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SUBJECTS PROPOSED FOR PAPERS.

NOTE.—Any one or more than one subject may be chosen. Papers for next report (August) should be received by the Editor of the EXPOSITORY TIMES, Kinneff, Bervie, N.B.,

by the 25th of June. In length they should run from two to three thousand words. Writers who wish their names withheld should give initials or *nom de plume*.

I. OLD TESTAMENT EXPOSITION.—1. The Character of Balaam. 2. An exposition of Psalm viii.

II. NEW TESTAMENT EXPOSITION.—1. Note on the "sin unto death" of 1 John v. 16. 2. The history and value of the title "Son of man."

III. THEOLOGICAL.—1. The Agnostic and Prayer. 2. The Work of the Holy Spirit on Christ.

IV. LITERARY.—1. Dr. Simon's *The Redemption of Man: A Review*. 2. The Bible in Ruskin's Writings.

The Sunday School.

The International Lessons for June.

I.

June 1.—Luke x. 25–37.

The Good Samaritan.

1. "A certain lawyer:" a teacher of the law of Moses; so that Christ's counter question was very appropriate: "What is written in the Law? How readest thou?" It was his business to be constantly reading in it.

2. "To inherit eternal life." The phrase was an old one. It was applied first to the inheritance of the Israelites in the land of Canaan (Lev. xx. 24; Deut. iv. 22, 26, etc.). But when it was found that Joshua did not and could not "give them rest," the pious Israelite transferred the phrase to denote the divine blessings which were to come in with the Messiah. Thus it came to mean *to partake of eternal salvation in the Messiah's kingdom*. There was a touch of irony in the question as the lawyer uttered it—"If thou art the Messiah, what must I do to inherit eternal life?" Thus he tempted Jesus.

3. The lawyer quotes (1) Deut. vi. 5, and (2) Lev. xix. 18.

4. "Willing to justify himself," *i.e.* wishing to appear just before the bystanders.

5. "From Jerusalem to Jericho." "A rocky, dangerous gorge, haunted by marauding Bedawin, and known as the 'bloody way'"—Farrar; who adds the fact that in this very road Sir Frederic Henniker, an English baronet, was stripped and murdered by Arab robbers in 1820.

6. "By chance." But not that chance which God knows not, and which knows not God. It is "by a coincidence." Neither the word chance (*τυχη*), nor the idea it represents, occurs in Scripture.

7. "Two pence." Five shillings would be about the equivalent *now*.

"If ye *know* these things, happy are ye if ye *do* them." The lawyer felt that he did not *do* so much as he *knew*. He was a little unhappy in consequence, and, feeling that he was put in the wrong before the bystanders, he attempted to get out of it by putting the question: "And who *is* my neigh-

bour?" He did not ask, "And who is my God?" On that point there was no dispute amongst the Jews of Christ's day. They agreed as to who God was, and they agreed that it was their duty to love Him. But when they read the command in Lev. xix. 18: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," they made it a great disputed question who was meant by "neighbour." Jesus showed once for all that every one was included; for nobody could be farther away from neighbourliness in a Jew's eye than the hated Samaritan.

There is now quite a large number of people who have reversed the dispute. They call themselves *Agnostics* sometimes, which means "we do not know." They say they understand that they must love their neighbour, and that it means all mankind; and some of them are very good in that way. But they ask, "And who is my God?" They are really worse than the old lawyers, for they add ingratitude and rebellion to their neglect. They do not acknowledge Him who has given them any power of loving their neighbour which they may have.

II.

June 8.—Luke xi. 1–13.

Teaching to Pray.

There is not a word in this lesson but the youngest child may understand. The questions as to the correct translation of some of them are at present beyond the capacity of the greatest scholars, and need not trouble the children.

Any one of the petitions would be sufficient to interest them for an hour; but when they have read the lesson over, that petition should be chosen for closer contact which Christ Himself chose and illustrated so forcibly—"Give us day by day our daily bread."

Our bread comes from God in daily gifts. What a wonderful thought that He does not give us a supply for a lifetime, but portions it out day by day, thus being *mindful* of us, even of the bread we need, every day! But surely those who are well-to-do are provided for the future, and independent? It is not only ingratitude, but flat rebellion to think so. And such stored-up food stinks—as the manna,

when the greedy, rebellious Israelites gathered too much of it to keep it for future use, stank and bred worms. How easy to show that to-morrow's food cannot be sure when to-morrow itself is not!

But this ever-mindful God, our loving Father, has a way of His own, and we must meet Him in His own way. He is very willing to give good gifts; more so than our earthly fathers. But He must be entreated to give them. "Ask, and ye shall receive." Ye shall receive, but not without asking; and even then not always at once. This is the lesson of the parable. Because of his *importunity*, the man got what he wanted, because he would not be put off; because he asked just till he got. How much more will our heavenly Father give good gifts—especially that best gift, His own Holy Spirit—the Spirit of Christian peace, and joy, and love, and holiness—if we ask; if we know that we have nothing of ourselves, and so ask and ask again, and will not let Him go until He blesses us.

There is a stimulating sermon on the golden text, "Ask, and it shall be given you," etc., by Dr. George Matheson, in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES for Dec. 1889, p. 67.

III.

June 15.—Luke xii. 13-21.

The Rich Fool.

The lesson of this memorable and melancholy parable is one that should be impressed on the young heart, it is so very hard to learn in after-life. The pity is that many do not see the necessity of it till the world is too much with them, and then to know is not the same as to do.

A man asked Jesus to settle a dispute about some property. The dispute was between two brothers. Jesus would not interfere. Perhaps He could have made the man more comfortable as far as worldly things go; but then His very mission was to show that true comfort is not in worldly things, worldly prosperity being often the most deadly enemy to true happiness. A man's *life* (there are two words for "life" in Greek, one meaning the lower animal life, the other the nobler life that man lives before God), a man's higher life, is not measured by his acres. Man does not live by bread alone.

Then Christ tells the history of a man who forgot that. His history is a parable; but how real, and how often has it applied! Taking the Bible alone, we have Balaam, Achan, Nabal, and Gehazi in the Old Testament; Judas Iscariot and Ananias in the New. These men were fools utterly, being overwhelmed in their covetousness. But again, to how many does it apply—to how few does it *not* apply, though in a less overwhelming manner—in our daily life! The very phrases that are current in men's mouths testify to it. "What is he *worth*?" they say. And we have heard the remark made as men followed to the grave the body of one who had died in Christ though poor, "It was but little he made out of life."

"Every good gift cometh down from above." To learn that, and never forget it, is the way to rise above covetousness. This rich fool said "*my* fruits" and "*my* barns," and "*my* soul." Like Nabal of old: "Shall I then take *my*

bread and *my* water, and *my* flesh that I have killed for *my* shearers?" (1 Sam. xxv. 11). And so it came to pass that there was no way by which God could teach him that none of it was his except the one way, that last and terrible way, by taking away his life. Paul said to the Corinthians once: "All things are yours;" and he named the "world" and "life" amongst them. But then he added, "Ye are Christ's;" see the "Great Text Commentary" in THE EXPOSITORY TIMES for March 1890, p. 129.

IV.

June 22.—Luke xii. 22-34.

Trust in our Heavenly Father.

This lesson fits in well with the last. But there are some words that need explanation here.

1. "Take no thought." In Old English, *thought* meant *anxiety*. It should now be rendered as in the R. V., "Be not anxious." Ps. lv. 22 has often been appropriately quoted: "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and He shall sustain thee."

2. "Solomon in all his glory," as it appeared to the Queen of Sheba, for example.

3. "The grass . . . is cast into the oven." In the absence of wood, this is the usual method of heating ovens in the East. (*Farrar*.)

4. "Of doubtful mind," *i.e.* distressed, literally *tossed about like ships*.

"Your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things:" that is the Golden Text, and it contains the great subject of the lesson. Why *should* we worry and vex ourselves about food and clothing, and what the future may bring, when our heavenly Father knows that we need these things? Knowing that we need them, He will see that we receive them. It is a warning against worry in worldly things, and it is addressed to God's dear children, from consideration for us and in the tenderest thoughtfulness. "Fear not, *little flock*." It is a lesson in trust.

The rich fool's fatal mistake was that he did not recognise God as a Giver at all. The mistake which God's little flock often make is in not remembering that He is a *constant* Giver. They do not leave God out of account altogether, but they must provide, they think, for the future in case He may forget them; or worry about it if they cannot provide. Christ says, Do not trouble if you cannot provide; and instead of providing, sell that ye have and give alms.

Now this shows that the sin is not in the mere provision for the future, but in that provision which means forgetfulness or distrust of God. Hence improvidence is no sign of trust. Often it is the clearest evidence of as utter a forgetfulness of God as that of the rich fool. He that provideth not for his own hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel. The trustful heart finds a reflection of God's will within, and does that will in cheerful obedience, sometimes by hearty work, sometimes by patient waiting.

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