

The Field of Holy Writ

Save for my daily range. Among the pleasant fields of Holy Writ I might despair. —Tennyson. International Sunday School Lesson.

Second Quarter Lesson VII. Chron. xxx 1-27. May 14, 1922. Golden Text: God is gracious and merciful and will not turn away his face from you if you turn unto Him.—2 Chronicles xx

Hezekiah Leads His People. History hardly affords a more convincing evidence of the supreme and practical bearing of religion upon the welfare and destiny of a nation. It is an old Testament commentary upon the New Testament text, "Seek first the Kingdom of God and all else will be added." On the accession of Hezekiah to the throne the kingdom was in the last stages of decay. Its treasury empty, its army demoralized, its invincible enemy at its throat. . . . Worldly-wise men would have counselled that the future be mortgaged to appease the enemy, that an alliance be made with Egypt, or that all the small imperiled nations be asked to pool their resources against the common foe, but the proposition to raise precious time in the attempt to kill a sacred but utterly dead enemy, many could hardly be made the butt of ridicule. It did actually raise a laugh. . . . The temple in graphic phrase. They showed their backs to it instead of their faces. They shut the doors, put out the lamps, and ceased from incense and singing. . . . Neglect of a public edifice is a species of vandalism, slower but ultimately as effective as the hammer of the monarch. When sweepers and artisans left off their daily work with accumulated, and the holy and magnificent house was on the verge of dissolution. . . . But nothing daunted the noble spirit of Hezekiah, fortified as it was by the inspiration of a great prophet. One of his first acts was to reopen, cleanse and mend the Lord's house, and get it ready for use. It required sixteen days of continuous labor before the last load of debris and rubbish from the interior part was dumped into Kidron. The ritual of Moses and the orchestra of princes, and people praised with gladness and worshiped. . . . Thus the way was opened for a general and complete renaissance of religion. Hezekiah naturally wished to crown the revival by observing the great festival of the Passover, and to make it the occasion of a national reunion of the diminished empire. This he could do without having sinister motives ascribed to him, for the northern Kingdom was already extinct. The King's carefully worded appeal was carried to Jerusalem from Dan to Beersheba. Enough responded to make a great assembly. The simple, beautiful, significant rite of the Passover was observed again under happy auspices. . . . A crusade against the false rites that naturally followed the revival of the true. Altars and idols went down into that common receptacle of the effacing, the claim of Kidron. . . . Under the sturdy lamp. The repeated period of the Jews should not surprise any one over-much. . . . Dean Millman himself tells us that during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, Elizabethan times were led through aisles of St. Paul's Cathedral, bargains struck, burglaries planned, and servants hired. . . . A sacred edifice may be looked upon as a thermometer, showing the religious temperature of a nation at any period. Well-kept, embellished, guarded and used, it indicates a high state of grace, and vice versa, a low state. At St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome a small army of men constantly employed in cleaning and repairing. . . . Though it is spent annually to build several ordinary churches. The majority of workmen and caretakers live in a little village on the ample and solid roof. If work was entirely stopped signs of decay would appear immediately. Hezekiah is one of the centralizing heroes of Hebrew history, bright light of dark ages, one of the three perfect Kings of Judah. . . . Hezekiah's invitation and summons had the historic treatment which every urgent religious appeal receives unimpeded, others excused.

others humbled themselves. . . . Jesus may have had this familiar incident of his country's history in mind when he spoke the parable of a King's invitation. He uses the very word "invited." . . . No state paper could have been more happily or skillfully worded. Attention was quietly called to the long period of omissions and they were reminded that they were a remnant that had escaped exile through the mercy of God. Note of warning is not wanting, but special emphasis is put upon this observance as a means by which their "brethren and children" shall escape. Not unlike Esau's may have collaborated with the King in drawing up this message. . . . Hezekiah believed in the ritual, but he was no fanatical stickler for it. He would not allow himself to be defeated by the delay of the priests or the tardy arrival of the people. He observed the second month when things could not be ready for the local "first month." Again when the priests were too few to prepare the victims were their sole office according to the ceremonial law and custom. Hezekiah re-enforced them with Levitical law to whom that function did not pertain. . . . The temple of God today is spiritual. Jesus Christ its corner-stone, prophets and apostles its foundation, upon whom rise the walls of living stones quarried out of sin. It is a temple still growing in whose building all may co-operate, all be included.

expressed in the life of the people. The former would be the "letter," the latter in the "spirit." Religion, expressing itself not in ecclesiasticism or dogmatism, but in righteousness, love and service, would insure universal peace and joy. Young People's Devotional Service, May 14, 1922. Psalm cxlii. Motto.—The Church: The violin and organized body of Christian believers.—Century Dictionary. How Can We Help Our Church and Get Help From It? At close of worship in the Collegiate Church, New York, on Sabbath a young man followed the minister into the vestry and said to him in a quiet fashion: "Sir, I believe in your doctrines you preach and wish to be received into membership next Sunday morning. The frankness, distinctness and resolution were characteristic of Theodore Roosevelt. In that decision he continued unwaveringly to Church." It is a classic. He once said: "The church is just what children should have for feverish colds, coughs, 'snuffles' and tight, wheezy breathing. Be sure to get 'Fogey.' It checks cough and whooping cough, too.—AMV.

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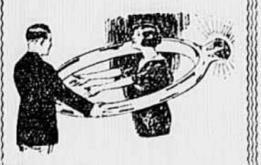
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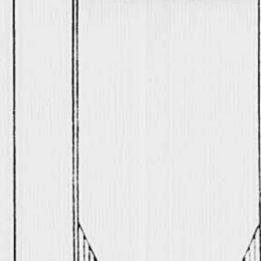


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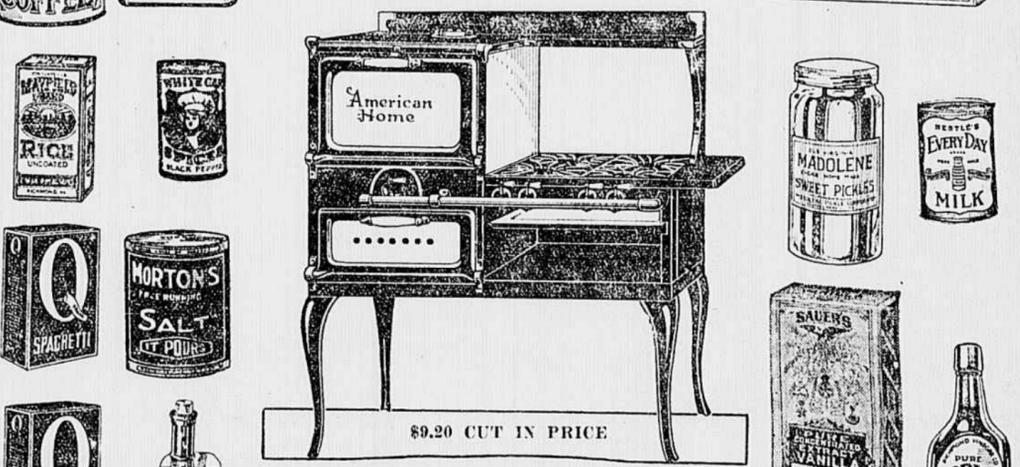
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