

A STRANGER HERE.

*"The name of the one was Gershom; for he said,
'I have been an alien in a strange land.'"*—*Exodus*
xviii. 3.

A stranger here, a Gershomite by grace,
Because in heaven is now my name and place;
Called from above, a heavenly man by birth
(Who once was but a citizen of earth),
A pilgrim here, I seek a heavenly home
And portion in the ages yet to come,
Where all the saints of every clime shall meet,
And each, with all, shall all the ransomed greet;
But oh, the height of bliss, my Lord, shall be,
To owe it all and share it all with Thee!

Thou art "the Image," in man's lowly guise,
Of the invisible to mortal eyes;
Come from His bosom, from the heavens above,
We see in Thee incarnate, "God is love;"
Thy lips the Father's name to us reveal:
What burning power in all Thy words we feel,
When to our raptured hearts we hear Thee tell
The heavenly glories known by Thee so well!
The prophet, not of law, but sovereign grace,
What glory shines in Thy unveiled face!
Unlike to him, whose countenance severe
Made the beholders shrink with slavish fear,—
Thou dost attract the wretched and the weak,
Thy joy the wand'ers and the lost to seek.
Physician of sick souls, Thy skill divine
Heals the most desperate cases—such as mine.
The leper fears not to approach Thy feet,
The publicans and harlots welcome meet:
"Whosoever will," Thy all-inviting word;
"Whosoever will,"—I come, most gracious Lord:

The Bread of Life, the living waters give ;—
 Lord, I believe, I drink, I feed, I live !

And oh, Thou art the Lamb, the Holy One :
 I see Thee on the cross for sin atone ;
 That precious stream of water and of blood,
 Which from Thy opened side so freely flowed,
 Has put away my sins of scarlet dye,
 And washed my every stain, and brought me nigh ;
 So clean, that through the veil I enter in,
 For there Thy blood appears, and not my sin.
 And Thou art now my great High Priest on high,
 No more like Aaron's carnal line to die :
 The Lord has sworn that Thou His Priest shall be
 Through the long ages of eternity, —
 The King of Righteousness, the King of Peace ;
 We upward look and all our terrors cease.
 Our names are on Thy shoulders and Thy heart ;
 Thou hast been tempted, and with faithful art
 Thou dost the succour grant that now we need,
 As on our weary way, Thy saints proceed :
 There's not one step of all the desert road,
 There's not a sorrow, or a heavy load,
 But with a human heart and pitying eyes,
 Thou dost in tenderest mercy sympathize.

I am a stranger here ; I do not crave
 A home on earth, that gave Thee but a grave ;
 I wish not now its jewels to adorn
 My brows, which gave Thee but a crown of thorn.
 Thy cross has severed ties which bound me here, —
 Thyself my treasure in a heavenly sphere.
 No earthly city (by man's labour built,
 Whose greatness is but congregated guilt ;
 Where mammon holds its toiling myriads bound,
 And sordid slaves are pleasure's votaries found ;
 In whose foul streets walk closely, side by side,
 Most abject want and rank luxurious pride ;

Where self reigns lord in temple, hall and mart)
 Has now a hold on my enfranchised heart.
 A freed man now, whom truth indeed makes free,
 There's no continuing city here for me ;
 A city yet to come, with longing eyes
 I now am seeking, built above the skies ;
 Whose strong foundations God Himself has laid,
 Like a fair bride in whitest robes arrayed.
 Without the camp—where Christ was crucified,
 And the Sin-offering for His people died,
 To sanctify them from this world below,—
 To Him, and His reproach, I gladly go ;
 For all, compared with Him, I dross esteem,
 My one desire is to be found in Him.



THE CHRISTIAN NOT OF THE WORLD.

(COLOSSIANS II.)

There is practically one subject in the above Scripture, but divided into two parts : one, Christ as contrasted with all the thoughts of the world ; and the other, the true place of the Christian as in Him. It is a new place, even in Christ. He begins by pressing on them a warning against all the philosophy and Judaism abroad. They really ran into the same channel ; and this is connected with the second point referred to, because they belong to this world. Christ is put, first, in opposition to all that ; and, secondly, he unfolds that what is in Christ is in a *risen* Christ, outside of this world. There are the same things current now, for people are turning back to "the rudi-

ments of the world." All this infidelity and ritualism have just the same root, though not the same shape ; both belong to this world, and are what man's mind and imagination, as a child of Adam, can take up. The contrast is Christ risen—Christ out of this world.

This chapter brings out both. They are the workings of man's mind and imagination—what man can do ; whereas the moment you get what God has revealed in Christ, and the place Christ is in, man has nothing to do with it. They are the rudiments of this world : the one is reasoning or mental flesh ; and the other is imaginative flesh. This ritualism—Christ offered every Sunday, &c. is as if there was not one offering for sin. But I find " By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified " (Heb. x. 14 ; see also ver. 10). Then it is not perfected ! This makes all the difference. My imagination and fancy can take hold of these things, or the mind rejects them ; but they are the denial that Christ has finished the work of redemption.

We are very little aware (though they are quite different parts of human nature) how it all has to do with man, i. e., with man not delivered from himself, and having Christ instead. The apostle first warns them, and then shews what the real thing is, that is, Christ in heavenly places. God had taken up human nature among the Jews to see if it could be brought into connection with Him ; and it could not. It was tried, in a certain

sense ; but God had to hide Himself behind a veil : if there were no veil, you must be able to stand in the light, as God is light. God never came out, but He set up a gorgeous worship, and He gave the law as a perfect rule for human nature, for man as he is. The question is, has man kept it ? No one has. Where a person is going on as under Judaism, he will take all the gorgeous part of it, and talk of the law, without the consciousness that he has not kept it. Of course numbers fear the law when their conscience is awakened ; and, where there is truth of conscience under such a system, they are always unhappy. Man's mind takes its own course, and ends necessarily without finding God. "Canst thou by searching find out God ?" (Job xi. 7). Instead of that, you get God fully revealed in Christ, and man (i. e., the believer) brought to God on the ground of His death (1 Pet. iii. 18). Christianity supplants the darkness of the natural mind (I do not say soul), which could have nothing to do with God (1 Cor. ii. 14), and which, take it in its fullest, broadest sense, is necessarily atheism, as it never reaches to God, confining itself to what the mind can find out ; and that is what they are all doing here.

The apostle was anxious about them, because they were constantly mixed up with these things—living in the midst of these Greek philosophers. Although he had never been there, yet his heart knew experimentally by the power of the Holy

Ghost what the snares were, and he says, "I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you." He felt the dangers that were there, and he looked on these saints as belonging to Christ, whom he so loved and laboured for, and he shewed interest in them.

Verse 2. Here I get the understanding of the mystery of God, and that is another thing altogether. It is not the way we are accustomed to understand the word "mystery," as a thing not to be found out; but it is a thing only known by revelation—it is not known save to the initiated. It is that which by divine revelation and teaching we know, and it brings us into a totally new world.

You get, then, another important thing needed. Supposing I was the greatest scientist in the world, there is not a bit of love about it; it is connected with nobody, and there is not an atom of soul-work in it. Therefore God cannot be known, for God is love. Faith gives us an inlet into all the things that His love has done. Science is as cold as ice—dead cold; you cannot let a bit of feeling in. There is no relationship with anything in the world or any One above it. (Ver. 2.) But revelation lets in "To the acknowledgement (or 'full knowledge'—*epignōsis*) of the mystery of God"—God the source of their life, God the One who dwells there by the Holy Ghost among them, and gives the feeling that flows from the relationship into which they are brought. The mind may get developed, but there is no moral

motive in it—it is not in its nature. The Christian acts by a motive. Science does not touch the ground that the soul is on. What has feeling to do with the discovery of how the physical nature works? In Christ I learn the blessed truth, that God dwells in me (i. e., the believer) by the power of the Spirit in the divine nature, and I have communion with the Father and the Son. I get into a new world altogether.

Then I rise “unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding.” Understanding of what? Of how animals were born? No; of the hidden mystery. I get my heart opened to see all the scope of God’s plans and counsels in Christ. You get the “full assurance of faith” (Heb. x. 22), (that is not science!) that “he that hath received his testimony, hath set to his seal that God is true.” Science says, “I think this, and I think that”—such is all it has. I find adequate certainty about all common things, but if I have the testimony of God, I get the positive certainty of faith—the only certainty we have. I have set to my seal that God is true—He cannot but be true.

I get another “full assurance,” and that is “hope” (Heb. vi. 11), for there you have the affections engaged, and the things realized. It gives much greater reality—the very acquaintance imparts great reality. I am going to be in the same glory with Christ, and that is the full assurance of hope. Am I going to be there? Yes, of course, if you are a believer, and you have the

earnest of it in your hearts. "Earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven" (2 Cor. v. 2)—that is the full assurance of hope.

The third thing goes much higher—"Full assurance of understanding"—for it is part of God's plan and counsel in Christ; and if we are not there, Christ's glory is not complete, and it cannot be otherwise. We have the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. ii. 16). If I have the full assurance of hope, then I see these things as a part of God's plan and Christ's glory, and that is the full assurance of understanding.

"To the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, wherein are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." There is nothing so certain in the world as the revelation of God, known only by redemption. Now you belong to another world, to which these things (philosophy, Judaism, etc.) do not belong. Of course there is God's creation, but it is His first creation; it passes away, or we perish from it. It is a wonderful creation, but that is not being reconciled to God, and being in the new creation. In this mystery are all God's wisdom and knowledge—all summed up—all His counsels there, to which the natural mind has not even an entrance, and never can, for "they are spiritually discerned." It rests on the revelation of God. The soul finds its affections in the new creation; it has a world it belongs to, and "they that say such things declare plainly that they seek

a country." You get the figure of it in Abraham. God gave him none inheritance in the land, no, not so much as to set his foot on ; yet He promised that He would give it to him for a possession, and that is just where we are, "As having nothing, and yet possessing all things." The world attracts Lot's heart in the character of its efforts at grandeur ; but Abram was a stranger and pilgrim, and he says, "If thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left." (Gen. xiii) Lot goes down to the plain just ripening for judgment, and pitches his tent near Sodom ; then he gets nearer and nearer, till he is snatched out of it. As soon as Lot had gone down and chosen this prosperous place, then God says to Abram, "Lift up now thine eyes," etc. As soon as he had completely given up the world in heart, then the promised land rose up before him. He realized the thing that was promised to him. It was separation to God in faith. He got the full assurance of hope.

Now we go on to learn where the Christian is, not yet what he is. "Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." It is Christ up in heaven in another world. "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." Here I find the actual starting-place, and this is, that in Christ all the fulness of the Godhead bodily is revealed. I have the perfect revelation of the fulness of the Godhead in Christ. I have nothing new to look

after (save of course to know it better), for I cannot go beyond the fulness of the Godhead, and it is revealed to me. In Christ,—in that Man—more than man, for He was God too—has been the revelation of the fulness of the Godhead. It requires eyes to see it ; but to faith, which saw through the veil of His humiliation when here, there was not a trait in His character, an act in His conduct, or an expression of the feeling of His heart going out to the misery around Him, that was not the revelation of the Godhead ; the Father was revealed, as in John xiv., all was revealed, and nothing else to seek after, except to know it better.

Then I get the other blessed side (ver. 10), “ In Him dwelleth all the *completeness* of the Godhead bodily, and ye are *complete* in Him ” (just the same word in the original). Yes, and I say I am *complete* in Him before God—God is *completely* revealed to me in Christ ; but what about you ? Can you stand before Him ? I am before Him complete in Christ, with not a single thing wanting. This makes it such a full statement of what the mystery is—the positive relation of all the fulness of the Godhead in One who has come close to me in love, that I may know He is love. When Christ was in this world, He did not seek anything great or grand for Himself. What did He seek ? Sorrow, poverty, misery. That is what God has been doing in this world—perfect love (and power too) relieving distress—love that brought down perfect goodness to where I was ; that is what God is to

me. Perfect goodness in the midst of all the sorrow and misery of this world, and the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in Him bodily! Ah, poor science, it is a long way off from that! It can talk about protoplasm, microbes, etc., but about divine love, never!

The mystery of Christ shows me this completeness without going to outside things—not up in the clouds to reach it if we can, but brought down to me here. I am complete in Christ, but as I find God perfectly revealed (none of us can measure it, of course, or even go through it—we have to search it out, and grow in it) then I find this on the other side: How can I stand before Him, and grasp all that? Are you fit to be in His presence? Yes; I say, “Giving thanks unto the Father, which *hath* made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col. i. 12). That is the place you are brought into, just as the completeness of the Godhead was brought to us in Christ. Then I find that I am complete according to all God’s thoughts. Just as God stood in Christ before man, man stands in Christ before God. It is not merely philosophy spelling out what has been all around us since the creation, it is the One who created it all; and besides this, I find my personal blessedness in it. I am complete in Him, I have everything I want, and that I want for eternity. “Both He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one” (Heb. ii. 11)—all one set. What life have I got? Christ.

What righteousness? Christ. What glory? Christ. Just in one position and state. How can I tell how much God loves me? This I can tell you, that you are loved as Christ is loved, as He tells us Himself: "I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it, and the love wherewith Thou has loved Me may be in them, and I in them" (John xvii. 26). And *we* know it now, for He dwells in us, and the Holy Ghost brings down this love into our hearts, "the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Rom. v. 5). By and bye *the world* will know it, as He says that the world may know that Thou . . . hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me" (John xvii. 23).

Now the apostle turns to a special thing which was their difficulty then, that, while he gives the whole scope of God's mind in the mystery, he goes down and deals with this fleshy religion. The Colossians were accustomed to be in the midst of these things. The Jewish system was bringing out for us whether man in the flesh could have to do with God. How many souls there are now under the law in their hearts (they are lawless if they are not)! You must get the knowledge of sin by the law, if rightly applied (Rom. iii. 20). It is man, as responsible man, getting a perfect rule of what he ought to be, and circumcision is merely the expression of that—death of the flesh. All that was shadowed forth in those things you have in Christ.

The apostle turns more to details to shew

where we are as Christians (ver. 11). A totally new thing it is—the putting off the body of the flesh. They never had circumcision in the wilderness, not till they crossed the Jordan—a figure of our dying with Christ. Gilgal was the place where they rolled away the reproach of the world (Josh. v.) I get the same here. Before, it was a circumcision made with hands; now it is without: I have the true circumcision. Instead of the mere outward ritual of the thing, I have the thing itself; I am complete in Christ. How so? Why *I* am dead and gone! I have put off the old man altogether; I am not speaking of carrying it out: this you get in 2 Corinthians iv. 10. A risen Christ is my life, all connection with this world is gone. I am dead to sin, and alive to God. I have put off the body of the flesh, I have died with Christ. I reckon myself dead; I have got a risen Christ as my life; to faith then I have done with this flesh—done with it altogether. I have got this new thing; I am in it (of course I am in this poor earthly tabernacle still, but) I do not belong to this world; I have died through the death of Christ. It is not merely saying you must die—saying “you must” does not give a thing. If you have died with Christ, you are risen with Him—you have left it all behind. It is the very character and meaning of baptism. With Christ I died, I am baptised to Christ’s death. Here am I, a living man, and I go through death with Christ (an out-

ward sign, of course)—a person who has gone with Christ into His grave, and come up out of it again. He passed out of the condition he was in here as a man on the earth into a totally new place—God raised Him from the dead. You then get, “Wherein also ye are risen with Him,” etc. As a Christian you are risen. I have got into this new state ; I say, That is myself, for I am a Christian.

And now we get much further light on our condition. “And you being dead in your sins” (ver. 13). I was living in sins in the other, but the truth of “dead in sins” goes a good deal farther : alive as regards my sins, but dead as regards God. This goes farther, and takes up the nature that likes doing them. There is not one single thing in your heart naturally with which God could link Himself. “They that are in the flesh cannot please God.” There is nothing in heaven your nature would like.

I get now, not merely “quickened,” but “quickened together with him (ver. 13) ; because, supposing I am alive, I may be spiritually alive, or I may be in Romans vii. Any one there says, “I think Christ is precious to me, and I love His word and His people,” but he is examining himself to find out if he is in the new creation. Like the prodigal before he met the father ; but this is not quickened together with Christ—quickened, no doubt, and when I speak of being quickened in that way, it is the divine operation of a new life in

my soul. But quickened together with Christ is different. Where do I see Christ Himself? Not as quickener, but as quickened. Christ as man has been raised from the dead. He died under our sins—for them; He went on unto death for us, and God has raised Him up, and, supposing I am a believer, I am raised up with Him. If I look at myself, it is as raised with Christ, as it says here, "Quickened together with him." It looks at Christ as a dead man, but that in coming down to death, He put away my sins, and therefore I am raised with Him. It is not merely the fact that I have life; I have life in a new condition where Christ is. I have got into a new place before God—Christ's place—and all my sins are left on the other side of Christ's grave. I do not own the old man: it is the horrid thing that has been deceiving me.

There are two more things I would just mention. There are these ordinances—all "blotted out." All the things the flesh can do in order to gain acceptance are dead in the flesh that did them. Where do I find Christ now that we are risen? Where do I find Christ in the Lord's supper? It is His death. "Bringing Christ into the elements," as people say; there is no such thing, for it is a dead Christ. The shed blood shews forth His death, and there is no such Christ now. After His resurrection He is alive, death can have no more dominion over Him. And so baptism, as to its signification; it is unto His death: I have

gone down with Christ to death, and I am risen with Him.

Only one thing more. In order to bring us thus complete in Him, there were other things against us—these “principalities and powers” (ver. 15). Christ has destroyed Satan’s power in the cross; I was a living man in sin—that is gone. Then all those ordinances I was bound to—they are gone. Well, then, Satan’s power (not that he has not power)—Christ has triumphed over him, “Through death destroyed him that had the power of death, that is the devil” (Heb. ii. 14); so death has lost its power too. The cross of Christ has closed the history of the old man, and of all its associations. I was a slave of sin, “I am quickened together with him”—a slave to ordinances, they are “nailed to his cross”—a slave to Satan, his power is destroyed. I am risen with Christ beyond these things, and that is where the Christian is. I am going to have an everlasting holiday: I have it even now in spirit. I am going to God’s rest in heaven. I do not keep days, for this is going back to heathenism. Do you think the sun going round will make them keep days in heaven? It is an everlasting holiday; it is only in our hearts now, for if we follow Christ, we learn its sorrows and griefs too, for He was “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” We are taken out of all the speculation of philosophy, for we are in a world into which it cannot get.

Now, beloved friends, are your hearts ready to accept such a Christianity? The flesh clings to what the flesh likes—clings to the world, and that which Satan has power over us by, and therefore there is still the combating. But are you content with this? I do not talk about realization; but are you content to take the path which Christ walked as your path?—to take up your cross daily and follow Him? It looks bitter to the flesh, for it is another world that the flesh can have nothing to say to, even in thought. We shall fail in many things; but are you content to have done with the world into which you were born—to be dead out of it? It is the character and essence of what Christianity really is. My place is, as a Christian, come up out of Christ's grave. Are you content to take such a Christianity as that? You will never escape the wiles of the devil—either philosophy or Ritualism—you have not got what takes you out of their sphere and dominion. It is the wiles of the devil we have to stand against, not his power—resist him (see James iv. 7; 1 Peter v. 9). We have still that allowed in us, in our lives, which Satan can use and get hold of. You say I must have done with this world that does not want Christ; but if I am risen with Christ, I say I have done with it. The more we go on, the more we shall see it is what is needed. If we are not using the power of Christ in that way, we shall not succeed. If we are risen with Christ, there is a world that the life belongs to, and a world that the flesh

cannot touch. Is my heart living for the world where Christ is gone, or for this world?

The Lord give us to see Him so precious, that "those things that were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ" (Phil. iii. 7). It is all very easy with a single eye, but "a double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." It must be a thorough thing.



THE WASTER.

Luke xiv. and xv. are, in one sense, very happy chapters to dwell upon, seeing how the Lord visited our world, and how we are to visit His world; how nothing in our world pleased Him, and everything in His own. It should be so with us. If we are right-minded we cannot find a home here. Man's apostate condition has built this world, and it is a painful thing to build a house and not be happy in it, yet it should be so with us. You have built a house here, and Christ has built a house in the heavens. Do you cultivate the mind of a stranger in this world and of a citizen in the heavens? (cf. 1 Pet. ii. 11; and Phil. iii. 20—for "conversation," in the latter, read "citizenship" or "commonwealth").

After this wonderful moral scenery, we enter on chap. xvi.—a continuation of the same scene. This chapter is one of the most serious in this gospel. The Lord begins by the parable of the unjust steward, and before we go further let me call your attention to the word "wasted," in the case of the prodigal. It was just what he had done, and it is the business of this parable to show

that the elder brother may do just what the younger did. He may be a very respectable waster—there are hundreds of thousands of such in the world, and high in the credit of the world they stand—but, weighed in God's balances, they are just as much *wasters* as was the dissolute prodigal. If we do not carry ourselves as stewards of God we are wasters. If I am using myself, and what I have, as if it were *my own*, in the divine reckoning I am a *waster*. This lays the axe deep at the root of every tree. The elder brother thought he was not a waster; but let me ask you, if you are living for this world, and using what you have as if it were your own, are you not an unfaithful steward, and if so, are you not a waster? Here is a steward. We are not told *how* he spent his money, but it is enough to know that he was not faithful to his master. Then we see how the Lord goes on to draw out the reasoning of a man like that. He lived for this world, laid plans about his history in this world, and not in the next. The moral is beautifully laid to you and to me. As that man laid out his plans for *this* world, so do *you* lay out your plans for Christ's future world. If you live to yourself, do not you deny your stewardship to Jesus? Then the Pharisees who heard Him derided Him. To be sure they must! It was a heavenly principle, and *they* were covetous. Covetousness is living for this world, and we are so far covetous, as we are laying our plans for this world. Now when you find corruptions in yourself, what do you do? Do not let corruptions lead you to give up Christ, but to put on your armour. The Pharisees derided Him, and what did the Lord say to them? "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men." This is just what we were saying. The elder brother may be highly

esteemed among men, but "that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God."

We are now introduced to the parable of the rich man. Tell me, has this passage been rather repulsive to you than attractive? There seems something rather repulsive in it, but let us look at it. Observe the difference between the rich man and the prodigal. The prodigal "came to himself" *before* it was too late, the rich man after the door was shut. The prodigal was dissolute and abandoned, and when he came to himself he thought of his *sin*. The rich man came to himself in the place of judgment, and did *not* think of his sins but of his misery. The prodigal came to himself in the midst of his misery *here*, the rich man in the midst of torment *there*.

That is all the difference. The prodigal said, I will go back; what a sinner and a rebel son I have been! There was nothing of that gracious stirring in the spirit of the rich man when he lifted up his head in flames. The prodigal had not to finish the first sentence; his father answered him on the spot, and put on him a ring and the best robe, and killed the fatted calf; but the rich man cried again and again. It was *too late*! Here is the end of the respectable waster. Why do I call him a waster? Will you tell me he called himself a steward of God, while he was living sumptuously every day with a saint of God lying at his gate? I am bold to say you and I are just the same if we are living to ourselves. This man *died* a respectable waster, full of honour and gratification. He had no misery to call him to himself. Have you ever contrasted these two pictures? It has changed this Scripture from repulsion into attraction.