

Dominion Churchman.

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THURSDAY, NOV. 9, 1876.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

After the conquest of Babylon by the Median and Persian powers united, we find the prophet Daniel again raised to the highest offices in the new dominion. His lofty position, and his extensive engagements however, did not in the least diminish his patriotism, or his attachment to the land of his fathers and the temple of his God. There must have been a great deal of state and majesty connected with the presidency of the kingdom of the Chaldeans in those days; and the chief president must have had a large amount of responsibility resting upon him, and a great many matters requiring his close attention; especially when we find him surrounded with so many enemies and rivals who coveted the distinction to which he had been raised, and who succeeded so far as to have him cast into a den of lions. And yet his love for his native land led him to study the prophecies which had then been delivered, respecting the captivity, and to watch the progress of events, as they were daily passing before him, in order to discover if possible any indications of the return of his people to the land of Judah. Great changes had taken place since the captivity; whole empires had crumbled into dust, and had been supplanted by new powers, hitherto almost unknown, and vainly imagined to be too barbarous ever to make head against the governments of Assyria and Babylon, with their well fortified cities and large standing armies. The return of the captives so far as human foresight could determine was one of the most improbable events that could come to pass. And yet Daniel trusts in the God that had predicted deliverance to His people. He had received too many tokens of Divine providential care ever to doubt that God would fail in the fulfilment of His promises to a whole people, and that people the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

There are many remarkable circumstances connected with the prayer of the prophet Daniel, when he understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. We can only glance at one or two. In the first place the distinction

some modern prophets make between prophetic years and ordinary years, is seen to be fallacious. In fact there is no scriptural authority for the practice of some interpreters, in putting a prophetic day for a natural year. This prophecy is unmistakably opposed to a theory so absurd. A comparison of Jer. xxv. 11-12, with Dan. ix. 1-2, plainly shows that when years are intended they are spoken of as such. Interpreters attempt to justify their principle from a reference to Ez. iv. 6; but an attentive consideration of that passage will show that when a day is mentioned, we are not justified in understanding a year, but merely that in this instance Ezekiel was appointed to lie on his side a certain number of days for a sign to the house of Israel, to represent the same number of the years of the iniquity of Israel and Judah. Another circumstance to be noticed as an example for ourselves, is the fact of the prophet praying for the accomplishment of what God had specially promised; such prayer being an expression of faith in God's truthfulness; just as the petition in the Lord's prayer, "Thy kingdom come," is an expression of faith, as well as a recognition of the conditional nature of the promises. We must also notice the result of the prayer, as regards Daniel himself; for he was rewarded with the most definite prophecy which had ever issued from the fountain head of all foreknowledge, in reference to the coming of the Messiah, and his being cut off, though not for Himself. And here also, we have a confirmation of our remarks above, in reference to the prophetic year, although to the reader of the authorized version, the contrary would rather seem to be the case. The word translated "weeks," denotes hebdomads, whether of days or years, periods of seven; as the version of Theodotion has it, "Seventy hebdomads are decreed" (apportioned).

We may remark upon the strangeness of the arrangements in our new Lectionary, which requires us to begin the first lesson for Evensong at the ninth verse of the chapter. It is indeed one of the most magnificent passages in the whole Bible—perhaps the most magnificent of all; and beginning at the ninth verse, its sublimity bursts upon us in all its lofty grandeur, with a suddenness which makes it perfectly overwhelming; and yet the passage contains allusions so distinct, to the former part of the chapter, that the whole ought to be read as a Lesson. The new Lectionary is in many ways a decided improvement upon the former one, but its omissions are very often unaccountable, and very considerably detract from the merit of the arrangement.

The particular teaching of the church for this Sunday, has direct reference to the practice of good works, as the devout service which the church, the household of Christ, renders to her Head.

The COLLECT brings this before us in an exceedingly forcible manner, as the godliness to which the Christian household should aspire, we being no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, which embraces priests and people, learned and unlearned, old and young. And the Almighty Father guides and governs His household by Jesus Christ, the members of it being His servants, and His children by adoption and grace.

To afford the fullest scope for the practice of works of piety and benevolence, we are taught to ask that the church may be free from all adverse influences; for, although adversity is oftentimes useful in converting some wrong tendency, or in shading some tender grace; yet a prosperous state of the church outwardly enables her to practice many works, and to expand her borders in a way that could scarcely be accomplished under less favourable circumstances.

THE EPISTLE carries out the same principle, and refers particularly to the production of those points of godliness which are prayed for in the Collect:—"Being confident of this very thing that He who had begun a good work in you will perform it unto the day of Jesus Christ." And the continuation of the Apostles' prayer is in full agreement therewith:—"That your love may abound yet more and more, in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may be sincere, and without offence, till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God." The idea of the church as a household is fully recognized in the expression of gratitude to which St. Paul gives utterance for the Philippians' fellowship in the Gospel, and the anxiety he manifests for their spiritual progress.

THE GOSPEL teaches us how to manifest our love in our dealings with our fellow members of the household of the church, and urges the duty of Christian forgiveness, by showing that a brother's trespasses should be forgiven, not seven times only, but seventy times seven; four hundred and ninety times. There were those in the early church who limited the number of times to seventy and seven; but that is not our Lord's meaning. In the illustration of the duty, we have here one of the most famous of our Blessed Lord's Parables. It is one of the most impressive, and one of the most pathetic of all the discourses to which the Saviour of man gave utterance while on earth.

The servant who took his fellow servant by the throat, saying, "Pay me that thou owest," is an example of the class of men who demand the uttermost as an act of justice, forgetting entirely that man cannot be said to be just if he is not humane. A constant sense of forgiveness received from God is essential to a proper state of mind for the