

Church) such as Rabinowicz has tried, in a truly humble and unambitious spirit, to supply. It may not yet be God's time to grant full success to such efforts; the nearest way is not always God's way (Exod. xiii. 17), and we know that in the Apostolic Age the *Minim* or Jewish Christians were bitterly opposed by their non-Christian brethren. But the cause represented by Rabinowicz, if checked now, will sooner or later flourish again, and meantime there is abundant instruction for thoughtful students of the Scriptures in the various documents published under Prof. Delitzsch's superintendence, by Deichert of Erlangen. It may be truly said that they carry us back into the days of the Acts of the Apostles.

T. K. CHEYNE.

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS.

VI.

THE RECONCILING SON.

"For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should all the fulness dwell; and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, *I say*, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens. And you, being in time past alienated and enemies in your mind in your evil works, yet now hath He reconciled in the body of His flesh through death."—Col. i. 19–22 (Rev. Ver.).

THESE words correspond to those which immediately precede them, inasmuch as they present the same sequence, and deal with Christ in His relation to God, to the universe, and to the Church. The strata of thought are continuous, and lie here in the same order as we found them there. There we had set forth the work of the pre-incarnate Word as well as of the incarnate Christ; here we have mainly the reconciling power of His cross proclaimed as reaching to every corner of the universe, and as culminating in its operations on the believing souls to whom Paul speaks. There we had the fact that He was the image of God laid

as basis of His relation to men and creatures; here that fact itself apprehended in somewhat different manner, namely, as the dwelling in Him of all "fulness," is traced to its ground in the "good pleasure" of the Father, and the same Divine purpose is regarded as underlying Christ's whole reconciling work. We observe, also, that all this section with which we have now to deal is given as the explanation and reason of Christ's pre-eminence. These are the principal links of connection with the previous words, and having noted them, we may proceed to attempt some imperfect consideration of the overwhelming thoughts here contained.

I. As before, we have Christ in relation to God. "It was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should all the fulness dwell."

Now, we may well suppose from the use of the word "fulness" here, which we know to have been a very important term in later full-blown Gnostic speculations, that there is a reference to some of the heretical teachers' expressions, but such a supposition is not needed either to explain the meaning, or to account for the use of the word.

"The fulness"—what fulness? I think, although it has been disputed, that the language of the next chapter (ii. 9), where we read "In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," should settle that.

It seems most improbable that with two out of three significant words the same, the ellipse should be supplied by anything but the third. The meaning then will be—the whole abundance, or totality of Divine powers and attributes. That is, to put it in homelier words, that all that Divine nature in all its sweet greatness, in all its infinite wealth of tenderness and power and wisdom, is embodied in Jesus Christ. We have no need to look to heavens above or to earth beneath for fragmentary revelations of God's character. We have no need to draw doubtful inferences as to what God is from the questionable teachings of nature, or from

the mysteries of human history with its miseries. No doubt these do show something of Him to observant hearts, and most to those who have the key to their meaning by their faith in a clearer revelation. At sundry times and in divers manners, God has spoken to the world by these partial voices, to each of which some syllables of His name have been committed. But He has put His whole name in that messenger of a New Covenant by whom He has finally declared His whole character to us, even His Son, in whom "it was the good pleasure of the Father that all the fulness should dwell."

The word rendered "dwell" implies a permanent abode, and may have been chosen in order to oppose a view which we know to have prevailed later, and may suspect to have been beginning to appear thus early, namely, that the union of the Divine and the human in the person of Christ was but temporary. At all events, emphasis is placed here on the opposite truth that that indwelling does not end with the earthly life of Jesus, and is not like the shadowy and transient incarnations of Eastern mythology or speculation—a mere assumption of a fleshly nature for a moment, which is dropped from the re-ascending deity, but that, for evermore, manhood is wedded to divinity in the perpetual humanity of Jesus Christ.

And this indwelling is the result of the Father's good pleasure. Adopting the supplement in the Authorized and Revised Versions, we might read "the Father pleased"—but without making that change, the force of the words remains the same. The Incarnation and whole work of Christ are referred to their deepest ground in the will of the Father. The word rendered "pleased" implies both counsel and complacency; it is both pleasure and good pleasure. The Father determined the work of the Son, and delighted in it. Caricatures intentional or unintentional of New Testament teaching have often represented it as making

Christ's work the means of pacifying an unloving God and moving Him to mercy. That is no part of the Pauline doctrine. But he, as all his brethren, taught that the love of God is the cause of the mission of Christ, even as Christ Himself had taught that "God so loved the world that He sent His Son." On that Rock-foundation of the will—the loving will of the Father, is built the whole work of His Incarnate Son. And as that work was the issue of His eternal purpose, so it is the object of His eternal delight. That is the wonderful meaning of the word which fell gently as the dove that settled on His head, and lay on His locks wet from His baptism, like a consecrating oil—"This is My beloved Son, in whom *I am well pleased.*" He willed that so He should be; He delighted that so He was. Through Christ, the Father purposed that His fulness should be communicated to us, and through Christ the Father rejoices to pour His abundance into our emptiness, that we may be filled with all the fulness.

II. Again, we have here, as before, Christ and the Universe, of which He is not only Maker, Sustainer, and Lord, but through "the blood of His cross" reconciles "all things unto Himself."

Probably these same false teachers had dreams of reconciling agents among the crowd of shadowy phantoms with which they peopled the void. Paul lifts up in opposition to all these the one Sovereign Mediator, whose cross is the bond of peace for all the universe.

It is important for the understanding of these great words to observe their distinct reference to the former clauses which dealt with our Lord's relation to the universe as Creator. The same words are used in order to make the parallelism as close as may be. "Through Him" was creation; "through Him" is reconciliation. "All things"—or as the Greek would rather suggest, "the universe"—all things considered as an aggregate—were made and sus-

tained through Him and subordinated to Him; the same "all things" are reconciled. A significant change in the order of naming the elements of which these are composed is noticeable. When creation is spoken of, the order is "in the heavens and upon the earth"—the order of creation; but when reconciliation is the theme, the order is reversed, and we read "things upon the earth and things in the heavens"—those coming first which stand nearest to the reconciling cross, and are first to feel the power which streams from it.

This obvious intentional correspondence between these two paragraphs shows us that whatever be the nature of the "reconciliation" spoken of here, it is supposed to affect not only rational and responsible creatures who alone in the full sense of the word can be reconciled, as they only in the full sense of the word can be enemies, but to extend to things and to send its influence through the universe. The width of the reconciliation is the same as that of the creation; they are conterminous. That being the case, "reconciliation" here must have a different shade of meaning when applied to the sum total of created things from what it has when applied to persons. But not only are inanimate creatures included in the expression; it may even be made a question whether the whole of mankind is not excluded from it, not only by the phrase "all *things*," but also from the consideration that the effect of Christ's death on men is the subject of the following words, which are not an explanation of this clause, but an addition to it, introducing an entirely different department of Christ's reconciling work. Nor should we lose sight of the very significant omission in this section of the reference to angelic beings who were named in the creation section. We hear nothing now about thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. The division into "visible and invisible" is not reproduced. I suggest the possibility that the reason may be the inten-

tion to represent the "reconciliation" as taking effect exclusively on the regions of creation below the angelic and below the human, while the "reconciliation," properly so called, which is brought to pass on alienated men is dealt with first in the following words.

If this be so, then these words refer mainly to the restitution of the material universe to its primal obedience, and represent Christ the Creator removing by His cross the shadow which has passed over nature by reason of sin. It has been well said, "How far this restoration of universal nature may be subjective, as involved in the changed perceptions of man thus brought into harmony with God, and how far it may have an objective and independent existence, it were vain to speculate."¹

Scripture seems to teach that man's sin has made the physical world "subject to vanity"; for, although much of what it says on this matter is unquestionably metaphor only, portraying the Messianic blessings in poetical language never meant for dogmatic truth, and although unquestionably physical death reigned among animals, and storms and catastrophes swept over the earth long before man or sin were here, still,—seeing that man by his sin has compelled dead matter to serve his lusts and to be his instrument in acts of rebellion against God, making "a league with the stones of the field" against his and their Master,—seeing that he has used earth to hide heaven and to shut himself out from its glories, and so has made it an unwilling antagonist to God and temptress to evil,—seeing that he has actually polluted the beauty of the world and has stained many a lovely scene with his sin, making its rivers run red with blood,—seeing that he has laid unnumbered woes on the living creatures,—we may feel that there is more than poetry in the affirmation that "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain

¹ Bp. Lightfoot, *On Coloss.*, p. 226.

together" and may hear a deep truth, the extent of which we cannot measure, in Milton's majestic lines—

"Disproportioned Sin
Jarred against Nature's chime, and with harsh din
Brake the fair music that all creatures made
To their great Lord, whose love their motion swayed."

Here we have held forth in words, the extent of which we can measure as little, the counter-hope that wherever and however any such effect has come to pass on the material universe, it shall be done away by the reconciling power of the blood shed on the cross. That reconciling power goes as far as His creative power. The universe is one, not only because all created by the one personal Divine Word, nor because all upheld by Him, but because in ways to us unknown, the power of the cross pierces its heights and depths. As the impalpable influences of the sun bind planets and comets into one great system, so from Him on His cross may stream out attractive powers which knit together far off regions and diverse orders and bring all in harmonious unity to God, who has made peace by the blood shed on the cross, and has thereby been pleased to reconcile all things to Himself,

"And a Priest's hand through creation
Waveth calm and consecration."

It may be that the reference to things in heaven is like the similar reference in the previous verses, occasioned by some dreams of the heretical teachers. He may merely mean to say—You speak much about heavenly things, and have filled the whole space between God's throne and man's earth with creatures thick as the motes in the sunbeam. I know nothing about them; but this I know, that, if they are, Christ made them, and that if among them there be antagonism to God, it can be overcome by the cross. As to reconciliation proper, in the heavens,

meaning by that, among spiritual beings who dwell in that realm, it is clear there can be no question of it. There is no enmity among the angels of heaven, and no place for return to union with God among *their* untroubled bands, who "hearken to the voice of His word." But still if the hypothetical form of the clause and the use of the neuter gender permit any reference to intelligent beings in the heavens, we know that to the principalities and powers in heavenly places the cross has been the teacher of before unlearned depths in the Divine nature and purposes, the knowledge of which has drawn them nearer the heart of God, and made even their blessed union with Him more blessed and more close.

On no subject is it more necessary to remember the limitations of our knowledge than on this great theme. On none is confident assertion more out of place. The general truth taught is clear, but the specific applications of it to the various regions of the universe is very doubtful. We have no source of knowledge on that subject but the words of Scripture, and we have no means of verifying or checking the conclusions we may draw from them. We are bound therefore, if we go beyond the general principle, to remember that *it* is one thing, and our reckoning up of what it includes is quite another. Our inferences have not the certainty of God's word. *It* comes to us with "Verily, verily." *We* have no right to venture on more than Perhaps.

Especially is this the case when we have but one or two texts to build on, and these most general in their language. And still more, when we find other words of Scripture which seem hard to reconcile with them, if pressed to their utmost meaning. In such a case our wisdom is to recognise that God has not been pleased to give us the means of constructing a dogma on the subject, and rather to seek to learn the lessons taught by the

obscurity that remains than rashly and confidently to proclaim our inferences from half of our materials as if they were the very heart of the gospel.

Sublime and great beyond all our dreams, we may be sure, shall be the issue. Certain as the throne of God is it that His purposes shall be accomplished—and at last this shall be the fact for the universe, as it has ever been the will of the Father—"Of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things, to whom be glory for ever." To that highest hope and ultimate vision for the whole creation, who will not say, Amen? The great sight which the seer beheld in Patmos is the best commentary on our text. To him the eternal order of the universe was unveiled—the great white throne, a snowy Alp in the centre; between the throne and the creatures, the Lamb, through whom blessing and life passed outwards to them, and their incense and praise passed inwards to the throne; and all around the "living creatures," types of the aggregate of creatural life, the "elders," representatives of the Church redeemed from among men, and myriads of the firstborn of heaven. The eyes of all alike wait upon that slain Lamb. In Him they see God in clearest light of love and gentlest might—and as they look and learn and are fed each according to his hunger from the fulness of Christ, "every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them," will be heard saying "Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever."

III. Christ, and His Reconciling Work in the Church.—We have still the parallel kept up between the reconciling and the creative work of Christ. As in verse 18, He was represented as the giver of life to the Church, in a higher fashion than to the universe, so, and probably with a

similar heightening of the meaning of "reconciliation," He is here set forth as its giver to the Church.

Now observe the solemn emphasis of the description of the condition of men before that reconciling work has told upon their hearts. They are "alienated"—not "aliens," as if that were their original condition, but "alienated," as having become so. The same thought that man's sin and separation from God is a fall, something abnormal and superinduced on humanity, which is implied in "reconciliation" or restoration to an original concord, is implied in this expression. "And enemies in your mind"—the seat of the enmity is in that inner man which thinks, reflects, and wills, and its sphere of manifestation is "in evil works" which are religiously acts of hostility to God because morally they are bad. We should not read "*by* wicked works," as the Authorized Version does, for the evil deeds have not made them enemies, but the enmity has originated the evil deeds, and is witnessed to by them.

That is a severe indictment, a plain, rough, and as it is thought now-a-days, a far too harsh description of human nature. Our forefathers no doubt were tempted to paint the "depravity of human nature" in very black colours—but I am very sure that we are tempted just in the opposite direction. It sounds too harsh and rude to press home the old fashioned truth on cultured respectable ladies and gentlemen. The charge is not that of conscious, active hostility, but of practical want of affection as manifested by habitual disobedience or inattention to His wishes, and by indifference and separation from Him in heart and mind.

And are these not the habitual temper of multitudes? The signs of love are joy in the company of the beloved, sweet memories and longings if parted, eager fulfilment of their lightest wish, a quick response to the most slender

association recalling them to our thoughts. Have we these signs of love to God? If not, it is time to consider what temper of heart and mind towards the most loving of Hearts and the most unwearied of Givers, is indicated by the facts that we scarcely ever think of Him, that we have no delight in His felt presence, that most of our actions have no reference whatever to Him and would be done just the same if there were no God at all. Surely such a condition is liker hostility than love.

Further, here, as uniformly, God Himself is the Reconciler. "He"—that is, God, not Christ, "has reconciled us." Some, indeed, read "ye have been reconciled," but the preponderance of authority is in favour of the text as it stands, which yields a sense accordant with the usual mode of representation. It is we who are reconciled. It is God who reconciles. It is we who are enemies. The Divine patience loves on through all our enmity, and though perfect love meeting human sin must become wrath, which is consistent with itself, it never becomes hatred, which is its own opposite.

Observe finally the great means of reconciliation: "In the body of His flesh"—that is of course Christ's flesh—God has reconciled us. Why does the Apostle use this apparently needless exuberance of language—"the body of His flesh"? It may have been in order to correct some erroneous tendencies towards a doctrine which we know was afterwards eagerly embraced in the Eastern Churches, that our Lord's body was not truly flesh, but only a phantasm or appearance. It may have been to guard against risk of confounding it with His "body the Church," spoken of in the 18th verse, though that supposes a scarcely credible dulness in his readers. Or it may more naturally be accounted for as showing how full his own mind was of the overwhelming wonder of the fact that He whose majesty he has been setting forth in such

deep words should veil His eternal glories and limit His far reaching energies within a fleshly body. He would point the contrast between the Divine dignity of the Eternal Word, the Creator and Lord of the universe, and the lowliness of His incarnation. On these two pillars, as on two solid piers, one on either continent, with a great gulf between, the Divinity of Christ on one side, His Manhood on the other, is built the bridge by which we pass over the river into the glory.

But that is not all. The Incarnation is not the whole gospel. The body of His flesh becomes the means of our reconciliation "through death." Christ's death has so met the requirements of the Divine law that the Divine love can come freely forth, and embrace and forgive sinful men. That fact is the very centre of the revelation of God in Christ, the very secret of His power. He has died. Voluntarily and of His own love, as well as in obedience to the Father's loving will, He has borne the consequences of the sin which He had never shared, in that life of sorrow and sympathy, in that separation from God which is sin's deepest penalty, and of which the solemn witness comes to us in the cry that rent the darkness, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" and in that physical death which is the parable in the material sphere of the true death of the spirit. We do not know all the incidence of Christ's death. The whole manner of its operation has not been told us, but the fact has been. It does not affect the Divine heart. *That* we know, for "God so loved the world, that He sent His Son." But it does affect the Divine government. Without it, forgiveness could not have been. Its influence extends to all the years before, as to all after Calvary, for that Man continued to be after Man had sinned, was because the whole Divine government then had respect to the sacrifice that was to be, as now it all is moulded by the merit of the sacrifice that has been. And in this aspect

of the case, the previous thoughts as to the blood of the cross having power in the material universe derive a new meaning, if we regard the whole history of the world as shaped by Christ's sacrifice, and the very continuance of humanity from the first moment of transgression as possible because He was "the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world," whose cross, as an eternal fact in the Divine purpose, influenced the Divine government long before it was realized in time.

As for us, that wondrous love—mightier than death, and not to be quenched by many waters—is the one power that can change our alienation to glad friendship, and melt the frost and hard-ribbed ice of indifference and dread into love. That, and that alone, is the solvent for stubborn wills, the magnet for distant hearts. The cross of Christ is the keystone of the universe and the conqueror of all enmity.

If religion is to have sovereign power in our lives, it must be the religion built upon faith in the Incarnate Son of God, who reconciles the world to God upon His cross. That is the only faith which makes men love God and binds them to Him with bands which cannot be broken. Other types of Christianity are but tepid; and lukewarm water is an abomination. The one thing that makes us ground our rebellious arms and say, Lord, I surrender, Thou hast conquered, is to see in Christ's life the perfect image of God, and in His death the all-sufficient sacrifice for sin.

What does it avail for us that the far-reaching power of Christ's cross shoots out magnetic forces to the uttermost verge of the heavens, and binds the whole universe by silken blood-red cords to God, if it does not bind me to Him in love and longing? What does it avail that God is in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, if I am unconscious of the enmity, and careless of the friendship? Each man has to ask Himself, Am I reconciled to God? Has the sight of

His great love on the cross won *me*, body and soul, to His love and service? Have I flung away self-will, pride and enmity, and yielded myself a glad captive to the loving Christ who died? His cross draws us, His love beckons us. God pleads with all hearts. He who has made peace by so costly means as the sacrifice of His Son, condescends to implore the rebels to come into amity with Him, and "prays us with much entreaty to receive the gift." God beseeches us to be reconciled to Himself.

A. MACLAREN.

THE BOOK OF DANIEL IN THE LIGHT OF
RECENT RESEARCH AND DISCOVERY.

II.

BELSHAZZAR appears in the Inscriptions as "the eldest son" of Nabonidus,¹ and there need be no hesitation in identifying him with the "son of the king" who was with the army in Accad.² What became of him? We can follow the fortunes of Nabonidus, in spite of the blank between the eleventh and sixteenth year of his reign, and notwithstanding the difficulty of deciphering much of the text. Captured in Babylon, to which he had fled, Nabonidus died within the year (possibly at Borsippa, on the right bank of the Euphrates).³ Can we trace anything of the fortunes of Belshazzar? I venture to think that we can.

After the battle of Rutum the "men of Accad revolted." News of the battle in the south and its results had been

¹ *Expositor* for March, 1885, p. 221.

² Pinches, in *T. S. B. A.*, vii. 150.

³ *Berosus*, Fr. 14. The language of the Inscription may bear the sense that Nabonidus fled (without specifying the place), and that when captured he was taken into Babylon; but I have adopted the interpretation supported by the Cyrus-cylinder. See, further, note 4, p. 435.