

proved irresistible; he told his trouble. But what were the surprise and joy of the devoted wife to find in her little careless husband, an awakened sinner, humbled and bowed down under a deep consciousness of his depravity, guilt, danger, and helplessness. She wept over him tears of affection, sympathy, and joy, and strove to console him, in directing him to the Lord Jesus Christ, as an all-sufficient and willing Saviour. They then bowed together before the throne of grace, imploring mercy and grace from the source of all good. He was now as teachable as a child; and having a faithful helper and counsellor, in one who had found mercy; he sought the Divine favour. She learned from him, that while he was at work that day in the field, the Divine Spirit had been working powerfully upon him, in bringing his sins before his mind, and in showing him the danger to which he was exposed; exciting in him an abhorrence of his sinfulness, and the most fearful apprehensions of the wrath of God. But this Divine agent does not bring to the birth and not bring forth. He hastened on His work; and the poor man was shortly enabled to rejoice in God, through faith in the Son of His love. His heart now, like that of his pious wife, being filled with the love of God, their views and feelings were the same; and the question was mooted, "What can we do to save the souls of our neighbors?" They agreed to open their house for the preaching of the Gospel; the minister, I think his name was Fisher, was requested to preach to them; and the neighbors were invited to attend. God was with them, in the power and grace of His Spirit. Sinners were converted. A church was formed, and increased. The congregation grew larger, until the place bore me no constraint for them. Then the worthy couple took down the gable end of their house, and enlarged it, that there might be room for all that would attend. And the good thus called into existence, remained; for, I understood Mr. Fisher, in conclusion, to say, That though his charge included several country congregations yet the most pious church, and the most numerous congregation, to which he preached, were the church and congregation, which worshipped in the house of this pious and devoted pair. In recommending the example of this pious woman to all Christians in similar circumstances, it may be remarked, that we should not limit the Holy One in respect to time or manner. As a faithful God, He will grant the desire of the righteous; but as a Sovereign, He has the right to fix the time, and appoint the manner of doing so. It is true that He is not extreme to mark what is amiss in those who are sincere in heart; but the closely we adhere to His word, and the more strictly we keep our position as supplicants before Him, the more hope and confidence we shall feel when we call upon his name. Let all share our kind and constant regards; but let the members of our households especially know, that our desire and prayer for them are, that they may be saved; leaving the time and manner in which our prayers shall be answered, exclusively with God. "Men ought always to pray and not to faint."

[FOR THE CHRISTIAN OBSERVER.]

THE MYSTERY OF THE PRESENT DISPENSATION.

No. I.

In the Epistle of Paul to the Ephesians, chap. III. 1-12, we read, "For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to youward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; as I wrote afore in a few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the Gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God, given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world, (age) hath been hid in God, who created all things in Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places, might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord; in whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

Rom. XVI. 25, 26; "Now to him that is of power to establish you according to my Gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but is now made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandments of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith.

1 Cor. II. 7, 8; "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory; which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Col. I. 25-27;—"Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but is made manifest to his saints; to whom God would make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you the hope of glory.

Rev. X. 7;—"But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound the mystery of God, should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets.

Chap. XI. 15;—"And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven saying: the kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever."

In these passages we read of a "dispensation even the mystery," which has been hidden from former ages; and which was made known by revelation to Paul; and which will be finished when the seventh angel begins to sound, and when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of our Lord. The question now is, What does the Apostle mean by this mystery, this dispensation, which was unknown to the saints of former days, and which is to be concluded when the seventh angel begins to sound?

1. It cannot be the Gospel of the Son of God; because that was made known to our first parents; preached more clearly and fully to Abraham; and was so well understood by the venerable patriarch, That our Lord said to the Jews, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." Gal. iii. 8, John viii. 56.

2. Neither can it be the glorious kingdom of the Messiah as the son and successor of David; for this is the great subject of the predictions of the Old Testament. Dr. John Pye Smith remarks, that "the prophecies respecting the kingdom of the Messiah, its extension and duration, and the happiness of his innumerable subjects, are in a much greater proportion than those which describe his humiliation to sufferings, and his dreadful death." This certainly is true; and the minds of the Jews were so occupied with the predictions of the triumphant kingdom, that they quite overlooked the prophecies of his sufferings and death.

3. Nor can it be the history of our Lord's miraculous birth, his ignominious death, or his resurrection from the dead. These things were clearly revealed. So clearly and fully were they made known, that the wonder with us is, how any could read the Old Testament and not see them. It is true that the predictions of the Messiah's death and those of his glorious kingdom appear, at first sight, to oppose each other; but this arises solely from not understanding the Divine dispensations: first one of humiliation, and then one of glory. Isa. vii. 14; liii. 2-12.

4. Nor can it be the participation of Gentiles with the Jews in the enjoyment of spiritual blessings through faith in Jesus Christ. This was clearly and fully revealed. In writing to the Galatians, Paul says: "Know ye therefore that they which are of faith the same are the children of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the Gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed. So then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." By turning to the history of the patriarch, we find this cheering truth repeatedly announced to him and his descendants. "And in thee shall all families in the earth be blessed." "And in thy seed shall all the nations of earth be blessed." The inspired Apostle teaches us that the blessing here promised, includes both the justification of the sinner, and the gift of the Holy Spirit; in other words, it includes all the benefits of redeeming grace.

5. Nor can this mystery merely signify the admission of the Gentile believers to the privileges of the church, without subscribing to Jewish rites. This question was contested in the beginning of the present dispensation; and disposed of by apos-