

The Christian.

ST. JOHN, N. B. JANUARY 1891

EDITORIAL

ON STUDYING THE SCRIPTURES.

With many wishes that THE CHRISTIAN'S readers may enjoy much happiness in beginning the New Year, and that this may prove to them the most joyful and prosperous year they have lived, we recommend to all, especially to the young, a renewed determination of studying the scriptures. It may be said of this study that it is profitable unto all things. One of the encouraging signs of this time is the increased activity of young Christians in the Master's work. A zeal tempered and guided by a knowledge of the word of God is a noble adornment of the young Christian. The gospel, as is clearly set forth in Brother Gates' article in the last CHRISTIAN, is a plain system sent by the loving Saviour to all men, offering them salvation on conditions so simple and plain that all who will can be saved, and all who reject will have no cloak for their sin. After men are saved they need to acquire such a knowledge of the scripture as will furnish them unto all good works. It was a bright gem in Timothy's character that from a child he knew the holy scriptures, which were able to make him wise unto salvation. Having but the Old Testament he read and memorized it—more, he knew it. It is not easy to turn one from what he has examined and knows to be true, when that knowledge has increased with ripening years, and has become the very woof that fills up the opening mind.

A few days ago it was our happy lot to visit a sister confined to bed in her 87th year. She was quite happy. No complaining, but cheerfully waiting to cross the river. She said: "I am quite blind, but then I do not need my sight. Others read for me and attend to my wants. When lying much of the night awake and have spells of ease from pain, I am repeating hymns and chapters from the scriptures, which I memorized when young, and which I never forgot; adding, "If I had thought I would be blind I would have learned more."

At a time and place where there was some excitement over the question whether Christianity or Secularism was most profitable unto men, a pamphlet on the side of the latter fell into our hands. It charged Christ with deceiving his followers by the promise of his speedy return. "He told them," said the writer, "that this generation shall not pass away till I come. But that and many generations since have passed away, and yet he has not come."

Again he told them that "some standing there should not taste death till they would see him coming. But all of them have tasted death hundreds of years ago, and still he has not come." So writes this Secularist against Christ and his religion.

This shows the need of Christians knowing the scriptures so that they can meet and expose crafty men who lie in wait to deceive. Their study is to puzzle Christians, and furnish weapons for those who, from pride and supposed bravery, wrest the scriptures to their own destruction.

Intelligent persons know that prophecy is the most difficult part of scripture to understand, and that the correct understanding of prophecy is not a condition of our salvation, but rather a hearty belief in Jesus as the Son of the living God, and obedience to him. But artful men chose for their purpose the parts of the Bible most likely to be misunderstood.

But now comes the question: Did Jesus break his promise, recorded in Matt. xiv., in Mark xiii., and in Luke xxi.? No, indeed. The above writer assumes that Jesus meant by "this generation"

all the people then living on earth, and on this bare assumption unhesitatingly accuses him of deception and falsehood. Although this is one meaning of the word *generation*, it is its not first meaning, and evidently not Christ's meaning of it here and elsewhere.

In Matt. xxiii:35, 36 Jesus said that all the righteous blood shed from that of Abol to Zacharias would be required of "this generation." Did he mean that all the people then living would be charged with the murder of these men instead of those who had actually killed them hundreds of years before? If "this generation" meant the people then living, then they were the guilty parties although many millions of them had never heard tell of the prophets.

By this generation Jesus meant the Jewish nation, those then living and their fathers, and not all nations then alive. He charged his hearers with following the example of their guilty fathers. They were filling up the measure of their fathers' iniquity, and would certainly share their fathers' punishment. Being Abraham's children they claimed to be God's generation; but not doing the works of Abraham, they were denounced by Jesus as a generation of vipers.

In his lament over Jerusalem Jesus said. "Thou that killeth the prophets . . . how often would I have gathered thy children together even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and you would not." The then inhabitants of Jerusalem were the children of those who had killed the prophets, and these Jesus eagerly sought to gather and to shield and to save from the nation's sins, and from its punishment, but they would not.

After these same children, led by their guilty rulers had murdered the Prince of Life, Peter, with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven, so convinced them of their terrible guilt that they cried out, "What shall we do?" He told them what to do. "And with many other words did he exhort and testify, saying, Save yourselves from this *inward generation*." Three thousand of them obeyed the gospel, and stepped out from the nation's sins, and from the terrible vengeance coming upon it. They were vor joyful in coming under the sheltering wings of that dear Saviour whom they had crucified, but whom God had raised from the dead and at his own right hand made both Lord and Christ.

We now ask: What does infidelity gain from this promise of Jesus Christ?—"this generation (or nation) shall not pass away till all these things be fulfilled." God spoke to the fathers 570 years before by the prophet Jeremiah, saying: *Though I make a full end of all the nations whither I scatter thee; YET WILL I NOT MAKE A FULL END OF THEE.* Jerem. xxx:11 16. He has in these last days spoken to us by his Son, saying this generation (nation) shall not pass away till all be fulfilled, or till the end of time.

Is it true or false that all the ancient nations, among which Israel have been scattered, have passed away? Is it true or false that the Jewish nation has not passed away? Can infidels point us to a man who knows that one drop of Assyrian, Persian, ancient Grecian or Roman blood flows in his veins? Such a man cannot be found! Yet millions of Jews know that in their veins flows the blood of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob! Who but God could instruct Jeremiah over 2,000 years ago to say that all the ancient nations who afflicted the Jewish nations should come to an end. Who but He that knew the end from the beginning could say to the Jewish nation, I will not make a full end of thee? If there were no other proofs of the divinity of the Bible than these two prophecies respecting all other nations and the Jewish nation, they stand to-day in the face of infidelity as two supernatural monuments "that cannot be moved." How suggestive the miracle that astonished Moses

when he was sent to bring the people out of Egypt to be a distinct nation. God has chastised them for their sins, but has not consumed them. The bush burned, but was not consumed. And Jesus says it will not pass away until he comes.

Respecting what Jesus says of some standing here, etc. This narrative is given in Matt. xvi. chap., Mark ix. and Luke ix. In each place it stands as a prophecy of the vision on the mount of transfiguration, a preface and a prophecy to be fulfilled in six days.

The religion of Christ is spiritual, and largely addressed to our spirits or minds, but has enough in it addressed to our senses to show its perfect adaptation to the wants of man, composed, as he is, of body, soul and spirit, as baptism and the Lord's Supper. So, after Jesus had given his disciples much instruction on the Kingdom of God, which they were slow to receive on account of their expectation of a worldly kingdom, He told them that some of them, before their death, would see him coming in his Kingdom. All the apostle could say they had seen the Lord, but those three only could say they had seen him coming in his Kingdom. To give them a miniature exhibition of it Jesus took Peter, James and John up to a high mountain where He, Moses and Elias appeared in glory. The three apostle could, in after years, say to their brethren. "We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of His Majesty, etc., etc. (II. Peter i.16, 17, 18.) They saw his glory and heard the same voice from heaven as at the Jordan when they were with him on the holy mount.

From the scriptures we learn that when the Lord comes he and his redeemed body will be the prominent objects of interest to the universe. One part of this body will have passed through death, the other will be changed, and the two will ascend together to meet the Lord in the air. The everlasting song of that body will be praise to God and the Lamb that was slain and has redeemed them with his blood.

Now, Christ appears on the holy mount as he will then appear. Moses, who died and is now glorified, represents the part of the body who will have passed through death, Elias represents the part who will be changed without dying. These two appeared in glory and spoke of the decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. They spoke not only of his death, but what he would accomplish in his death. Thus they had as full a sight of the Lord's coming as it was possible to have before they tasted death.

What the enemies of the cross deride most are the most glorious truths of the Bible. Young friends, throw deep the buckets and joyfully draw water from the wells of salvation.

Original Contributions.

HAPPY, IF HOLY.

We may read in the prophecy of Malachi, chap. iii., verse 6: "I am the Lord, I change not." But man's ideas of God do not always come up to a level with that grand expression, descriptive of the being and nature of the I AM.

Man's ideas of God are, sometimes, very narrow. It is difficult, if not impossible, for the stream to rise above the fountain, and, so, it may be difficult for man's mind to rise to any just conception of what God is, even with the help of revelation. Do we sometimes think that, as we are, so God is; as are our loves and hates, so does God love and hate; as we are affected by every change in nature, so God is affected by every change in nature? If we do not think of God as being affected by every convulsion in nature, do we think of Him as being