagination.** Defeating their plans contrary to all their expectations. Who in that day would have imagined that in three centuries the Romans would bow before the Son of Mary?

**52, 53. Exalted them of low degree.** She sees in vision the advancing cause of the Gospel, beginning with the humblest, and arising to the highest place. 7. "Pride changed angels into devils; humility makes men as angels."—Augustine. **Filled the hungry.** Spiritual and temporal meanings are mingled here; but the thought is that God, under the Gospel, gives blessings to those who appreciate their value and seek after them, while he leaves the spiritually proud to themselves. See the example of the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount.

**54, 55. Holpen.** Old English for helped. Literally, "taken hold of." **Israel.** The true people of God, cast down under their enemies, are uplifted by the coming of Christ. **His mercy.** This may be translated, "That his mercy may be remembered," as a parenthetical clause. **To our fathers.** To the long line of the prophets, in promise of Christ's coming. **To Abraham.** In Gen. 12. 1-3; 13. 14-17, and elsewhere in the history of Abraham, we read the promises of God that in his seed all mankind should be blessed. After nearly twenty centuries of waiting, the promise was now to be fulfilled. 8. God's promises, though long delayed, are certain. **Forever.** A blessing which was to abide while the earth should stand.

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**Time.**—B.C. 7, at least six months after the events of Lesson I.

**Connecting Links.**—1. The annunciation to Mary. Luke 1. 26-35. 2. Mary's visit to Elisabeth. Luke 1. 39-45.

**Place.**—A village, probably Juttah, near Hebron, in the hill country of Judaea.

**GOLDEN TEXT.**

**My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.** Luke 1. 46, 47.

**LESSON HYMNS.**

No. 14, *New Hymn Book.* S. M.

Awake, and sing the song  
Of Moses and the Lamb;  
Wake every heart and every tongue,  
To praise the Saviour's name.  
Sing of his dying love;  
Sing of his rising power;  
Sing how he intercedes above  
For those whose sins he bore.  
Soon shall ye hear him say,  
"Ye blessed children, come;"  
Soon shall he call you hence away  
To your eternal home.

No. 417, *New Hymn Book.* 8s & 7s.

Come, thou all-inspiring Spirit,  
Into every longing heart;  
Bought for us by Jesus' merit,  
Now thy blissful self impart.  
Give us quietly to tarry,  
Till for all thy glory meet,  
Waiting, like attentive Mary,  
Happy at the Saviour's feet.  
Keep us from the world unspotted,  
From all earthly passions free,  
Wholly to thyself devoted,  
Fixed to live and die for thee.

No. 347, *New Hymn Book.* C. M.

Salvation! O the joyful sound!  
What pleasure to our ears!  
A sovereign balm to every wound,  
A cordial for our fears.

CHORUS.

Glory, honour, praise, and power,  
Be unto the Lamb forever;  
Jesus Christ is our Red-empter,  
Hallelujah, praise the Lord.  
Salvation! let the echo fly  
The spacious earth around;  
While all the armies of the sky  
Conspire to raise the sound.  
Glory, honour, praise, and power, &c.

**HOME READINGS.**

- M. The song of Mary. Luke 1. 46-55.
- Tu. The song of Moses. Exod. 15. 1-21.
- W. The song of Deborah. Judg. 5. 1-13.
- Th. The song of Hannah. 1 S. m. 2. 1-10.
- F. The song of the angels. Luke 2. 8-20.
- S. The song of the apostles. Acts 4. 21-31.
- S. The song of the redeemed. Rev. 5. 1-14.

**QUESTIONS ON THE OUTLINE.**

1. **The Singer,** v. 46. [See v. 26-45.]  
Who was the singer?  
What was her character?  
Where was her home?  
Of what family was she descended?  
What events had happened to her?  
In what spirit did she accept her divine call?  
Under what circumstances was this song uttered?  
Where was she at the time?  
What traits of character does this song show?
2. **The Song,** v. 46-55  
What in this song shows a spirit of praise to God?  
Under what circumstances should we praise God? Ps. 34. 1.



How did Mary show a spirit of humility?  
 Whom does God especially regard? Psa. 138. 6.  
 What prophecy did Mary utter?  
 How has it been fulfilled?  
 Is there any warrant in this for offering worship to Mary?  
 Where does this song declare the power of God?  
 What showed God a power?  
 How does God deal with the proud, and why?  
 Whom does God satisfy with good things?  
 How does this illustrate Matt. 5. 6?  
 What blessings and help to Israel are here referred to?  
 What promises of God are here referred to as fulfilled?  
 How are we interested in those promises?

#### TEACHINGS OF THE LESSON.

What does this lesson teach—1. Concerning the mercies of God? 2. Concerning the might of God? 3. Concerning the promises of God?

DOCTRINAL SUGGESTION—The omnipotence of God.

#### ANALYTICAL & BIBLICAL OUTLINE.

##### The Saviour of Mary's Song.

- I. A DIVINE SAVIOUR.  
 God my Saviour," v. 47.  
 "God is my salvation." Isa. 12. 2.
- II. A MIGHTY SAVIOUR.  
 He that is mighty, . . . great things." v. 49.  
 "Able to do exceeding abundantly."  
 Eph. 3. 20.
- III. A HOLY SAVIOUR.  
 Holy is his name. v. 49.  
 "Holy and reverend is his name. Psa.  
 111. 9.
- IV. A MERCIFUL SAVIOUR.  
 His mercy is on them that fear him." v. 50.  
 "Keepeth covenant and mercy." Deut.  
 7. 9.
- V. A RIGHTEOUS SAVIOUR.  
 Put down. . . mighty. . . exalted. . . low."  
 v. 52.  
 "Exalted himself. . . abased. . . hum-  
 bleth. . . exalted." Luke 18. 14.
- VI. A COVENANT-KEEPING SAVIOUR.  
 As he spake to our fathers." v. 55.  
 "Heirs according to the promise." Gal.  
 3. 29.

#### ADDITIONAL PRACTICAL LESSONS.

##### Causes for Thanksgiving.

1. We should praise God, not only for his mercies to the world in general, but also for his special blessings to ourselves. v. 47.
2. We should praise God for the personal benefits that we receive from the Gospel of his Son v. 48.
3. We should praise God for the endurance, as well as for the abundance, of his mercies. v. 50.
4. We should praise God for his just dealings with the sons of men, humbling the proud, lifting up the lowly. v. 51, 52.
5. We should praise God for his abundant provision for our spiritual needs. v. 53.
6. We should praise God for fulfilling to the sons the promises made to the fathers. v. 54, 55.

#### CATECHISM QUESTIONS.

3. What is the outward and visible sign or form in baptism?
- The outward and visible sign or form in baptism is the application of water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. (Matthew 28. 19)

#### ENGLISH TEACHER'S NOTES.

BY EUGENE STOCK, ESQ.

You have seen a spring of water, bubbling up, fresh and sparkling, from the earth, and pouring forth the clear stream that refreshes the thirsty traveller. It is from that bubbling fountain that the Hebrew language gets its word for "prophet" — *nabi* or *nebi* or *nebbi*. The word is familiar to all who have been in the East. It has come down into the colloquial Arabic of Syria and Egypt, and the people will speak to you of Nebi Moses and Nebi Daoud. There are places, too, that bear the name: for instance, Nebi Samwil, (the prophet Samuel,) the modern name of Mizpah, the well-known height north of Jerusalem.

What was the idea expressed by this word? It was that the prophet's speech was not his own; that it bubbled up spontaneously, so to speak, and streamed forth from his lips by virtue of a power independent of him. Our word "prophet," which comes from the Greek, fairly conveys this idea. It means not so much one that foretells, as one that forth tells. Prediction was only one part, and not the largest part, of the prophet's functions. His primary work was to tell out God's messages; and to do so, not speaking in his own words, but submitting to be an instrument by which the Divine Spirit spoke. This was what we call "inspiration." The nature of the gift is best seen in those few cases where, for a special purpose, it came to unwilling and unworthy instruments, as Balaam and King Saul. 1 Sam. 10. 9-13; 19. 19-24. They "prophesied," though they were not prophets. Inspired words bubbled forth from them independently of their own will.

What has all this to do with the Song of Mary? Just this: that her song was the first utterance of direct inspiration after an interval of four hundred years, and that we must think of it, not as a composition which she sat down to write, nor as improvised out of her own head, but as strictly "prophecy" in the sense of springing and streaming forth from her lips under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. Only two other cases of prophetic utterance are recorded after the break in God's revelations when Malachi had spoken, and before the descent of the Holy Ghost on the Day of Pentecost, namely, the Songs of Zacharias and Simeon. It is interesting to notice that all three are preserved in this introductory section of Luke's Gospel; and all three are appointed for study in this course of lessons.

But Mary and Zacharias and Simeon were not like Balaam or Saul, unwilling or merely passive instruments. They were among those whose natural will and knowledge a<sup>nd</sup>

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imagination and affections the Spirit used and sanctified. In the Psalms and in the Prophets we find the intelligent personal utterances, both of exhortation to men and of praise and prayer to God. In these cases the speaker meant what he said, and yet he was so impelled and guided by the inspiring Spirit that his words would bubble up and burst forth, so to speak, beyond his natural powers, and in a poetical form. Thus not only are Mary's natural feelings of joy and hope expressed in her Song, but we can trace in it her familiarity with the Old Testament Scriptures. Evidently she knew the Song of Hannah (1 Sam. 2. 1-10) by heart, and her praises issued from her lips in like phrases. The resemblance between the two Songs will be seen at once by the most cursory reader.

It seems to me that an introduction like this will not only enhance the interest of the lesson now before us, but prepare the way for those to follow on the other two Songs, and also serve better to impress on the memory what "prophecy" was then, if the same information were given in connection with a predictive passage in the "Prophetic Books." But, coming now closer to our subject, let us think first of the singer, then of the occasion of her song, and lastly of the song itself.

I. *The Singer.* The prophetic utterance had been given of old to mighty leaders like Moses, kings like David, princes like Jeremiah, prime ministers like Daniel. But God's sovereign choice was not confined to men like these. The Spirit is like the wind that "bloweth where it listeth," and he spoke sometimes through a plain Levite like Jahaziel, (2 Chron. 20. 14,) or a herdman like Amos, (Amos 7. 14,) and sometimes by the mouths of women. And so now he passes over rabbis and priests, even over the ordinary scribes who expounded the law in the synagogues, and comes to a young woman; one, moreover, living in a Galilean village so obscure that Josephus never mentions it, (though he names many others all around,) and with such a reputation at its near neighbour, Cana, that even guileless Nathanael could imagine nothing good coming out of it. But all the wonder ceases when we know the destiny of that young woman—to be the mother of Messiah; and of that village—to be his home for thirty years.

II. *The Occasion of the Song.* What was the occasion? Was it the birth of the holy child? No. Was it the angel's announcement that he was to be born? Not this either. It was the salutation of Elisabeth. The song was spoken, not, as we are apt to think, at Nazareth, but at the home of

Zacharias in Judea. How came Mary there? Her journey thither is an interesting incident. She has received the wondrous message from God—wondrous in that it announced three wondrous things—(1) the immediate coming of Messiah as a little child, (2) her mysterious connection with that coming, and (3) the fact that the child—her child—shall have something greater even than David's throne—shall be not only Son of David, but also Son of God. She must tell someone all this; and away she goes from Galilee to Judea, to her aged kinswoman Elisabeth—just the person to confide such a matter to, even apart from the fact that she too, and the coming child of her old age, were mentioned by Gabriel as if in some way associated with the approaching Messiah. With her mind filled with conflicting emotions, Mary enters the house of Zacharias, and is met by Elisabeth with the very words the angel had addressed to her—"Blessed art thou among women!" Here, too, is a prophetic utterance, inspired (as we are told in ver. 41) by the Spirit, even before that of Mary herself. One can imagine nothing more exactly calculated to confirm Mary's faith in the Divine message, and to fill her with joyful assurance, than this unexpected salutation. It instantly opens her lips, and from them bursts forth the song so familiar to the Church through eighteen centuries since—a song sung in the public worship of a great part of Christendom down to our own day.

III. *The Song itself.* See whom it is that Mary praises, and why.

1. She praises, (a) "God my Saviour." Who is meant? The child? No, she knows not enough about him yet. It is the God of Israel, the Eternal Father, that she would magnify. But why "Saviour?" Not merely in a general sense, as Preserver of men, but surely with reference to spiritual blessings. And "Saviour" in some way through the Child, for the term is evidently suggested by the name the Child is to bear—Jesus. (b) "He that is mighty," (ver. 49.) "to whom," as the angel said, nothing is impossible."

2. She praises God her Saviour, the Mighty One, for his goodness—(a) to herself, vers. 46-49; (b) to all who, though like her, are "of low degree," yet, like her, "Fear him," vers. 50-53; (c) to Israel as a nation, according to the promise, vers. 54, 55. We are apt to be selfish even in our thanksgivings; but there is nothing selfish in Mary's thanksgivings. Is God a Saviour for her?—so is his mercy "on them that fear him," ver. 50. Has he done "great things" for her? So wherever the "strength of his arm" is needed, ver. 51. Is she, in her low estate, exalted? Others shall not

be forgotten, ver. 52. Does she believe his message to her? all his ancient promises shall be fulfilled, vers. 54, 55. Can she look forward to future generations, and know that all shall "call her blessed?" (that is, regard her a happy woman, "felicitate her"—one word in the Greek—it is no prediction of the title "Blessed Virgin.") Well, but she thinks not of her own fame only in that distant future, but of God's mercy manifested "from generation to generation," ver. 50.

I would suggest that the application of this lesson start from the word "handmaiden," ver. 48. It means literally a female slave, one wholly at the disposal of her master. It was Mary's own expression of self-dedication to God in ver. 38, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word," she yields herself wholly up to the divine will. That is the way to be "blessed among men" or "among women." For as Jesus himself said, "Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

#### BEREAN METHODS.

##### Hints for the Teachers' Meeting and the Class.

Draw a rough map of Palestine, locating Nazareth, Jerusalem, and Hebron.... Give a word-picture of the annunciation to Mary.... The character of the mother of Jesus as far as shown in Scripture.... Describe her journey to visit Elisabeth.... The subjects of her song. Characteristics of the song: (1) Devotional; (2) Thankful; (3) Personal, for individual blessings; (4) National; (5) Believing.... The divine nature and character as here presented.... God's dealings with men as here shown.... How may we find here occasions for our gratitude?

**References.** FOSTER'S PROSE: Vol. I. 4909, 4910, 4513. Vol. II. 10038, 9081, 11058. POETICAL: 1510, 1482.

##### Blackboard.

BY J. B. PHIPPS, B.S.Q.



The song of Mary is a song of faith in God's promise. He is the fount of every blessing. We should join in praising God to-day.

#### Primary and Intermediate.

BY M. V. M.

**REVIEW.** Outline the altar of incense on the board. Ask what it is, its use, where found, who stood by it on a certain day, his work, his character, etc. Speak of the angel's coming, his promise, and his words about John. Call back also the special teachings of the lesson.

**LESSON THOUGHT.** (Print on board.) "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." To be taught: (1) The Son of God, the Saviour, comes to each one of us. (2) We should praise God for his gift, as Mary did. (3) All our good things come from God. (4) They only are "blessed" who believe.

1. Interest the children in Mary, her home, circumstances, betrothal to Joseph, her simple and devout character. God sees and knows all who love to please him, though they may be poor and unknown. The angel sent by God came to a pure-hearted, lowly maiden, and told her what was to be given to her. At first she was afraid, but then she remembered that God will not send anything to harm his children, and she believed all he said and was glad. That is the way in which we should receive the news that Jesus has come to be our Saviour. [Teach Lesson Thought, and tell that it is in God's word; or better, read it from the Bible.]

2. Tell of Mary's visit to Elisabeth. What do we do when we hear good news? What had Mary heard? Who else had been promised a son? Yes, Elisabeth, Mary's cousin. Mary went a long way, as much as a hundred miles, to tell Elisabeth, and when she found that Elisabeth already knew what joy and blessings were promised to her, she broke out into a song of praise. When do you sing? When you are sorry? No; a glad song comes from a glad heart. Why did Mary sing? Because Jesus was coming! To whom besides has he come? [Write names of several of the class on board, and impress the truth that he has come to be born in every heart. Recite Lesson Thought.] Then we ought all to sing for joy! Let the song be chanted if possible, children following leader, clause by clause. If this is impracticable, let the class recite it after the teacher.

3. Outline a table on the board with dishes standing upon it. Talk about hungry people, and show what it is to be hungry in heart. The child who "wants to be good" is hungry. Print "Good Things" above the table, and get children to name the good things God gives. It will please them to name the dishes. Teach that only hungry people want to eat. If a child thinks he is

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good enough, God cannot give him any of his good things. Read ver. 53:  
4. Tell what Elisabeth said to Mary, "Blessed is she that believed," and illustrate by simple story. Mary believed God and was glad. If we believe him, and take his gift, we shall be glad and happy forever.

**MY REDEEMER!**  
Promised from God!  
Revealed to me!  
All love to THEE is found.  
In anthem grand, and  
Sweetest song, my  
Endless praise should sound.

**B. C. 6.**

**LESSON III.—PROPHECY OF ZACHARIAS; or, The Dayspring from on High.**

**January 16.**

**GENERAL STATEMENT.**

The hour foretold by the angel in the temple has come, and the aged Elisabeth presses her child to her bosom, while her friends present their congratulations to her as a mother in Israel. During months of waiting Zacharias has sat in silence, unable to speak or hear, as the penalty for doubting the angel's word, but when the infant receives its name, "John, the gift of God," the lost power returns, and with unloosed tongue the father gives thanks to God. Around the hills of Judah the glad news is borne, and a wondrous future is expected from this child of prophecy. The inspiration which has rested upon Mary and Elisabeth seizes Zacharias in turn, and he, too, pours out a strain of exultant song. His joy over his own child is forgotten in the thought of the coming One, of whom that child is the destined herald and forerunner. Overborne by the divine power, he pictures the redemption which is to lift up God's Israel from the dust, in glowing sentences whose fullness of meaning he did not himself comprehend, and whose complete fulfilment is reserved to the day when the kingdoms of this world shall bow before the sceptre of Christ Jesus.

**Luke 1. 67-79.**

[*Memory Verses, 76-79.*]

67 And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying,

**Explanatory and Practical.**

**Verse 67. His father Zacharias.** See notes on Lesson I. Zacharias has just been set free from the dumbness which he had suffered for not believing the angel, and his first use of his recovered speech is to give praise to God. **Filled with the Holy Ghost.** None may be able precisely to draw the line between an enthusiasm on religious subjects, which is human, and inspiration, which is supernatural and divine; but both are evidently mingled in this song. **Propheesied.** This word is used in Scripture of all inspired utterances, and perhaps of any religious teaching; but in this song there is prophetic prediction of coming events, controlled by a divine influence, and doubtless not fully understood by the speaker; for the full meaning of prophecy cannot be realized until its fulfilment.

68 Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,

**68. Blessed be the Lord.** This song is an ascription of praise to God, not, as might be expected, for his own restoration to powers of speech, nor for the birth of his son, but for the coming of the Redeemer, whom that son is to proclaim. 1. We are not to put our own interests in comparison with those of the kingdom, even in our praises. **God of Israel.** The song is thoroughly Israelitish in its tone, for the great truth of Gentile redemption had not yet been revealed. 2. God's Israel is now the universal Church of his Son. **Visited and redeemed.** "Hath looked after and wrought redemption for." Probably Zacharias did not realize the deeper meaning of a ransom in the word "redeemed," yet that is just what Christ gave for men by his own offering of himself. 3. When God looks upon his people, it is for their redemption.

69 And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David :

**69, 70. Hath raised up.** The past tense is used prophetically, regarding future events as having already taken place. 4. Faith gives substance and reality to God's promises, and counts them as fulfilled. **An horn of salvation.** From its prominence and strength on animals the horn early became a symbol of power; hence this is a figurative expression for "a mighty, wonderful salvation." **House of... David.** The Saviour promised was to come through the royal line of David, to which Mary belonged. **By the mouth of his holy prophets.** Though the prophet's lips uttered the words, it was the mind of God that spoke them. 5. Christ is the central theme of Old Testament prophecy. **Since the world began.** Though the prophetic order dates from the days of the Israelites, yet prophecies were given in every age, from

Ezek. 29. 21: In that day will I cause the horn of the house of David to bud forth. Luke 3. 23, 31: And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age, being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was the son of Heli... which was the son of David. Matt. 1. 1: Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

70 As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began :

71 That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us ;

72 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant ;

73 The oath which he swore to our father Abraham,

Acts 3. 25, 26 : Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away everyone of you from his iniquities.

74 That he would grant unto us, that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear,

75 In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

Rom. 8. 15 : Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear ; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

76 And thou, child, shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest ; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways :

77 To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,

Luke 3. 3 : [John] came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.

78 Through the tender mercy of our God ; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us,

79 To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Mal. 4. 2 : Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings. Isa. 9. 2 : The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light. John 1. 4 : In him was life : and the life was the light of men. Isa. 32. 17 : And the work of righteousness shall be peace.

#### GOLDEN TEXT.

The Dayspring from on high hath visited us.—Luke 1. 78.

Time.—B. C. 6, or six months before the birth of Christ.

Place.—Probably Jutta, a village in the hill country of Judea, not far from Hebron.

the first promise in Eden, growing more and more clear to the final predictions of Malachi. 6. God has never left the world without its witnesses to Christ.

71, 72, 73. **Saved from our enemies.** For six centuries the Jews had scarcely enjoyed even a semblance of political liberty. Chaldeans, Persians, Greeks, Romans, in turn had been their masters ; and their first thought of a Saviour was of one who should set them free from the galling foreign yoke. 7. We, too, have an enemy, who holds us his slaves until Christ gives us liberty. **To perform the mercy.** That is, to fulfil the promises of mercy, which had been made to the fathers of the Jewish people. 8. Let us remember that God's promises are given, not as our right, but as pure mercy. **His holy covenant, his oath.** The oath, the covenant with Abraham, in which God had sworn with an oath, by himself (Heb. 6. 13, 14), that he would bless Abraham and his seed. Fulfilled measurably in the history of Israel, it was fulfilled completely in the coming of Christ. [Teacher, impress the thought that we have an interest in that ancient promise to Abraham.]

74, 75. **Delivered.** Literally "snatched," a sudden, wonderful deliverance from foes. **Serve him without fear.** Not without fear of God, which is the basis of all true service, but without fear of enemies and their persecutions. **Holiness and righteousness.** Holiness here means fidelity in duties toward God ; righteousness, a just conduct toward men. 9. True religion has requirements in relation to our fellow-men, as well as in relation to our God. **Before him.** Ever keeping in mind the divine eye resting upon us. **All the days of our life.** 10. He who enlists in the Lord's army must be a soldier for life.

76. **And thou, child.** John the Baptist, who is here referred to, for the first and only time in the song. **Prophet of the Highest.** The "Most High" is a term applied in Scripture to God alone ; hence in applying this title to Christ Zacharias prophetically recognized his divinity. **Go before the face of the Lord.** John's mission was to proclaim the near approach of Christ and to lead the people to repentance, which would fit them to receive him.

77. 78. **To give knowledge of salvation.** John the Baptist, who is here referred to, did not directly preach to men how to be saved ; but rather showed their need of salvation in their sinful state and their duty to repent, which would fit them to hear from Christ the way to find remission of sins. **By the remission.** Rather, "in the remission of sins." The word literally means "a letting go," that is, of the sinner from the penalty of his sins. **Through the tender mercy.** The motive which prompts to salvation of a guilty world can be no other than love and pity. **The dayspring from on high.** The dawn or sunrise, here used as an emblem of Christ, who comes as the world's light. A light (1) reveals the condition of the world and the heart, (2) brings hope of salvation, (3) directs to the way of salvation, (4) gladdens the heart.

79. **Them that sit in darkness.** To all the world, hidden in the shadows of sin, Christ comes to bring hope and liberty. **Shadow of death.** With the certainty of death overhanging them as a dark cloud. **To guide our feet.** The light is the traveller's best and surest guide ; so Christ as a sun lights up the path to heaven, and points us in the way of peace.

#### LESSON HYMNS.

No. 719, *New Hymn Book.*

L. M.

Jesus, thy church, with longing eyes,  
For thy expected coming waits ;  
When wilt the promised light arise,  
And glory beam from Zion's gates ?

No. 7

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O come, and reign o'er every land !  
 Let Satan from his throne be hurled  
 All nations bow to thy command,  
 And grace revive a dying world.  
 Teach us, in watchfulness and prayer,  
 To wait for thine appointed hour;  
 And fit us by thy grace to share  
 The triumphs of thy conquering power.

No. 726, *New Hymn Book*, 8, 7, 8, 7, 4, 7.

O'er the gloomy hills of darkness,  
 Cheered by no celestial ray,  
 Sun of righteousness, arising,  
 Bring the bright the glorious day !  
 Send the gospel  
 To the earth's remotest bound.  
 Kingdoms dark that sit in darkness,  
 Grant them, Lord, the glorious light ;  
 And, from eastern coast to western,  
 May the morning chase the night ;  
 And redemption,  
 Freely purchased, win the day.

No. 724, *New Hymn Book*, 8s & 7s.

Light of those whose dreary dwelling  
 Borders on the shades of death,  
 Come, and by thy love's revealing  
 Dissipate the clouds beneath.  
 Still we wait for thine appearing ;  
 Life and joy thy beams impart,  
 Chasing all our fears, and cheering  
 Every poor benighted heart ;  
 Come, and manifest the favour  
 God hath ever ransomed race ;  
 Come, thou universal Saviour,  
 Come, and bring the gospel grace.

**Connecting Links**—1. Mary's return to Nazareth. Luke 1. 56. 2. The birth and naming of John the Baptist. Luke 1. 57-66.

**HOME READINGS.**

- M. The prophecy of Zacharias. Luke 1. 67-79.
- Tu. The birth of John the Baptist. Luke 1. 57-66.
- W. The prophet Elijah. 1 Kings 18. 20-39.
- Th. Isaiah's prediction of John. Isa. 40. 1-11.
- F. Malachi's prediction of John. Mal. 4. 1-6.
- S. Christ's declaration of John the Baptist. John 1. 6. 23.
- S. Christ's declaration concerning John. Matt. 11. 2-14.

**QUESTIONS ON THE OUTLINE.**

1. **The Redeemer**, v. 67-75.  
 Who was Zacharias? What had happened to him? v. 20.  
 When was his tongue loosed?  
 How did this event show a divine influence?  
 What inspired this song of Zacharias?  
 What predictions of the future does it contain?  
 What is its most prominent theme?  
 What does it show concerning the Redeemer?  
 What is meant by "an hour of salvation"?  
 How was this through the house of David?  
 What prophets are here referred to? Gen. 49. 10; Jer. 23. 5, 6.  
 What covenant is here mentioned? Gen. 22. 16, 17.  
 What was the character of that covenant?  
 What kind of service is here described?
2. **The Forerunner**, v. 76-79.  
 What forerunner is here referred to?  
 What was the mission of John?  
 What prophecy did he fulfil? Isa. 40. 3.  
 What is meant by the remission of sins?  
 How may we obtain remission? Acts. 5. 31.  
 What motive for salvation is named in v. 78?  
 By what name is Christ called in the GOLDEN TEXT?  
 How does this name apply to Christ? 2 Cor. 4. 6.  
 What privileges of salvation are named in v. 79?  
 In what respect is the gospel a way of peace?

**TEACHINGS OF THE LESSON.**

- What are the teachings of this lesson—
1. Concerning the promise of God?
  2. Concerning the means of salvation?
  3. Concerning the privileges of salvation?
- DOCTRINAL SUGGESTION—The faithfulness of God.
- CHRISTIAN QUESTIONS.**
4. What is the inward and spiritual grace signified by this?  
 The inward and spiritual grace signified by baptism is, our being cleansed from sin, and becoming new creatures in Christ Jesus.

**ANALYTICAL & BIBLICAL OUTLINE.**  
**The Vision of Salvation.**

- I. A DIVINE SALVATION.  
 The Lord God....hath visited....redeemed v. 68.  
 "Who, being in the form of God. Phil. 2. 6.
- II. A MIGHTY SALVATION.  
 A horn of salvation for us. v. 69.  
 "The horn of the house of Israel. Ezek. 29. 21.
- III. A ROYAL SALVATION.  
 In the house of....David. v. 69.  
 "Jesus Christ, the son of David." Matt. 1. 1.
- IV. A PROMISED SALVATION.  
 Spake by....his holy prophets. v. 70.  
 "Spake in time past....by the prophets." Heb. 1. 1.
- V. A FEARLESS SALVATION.  
 Might serve him without fear. v. 74.  
 "Not....the spirit of bondage." Rom. 8. 15.
- VI. A LOVING SALVATION.  
 Through the tender mercy of God. v. 78.  
 "In this....manifested....love." 1 John 4. 9.
- VII. AN ENLIGHTENING SALVATION.  
 To give light to them....in darkness. v. 79.  
 "I am the light of the world." John 8. 12.

**ADDITIONAL PRACTICAL LESSONS.**  
 (From what Christ saves us.)

1. Christ saves us from sin and its penalty by purchasing redemption for us. v. 68.
2. Christ saves us from the power of our foes, especially from Satan, the enemy of our souls. v. 71.
3. Christ saves us from fear, by the glad consciousness that we are sons of God. v. 74.
4. Christ saves us from slavery, by the freedom of his service. v. 74.
5. Christ saves us from iniquity, by giving us power to live righteous lives. v. 75.
6. Christ saves us from judgment, by the remission of our sins. v. 77.
7. Christ saves us from ignorance, by giving light upon the way of life. v. 79.

**ENGLISH TEACHER'S NOTES.**

BY EUGENE STOCK, ESQ.

In the Episcopal Church of England we have what are called "visitations," at which the bishop calls over the roll of his clergy, collects certain returns from them, and delivers his "charge" to them—generally a long and elaborate address on the Church topics of the day. I suppose that something analogous may prevail in the Methodist Episcopal Church of America, for whose

Journal I am writing. Each of our ancient colleges, too, at Oxford and Cambridge, and our more modern theological colleges, has a "visitor." This is generally a mere nominal and honorary office, and the holder (usually a bishop) has no real authority over the principal; but the name will help to illustrate my point. The word "visiting," in these cases, conveys something of the idea of inspection on the part of a superior. It is not merely going to see, as Englishmen "visit" America, and Americans "visit" Europe.

The word has other technical uses. "I am going to Scotland on a visit;" this does not mean simply a visit to Scotland to see the country, but, more definitely, to see a friend there and stay in his house. Thus, when Paul tells the Galatians (chap. 1. 18,) that he went to Jerusalem "to see Peter," the Greek word means to sojourn with him, and for this the best English equivalent would be "to visit." Or, again, the minister of an English congregation will say, "I have so many Sunday-school teachers, so many 'visitors,' and so on; and here the 'visitor,' or 'district visitor,' is a lady, who has under her charge perhaps two or three of the poorer streets in the neighbourhood, and 'visits' the people, dispensing temporal relief in cases of need, and watching for opportunities to speak of religion. In this sense we find the word in Matt. 25. 36, "I was sick, and ye visited me," and in James 1. 27, "Pure religion . . . is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction," etc.

In the passage before us to-day, we have God represented to us as a Visitor. "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he hath visited and redeemed his people," v. 68. "The Dayspring from on high has visited us," v. 78. And we may surely say that God's visits partake of all three special characters just referred to. He comes as a Visitor to inspect; he comes as a Visitor to sojourn; he comes as a Visitor to bring help and comfort.

Some of God's visits, indeed, have the first character, but not the other two. "Shall I not visit for these things?" is the warning by Jeremiah's mouth. "Visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children," is the expression of the Second Commandment. But more often the word has a good sense. "God will surely visit you," says dying Joseph to his nation in Egypt. "What is man," exclaims the Psalmist, "that thou visitest him?" And in another Psalm, "O visit me with thy salvation."

But before enquiring further what the Song of Zacharias tells us of the Divine Visitors, let us look at the circumstances of the song itself, for it is a song as well as a

prophecy—an inspired song like Mary's, bursting forth, as in her case, as the Spirit gave the old priest utterance, but having this in addition to make it remarkable, that it was the unloosing of the tongue after many months' total dumbness.

It is a pretty domestic scene that is pictured to us in vers. 58-64. The aged mother and her infant; the dumb and deaf father, used to his affliction after suffering it so long; the kinsfolk and neighbours with their congratulations; the ancient and sacred rite admitting the child to the privileges of the national covenant; the discussion about the name—the relatives thinking they must settle the matter as the father was cut off from communication; the unexpected interposition of Elisabeth, to which they will not listen without an effort to ascertain what Zacharias wishes; the fetching of the waxen tablet and the sharp-pointed *stylus*, (for though signs might express the question what name should be given, no signs could spell out the name in reply); the astonishment of the friends at the father fixing on the name John, which to them seemed so arbitrarily chosen—(this astonishment proves Zacharias was deaf as well as dumb, for otherwise they would have supposed he had heard the conversation); and, finally, the sudden burst of inspired praise from the lips so long closed. And while the political events of that period are known only to a comparatively small number of students of history, the scene in this humble Judean dwelling, narrated in such vivid detail, appears in print in millions of volumes, and in two hundred languages, and will be read on this Sunday by children of every race and clime!

Zacharias blesses the Lord God of Israel. What for? For the birth to him of a son in his old age! No, that is a mercy, but the thought of it is swallowed up in the thought of a far greater mercy. It is for God's visit—a visit with a blessed purpose, Redemption. "He hath visited and redeemed his people." Let us inquire—

#### 1. *What Zacharias tells of the Redeemer?*

(a) It is worth noting that he does not suppose his new-born child to be the Redeemer. That child's birth had been announced by an angel; it was born out of the ordinary course of nature; it was to him and Elisabeth like Isaac to Abraham and Sarah, and like Isaac, was named by God before his birth. Moreover, he was to be "great in the sight of the Lord." Yet Zacharias makes no mistake about it. John is but to be the forerunner. In the midst of his song the old man turns, as it were, to the babe and addresses it—"Thou, child, shalt be called the Prophet of the Highest, for

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thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways."

(b) The words just quoted might lead us to suppose that Zacharias regarded this Divine Visit for the redemption of men as merely a manifestation of God's power similar to that when he "visited" his people in Egypt. "Thou shalt go before the face of the Lord," as though John were to be the executor of God's will in much the same way that Moses was. But another verse shows that he knew better. "Hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David"—this shows that he looked for a man—one of David's line, whose coming should be God's visit, whose work should be God's redemption; while John, who was of the tribe of Levi, should be the forerunner of that other Coming One.

(c) The song expresses a truth about this Coming One which Zacharias could not himself grasp as we grasp it. The prophetic impulse gave him words that went beyond his own knowledge. Compare I Peter 1, 11, 12. We know, what he did not, how the birth of a scion of David's house could literally be a visit of God to the earth. Zacharias did not consciously announce the Incarnation, but the inspiring spirit did announce it by his mouth. And we can thank God that it is no figure of speech to say that "the Lord hath visited his people."

#### 2. What Zacharias tells us of the Redemption.

(a) It had been promised long before. "Since the world began," v. 70—referring, no doubt, to the great original promise to Adam immediately after the fall. And, from that time downward, "by the mouth of his holy prophets." It would be a good "home work for youthful Bereans" to trace this out.

(b) It was a deliverance from enemies, ver. 71. The same idea is expressed in the phrase "horn of salvation," ver. 69. The horn is a common figure for power, and the exalting of it a symbol of victory, in the Old Testament, derived from the thought of the horns of the bull or the stag as the seat of strength. In Psa. 132. 17, Messiah is called a horn: "There will I make the horn of David to bud; I have ordained a lamp for my anointed," where the "horn" and the "anointed" are plainly identical. But who are the enemies from whose hand there is to be deliverance? Most Jews at that time would have said, the Romans. The song of Zacharias looks deeper and higher: for—

(c) The result of the deliverance is to be the service of the Lord "in holiness and righteousness, ver. 75. Many of our young people have the feeling that they "would like to be good if they could, but they can't." Well, the "horn of salvation" is strong

enough to thrust their spiritual enemies out of their hearts, and make them holy and righteous." Let them try it!

(d) But there is something else first. Suppose we are made good—what of our past sins? For them there is "remission." The song does not say how; but we know now whose blood was shed to procure it.

(e) Every one who has tried to put the freeness and fullness of the Gospel before others individually knows how common is the answer, "I don't see it!" This difficulty, too, is met. Spiritually you "sit in darkness," in the "shadow of death," but you need not; for God's visit is the visit of the "Dayspring," the dawn rising up in the east, gleaming athwart the darkness, and guiding the wanderer's feet into the way of peace, vers. 78, 79. In this one beautiful figure there is enough for a lesson!

(f) And all "through the tender mercy of our God," literally the bowels of God's mercy, the striking illustration so often used in Scripture. Here is the final word to our Sunday scholars—the divine Visitor yearns over you: can you shut him out?

### BEREAN METHODS.

#### Hints for the Teachers' Meeting and the Class.

Review the first lesson about Zacharias, and relate the connecting links between them . . . . Show what was the spirit and theme of Zacharias in this prophecy . . . What it teaches concerning Christ . . . What it teaches concerning salvation . . . What it tells concerning the mission of John the Baptist . . . What it reveals as our privilege through Christ . . . Find here what reasons for rejoicing in Christ's coming may be named . . . Enforce the Golden Text, and show how Christ is the "dayspring," or dawn.

References. FOSTER'S PROSE: Vol. I. 700, 5206. Vol. II. 7149, 10280, 11034. POETICAL: 396, 2041.

#### Primary and Intermediate.

BY M. V. M.

#### LESSON THOUGHT. God Visits his Children.

1. Call back Lesson I. Tell the story of Zacharias, dumb because he could not quite believe God, and speech coming back to him through his act of faith. Now he is full of faith, and can speak God's words.

2. Talk about visitors. Who are we glad to have visit us? Those who love us, who can bring us good things, who can make us happy. Read verse 68. He does more than visit—he redeems. Explain. If we were in prison, how welcome the visitor would be who came to redeem us—to redeem from the dark prison of sin.



3. Talk about enemies. Why do we fear them? What are some of our soul's enemies? Get children to suggest. Talk a little about Pride, Envy, Selfishness, Indolence, etc., and show what cruel enemies they are, and how they will destroy our life unless we are saved from them. Illustrate. A child among cruel, wicked people, who beat and torment and threaten to kill. He has not one friend, and he cannot get away. But see! Father has found where his child is, and is coming to deliver! Read verse 74. Zacharias speaking God's words, says that God has sent Jesus to visit us, and to deliver us from our enemies.

4. Talk about light. The sun rising in the morning and scattering the night. Tell that light shows the good things and the bad things, too. The sun may be called "day-spring." So when Jesus is called the "day-spring from on high," he is compared to the sun. Read verses 78, 79. Does any one like to sit in the dark? Why cannot we walk in the night as well as in the day? Our feet stumble because we cannot see. So we need the light that Jesus gives to walk without falling and hurting ourselves. Explain that to walk means the every-day acts of our lives.

B. C. 6.

## LESSON IV.—THE BIRTH OF JESUS; or, Good-will toward Men.

GENERAL STATEMENT.

The hour long foretold has dawned at last, and Christ, the Shiloh of Jacob's prophecy, the Anointed of David's psalm, has come. It is an hour of peace throughout the world, for the nations have been united under the broad wings of Rome, and, amid the decay of old idolatries, are looking with yearning hearts for some new revelation of God. While all earth remains in ignorance, the eager eyes of angels watch the carpenter and his wife in their journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem, the ancestral home of David's line, where they are to be enrolled upon the census of the Roman Empire. The khan is crowded with wealthier guests, and the mother of earth's Redeemer can find no room, save in the place allotted to the beasts. In such lowly surroundings her babe is born, and laid for his first rest in a manger. The first news of the greatest event in all history is borne by angelic messengers, not to kings nor philosophers nor rabbins, but to a company of shepherds watching their flocks at night on the hillside. The song echoes upon the startled air, proclaiming "peace on earth, good-will to men," and as it dies away, and the vision of angels recedes, the believing shepherds hasten to the manger at Bethlehem, to feast their eyes upon the sight of their King. The news which they bear is heard by others with wonder, if not with faith, while the maiden-mother, with thoughts too deep for words, presses her babe to her bosom, and ponders over the wondrous events that have attended his coming.

Luke 2. 8-20.

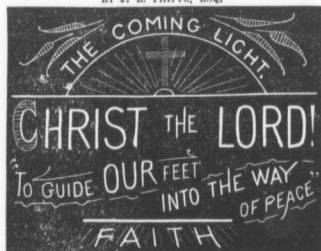
[Memory Verses, 10-14.]

8 And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

CLOSING EXERCISE. Change Lesson Thought on board to read, "God visits me, his child." John was sent to tell that Jesus was coming. We have the Bible, the Holy Spirit, and Christian teachers to tell us that he has come. We must believe it, trust him, and follow him, that is, obey him.

Blackboard.

BY J. B. PHIPPS, ESQ.



Of whom did Zacharias prophecy? The coming light. Who was that light? Christ the Lord. What was the light to accomplish? "To guide our feet into the way of peace." What was beneath all the prophecy? Faith.

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9 And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid.

Exod. 24. 16: The glory of the Lord abode upon mount Sinai. Acts 7. 55; [Stephen] looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God.

10 And the angel said unto them, Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.

Isa. 52. 7: How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings; that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! Rom. 5. 11: We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

11 For unto you is born this day, in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

Matt. 1. 21: Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for he shall save his people from their sins. Rev. 19. 16: He hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of Kings, and Lord of Lords. Phil. 2. 11: Every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

12 And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,

Dan. 7. 10: Thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. Psa. 103. 20, 21: Bless the Lord, ye his angels that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his that do his pleasure.

14 Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good-will toward men.

Eph. 3. 21: Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Isa. 49. 13: Sing, O heavens; and be joyful, O earth; and break forth into singing, O mountains; for the Lord hath comforted his people, and will have mercy upon his afflicted.

15 And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethle-

the Son of God is accompanied with manifestations of his divine origin. **Came upon them.** "Burst upon them," a sudden appearance. **The glory of the Lord.** A supernatural divine illumination, such as accompanied most messages of God. 3. How glorious must the King appear whose servants are so bright! **Sore afraid.** "Feared a great fear." So trembled Manoah, and Zacharias, and Mary, at the angel's coming. 4. Even the purest hearts become conscious of unfitness when God's messengers are before them. 5. If saints tremble at the coming of an angel, how will sinners quake when they meet the Lord!

10. **Fear not.** The angel, like the Gospel, first awakens fear, and then removes it. **Good tidings.** News of pardon to sinners; salvation to men; the coming of Israel's King; the bruising of Satan's head; the universal establishment of Messiah's rule—surely these were good tidings. **To all people.** In the original, "the people," referring originally to Israel, yet through Israel to the rest of the world.

11. **Unto you.** 6. He is a Saviour to us, as surely as to the shepherds. **City of David.** A name given to Bethlehem as the birthplace of King David; and in the prophecy of Micah announced as the birthplace of the Messiah. **A Saviour.** The most precious title of Christ is that which announces his mission "to seek and to save that which was lost." **Christ the Lord.** Christ is the Greek word, the same as Messiah in Hebrew, meaning "Anointed." So he is here called "the Anointed Lord," at once proclaiming his royalty and divinity.

12. **A sign unto you.** Not a sign to strengthen their faith, for none was needed, but a token to distinguish the babe. **Find the babe.** Rather, "find a babe." They were to behold in a helpless, new-born infant, the world's Saviour, and God's Son. 7. See in all this the humanity, the humility, and the sympathy of our Saviour with us in every stage of our being. **Swaddling clothes.** Not garments, but bands wrapped closely around the body. **Lying in a manger.** The mangers from which cattle feed in the East are generally made of small stones and mortar in the shape of an open box; and it is not unusual for little children to sleep in them still. 8. The hearts of men are like the inn of Bethlehem, in which the Saviour, crowded out of the highest place, is compelled to take the lowest.

13. 14. **A multitude of the heavenly host.** That is a throng of angels and heavenly beings, of whom there may be many orders. See Col. 1. 16. "An angel choir in the gallery of the firmament."—*Whedon.* **Glory to God in the highest.** This may mean either 1. The highest measure of glory. 2. From the highest order of creation, (angels.) 3. To God, the highest over all. 4. In the highest heaven, as contrasted with the peace on earth. **On earth peace.** These angel choristers saw the ultimate result of the Gospel, in bringing peace to men. 1. Peace between God and man, through the atonement. 2. Peace between man and man, through a common love to Christ. 3. Peace among nations through the influence of the Gospel. Not without significance is the fact that Christ was born at the only time, for centuries, when there was peace throughout the world. **Good-will toward men.** Either meaning that the birth of Christ is a token of God's love toward men; or, as some translate, "good-will among men."

15. **The angels were gone.** The vision fades, leaving the shepherds and their flocks. 9. Hours of rapt glory are only occasional, and they leave us with the rugged realities of life. **Let us now go.** The latter clause of the verse shows that this is not the utterance of a doubt, desirous of testing the truth of the message, but of ardent faith, eager to see that in which it already believes. 10. It is our privilege not only to hear about Jesus, but to go to him, and see him. **Bethlehem.** A village of Judah, six miles south of Jerusalem; famous in Old Testament history as

hem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.

16 And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.

17 And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.

Acts 4. 20: For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.

18 And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.

19 But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.

20 And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

the home of Boaz and Ruth, and the birthplace of David. It is now Bethlehem, a town of three thousand inhabitants, mostly Greek Christians. A cave, traditionally supposed to be the place of Christ's birth, is shown near the wall.

16. **They came with haste.** Showing their faith by the eagerness of their works, and willing to leave their flocks to look upon their Saviour. 11. No earthly object is too dear to be forsaken for Christ. **Found Mary.** See notes, Lesson 11. **Joseph.** The husband of Mary, and the reputed father of Jesus. As his name is not mentioned after Christ was twelve years old, he is presumed to have died before the public ministry of our Lord began.

17, 18. **Made known abroad.** Probably they related the wonderful events only in their own circle of acquaintance, and to Joseph and Mary, as there is no indication that the news reached the court or the capital. 12. Those who have seen Christ should be his message-bearers to others. **The saying.** That is, the words of the angel, and the song of the celestial company. **Heard it wondered.** There was a vast difference between the faith of the shepherds and the wonder of the hearers; one led them to Christ, the other probably soon faded away into doubt or forgetfulness. 13. **Heart-trust** is better than emotional excitement.

19, 20. **Kept all these things.** Treasured in her heart all these significant events, the angelic predictions, the heavenly song, and the midnight visit. **Pondered.** "Weighed them," thought of their importance, and the destiny of her child. 14. How much thoughtful mothers may influence the lives of their children. **Returned.** They had accomplished their mission, and could serve God among their sheep better than in a more public life. Perhaps some of them lived long enough in after years to recall these events and become disciples of Christ.

**Connecting Links.**—1. The vision of Joseph. Matt. 1. 18-25. 2. The birth of Jesus. Luke 2. 1-7.

**Time.**—B. C. 6, according to the incorrect common chronology, Augustus Caesar, emperor of the Roman world. Herod the Great, king of Judea.

**Place.**—Bethlehem, six miles from Jerusalem.

#### OLDEN TEXT.

**Glorify to God in the highest and on earth peace, good-will toward men.**—Luke 2. 14.

#### LEKSSON HYMNS.

No. 143, *New Hymn Book.* 88 & 78.

Hark! what mean those holy voices,  
Sweetly sounding through the skies?  
Lo! the angelic host rejoices;  
Heavenly hallelujahs rise.

Listen to the wondrous story,  
Which they chant in hymns of joy:  
"Glory in the highest, glory,"  
"Glory be to God most high!"

Christ is born, the great Anointed;  
Heaven and earth his praises sing;  
O receive whom God appointed,  
For your Prophet, Priest, and King.

No. 145, *New Hymn Book.* 87, 87, 4, 7.

Angels, from the realms of glory,  
Wing your flight o'er all the earth;  
Ye who sang creation's story,  
Now proclaim Messiah's birth;

Come and worship,  
Worship Christ, the newborn King.

Shepherds, in the field abiding,  
Watching o'er your flocks by night,  
God with man is now residing;  
Yonder shines the infant light;

Come and worship,  
Worship Christ, the newborn King.

No. 142, *New Hymn Book.* 78.

Hark! the herald-angels sing  
"Glory to the new-born King,  
Peace on earth, and mercy mild;  
God and sinners reconciled."

Joyful, all ye nations, rise,  
Join the triumphant of the skies;  
With angelic hosts proclaim,  
"Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Mild he lays his glory by,  
Born that man no more may die;  
Born to raise the sons of earth,  
Born to give them second birth.

#### HOPE READINGS.

M. The birth of Jesus. Luke 2. 8-26.  
Ta. The promise to Mary. Luke 1. 26-35.  
W. The prophecy of Jacob. Gen. 49. 8-28.  
Th. The prophecy of Moses. Deut. 18. 15-22.  
F. The prophecy of David. Psa. 2. 1-12.  
S. The prophecy of Isaiah. Isa. 42. 1-11.  
M. The prophecy of Daniel. Dan. 9. 20-27.

#### QUESTIONS ON THE OUTLINE.

- The Night Watch, v. 8-12.**
  - At what time did this event take place?
  - What was the condition of the world at that time?
  - What led Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem?
  - What were the circumstances of Christ's birth?
  - Who received the first news of the Saviour's birth?
  - Why were such people chosen for this honour?
  - How was the event made known to them?
  - What is the effect of angelic appearances upon men, and why were these "good tidings?" (why?)
  - What is the meaning of the word "Christ?"
  - Why was a "sign" needed?
- The Night Song, v. 13, 14.**
  - Who appeared with the angel?
  - How did this illustrate Dan. 7. 10?
  - What was the song of the heavenly host? Golden Text. How did Christ's birth glorify God?
  - What did it bring to men, and how?
  - How is this song illustrated by Rev. 5. 13, and Col. 1. 19, 20?
  - Has Christ's coming brought peace among the nations? How does it bring good-will? [of men?]
  - The Night Visit, v. 15-20.**
    - What was the resolve of the shepherds?

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Did it show any doubt of the angel's message?  
 What inspired their journey?  
 How were they an example to us?  
 What resulted from their journey?  
 What reasons can be given why Christ should come as a babe?

What was the after-conduct of the shepherds?  
 How were their tidings received?  
 Did those who heard believe their story?

#### TEACHINGS OF THE LESSON.

- What is taught in this lesson—  
 1. As to the persons whom God honours?  
 2. As to the subject which inspires angelic songs?  
 3. As to the benefits which flow from Christ's coming?  
 DOCTRINAL SUGGESTION—Salvation through Christ.

#### ANALYTICAL & BIBLICAL OUTLINE.

##### The Tidings of the Redeemer.

#### I. HEAVENLY TIDINGS.

The angel . . . came upon them. v. 9.  
 "His angelic spirits . . . ministers a flame." Heb. 1. 7.

#### II. JOYFUL TIDINGS.

Good tidings of great joy. v. 10.  
 "Joy in God through . . . Jesus Christ."  
 Rom. 5. 11.

#### III. UNIVERSAL TIDINGS.

Shall be to all people. v. 10.  
 "Go ye . . . teach all nations." Matt.  
 28. 19.

#### IV. WELCOME TIDINGS.

Unto you is born . . . a Saviour. v. 11.  
 "A child is born . . . name . . . Wonderful." Isa. 9. 6.

#### V. WONDERFUL TIDINGS.

The babe . . . lying in a manger. v. 12.  
 "Took upon him the form of a servant."  
 Phil. 2. 7.

#### VI. GLORIOUS TIDINGS.

Glory to God in the highest. v. 14.  
 "Glory in the Church by Christ Jesus."  
 Eph. 3. 21.

#### ADDITIONAL PRACTICAL LESSONS.

##### Lessons from the Shepherds.

1. That God loves and honours those who are faithful in secular vocations, as well as in sacred. v. 8.
2. That even the best of men may fear when God's glory is revealed to them. v. 9.
3. That Christ is the Saviour for the lowly as well as the lofty, and "all people" have an interest in him. v. 10, 11.
4. That the humiliation of Christ's coming should not deter men from believing in him. v. 12.
5. That those who hear of Christ should also seek a personal knowledge of him. v. 15.
6. That people should seek Christ at once, and without delay. v. 16.
7. That those who have seen Christ should be messengers of him to others. v. 17.

#### CATECHISM QUESTIONS.

5. What are the actual privileges of baptized persons? The actual privileges of baptized persons are these; they are made members of the visible church of Christ; their gracious relation to him as the Second Adam, and as the Mediator of the New Covenant, is solemnly ratified by divine appointment; and they are thereby recognized as having a claim to all those spiritual blessings, of which they are the proper subjects.

#### ENGLISH TEACHER'S NOTES.

BY EUGENE STOCK, ESQ.

We in England have lately been startled by the secession from the Anglican Church of an eminent and popular preacher in London; not on account of ecclesiastical differences such as lead men to become Methodists or Presbyterians, but avowedly because he has ceased to believe in miracles, and particularly in one great miracle, the Incarnation, which the Church he is leaving plainly and emphatically teaches. To us this is a lesson to be all the more distinct in our assertion of this great fundamental truth—or rather fact, for such it claims to be—not a mere dogma, however true, but a real historical event. That is to say, we hold not only that a child was actually born at Bethlehem who became the founder of the Christian religion, but that the child, though the offspring of an earthly mother, had no earthly father, and was in very deed the Son of God in human flesh. I have an impression that there is in America also a good deal of loose teaching on this point, or at least that the truth is often conveniently avoided; and if so, I earnestly press upon my friends who read these Notes the importance of making this lesson an occasion for very plain speaking on the Incarnation. For remember, upon this central fact of history rests the whole structure of our Christian faith. Remove the foundation and the building falls to the ground. No doubt you may build up another system in its place, and call it Christianity; but it will not be the Christianity of Paul and John, of Augustine and Chrysostom, of Luther and Wesley.

The tendency to let the essential Godhead of Jesus Christ fall into the background of our teaching is much encouraged by a circumstance for which, in itself, we ought to be very thankful. I mean the flood of light thrown by recent literature upon his earthly life and its surroundings. It is easy now to draw attractive pictures of the Babe of Bethlehem, of the Boy of Nazareth, of the Man of sorrows. His perfect character, and the reality of his human sympathy, are described and illustrated for us in books of great eloquence and power. For the lesson now before us, almost every teacher is prepared with exact accounts of Bethlehem, and its fields and its shepherds, and of every variety of inn or *khan*, and of their stables and mangers. I say again, let us thank God for this. But it should all be used, and it can all be used, to lead up to the great central truth of the Incarnation, and not to hide it from our view.

Let me take two instances.

1. Few things are more apt to draw us aside from the spiritual teaching of Scripture

than chronological questions, just because they are so interesting. Yet I would dwell a little on the synchronisms in the first two verses of this chapter. Suppose a few questions and answers as follows:

Do you remember the last census, when your father had to put all your names and ages on a piece of paper, and a man called and took it away? (My readers will describe the American method, of course.) Here is an account of a census 1884 years ago. (The word "taxed" means "registered;" it occurs also in Heb. 12, 23, "written in heaven.") Who orders a census to be made? The Government. Who was ruler of Judea at this time? Herod: see Luke 1. 5. But who ordered this census? What right had Cæsar Augustus to order it? Who was he? (Explain: Roman Empire and tributary kings. So now: Egypt pays tribute to Turkey. Native States in India to Great Britain.) But how could he order it in "all the world?" (Explain: means the Empire. Greek word always used in that sense in New Testament—*oikoumene*, not *kosmos*, as in "God so loved the world.") What had Cyrenius got to do with it? Governor of all Syria at that time, under Augustus: Judea a part of Syria. Which greatest, Cyrenius or Herod? Cyrenius, not in himself, but because represented Emperor, (as British Viceroy of India greater than the Maharajah of Cashmere.)

Now what is the good of all this? Will it not take up time that should be given to higher things? It may, very easily; but if kept in its proper place, it will do a most useful thing—it will show the position of the birth of Christ in general history, and help the realization of that birth as a historical fact. Of course, the fact that Jesus was then born does not of itself prove that he was the Son of God; but it helps us to trust the accuracy of Scripture; we feel we are in the region of true history and not of romance; and if Luke is correct when he refers to the Roman Empire, may we not believe him in the other things too?

But further: with classes capable of appreciating it, I would dwell on the old difficulty of the date of Cyrenius' governorship, and its remarkable solution within the last few years. Teachers who can not only state the fact that Cyrenius was governor twice, but explain the curious chain of indirect evidence by which Zumpt of Berlin has proved it, will give intelligent scholars an illustration of the exact accuracy of Scripture which they will not forget. No "discrepancy" was more triumphantly appealed to formerly by objectors; none has been more completely transformed into Christian evidence. It is worth while for our young people to know how.

2. A description of Bethlehem, or of an Eastern *khan*, may be made a real help to the higher teaching of this lesson. Let me, instead of attempting one myself, copy here a few lines from a book called "Domestic Life in Palestine," by Miss Rogers, sister of a former British Consul at Damascus. The house she describes was not at Bethlehem; but her account is none the less available by way of illustration:

"I found the house consisted of only one very lofty room, about eighteen feet square . . . Just within the door, a donkey and a yoke of oxen stood, and I soon perceived that rather more than one-third of the room was set apart for cattle, where the floor, which was on a level with the street, was of earth, and partially strewn with fodder. We were led up two stone steps on to a dais, two feet high, where fragments of old mats and carpets were spread. . . . Meantime, our two horses were unsaddled, and lodged in the lower part of the room. . . . Three deep troughs or mangers, about three feet by one, were hollowed out of the broad stone coping at the edge of the dais. Mohammed, our groom, filled these troughs with barley, and our tired animals enjoyed their evening meal. . . . I imagined Joseph anxiously seeking rest and shelter for Mary after her long journey. . . . The raised floor was crowded with strangers, who had, like them, come to be taxed. But Joseph and Mary may have taken refuge from the cold in the lower part of the room. . . . I looked at one of the mangers, and felt how natural it was to use it as a cradle for a newly-born infant. Its size, its shape, its soft bed of fodder, its nearness to the warm fire always burning on the dais in midwinter, would immediately suggest the idea to an Eastern mother."

This is a vivid picture. Whether the "inn" at Bethlehem was like that, we cannot say. But this we can say, that the place where Jesus was born, whether a cave, as local tradition says, or anything else, was certainly not better than what Miss Rogers describes. But how will all this help our teaching on the Incarnation? Just by contrast. That was what the Son of God came down to.

But now, how should the great fact of the Incarnation itself be introduced? Put it thus: You all have had a beginning, and that was when you were born. But the birth at Bethlehem was not Christ's beginning. See John 17. 5, where he speaks to the Father about "the glory which I had with thee before the world was." What was he then? Not a man; not an angel; but—see John 1. 1, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." But how do we know this

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"Word" was Christ? Look at the fourteenth verse, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us," there is the birth at Bethlehem. So Mary's babe, the child Jesus, was God! But when we pray to God as "Our Father," do we mean Jesus? No; there are God the Father and God the Son; and also God the Holy Ghost. What! three Gods? No; see Deut. 6. 4; 1 Cor. 8. 4. Three persons in one God—all equal, for see how they are mentioned together. Matt. 28. 19; 2 Cor. 13. 14.

Then, in what way did God the Son become Man? We cannot understand it all, but we know this—

(n) He laid aside his glory. Phil. 2. 6, 7. See a picture of what that glory was. Isa. 6. 1-6. Compare John 12. 41. What made him give it up to come down here? See 2 Cor. 8. 9.

(b) He took a human body. He was really born, and had a real mother. Gal. 4. 4. His body grew. Luke 2. 52. He was hungry, Matt. 4. 2; thirsty, John 4. 7; tired, John 4. 6. He really died. Mark 15. 44, 45.

(c) He took a human soul. Do not think of him as God in a human body. He thought and felt as a man; had a man's will. Luke 22. 42; was glad, Luke 10. 21; sorry, Mark 3. 5; Luke 19. 41; John 11. 35; surprised, Matt. 8. 10; Mark 6. 6. One thing he had not—sin. See 2 Cor. 5. 21; Heb. 4. 15; 1 John 3. 5.

(d) Yet he was God all the while. See what was predicted, Isa. 7. 14; 9. 6—the "child" should be "the Mighty God," and what does "Emmanuel" mean? See Matt. 1. 23. See what he said about himself—spoke of God sending his only begotten Son into the world, (John 3. 16, 17)—made himself "equal with God," (John 5. 18)—said all "should honour the Son even as they honour the Father, (John 5. 23)—said, "Ye are from beneath; I am from above," (John 8. 58)—"I and my Father are one," (John 10. 30)—and many other like sayings.

Let us all adore him as Thomas did, (John 20. 28), and say "My Lord and my God!"

### BEREAN METHODS.

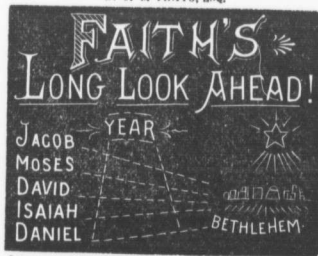
#### Hints for the Teachers' Meeting and the Class.

Draw or show on the map the journey of Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem. . . Explain the purpose of their coming, the inn, the manger . . . A picture, (1) Of the night watch; (2) Of the night song, (coming of the angel, his message, the heavenly host); (3) Of the night visit. . . The persons of the lesson, their traits, and lessons from each, (1) The angels' joy; (2) The shepherds' faith; (3) The mother's thoughtfulness; (4) The hearer's wonder. . . What is here taught concerning Christ: (1) His humanity; (2) His humility.

**References.** FOSTER'S PROSE: Vol. I. 3237, 696, 712. Vol. II. 7119, 9828, 10009. POETICAL: 257, 2123. FREEMAN: Swaddling clothes, 751; Manger, 751.

#### Blackboard.

BY J. R. PHIPPS, B.S.Q.



Place the diagram as it is on the board. By questions bring out the time of the prophecies that looked toward Bethlehem. As the answers are given, write them opposite the names, have the prophecies read, and sing appropriate songs of praise.

#### Primary and Intermediate.

BY M. V. M.

**REVIEW.** Call back the prophecy of Zacharias. Who was coming to visit his people? What did he do? See that the words "deliver" and "redeem" are understood. What did he give? A few crayon strokes to indicate the sun's rays will recall the teachings on light.

**LESSON THOUGHT:** Jesus is God's Good-will.

**INTRODUCTORY.** Ask how many remember Mary's song. Talk about her gladness and its cause, and sketch vividly that journey to Bethlehem, the stay at the humble house which was the only stopping-place they could find, and the coming of the Lord of heaven to this lowly spot.

1. Talk about shepherds. Some of them were men who knew and loved God, as David, who was made a king. These were men loved by God, or he would not have sent word to them first of the coming of Jesus. Make the story clear and simple—the angel, the bright shining, the fear of the shepherds, and the glad announcement by the angels. Tell what he meant by the "City of David," and let class rise and recite (unless it can be chanted) the angelic song:

"Glory to God in the highest,  
And on earth peace,  
Good-will toward men."

2. What the shepherds did. They had heard of a wonderful Babe, and they set out at once to see him. What good can a help-



less little baby do in this great world? Wouldn't a big, strong, wise man be more likely to have some good gift for the world? Let us read the eleventh verse, and see what name the angel gave to this baby. "Saviour," "Christ," "The Lord." They thought he must be worth finding, and so they went quickly to find him. As soon as we hear of Jesus we ought to try to find him. God sends word to us to-day of his coming.

3. Tell where they found him. Describe the great event it is when an earthly prince is born—the great preparations, the costly gifts, etc. Jesus lay in a manger! He did not come to the rich. He came to help and

bless and save all—the very poorest and humblest. The shepherds went away to tell the story. They had found something precious—a gift from God—and they could not keep the good news to themselves. They praised God. They were glad, and they thanked God for sending this dear baby to bring light and salvation to the world.

CLOSING EXERCISE. Tell what good-will is. When it is in the heart there is almost always some way to show it. God felt good-will toward us, and so he sent Jesus to show it to us. "God so loved the world," etc. People often send gifts to show their good-will, or kind feeling, and Jesus is God's gift.

B. C. 6.

January 30.

## LESSON V.—SIMEON AND THE CHILD JESUS; or, Salvation Seen.

## GENERAL STATEMENT.

The fortieth day after the birth of Christ has come, and the carpenter and his wife, with the babe of destiny, now leave their lowly dwelling-place to formally present the child before the Lord in Jerusalem. They pass out the gate of Bethlehem, and wind their way, first among terraced hillsides, and then through dark ravines overhung by frowning mountains. After a journey of six miles they come up the valley of the Kedron, and behold the white walls and gilded roof of the temple, rising on the hill of Moriah. They enter the gate of the holy city, thread its narrow streets, and at last find themselves within the long porticoes of the Court of the Women. Their humble offering of a pair of doves is received by the priests in waiting, and carried within the inner court to be laid upon the great altar as a token that their child is accepted by the God of Israel. Suddenly an old man approaches them. It is Simeon, the just and the devout, who has been long awaiting the fulfillment of the Lord's promise that his eyes shall look upon the Messiah of Israel's hope. As his glance rests upon the babe in its young mother's arms, a new light flashes upon his face, for by a divine revelation in that babe he recognizes the Lord's Christ. He takes it in his arms, uplifts his eyes in gratitude to God for his high privilege, which kings and prophets have vainly longed to enjoy, and then in a strain of high inspiration predicts the salvation of the world to be wrought by the child he holds; and not only this, but the opposition and sorrow and suffering, culminating in the cross on Calvary, which shall pierce the mother's heart, and reveal the cruelty of the unbelieving people.

## Luke 2. 25-35.

[Memory Verses, 28-32.]

25 And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.

Isa. 25. 9: It shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation. Mark 15. 43: Joseph of Arimathea. . . also waited for the kingdom of God.

26 And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.

27 And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the

## Explanatory and Practical.

Verse 25. Whose name was Simeon. Some have supposed that this was Simeon the father of the celebrated Gamaliel, and president of the council; who was living at that time, though not an old man, as seems to be intimated in vers. 26, 29; but there is no certain evidence on the subject. Just. Righteous in character, and upright in his relation to his fellow-men. Devout. Having reverence for God, and fulfilling the observances of worship. 1. "Devotion toward God is the mother of justice toward man." Waiting for the consolation. The Messiah was called "the consolation of Israel," since his coming was expected to comfort the people under their national trials by giving them freedom and a just rule. The Holy Ghost was upon him. So close was his communion with God, that a divine influence rested upon him, enlightening his understanding, and giving him some knowledge of the future.

26. Revealed unto him. "By an inward revelation which it would be as impossible to describe as presumptuous to doubt."—*Van Oosterzee*. 2. Those who live near the Lord discern the mind of the Lord. Not see death. Should not die until the coming of the promised Christ. A very blessed privilege, making it evident that his appearance was to be during that generation. 3. "God's elect never die, until by the eye of faith they have seen Christ."—*Quesnel*. The Lord's Christ. Literally, "the Lord's Anointed;" in Hebrew, the Messiah.

27. He came by the Spirit. Though doubtless accustomed to go to the temple for worship, on this occasion he went

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Num. 8. 17: All the first-born of the children of Israel are mine, both man and beast; on the day that I smote every first-born in the land of Egypt I sanctified them for myself. Num. 18. 15: Nevertheless the first-born of man shalt thou surely redeem, and the firstling of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem.

**28 Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,**

**29 Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:**

Gen. 46. 30: Israel said unto Joseph, Now let me die, since I have seen thy face. Phil. 1. 25: I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.

**30 For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,**

**31 Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;**

Gen. 49. 18: I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord. Matt. 13. 17: Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them. Isa. 52. 10: The Lord hath made bare his holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

**32 A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.**

Isa. 49. 6: It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Israel; and to restore the preserved of Jacob; I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth. Matt. 4. 16: The people which sat in darkness saw great light, and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.

**33 And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.**

**34 And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;**

under a special divine leading, an impulse from on high. 4. When God leads, his people may look for a blessing. **Into the temple.** Into the second court, known as the "court of the women," where worship was generally offered by the people. See Notes Lesson 1., ver. 9. **The parents.** Mary and Joseph. Joseph, though not personally related, was regarded as the father of Jesus in a legal sense. **The child Jesus.** An infant, forty days old. **After the custom of the law.** The law required that about forty days after the birth of a child, an offering should be presented on its behalf by the parents. The rich gave a lamb and a turtle dove, the poor two doves; one for a burnt-offering, the other for a sin-offering. From the fact that the parents of Jesus gave only the doves, their poverty has been deduced. Luke 2. 23, 24. 5. He who took upon him our nature, descended to its lowest depths, and though rich, for our sakes became poor.

**28, 29. Took he him up in his arms.** Recognizing by a divine enlightenment the Messiah in the tiny babe, he rejoiced that God's promise had been more than fulfilled, for he was permitted not only to see, but to embrace his Redeemer. **And said.** There is a broadening light with each one of the three successive songs of Mary, Zacharias, and Simeon; the mother sings of her son, the priest of the triumph of his nation, and the aged saint of the salvation of the Gentile world. **Now lettest thou.** "Thou mayest release thy servant," as if death to the servant of God were only a setting free of an imprisoned soul. 6. To him who has embraced Christ, death has lost its sting.

**30, 31. Mine eyes have seen.** His was a personal, individual look at his Redeemer. 7. So must each soul for itself look unto Jesus. **Thy salvation.** Embodied in the person of the Saviour. He looks upon Jesus less in his kingly, and more in his priestly capacity, than either of those whose prophetic songs have been given, thus penetrating deeper into the divine plan of redemption. **Which thou hast prepared.** Not an event happening by accident, but that for which all time has been paving the way. **Face of all people.** Literally, "all peoples;" including both Jews and Gentiles: as named in the next verse.

**32. To lighten the Gentiles.** "For a revelation to the Gentiles." Here is an insight into the Gospel plan far clearer than that of even the most intelligent of the Jews, or even of the disciples, long after the ascension. The common conception of the Messiah was of a prince reigning over Israel and conquering the Gentile nations. Now for the first time is presented the thought of a Saviour for all mankind. Most appropriately is this first gleam of Gentile privilege recorded by St. Luke, the only Gentile evangelist. **The glory of thy people.** In the salvation of the Gentile world we are not to forget the honour of Israel, as the stalk on which grew this glorious blossom, which has shed its fragrance over all the lands.

**33, 34. Marvelled.** They did not understand the lofty utterances of Simeon, and were confused by his mention of the Gentiles, to them mysterious. **Blessed them.** Pronounced upon them the divine benediction, in view of their high privilege. **For the fall and rising.** "For the downfall and uprising." The word "again" is not needed in the translation, and leads to an erroneous impression. Those who fall here are not the same with those who rise. The one are those whose expectations of temporal kingdom in the coming of Christ are doomed to disappointment; the other are those who, accepting Christ in humble faith, rise to salvation. The Jew as a people fell: the Gentile Christians rose. 8. God's plans are always a surprise to men. **A sign which shall be spoken against.** The token of God's love to men, yet rejected and reviled.

**35. Yea, a sword shall pierce.** A reference to the troubles which the mother of Jesus was destined to experience in

35 (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thine own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.

the rejection of her Son by the people, her own misunderstanding of his mission, and her culminating grief at his crucifixion. 9. The path to blessedness must be trodden through sorrow. **Thoughts of many hearts.** By their treatment of Christ men should reveal their true character, thoughts, and feelings. 10. Nothing will disclose the heart of a man now so clearly as the relation which he holds toward his Saviour.

**Time.**—B. C. 6, about forty days after the birth of Jesus.

**Place.**—The women's court of the temple in Jerusalem.

**Connecting Links.**—1. The circumcision and naming of Jesus. Luke 2. 1. 2. The presentation of the infant Saviour. Luke 2. 22-24.

### GOLDEN TEXT.

For mine eyes have seen thy salvation.— Luke 2. 30.

### LESSON HYMNS.

No. 729, *New Hymn Book*.

C. M.

Light of the lonely pilgrim's heart,  
Star of the coming day,  
Arise, and with thy morning beams  
Chase all our griefs away!  
Come, blessed Lord, let every shore  
And answering island sing  
The praises of thy royal name,  
And own thee as their King.  
Bid the whole earth, responsive now  
To the bright world above,  
Break forth in sweetest strains of joy,  
In memory of thy love.

No. 721, *New Hymn Book*.

7s & 6s.

Hail to the Lord's Anointed;  
Great David's greater Son!  
Hail, in the time appointed,  
His reign on earth begun!  
He comes to break oppression,  
To set the captive free,  
To take away transgression,  
And rule in equity.  
He comes, with succour speedy,  
To those who suffer wrong;  
To help the poor and needy,  
And bid the weak be strong;  
To give them songs for sighing,  
Their darkness turn to light,  
Whose souls, condemned and dying,  
Were precious in his sight.

No. 725, *New Hymn Book*.

8s & 7s.

Saviour, sprinkle many nations,  
Fruitful let thy sorrows be;  
By thy pains and consolations  
Draw the Gentiles unto thee;  
Of thy cross the wondrous story  
Be to all the nations told;  
Let them see thee in thy glory,  
And thy mercy manifold.  
Give the word, and of the preacher  
Speed the foot, and touch the tongue,  
Till on earth by every creature  
Glory to the Lamb be sung.

### HOME READINGS.

- M. Simeon and the child Jesus. Luke 2. 25-35.  
Tu. The magi and the child. Matt. 2. 1-12.  
W. Herod and the child. Matt. 2. 13-25.  
Th. The prophetic star. Num. 24. 1-19.  
F. The prophetic name. Isa. 9. 1-7.  
S. The light to the Gentiles. Isa. 49. 6-18.  
8. The people of God. Rom. 9. 20-33.

### QUESTIONS ON THE OUTLINE.

1. **A Saint's Desire**, v. 25, 26.  
Who is here named, and what is known concerning him?  
What elements of his character are here exhibited?  
How did he show strong faith in God's promises?  
What desire did he cherish?

Why was this expectation precious to a pious Jew?

In what sense was the Holy Ghost upon him?

What special promise had been given to him?

What is the promise in Isa. 25. 9?

What is the meaning of "the Lord's Christ"?

### 2. **A Saint's Delight**, v. 27-35.

To what place did Simeon come, and how was he led?

Whom did he meet?

What was "the custom of the law" in this case?

What was its origin and import? Lev. 12. 2-8.

How did Simeon recognize Jesus as the Christ?

With what feeling did he see Jesus?

What spirit of a true disciple did he show?

How did his desire compare with Paul's? Phil. 1. 23.

What was Simeon's view of Christ's mission?

How do we here see the foreshadowings of salvation for the Gentiles?

How was Christ a glory to Israel?

How did Joseph and Mary regard the words of Simeon?

How was Christ to cause the "fall" and "rising" of many? Comp. 1 Pet. 2. 7, 8.

When was the prediction concerning the mother of Jesus fulfilled?

How did Christ reveal the thoughts of many hearts?

### TEACHINGS OF THE LESSON.

Where does this lesson teach—

1. How a saint should regard life?

2. How a saint should regard death?

3. How a saint should regard Christ's coming?

DOCTRINAL SUGGESTION—The personality of the Holy Ghost.

### ANALYTICAL & BIBLICAL OUTLINE, Simeon's View of Christ.

#### I. CHRIST THE COMFORTER.

Waiting for the consolation of Israel. v. 25.

"The Lord shall comfort Zion." Isa. 51. 3.

#### II. CHRIST THE SAVIOUR.

Mine eyes have seen thy salvation. v. 30.

"I have waited for thy salvation." Gen. 49. 18.

#### III. CHRIST THE ENLIGHTENER.

A light to lighten the Gentiles. v. 32.

"For a light to the Gentiles." Isa. 42. 6.

#### IV. CHRIST THE REJECTED.

A sign which shall be spoken against. v. 34.

"A stone of stumbling. . . offence." 1 Pet. 2. 8.

#### V. CHRIST THE DISCERNER.

Thoughts of. . . hearts be revealed. v. 35.

"A discerner of. . . thoughts and intents." Heb. 4. 12.

### ADDITIONAL PRACTICAL LESSONS. The Salvation Seen.

1. It was seen by a holy man, one whose life was devoted to God's service. v. 25.

2. It was seen by one who looked forward to seeing it as the crowning event of his life. v. 26.

3. It was seen by a man whose life was devoted to God's service.

4. It was seen by a man who looked forward to seeing it as the crowning event of his life.

5. It was seen by a man who looked forward to seeing it as the crowning event of his life.

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### ENGLISH

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3. It was seen as a present salvation, not, as seen by the prophets of old, a future salvation. v. 30.

4. It was seen as a universal salvation, for all people. v. 31, 32.

5. It was seen as a strange and mysterious salvation, causing some to fall and others to rise. v. 34.

6. It was seen as a salvation bringing sorrow as well as rejoicing. v. 35.

#### CATECHISM QUESTIONS.

6. *What doth your baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, oblige you to do?*

My baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, obliges me first to renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh; secondly, that I should believe all the articles of the Christian faith; and, thirdly, that I should keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of my life.

#### ENGLISH TEACHER'S NOTES.

BY EUGENE STOCK, ESQ.

In old romances it is not uncommon for the story to turn upon the hero's fate being dependent on the occurrence of some strange event. Some venerable bard or astrologer has foretold that his life is safe until a certain very unlikely thing happens. And at the crisis of the story that unlikely thing does happen, and the hero meets his irrevocable doom. All my readers will remember Macbeth, for instance, who, the witches said, might rest secure "till Birnam Wood should come to Dunsinane," and whose defeat and death were heralded by what seemed to be the wood of Birnam Hill marching toward him.

Now, of course, in all these cases we find every hope and effort concentrated upon avoiding and averting the catastrophe as long as possible. And is not this natural? Let me suppose, for illustration's sake, that to one of us now a message came from heaven, telling us that we should not die till—say, till a certain person came from the other side of the globe. How fervently we should hope that he would not come just yet? Anything to prolong life; anything to defer death! It is true that a fretful person will sometimes utter the thoughtless words, "I wish I were dead!" But if at that moment a naked sword were pointed at his breast, he would run away far enough.

How was it with old Simeon? He really did have a supernatural intimation regarding his destiny. And it was no mere augury of an astrologer. It was a divine word. "It was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ." What effect had this revelation upon him? As year after

year passed away, and his strength grew feebler, and his step more uncertain, was he getting more and more nervous and anxious lest one day he should hear the rallying cry, Messiah has come? And at last when he saw the humble carpenter bringing his young wife and her new-born child, with the lowly offering of their poverty, (ver. 24; see Lev. 12, 8.) and when the Divine Revealer pointed out to him that helpless infant as "the Lord's Christ," did his heart fail him, and his cheek blanch, and his tongue refuse to speak, from terror at the long-dreaded hour having arrived?

Surely it is an impressive scene from this point of view. "Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God." And why did he bless God? Because Messiah had appeared at last? Certainly, but with this joy for his nation's sake, he might have had nothing more than a kind of resigned submission on his own account. Yes, he might say, it is a grand thing that the Christ has come; and as for me, well, I must try and not murmur; God has been good to me in letting me live so long. But it was not so at all. He rejoiced to see the Child, not only for what he was to do and to be for Jew and Gentile, but also because his appearing was the signal for his own release. "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation."

The words themselves are remarkable. The word rendered "Lord" is not the usual one, *Kyris*. It rather means "master." Nor is it one of the words usually found where Christ is called "Master," meaning teacher, or superintendent. It is *Despota*, and expresses the relationship of master and slave. "Servant," too, is literally "slave." Simeon speaks as one in bond-service, who after long waiting is receiving his manumission, and is in sight of freedom. "Master," he says, joyfully, "now at length art thou releasing thy slave."

Now we do not wish to encourage false sentiment in this matter. We do not desire the careless phrase, "I wish I were dead," to become a true utterance in any one's mouth. There is a popular hymn of Faber's which was much sung, (for the sake of its swinging tune,) a few years ago, and you might hear a large congregation lustily shouting out, "O Paradise! O Paradise! Wherefore doth death delay?" Nothing could be more painfully unreal. At the same time, I think the foregoing line of illustration and contrast may usefully be employed in this lesson to show how happily a godly man can meet death. He will take care of the life and health God has given him, and thank God for them; and yet, whenever the summons does come, he will

know that his work on earth is finished, and he will go joyfully to his rest.

But now let us turn to the event itself, which was to old Simeon the signal of his release. It was the appearance of "the Lord's Christ," or Messiah. But observe, Simeon's thoughts about that Coming One so long promised were not like the thoughts of many others at that day. The notion of most people was of a warrior-king who should drive out the Romans and "restore again the kingdom to Israel." Others were looking for a great Rabbi; the Samaritan woman, for instance, who said, "I know that Messias cometh; when he is come he shall tell us all things." What Simeon desired and expected we can gather from two interesting expressions. He is represented "as waiting for the consolation of Israel," and his own word is, "Mine eyes have seen thy salvation." It will be a useful thing to base the chief teaching of this lesson on these two terms.

1. *Consolation.* In what sense was Messiah to be the Consolation of Israel? And is there any sense in which he can be our Consolation?

What does the word mean? To answer this question, let me suggest an illustration. A timid and retiring boy goes to a new school. His more boisterous comrades quickly make him the butt of their practical jokes, and torment him with the peculiar mercilessness we only see in school-boys, (at least we see it in English school-boys.) But one kind-hearted elder boy takes his part. He makes friends with him, cheers him up, protects him, teaches him to stand up for himself, helps him in a thousand little ways. Now this illustrates exactly what is meant by the "consolation" or "comfort" of the New Testament. It is not merely what the word "comfort" means to us. The kind protector at school is indeed a great comfort to our poor young friend, but why? Not because of his soothing words and friendly manner only, but because also of his active help. "I like Brown," writes the youngster to his mother or sister; "he takes my part." Taking our part—this familiar phrase just expresses the scope of that Greek word which in the Gospel of John is translated Comforter, and in the Epistle of John, Advocate; and the noun "consolation" is closely connected with it. Our English word "comfort" originally had more of this meaning. Thus, in Wycliffe's version of Isa. 41. 7 we read, "And he countfortid hym with nailes that it should not be moved," where our version has "fastened." And so in Phil. 4. 13, "Christ that strengthneth me" is in Wycliffe, "that countfortid me."

The "Consolation of Israel." One to take the part of God's people, to be on their side,

to care for them, pity them, comfort them, strengthen them, help them, plead their cause, be identified with them as their Advocate—that is what Simeon was waiting for; that is what Christ came to be; that is what he will be to us if we will only accept his advocacy and companionship.

2. *Salvation.* This, too, here, does not stand for what Christ brings, but for Christ himself. It is a stronger word in the Greek than the usual one, and denotes the agency by which salvation is procured. "Mine eyes," said Simeon, "have seen thy salvation," that is, the very Saviour himself, in the person of the little infant in Mary's arms.

What is the difference between Salvation and Consolation? To revert to my illustration, the school-boy knows well the difference in his own case. His friend may take his part bravely, but he may not be able to save him entirely from his tormentors. An Advocate seeks to save, but even if he falls, his help is still valued. Better suffer with a sympathizer than without one. But a Saviour saves. Christ is a successful Advocate; and therefore he is a Saviour too.

Let the question be pressed home, Is he your Saviour? What from? From the condemnation of sin now, at once—by his atoning death. From the power of sin we go on in life—by his indwelling Spirit. From the presence of sin—when he takes us one day to himself. Simeon rejoiced to see him in his humiliation; shall we rejoice to see him in his glory?

## BEREAN METHODS.

*Hints for the Teachers' Meeting and the Class.*

Sketch the character of Simeon: (1) A righteous man; (2) A devout worshipper; (3) Endowed with the Spirit; (4) Waiting for the Saviour.... A word-picture of the meeting in the temple.... The offering, why, and what?... Explain "Consolation of Israel;" "Holy Ghost upon him;" "Custom of the law;" "Fall and rising again," etc., etc.... Present the view of Christ as given in this lesson.... What are our privileges as compared with Simeon?

**References.** FOSTER'S PROSE. Vol. I. 2098, 662, 720, 5157. Vol. II. 7181, 7197. POETICAL: 1207, 2037. FREEMAN: The "Consolation," 752.

### Primary and Intermediate.

BY M. V. M.

REVIEW on names of Jesus given thus far, briefly explaining each, and dwelling especially on Peace and Good-will as being the Father's thought toward us, which he sent Jesus to reveal.

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opportunity should not be let pass of teaching the personality of the Holy Spirit. He speaks now, to tell us what to do, as certainly as he spoke to Simeon, and he speaks to little children.]

1. Get children's ideas of a good man. Here is a description of one—"just" and "devout." Explain these terms and illustrate. God could speak to such a man, for he could hear. Why doesn't a deaf man hear? People talk, and he has ears, but his ears are not open. Simeon's ears were open to God, because he was obedient. Tell that he was a very old man, and had heard that Jesus was coming to make all things right. He wanted to see him before he died, and God had promised that he should.

2. Explain why Jesus was brought to the temple, and by whom. Tell the story in simple words—the sweet young mother with her babe, and the father standing by; the old man coming in "by the Spirit," and seeing in the child the long-promised Deliverer; his joy, and his outburst of song and praise. Tell the children that we often see things without knowing what they are. Show some strange object, and tell that just as they see this, but do not know it, so many people see Jesus and do not know him. Simeon knew him because God opened his eyes to see him, and this was done because Simeon wanted to see him. God never lets any one be blind who wants to see Jesus. The eyes of our hearts must be opened by faith and prayer.

3. What Simeon saw. Ask what the children think he saw. He had just a little baby in his arms, nothing more! But this is the wonderful sight he saw. Make a cross on the board, and print his words: verse 30. How is Jesus our salvation? From what does he save? Who and what are our enemies? Who can be saved by Jesus?

CLOSING EXERCISE. Ask if any have seen Jesus, not with the outward, but with the inward eyes, and explain that only those truly see him who are trying to obey him. He tells us to be true, obedient, patient, kind, unselfish, loving, and helpful. If we are asking Jesus to save us from our heart-enemies, and to help us to be like him, then we do see him, and we shall go where he is by and by.

**LESSONS FOR FEBRUARY, 1881.**

FEB. 6. The Boyhood of Jesus; or, Filled with Wisdom. Luke 2. 40-52.

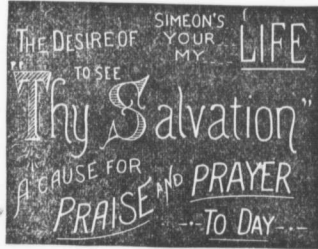
FEB. 13. Preaching of John the Baptist; or Fruits of Repentance. Luke 3. 7-18.

FEB. 20. The Preaching of Jesus; or, Anointed to Preach the Gospel. Luke 4. 14-21.

FEB. 27. Christ Healing the Sick; or, The Power of the Lord. Luke 5. 12-26.

**Blackboard.**

BY J. B. PHIPPS, ESQ.



Make the words "Thy Salvation" as prominent as the size of your board will allow. Do not write the words your or my beneath Simeon until you have spoken of the desire of Simeon's life. The application should be the end and aim of all Sabbath-school work, that is, spiritually to see Christ, through whom salvation is offered.

**WHISPER SONGS FOR JANUARY.**

**FIRST LESSON.**

O ANGEL of the Lord, draw near,  
Speak to our hearts to-day;  
And bid us haste with willing feet  
To make for Christ a way.

**SECOND LESSON.**

My soul doth magnify the Lord,  
For holy is his name;  
His mercy is to us made known,  
From age to age the same.

**THIRD LESSON.**

Thou, child, a Prophet shalt be called,  
To go before the face  
Of Him who comes to rule the world  
With holy truth and grace.

**FOURTH LESSON.**

Fear not, for unto us this day  
The angels come to bring  
Good tidings of great joy to all,—  
The birth of Christ our King!

**FIFTH LESSON.**

Lord, let thy servant die in peace,  
According to thy word;  
For now mine eyes have seen thy light,  
The glory of the Lord!

# THE PILGRIM'S MISSION.

A HYMN FOR THE NEW YEAR.

Words by REV. W. MORLEY PUNSHON, LL.D.

Music by PHILIP PHILLIPS.

1. Listen! the Master be-seecheth, Calling each one by his name; His voice to each living heart
2. Seek those of evil be-haviour, Bid them their lives to a-mend; Go, point the lost world to the
3. Work, tho' the en-e-mies' laughter, Over the valleys may sweep, For God's patient workers here-
4. Work for the good that is highest; Dream not of greatness a-far; That glory is ev-er the
5. Of-fer thy life on the altar; In the high purpose be strong; And if the tir'd spirit should

reacheth, Its cheer-ful-rest ser-vice to claim. Go where the vineyard de-mand-eth  
 a-Saviour, And be to the friendless a friend. Still be the lone heart of anguish  
 aft-er Shall laugh when the en-e-mies weep. Ev-er on Je-sus re-li-ant,  
 highest, Which shines up-on men as they are. Work, tho' the world would de-feat you;  
 fal-ter, Then sweeten thy la-bour with song. What, if the poor heart complain-eth,

Vine-dressers' nurture and care; Or go where the white harvest standeth, The joy of the reaper to share.  
 South'd by the pit-y of time; By waysides, if wound'd ones languish, Go poor in the oil and the wine.  
 Press on your chivalrous way—The mightiest Paillistine gi-ant His Davids are chartered to slay.  
 Heed not its slander and scorn; Nor weary till angels shall greet you With smiles thro' the gates of the morn.  
 Soon shall its waiting be o'er; For there, in the rest which remaineth, It shall grieve and be weary no more

**Chorus.**

Then work, brothers, work! let us slumber no longer, For God's call to labour grows stronger and stronger. The

light of this life shall be darken'd full soon, But the light of the bet-ter life resteth at nooa.