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**MEDITATIONS ON THE  
FIRST and SECOND CHAPTER  
OF THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS**

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# **MEDITATIONS ON MATTERS OF CHRISTIAN FAITH AND EXPERIENCE**

**On the First and Second Chapters of Ephesians**

## **1. MEDITATIONS ON THE FIRST CHAPTER OF THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS**

### **INTRODUCTORY PAPER**

We have hitherto, in our Meditations, addressed ourselves chiefly to the consideration of "various important points of our most holy faith;" but it has for some time past struck our mind that for the sake of a little variety for our readers, as well as for other reasons more specially connected with our own thoughts, desires, and feelings, we would now turn our attention to Scripture Exposition. In the course of a long profession, for our own private profit and edification, and had this not been a primary object, almost necessarily from having been so many years in the ministry, we have read, we may, perhaps, say studied, the Scriptures a good deal, especially the Epistles of the New Testament; and if, through the Lord's goodness, any light has been cast upon them by the Blessed Spirit for our own instruction and edification, and if we have gathered any fruit or profit thereby for our own soul, it will be both a pleasure and a privilege to be allowed to impart any measure of both to others. "Freely have ye received, freely give," the Lord said to his disciples. Acting in the spirit of this blessed precept, we would freely impart anything which we have so freely, so undeservedly received, and can only lament that both reception and gift should be in so scant a measure. "But if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not." Measured by this willingness, and not by the amount of the gift, would we lay our contribution at the Lord's feet, in the hope that he will make use of it for his own glory and his people's good.

Our hearers in various places will, perhaps, remember that exposition almost always formed a part of our ministry when we were engaged in its active exercise; and if we may give some of our friends credit for soundness of judgment, as well as for sincerity in its expression, they have sometimes

assured us that the exposition was much more profitable than the sermon. Nor is the reason far to seek, whether in our own case or in that of our brother ministers who are in the habit of expounding the Scripture, for some of the choicest servants of God, whether dead or living, have not practised it.\* In sermons, there is generally a good deal of what we may call surplusage, mere straw and hay by way of packing, as in a crate of glass, to keep our ideas a little together, and prevent them from getting broken; but in exposition, at least where there is any gift that way, there is more of the word of God, and less of the word of man. We let the word of truth speak more for itself, and, therefore, it flows less diluted and watered, and thus less weakened than when drawn out in a long and often tedious discourse. Being, then, in the wise dispensation of the Lord, a good deal laid aside, especially in the colder parts of the year, from the work of the ministry, if we can, through the pages of the Standard, by opening the word of truth, in some measure carry it on from our study, it will but form another cause of thankfulness to the God of all our mercies that he still spares our life when so many of our brethren in the ministry are being taken away on the right hand and on the left, whose places we know not to whom to look to supply. But enough of self, of which, indeed, we should not have said so much, had we not wished to explain why we have been led to adopt the plan we have proposed of offering to our readers some exposition of various portions of the word of God. Suffice it, then, to say, that if we can throw any light on the word of truth, if we can enable our readers more clearly to understand, more firmly to believe, and more experimentally to feel the power of what God has revealed in the Scriptures for their instruction, edification, and consolation, that will be our chief reward, as, we hope, it is our chief aim.

\*Mr. Fowler used to expound, and Mr. Hardy was singularly great in exposition; but Mr. Gadsby and Mr. Warburton, and, we believe, Mr. Huntington considered preaching quite sufficient.

We shall commence with the first chapter of the Epistle to the Ephesians, as not only that is a special portion of the word which has been opened to our mind, and made sweet to our taste; but there has long been a secret desire in our breast to bring it before the living family of God, as containing such a rich store of precious gospel truth. In endeavouring to expound it, and we wish the same remark to apply to all our other attempts of a similar nature, we shall neither seek nor shun anything which may look like learning or research. We have read it so often in the original that it is almost as familiar to us as the English translation; and if, therefore, sometimes we may refer to it, let it not

be ascribed to any foolish, and in things of God, most unbecoming, nay, sinful, desire of what is called showing off, but to a simple wish to make the truth of God more clear and precious.

But before we proceed to our intended exposition, let us make a few preliminary remarks on the Epistles generally, and that to the Ephesians in particular. The New Testament may be broadly divided into three distinct portions: 1. Narrative; 2. Epistolary; 3. Prophetical. The first division, the narrative, comprehends the four Gospels, and the Acts of the Apostles; the second, the epistolary, all the Epistles of the New Testament; and the third, the prophetical, the Book of Revelation.

Now the wisdom of the Holy Ghost is especially to be admired in adopting this threefold mode of communicating the books of the New Testament as the inspired word of God. The foundation of our faith is the Person and work of the Son of God. It was, therefore, needful that there should be an historical revelation of his birth, death, and resurrection, of his miracles and his discourses so full of grace and truth, and generally of what he was and did, suffered and sorrowed when here below. It will be seen at a glance that what was required was an inspired and, therefore, perfectly truthful narrative of the words and actions of the blessed Lord, in order that our faith in him might rest on some clear, tangible, visible foundation. Now nothing is so suitable for a foundation of this kind as a simple historical narrative guaranteed by positive divine inspiration from all mistake of fact or expression. An epistle here would be out of place. We have, therefore, four distinct inspired narratives, each independent of the other, and yet all combining to give us a faithful portraiture of the Lord in the days of his flesh. The death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus are two grand capital features of our most holy faith. In the four gospels, then, we have the clearest possible account which even an inspired pen could give of the crucifixion of Christ, and of his resurrection from the dead. But we also needed the visible proofs of his ascension and glorification at the right hand of the Father in the promised gift of the Holy Ghost, and the setting up of his spiritual kingdom in a Church to be called out and manifested as his purchased possession. This we have also in a similar form of narrative in the Acts of the Apostles, which embraces a period of about 30 years from the pouring out of the Holy Ghost, on the day of Pentecost, to Paul's journey to Rome to appear before Caesar. Here again we see the necessity of narrative to present to us a connected account of such part of the history of the early churches as the Holy Ghost thought best to give for the general instruction and edification of the Church.\* Into these points we

need not, therefore, further enter, except to name that a prophetic map was also needed as a kind of chart for the Church, and especially to warn and prepare her beforehand for that monstrous system which has developed itself as the Babylon of the New Testament, and which we have described beforehand in the Revelation.

\*As it was the mind of the Spirit that so many of the Epistles should be written by Paul, we see his wisdom in giving us in the Acts so large an account of his labours, and thus the Epistles and the Acts mutually explain and confirm each other.

But now, just for a few moments, admire with us the wisdom of the Holy Ghost in giving us the Epistles of the New Testament. There was sweet, precious, and most important truth in the bosom of Christ, which could not be revealed to the Church till after the ascension of her risen Lord. This, then, is unfolded in the Epistles; and observe with what special grace and wisdom that form of communicating divine truth has been chosen. Of all modes of composition, a letter (for these Epistles are letters) is what we may call most flexible; that is, most easily adapted to almost every mode of conveying meaning.

1. Thus a letter admits first of *narrative*. You can tell a friend, in a letter, where you have been, and what you have said and done. So in the Epistles, we have sometimes simple narrative. See, for instance, 2 Cor. 11:24-33; 12:1-10 Gal. 1:15-24; 2:1-14; 1 Thess. 1:6-10; 3:1-8. In these places we have simple narrative of actions; and all will see how naturally and easily this historical relation falls in with the rest of the Epistle.

2. An epistle or letter admits also of direct or positive *teaching*. This feature is out of place in a narrative, except as it records words actually spoken; as in the case of the discourses of the blessed Lord. But a letter written by an inspired Apostle to a Church admits, in the fullest degree, of an authoritative declaration of divine truth. Take any one of the Epistles, and you would be surprised, if you were not prepared for it, at the amount of positive teaching which it contains. Look, for instance, at the Epistle to the Romans, and see what a large amount of direct, positive truth it contains, as the Holy Ghost gradually unfolds in it the way in which God justifies a sinner, freely and fully, through the blood and righteousness of his dear Son. Read the first eleven chapters of the Romans as a harmonious whole, and see what a full, clear, connected exposition it is, from the description of what man is by actual

transgression, in chap. 1, to the present casting off and future restoration of Israel, in chap. 11. We wish we could convey to all our readers what we have seen of the beauty and harmony of the whole chain of scriptural, we might almost say logical, reasoning which connects these chapters, as in one golden bond. Or take the Epistle to the Hebrews. What a large and blessed amount of positive teaching, of clear detailed instruction about the priesthood of Christ, and its connection with that of Aaron and Melchisedek, do we find through the whole Epistle. So with the Epistle to the Ephesians. What a clear and full amount of direct, positive teaching as to the Church of Christ, and the position in which she stands to her risen and glorified Lord. We see from these examples how admirably a letter or an epistle, written by an inspired Apostle, is adapted to convey clear, distinct, positive instruction in divine truth.

3. Then observe how beautifully adapted the epistolary form is to the inculcation of *precept*. How suitably, how forcibly an inspired Apostle, in his letters to a Church of Christ, can urge on them all Christian practice, and, at the same time, enter into the minutest details of gospel obedience in the various relationships of life.

4. Mark again the peculiar *tenderness* and *affection* which nothing can so well convey as a letter. In a letter, there is the pouring out of the heart of the writer as if into the bosom of his correspondent. Think for a moment, if you wished to express your feelings of affection to a friend or relative; if you could find any means so good as writing a letter to him or her. Is it not next best to conversing with them, and in some respects better, for shyness or reserve might sometimes stop your tongue though it does not chain your pen? Lovers, friends, relations, all communicate by letter what their affection prompts. So in the Epistles of the New Testament. What a pouring out of the heart there is in Paul's second Epistle to the Corinthians, written with so many tears. How touching is all this! How it goes from heart to heart. How it makes the Epistles the choicest of love-letters, and what a softness and tenderness has the spirit of love poured into all the instruction and all the exhortation contained in them, thus removing all dryness or formality, whether in instruction or exhortation, and steeping both in an atmosphere of the truest affection.

5. A letter, again, admits of *continual change* from one point to another, and one form of writing to another. It is eminently what we have already termed flexible, that is, may be bent or turned almost in any direction without violence in its nature. The writer may glide from one thing to another by the most easy transitions. Thus Paul sometimes teaches as an instructor,

sometimes exhorts as a father, sometimes gives us a little bit of his past history or experience, sometimes drops a word of warning, or admonition; and yet all is done without any sensible break, or the introduction of anything unsuitable to the character of a letter. This beautiful flexibility is peculiar to the epistolary style, and is, therefore, eminently adapted for all readers.

6. Letters also admit of *familiarly* discussing various matters which could not at all be so well handled in a more fixed and formal mode of composition. It is said of the trunk of an elephant that it can pick up a pin or rend an oak. So a letter can take up the minutest circumstance, such as leaving a cloak at Troas, or pull down an angel with a curse, were he to preach any other gospel than that which Paul had preached unto the Galatians. It can tell a woman to cover her head and keep silence in the house of God, and it can sound forth such majestic chants of triumph over death and hell as fill the last parts of Romans 8 and 1 Cor. 15 with such strains of heavenly eloquence that, side by side with them, all mere human oratory sounds like the tunes of a street organ.

7. A letter also admits of *all lengths*, from a short epistle, like that to Philemon, to one of many chapters, as that to the Romans and those to the Corinthians, and may be written to individuals, as to Timothy and Titus, or to particular churches, as that at Ephesus or Philippi, or like those of Peter, James, and Jude, to the whole body of the elect scattered abroad.

8. The chief charm of a letter is its *ease*,—the absence of all stiffness and form. It is, as it were, written conversation; and the conversation, too, of intelligent people, able easily and fluently to express their thoughts and feelings without reserve, shyness, or restraint. If we might point out this feature as visible in the Epistles of Paul, we might direct attention to the remarkable ease with which his thoughts and words generally flow. We do not mean to say that he is always easy to understand. To do so requires divine teaching; and we must add careful study and attention, frequent reading, and earnest prayer. But if blessed with the anointing from above, which teacheth of all things, and if favoured with a studious, teachable, prayerful spirit, desirous to know the mind of Christ, and be led into all the counsel of God, we shall find the Epistles "a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees, well refined."

And be not discouraged, Christian reader, if you seem slow of understanding, and do not as yet see the beauty and blessedness of this portion of the word of truth: "The soul of the diligent shall be made fat." Persevere in reading them.

If you feel to lack wisdom, do as James bids, "ask of God, who giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not, and it shall be given you;" and then you will say, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste; yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth;" and you will be able to add, "Through thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way." (Psa. 119:104.)

These preliminary remarks on the Epistles generally, which have been drawn out farther than we intended, may, perhaps, prepare us for the more profitable examination of that to the Ephesians, which we shall hope to consider in our next paper.

## I.

In our introductory paper we attempted to show the wisdom and grace of the Holy Ghost in choosing Epistles as the most fit and suitable medium of communicating to the Church of Christ all that instruction which was needful, as a sequel to the inspired narrative of the Gospels and the Acts, to build her up upon her most holy faith; and the point to which we directed special attention was the flexible character of that mode of composition as admitting so great a variety both of subject and expression.

But when we come to examine these inspired Epistles a little more closely, we find that almost every one of them has a distinctive and peculiar character of its own, what we may, perhaps, call a key-note, which, as in music, controls and dominates the whole composition. Thus in the Romans, justification is the key-note; in the Hebrews, the priesthood of Christ; in the Corinthians, the internal administration of the Church; in the Galatians, liberty from the law; in the Colossians, the headship and fulness of Christ; in the Thessalonians, his second coming; in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus, the peculiar qualifications and duties of ministers and deacons. Not that each of these Epistles is wholly taken up with the subject which we have thus briefly pointed out as its dominant idea, but that such is the leading feature with which almost every verse is in harmony, and to which it is subordinate. If this be the case, unless we get hold of, and in some good measure not only apprehend, but carry with us as we read, this key-note, as we have termed it, we cannot clearly see, or fully appreciate the spiritual meaning of any one of the Epistles. We may, indeed, understand the meaning and realise the sweetness and blessedness of single verses or detached portions; but we shall lose the harmony of thought, the connection of one argument with another,

and the way in which they all tend to one point, which carry such conviction to the mind which can grasp the whole subject as unfolded by the Apostle. And to lose this is, we may add, no little loss in the eyes of those who love the truth, and see an unspeakable beauty in the harmony of every part. When the Apostle sat down to write to a Church or to a brother in the Lord, it would seem as if the Holy Ghost not only inspired every thought and expression, but impressed on his mind a particular subject to guide those thoughts and words into a definite channel. The Epistles, therefore, do not spread themselves loosely and at random over the fields like a flood, but flow in a determinate course like a river; and as this definite object preserves them from confusion, so by stamping upon each Epistle a character of its own, it gives them a beautiful variety. Careless, formal readers of the Scripture, of whom there are so many in the professing Church, may not, indeed, see the necessity or the benefit of a serious, earnest, prayerful study of these divine Epistles; and others of a different stamp may shelter their indolence under the pretext that the blessed Spirit will teach them without any pains of their own. But we are bidden to "search the Scriptures," (John 5:39,) and this searching of them is compared to "seeking as for silver, and searching as for hid treasures," (Prov. 2:4,) implying some such diligent toil as a man uses who is mining for silver in the bowels of the earth, or digging all over a field to get at a hoard which he has been led to believe is somewhere hidden in it.

But the question now arises, What is the key-note of the Epistle to the Ephesians, with which we are now more immediately engaged? To this we briefly answer, The relationship of the Church to Christ as her risen and glorified Head. This is the leading feature, the grand subject, the fundamental idea which runs through the whole Epistle, and which, binding in one harmonious chain well-nigh every verse, again and again sounds forth its distinctive note in various parts. If you will refer to the last two verses of the first chapter, you will find this key-note first clearly struck; but you will discover it sounding also afterwards, 2:16-22; 3:1-21; 4:15, 16; 5:23-32, in all which passages mention is made directly or indirectly of the Church as the body of Christ. Following the Apostle's example, we shall not dwell particularly on this point until we arrive at it in due course; but if our readers will bear in mind the fundamental idea of the Epistle which we have thus pointed out, it may, with God's help and blessing, not only enable them better to follow us in our exposition, but, what is of much more importance, better to understand and enter into the spiritual meaning of the whole. May the Lord the Spirit be with both writer and readers, teaching him to open up and

rightly divide the word of truth, and applying with power to their hearts what he may thus be enabled to lay before them in harmony with it.

After this, we fear, too long introduction, we come now to our exposition of the first chapter.

i. Two things at once strike us as we open upon the first verse. Being a letter, it commences according to the custom of the period, with, 1, The name of the writer; 2, The name of the persons to whom it was written. Both of these points will claim our attention.

1. First, then, the writer, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God." The ancient way of putting at the top of the letter first the name of the writer, and then the name of the person to whom he wrote was a far more sensible plan than our mode of placing the name of the writer at the end, and that of our correspondent on the back, or, according to present custom, on an envelope. He, therefore, begins at once, "Paul." How clear, how simple, how distinct is this. How adapted to call attention at once to the writer. Let us for a moment endeavour to realise the meeting of the Ephesian Church to hear read to them an epistle just arrived from Paul, their beloved father and revered Apostle, who for the space of three years had not shunned to declare unto them all the counsel of God, and ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears. (Acts 20:27-31.) One of the elders, perhaps one of the very men who had wept sore and fallen on Paul's neck and kissed him, when they parted at Miletus, would open and read the epistle. How still would they all be; and as the word "Paul" broke on their ears, with what reverence and attention would they listen.

But he immediately adds his commission and authority to address them in the name of the Lord, "An apostle of Jesus Christ." Apostleship was the greatest gift and the highest office in the first visible setting up of the Church of Christ in the power of the Holy Ghost. "And he gave some apostles and some prophets." (Eph. 4:11.) "And God hath set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets." (1 Cor. 12:28.) As this, then, was the highest office, so it demanded peculiar requisites, and possessed peculiar privileges. The two chief requisites for an apostle were, 1, An immediate call and commission from the Lord himself; 2, That he had seen the Lord after he had risen from the dead, and was thus a witness of his resurrection. The call and commission of the other apostles we have in the gospels. Luke 6:18 gives us their call, and Matt. 28:18-20 their commission; and from Acts 1:21, 22, we see the fact as

well as the necessity of their being witnesses of the resurrection of Christ. These two points, then, we need not further prove. But here comes in a difficulty in the way of the apostleship of Paul, for he seemed to lack these two grand requisites 1, He had not been visibly and manifestly called or commissioned by the Lord himself; 2, He had never seen the Lord, personally, either before or after his resurrection. This is why he calls himself, "one born out of due time." (1 Cor. 15:8.) How, then, were these two difficulties obviated? Thus. The first by a special call and commission; (Acts 26:12-18;) and the second by a personal revelation of the Lord to his soul. He, therefore, says, "Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?"\* (1 Cor. 9:1.) In one sense, therefore, he received a higher commission than any of the other apostles; for his was from Christ in his risen glory, whereas they had received theirs from Christ in his grace. Theirs was given them when Christ was on earth, but Paul his when Christ was in heaven. Theirs was in conjunction with one another; his, peculiar and special to himself. This special call and commission he much insists on, especially whenever it was called in question. He writes, therefore, to the Galatians: "Paul, an apostle, (not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead." (Gal. 1:1.) So he writes to Timothy: "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope." (1 Tim. 1:1.) So also, "According to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to my trust. And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry." (1 Tim. 1:11, 12.) And as he was called and commissioned in a special manner, so was he taught and qualified in a special manner. As to make up, as it were, for his not seeing Christ in the flesh, he had a special revelation of him from heaven, so to make up the loss which he had of not receiving the oral instruction of Christ before and after the resurrection, which his fellow-apostles had been favoured with, the gospel was in a peculiar and special manner revealed to him by Christ himself, after his ascension. He therefore speaks: "But I certify you, brethren, that the Gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Gal. 1:11, 12.) So in the epistle before us: "If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward; how that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ." (Eph. 3:2-4.) Similar expressions may be found, 1 Cor. 11:23; 15:1-3. It is very desirable to have clear views on this point, as it gives such weight and power to the Apostle's words. If one whom we could fully

trust should assure us that he had seen the Lord Jesus Christ, personally, in his risen glory, and that he had received certain words and a certain message from his mouth, which he was commanded to communicate to us; with what reverence and attention should we listen to and receive his communication. This, then, we have precisely in the Apostle Paul, and in the epistle before us. He assures us (and his whole life and labours prove how worthy he is to be implicitly believed) that he had seen Christ for himself, and that the gospel which he had preached had been revealed to him specially and particularly by the Lord Jesus. Now, just as far as we are persuaded of this, shall we listen to and receive his words; shall we desire to understand them, to believe them, to enter into their true and heavenly meaning, to experience their power and influence in our heart, and to find them made spirit and life to our souls. This is the true spirit in which we should approach and read this epistle, drinking its words into our inmost heart, and receiving them as a special and personal message from God to us as much as if Jesus Christ spoke to us himself from heaven.

\* Some of our best MSS., as the Alexandrine, the Vatican, and the Sinaiticus, transpose these two clauses, and read, "Am I not free? Am I not an apostle?" which certainly better connects apostleship with seeing the Lord.

He, therefore, adds, "By the will of God;" that is, not God's mere approval or ratification of his commission to be an apostle, but that eternal, sovereign good will and pleasure of his, by which all things were ordained, disposed, and regulated. As it is this apostleship of Jesus Christ by the will of God which gave Paul all his authority to write this epistle, it may not be out of place to point out two peculiar features of his commission.

Its first feature is, as we have already pointed out, that it was given him by a special revelation. All the Apostles were indeed taught and empowered by the Holy Ghost; (John 14:26; 16:13-15; Acts. 1:6;) but they did not each receive an individual and separate revelation from the Lord himself in his glory, at least not in that direct and express way with which Paul was favoured. Peter was really as much commissioned, (Gal. 2:7,) as truly inspired, both to preach and write, (Acts 10:42; 2 Pet. 1:12-16; 3:1, 2,) and as much endued with the gifts of miracles and tongues (Acts 2:4; 9:32-41) as Paul; but he was not caught up to the third heaven, nor favoured with such revelations of the Lord as the great Apostle of the Gentiles.

2. But the Gospel which Paul preached was also one of a special and particular character. He was emphatically sent to preach to the Gentiles, as Peter's mission and preaching was to the Jews; (Gal. 2:6, 7;) though, as a special act of favour, God made choice among the apostles that the Gentiles, by Peter's mouth, should first hear the word of the gospel and believe. (Acts 15:7.) If you will carefully read Eph. 3:1-11, for it is too long for us to quote, you will see how clearly and beautifully the Apostle there unfolds the peculiar dispensation of the grace of God given unto him, and that by revelation he made known to him a mystery, or heavenly secret which from the beginning of the world had been hidden in the bosom of God.

But what was this mystery? It was that the Gentiles should be "fellow-heirs with the Jews and of the same body, and partakers of the same promise in Christ by the gospel." Thus Jew and Gentile formed one complete and glorious body, the Church. Christ, as our peace, had made both one; and there was no longer any middle wall of partition between them, for the Lord Jesus had reconciled both unto God in one body by the cross; and having done this, he now came in the ministry of the gospel to preach peace to the far-off Gentile, and to the nearer, by external privilege, Jew. This was the gospel that Paul preached, and which shines as with a ray of heavenly light through all his Epistles.

ii. But now for the *persons* to whom the Epistle is written.

What we have already said about the commission of the writer may the better prepare us to understand why he should write to the Ephesians, and why address them as "saints and faithful in Christ Jesus." They had been Gentiles and had "walked according to the course of this world, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath even as others." But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he had loved them even when dead in sins, had quickened them into divine life; and as they had been freely and fully justified by the blood and righteousness of Christ, so were they sanctified by the Spirit of God. He could, therefore, address them as "saints," not only as sanctified by the will of the Father, and the blood of his dear Son, (Heb. 10:10, 29,) but inwardly sanctified by the special operations, sealing, and indwelling of the Holy Ghost. (Eph. 1:13; 2:18, 22.)

The epistle is addressed also to the "faithful in Christ Jesus." This seems to give the epistle a somewhat fuller and wider scope, as if, in addition to the

saints in Ephesus, it would comprehend "all the faithful in Christ Jesus" to whom it might come. The word translated "faithful" means also "believing," or a believer, and is frequently so rendered, as Acts 10:45; 16:1; 2 Cor. 6:15; 1 Tim. 4:3, 10, 12; 5:16; &c. We might, therefore, so translate the word here, and read, "to the believers in Christ Jesus," as, indeed, would seem to be its preferable meaning, for the epistle is addressed not so much to those who are faithful in their profession as to those who possess a living faith in the Son of God. To the saints at Ephesus, then, specially, and the believers in Jesus Christ generally, is this epistle addressed; and as the first title made it peculiarly suitable to them, so the second makes it especially suitable to us. The Ephesian saints have passed away, and Ephesus itself is a ruin; but believers in Christ Jesus still live, and will live till the Church is complete.

But we cannot leave this salutation without pointing out how grace adorns and sanctifies all that it touches. The usual cold and formal beginning of a letter in ancient times we may see, Acts 23:26, where we have an original and authentic Roman letter: "Claudius Lysias unto the most excellent governor Felix sendeth greeting." Preserving the usual mode, how the Apostle infuses life, as it were, into a dead formula. How cold, though respectful, is "the most excellent governor," and how bare is the word "greeting." But how warm, how full of grace and life, as contrasted with this cold, dead salutation, is "Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." (Eph. 1:1, 2.)

But now a few words as to the blessings prayed for. These are "grace and peace,"—grace the fountain, peace the stream; "grace," as containing in its bosom all that favour which God the Father has towards his people; and "peace," all that personal manifestation of it which could be realised and enjoyed from a sense of pardoning mercy. But we must not here enlarge, as much lies before us, and our progress at present has been but slow.

iii. Now no sooner had the Apostle given to the Ephesian saints his affectionate greeting, and breathed forth his spiritual desires on their behalf, than his heart was touched and his whole soul as if inflamed with a sense of the wondrous goodness and mercy of God to him and to them. So melted and overpowered was he with a view by faith of what God had already done for them in the exceeding riches of his grace, that he bursts forth into an anthem of grateful praise: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." (Eph. 1:3.)

How shall we attempt to unfold, we will not say all, for that is beyond the tongue of men or angels, but a small part only of the treasures of grace and glory which the Holy Ghost by the pen of Paul has stored up in the bosom of these words? Yet let us bring our cup, that we may draw if it be but one clear draught out of this ever-flowing, overflowing fountain of heavenly truth.

1. The first thing which we shall notice is the word "blessed," which occurs twice, though in two different senses, in this verse. As first used, it is the ascription on our part of thankful praise to God, speaking well, as the word literally means, of his gracious Majesty. To bless and praise God, and that for evermore, is the employment and the happiness of those who bask in the full beams of his love and favour in the glorious mansions above. But the first notes of this eternal song of heavenly praise are sounded here below, and are produced and drawn forth by a sense of God's goodness and mercy as revealed to the soul, and especially when his love is shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost. This made David say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits." (Psa. 103:1, 2.) He blesses God for having blessed him. But now observe the difference between his blessing us and our blessing him; for we have observed that the word "blessed" is used in two different senses. God blesses us in *deed*; we bless him in *word*. His blessings are actual, substantial favours, freely conferred; ours, are merely the thankful acknowledgment of them as received. This, however, we shall more clearly see as we advance in our exposition of the verse now before us.

But who is it whom the Apostle thus fervently blesses? Under what name and title does he praise him? It is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" whom he thus praises and blesses. We cannot bless God simply and nakedly as God, for in himself and out of Christ in his terrible Majesty, he is a consuming fire to sinners like us. Simply, then, as God, he has not blessed us, nor as such can we bless him. But as "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," we, if saints and believers, may bless him, for as such and as such only, has he blessed us. This is his peculiar New Testament title, as that of "the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" was his Old Testament name. Let us seek, then, to apprehend its spiritual meaning and import.

**You will observe that, according to this New Testament title, he is the God of the Lord Jesus Christ and the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. As these two titles evidently differ, the distinction between them demands a little explanation.**

**1. First, then, he is, "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ." This may seem at first sight a somewhat harsh and unwonted expression; but it is perfectly scriptural, and when spiritually understood and realised, full of blessed meaning. Thus the Apostle, in the chapter before us, expressly uses the term where he prays that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ would give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation." (verse 17.) But how is he "the God of Christ?" To understand this we must bear in mind that though the Lord Jesus Christ has but one Person, yet he has two natures; and that though the Scriptures clearly distinguish between these two natures, yet, on account of the oneness of his Person, they ascribe to our Lord the attributes of each nature without drawing minute distinctions. Thus, in Rom. 1:3, 4, Paul distinguishes the two natures: "Which" (or, as we now say, "Who") "was made of the seed of David according to the flesh—there is the human nature; "And declared to be the Son of God with power;" not "made," but "declared"—there is his divine nature as the eternal Son. But in Hebrews 1, the same Apostle makes no such clear distinction of the two natures, for he says of the same Son of God: "Who being the brightness of his glory and the express image of his Person," which he could only be in his divine nature, "by himself purged our sins," which was by the blood of his human nature in union with his divine. So the title, "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," blends into one gracious name what God is to Christ in his human, and what he is to him in his divine nature. Thus, as Christ is the Son of God, God is his Father; but as he is the Son of man, God is his God. As choosing and appointing him to the work of mediation, as making an everlasting covenant with him, as preparing a body for him, as in due time sending him, as anointing him with the Holy Ghost and with power, as accepting his sacrifice as a propitiation for sin, as raising him from the dead and setting him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,—in all these points God is "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ." Our blessed Lord, therefore, in the depth of his agony on the cross, cried to him under that title: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" So in Psa. 22, the first words of which the Lord thus took to himself on the cross, and which, therefore, contains throughout his language, we find him speaking, "Thou art my God from my mother's belly," (Psa. 22:10,) which shows the connection between the incarnation of Christ in the womb of the Virgin and God being his God. So also in Psa. 40, in which we**

know also from Heb. 10:5-7 that the Lord Jesus speaks, we find him saying, "I delight to do thy will, O my God," (verse 8,) which he did when he took the body prepared for him; and again, "Make no tarrying, O my God," (verse 17,) which shows his looking to him and hanging upon him in the days of his flesh. And to show that this covenant title did not cease at his death, but abides still in all its completeness, immediately after his resurrection, before he ascended up on high to be the great High Priest over the house of God, he declared that God was still his God, when, by Mary Magdalene, he sent that gracious message to his disciples: "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." (John 20:17.)

2. That he is "the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ," inasmuch as Christ is his only-begotten Son, we need not stay to prove, as we have written so much on the subject of our Lord's true, proper, and eternal Sonship. It will be sufficient, therefore, now merely to notice it.

Now it is the blending of these two titles in one and the same God which makes him to us so relatively blessed; we say relatively, for God in himself is and ever must be blessed as distinct from anything he is or can be to any of his creatures. He, then, who is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ in the glorious yet incomprehensible mystery of the Trinity is the God of Jesus Christ in the covenant of grace. Here is the foundation of all salvation, here is the fountain of every spiritual blessing, that the Son of the Father by eternal subsistence should be the Mediator between God and men by an everlasting covenant. But we will not further enlarge here, both for the reason that we have given, and especially because this blessed mystery, which we have thus far ventured to unfold, will be continually meeting with us as we proceed with our exposition.

iv. We pass on, then, to the next words, "Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings." It is literally, "in every spiritual blessing;" but the sense is much the same, for "every spiritual blessing" means the same as "all spiritual blessings;" and though "in" is somewhat fuller and stronger than "with," as implying an actual possession and enjoyment of them, yet "with" is sufficiently expressive of the sense of the Apostle.

We have already pointed out a difference between our blessing God and his blessing us. We can only faintly and feebly bless him in word for what he blesses us in deed. And O, could our faith but embrace a little, were it only a little, and O, could we daily come and drink but a few drops of this pure

**fountain of immortal joy, in the sweet realisation of being blessed, already blessed, fully blessed, unalterably, irreversibly blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ, what strength and consolation would it impart to our often cast-down soul. Look at the words; examine them again and again; think over in your mind, one by one, the spiritual blessings that you most covet. Is it pardon? Is it peace? Is it the love of God shed abroad in your heart? Is it the Spirit of adoption, enabling you to cry, Abba, Father? Is it communion with God? Is it the enjoyment of his presence and smiles? Is it deliverance from every doubt and fear? Is it a large measure of his fear in your heart, a subduing of all your lusts and corruptions, a godly, holy life, and a happy, blessed death? Are not these the spiritual blessings which you prize above house or land, wife or husband, child or relative, or any earthly good? With these, then, and with every other are you blessed, already blessed, if you are one of God's saints and a believer in Christ Jesus. God has not *yet* to bless you, beyond giving you a foretaste here and the full enjoyment hereafter. He has *already* blessed you with them all in Christ Jesus.**

**But where? "In heavenly places?" As after "heavenly" in the original there is no substantive, for you will observe that in our translation "places" is in italics, which signifies a word wanting in the Greek, we might read "heavenly things," as is noted in the margin. But we think that our translators were wise in putting "places" instead of "things." And why? Because we are blessed with all these spiritual blessings in Christ. And where is he? Is he not in the heavenly places? Was he not set there by God himself, when he raised him from the dead, as it is declared in this chapter, verse 20? Every spiritual blessing with which God has blessed his people is in Christ; and as he is now in heavenly places, all these blessings are there stored and secured in him.**

**We here see the union between Christ and the Church, and her relationship to him as her risen, glorified Head, which we have pointed out as the distinguishing feature, and, if we may use the expression, peculiar signature of this epistle. God has blessed her with all spiritual blessings. But why, and how? "In Christ." That is the reason, and that is the manner of her being so blessed. She is not so blessed in or for herself, but only by virtue of her union with, her relationship unto, and her standing in, the Lord Jesus Christ. Figures are but dim and imperfect representations of the union between Christ and the Church, but as the Holy Spirit has himself chosen marriage as an illustration of the nature and closeness of this union, we may safely adopt, and perhaps expand it, to unfold more clearly the connection of the Church's union with Christ and her being blessed with all spiritual blessings in him.**

Take, then, the figure of a father richly endowing the chosen bride of his only son, and loading her with most costly gifts. Why? Because, and only because, she is his son's wedded spouse. Her union with his son makes her his daughter, and he becomes her father by her becoming his son's wife. We therefore read, "The King's daughter is all glorious within;" and again, "Hearken, O daughter." (Psa. 45:10, 13.)

The best of all blessings are "spiritual blessings." All others are for time; but they, and they only, for eternity. Health and wealth, wife and children, food and raiment, friends and relations, house and home, are but for the body, and will not be needed when body and soul part company. But spiritual blessings—those blessings which the Holy Spirit manifests and reveals to the souls of God's people, and by the knowledge, possession, and enjoyment of which he qualifies them and makes them meet for the inheritance of the saints in light,—those blessings, so worthy of God to give and for her to receive, are given to the Church only as in union with her covenant Head.

But our limits warn us to defer the further consideration of this union with Christ to our next paper.

## II.

Viewing the Church of Christ in her relationship to her glorious covenant Head, which we have pointed out as the characteristic mark and distinguishing feature of this Epistle, two things, intimately connected with this relationship, prominently meet our eye: 1, her *being*; 2, her *well-being*; first that the Church *is*; secondly, that she is *what* she is. The first of these two points we shall but briefly touch upon; the second, as intimately connected with our subject, will require from us a fuller and larger degree of handling. And if our exposition of this part of the chapter should seem somewhat dull or dry, as being chiefly doctrinal, be it borne in mind that sound and clear doctrine must ever precede and be the foundation of all sound and clear experience of the truth in its purity and its power.

1. That there should be a Church at all is, in itself, a marvel which surpasses and baffles all our attempts to understand or explain; for consider, for a moment, what is involved in the simple fact made known to us only by divine revelation, and only received by faith, that there is a Church, "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." That God should have chosen, before the foundation of the world, an innumerable multitude of the

human race, and that these should form, in their united assemblage, one perfect, harmonious body—the mystical body of Christ, and as such should be the Bride and Spouse of the Son of God—what a mystery of wisdom and grace is here! At present, we know but in part, (1 Cor. 13:9,) and can therefore, only stand, as if in holy admiration, on the brink of this sea of love and grace, without being able, in our time-state, to embark upon and sail over it. We believe it only on the testimony of God in the word; and if we can rejoice in hope of personal interest in it, it is only from the testimony of God in the soul. As, then, by faith we view what the Apostle calls "the mystery of Christ," which "from the beginning of the world was hid in God, but in due time was revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit," which mystery is the union of Head and members into one mystical body, the question may, perhaps, arise in our mind, "How can these things be?" To this our chief answer must be, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things; to whom be glory for ever. Amen." (Rom. 11:33-36.)

But viewing this divine mystery as revealed in the word of truth, with special reference to the two points already named, we may briefly say that the sovereign will of God is the cause of the Church's being; and his eternal love, boundless grace, and infinite wisdom the cause of her well-being.

It is not well, perhaps, to draw too fine or needless distinctions; and yet it may help our thoughts in contemplating this heavenly mystery to see that there is a distinction between the Church simply being the bride of Christ, and the Church being a bride adorned for him with all her beauty and glory. A simple illustration may assist us here. Youth, beauty, and graceful accomplishments, sweetness of temper, and amiability of disposition do not constitute womanhood; nor are they necessary to kindle love in man's heart; and yet they may much endear the bride who possesses them to him who has won her affections, and can now call her by marriage his. So the Church's present grace and future glory do not make her to be a Church; but being constituted a Church by the appointment of the Father, her beauty and comeliness enhance her heavenly Bridegroom's love, and call forth those almost rapturous words from his lips, "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck. How fair

is thy love, my sister, my spouse! How much better is thy love than wine, and the smell of thine ointments than all spices!" (Song of Sol. 4:9, 10.)

It is this beauty of the Church which we have now to unfold; for it mainly consists in her being blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ.

2. It being, then, the sovereign goodwill and pleasure of the Father that there should be a Church, as the bride and spouse of his dear Son, his love went out in blessing her, his grace in enriching her, and his wisdom in furnishing her with every qualification suitable to her high and heavenly calling, and to that state of ultimate and eternal glory for which he had designed her. And do we not see a glorious beauty and harmony in all this? Being but a creature, even in her primitive innocence, in all the purity of her unfallen condition, the Church, as she could have had no existence but by the sovereign goodwill and pleasure of God, so she could not have furnished herself with those qualifications which should render her a suitable bride, friend, and companion for the Son of God. As then love moved the heart of the Father toward her, so wisdom directed his counsels; and the result was that he blessed her with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in the Son of his love. Thus was she prepared beforehand in eternity as "a bride adorned for her husband;" for she was viewed by him, "who sees the end from the beginning," with whom there is neither time nor space, but one eternal "now," *then* as she will one day appear, arrayed in all the beauties of holiness, and shining forth in all the glory of the Lord the Lamb.

But this brings us to resume the thread of our exposition; for what followed upon the sovereign goodwill and pleasure of God that there should be a Church, and that he blessed her with all spiritual blessings in Christ? The determinate choice of the members of this mystical body, which we believe to have been not general and indiscriminate, not national or to privileges, not with respect to faith and obedience foreseen, or any other such scheme as the wit of man has devised to nullify or render palatable a doctrine offensive to the carnal mind; but an election personal and individual; in other words, an absolute, unconditional, and distinct choice of every individual member, so that there should be, in their totality, neither more nor fewer than should make a perfect body. This personal and individual election is intimated in the words: "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love." (Eph. 1:4.)

The connection between this and the preceding verse lies in the words, "According as." Having simply declared that God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, the Apostle goes to show *why* and *how* he has so blessed us. It is "according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world." Election in Christ, therefore, precedes being blessed with all spiritual blessings; for we are blessed with them only as being in him, and we are only in him as chosen in him. We thus see what an important and momentous truth the doctrine of election is, and that in it not only our very present existence, our now living and moving on this earth, is bound up, but that all our hopes and prospects for the future centre in it. Election also, we may remark, though distinct and personal, is not, as is sometimes loosely and confusedly stated, a mere abstract or absolute choice of persons to eternal salvation, irrespective of their union with their covenant Head, but, according to our text, is a choice of them in Christ. It, therefore, precedes every blessing, and they were given only through it and in accordance with it. God chose him and the elect in him at one and the same moment, and by one and the same act. Jesus Christ is, therefore, the Head of election and of the elect of God; for as in the natural body the head was not first formed and then the members, but head and members were by one and the same act called at the same moment into being; so it was with Christ mystical. God the Father did not choose Christ first to be a Mediator, and then choose his people by a subsequent act, and put them into him, which would be setting up a Head without members, a Bridegroom without a bride, a Shepherd without sheep, and a Vine without branches; but chose him and then in him by one eternal act. You will also carefully bear in mind that Christ was not chosen to be the Son of God by this act of election, for this he ever was and is by virtue of his eternal subsistence; but being, already and eternally being, the Son of the Father in truth and love, and fore-viewed and predestinated as incarnate, he was chosen as God-man Mediator, and his people chosen in him as such. Here we see both their being and their well-being; *why* they are, and why they are *what* they are. Here we see two divine mysteries unfolded, in which are wrapped up all that the elect of God are and all that they ever will be: 1. Their union with Christ; 2. The blessings which they possess in him by virtue of that union. Here we see why and how God has blessed them with all spiritual blessings. It is "in him," and because they are in him as being chosen in him. Viewing them, therefore, in union with his dear Son, God loved them with the same love as he loved him (John 17:23,) and out of the fulness of this love he blessed them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in him. It was as if he could not do enough for the bride of his dear Son; as if he would enrich and endow her with every blessing which

could not only qualify her to be a suitable spouse, but raise and elevate her to a state of holiness, happiness, and glory, not only beyond all human or angelic thought or conception, but such as would satisfy the very heart of God himself, and display to all eternity the riches of his wisdom and grace, and the height, depth, length, and breadth of his love.

This, then, brings us back to the fuller consideration and examination of the spiritual blessings with which God has blessed the Church in heavenly places in Christ.

i. The first spiritual blessing is being "chosen in him before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blame before God in love." We prefer ourselves to put the stop after "before him," and connecting the words "in love" with the next verse, to read it thus:\* "In love having predestinated us." But we will first take the words as they stand in our translation.

\* The original manuscripts having no stops whatever, or even any division into words or sentences, we are not strictly tied to the punctuation of our translation, though it is generally so excellent that we would not willingly, without good reason, in any instance, depart from it.

Two spiritual blessings are spoken of here: 1, holiness; 2, blamelessness. Unto both of these, as needful qualifications to render her a suitable bride for the Son of God, was the Church chosen. As it is very desirable to understand what is signified or implied by these two qualifications, we shall endeavour to unfold them separately, that we may enter into their spiritual meaning, and try our own state and standing by them. And we may here remark that unless we can raise our eyes to the position which the Church occupies as the spouse and bride of the Son of God, all our views of her will be weak and defective, and our own experience of spiritual blessings, as their design and result, be dim and confused. The grand end and result of all personal experience of spiritual blessings is to bring us into manifested union and communion with the Lord Jesus, so as to drink into his spirit, have his mind, and be conformed to his likeness. We thus become one spirit with him; and without this there can be no communion between him and us. Even in earthly marriage, there must be some union of soul as well as of body, of mind as well as of person, of spirit as well as of flesh, between man and wife, and especially in the case of the people of God, to make wedded life happy. What makes so many miserable marriages but disparity and unsuitability of mind or disposition between the parties? When God, then, would provide a bride for his dear Son,

he took abundant care that she should be a suitable friend and companion as well as wedded spouse. They were to dwell together in the most blissful intimacy of spirit through a glorious eternity. She must, therefore, be perfectly conformed to his image, that he might delight in her as reflecting his beauty and glory, and she delight in him as beholding all the perfections of Deity shining forth through the medium of his glorified humanity. This was why God chose her to the possession and enjoyment of two of the richest spiritual blessings which even his wisdom could devise or his love bestow: 1, perfection of holiness within; 2, a perfection of spotless beauty without. The psalmist puts them together in one verse, "The King's daughter is all glorious within." There is her inward perfection in holiness. "Her clothing is of wrought gold." There is her outward perfection; We will look at both these blessings in connection with the verse now before us. And first of the choice of the Church unto *holiness*.

1. By holiness we may understand two things: 1, holiness in its germ or earthly beginning; and 2, holiness in its full maturity or heavenly completion. God is essentially and infinitely holy; and he has said to his people, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." (1 Pet. 1:15.) So holy is he that nothing that is unholy can live in his presence. As, then, without holiness no man can see the Lord, so, without holiness no man can enjoy the Lord. Holiness, as an internal grace, is especially a spiritual blessing, for it mainly consists in a spiritual capacity to delight in God as essentially and ineffably holy, and to have communion with him from oneness of spirit with the Lord Jesus, who is the brightness of his glory and the express image of his Person. The happiness of heaven is not only to be perfectly holy, but to enjoy eternal communion with a Three-One God in all the beauties of holiness. This is the meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light, without which heaven, could they reach it, would be no heaven to them. There is a depth of vital truth in those remarkable words of the Apostle, to which we have already alluded: "But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit." (1 Cor. 6:17.) Thus, even here below, with all our weakness and sinfulness, there is a sweet spiritual delighting in Christ as the Holy One of Israel, and so far a blessed communion with him as joined to him and one spirit with him. Though in ourselves such hideous, loathsome lepers, polluted without and within by every sin and crime, yet, as partaking of his spirit and born of God into a new and hidden life, we cannot but, with the eyes of our new man, admire the beauty of the King as he presents himself to our view, and wins over and engages every affection of our willing heart unto him self. Indeed, if ever we hate and loathe ourselves on account of our iniquities, it is because we are so unlike him, and have so sinned against and before the eyes of his infinite purity and against his bleeding, dying love. Sin, horrid sin,

is the cause of all our grief, burden, and trouble; and we are sure that whatever moments of peace we may now and then enjoy, we never can or shall be perfectly happy until we are perfectly holy, and have done for ever with our daily plague and continual burden. The words of Hart well express our feelings:

**"But I would be holy."**

And whence springs such a feeling and such a desire? From being born of God. It is our new nature, our spirit born of the Spirit, which is holy; not "our flesh in which dwelleth no good thing." It is this holy and divine nature in us which hates sin and pants after holiness, which relishes holy employments, and delights in spiritual enjoyments, which believes, and hopes, and loves; which prays and praises, which alternately sings and sighs; trembles and rejoices, lies at the footstool and waits at the doorposts, mourns like a dove and mounts as an eagle. But in this life, this principle of holiness is but an infant germ under the clods, as a sprouting seed in the furrow, as a tender blade amid the weeds, as a lily among the thorns. Earth is not its native clime or destined home. It is now, indeed, planted in the house of the Lord, but it will flourish only in full perfection in the courts of God. (Psa. 92:13.) To this ultimate state of perfection in holiness is the Church chosen. And God will most certainly "perfect that which concerneth her, nor will he forsake the work of his own hands." "He who hath begun the good work will perform [or 'finish,' margin] it until the day of Jesus Christ;" (Phil. 1:6;) for "when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall his saints also appear with him in glory." At his appearing, "he will change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Then, and not till then, will the holiness to which the Church has been chosen be perfect and complete. Holy in soul and holy in body, and each wholly conformed to the perfect exemplar of the glorified humanity of the Son of God, the saints will dwell for ever in union and communion with their loving and beloved Lord.

2. Then, also, will the Church be "*without blame* before God." Most commentators, we believe, connect this spiritual blessing with the preceding, as if they formed but one; but we prefer to view them, as already observed, as distinct, and to refer the blessing of holiness to the internal, and the blessing of blamelessness to the external character of the Church. Justification and sanctification are distinct blessings. The first springs out of, and is connected with, the finished work of the Son of God; the other springs out of, and is

connected with, the work of the Holy Ghost on the soul. Sin has defiled our persons externally as well as polluted our souls internally. We cannot, therefore, stand before God unless washed in the blood of the Lamb, and clothed in his spotless righteousness. This righteousness forms our *title* to heaven, as holiness constitutes our *meetness*. The former is our wedding robe, the latter our spiritual qualification. The hymn well draws this distinction:

"'Tis he adorn'd my naked soul,  
And made salvation mine;  
Upon a poor, polluted worm  
He makes his graces shine.

"And, lest the shadow of a spot  
Should on my soul be found,  
He took the robe the Saviour wrought,  
And cast it all around.

The Spirit wrought my faith, and love,

And hope, and every grace;  
But Jesus spent his life to work  
The robe of righteousness."

Without these two qualifications, what entrance could there be into heaven, or what happiness there, could entrance be gained? For consider not only the infinite purity and holiness of God, but the blazing splendour of his immediate presence—the piercing ray of his deep-searching eye. Who or what can live in his presence but what is absolutely perfect without and within? But this the Church could not be, unless she were washed in the blood and clothed in the righteousness of God's dear Son, and perfectly sanctified by the operations and indwelling of his Spirit. We therefore read: "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." (Eph. 5:25-27.)

Both of these blessings are contained in the above words. Christ "loving the Church, and giving himself for it," implies his blood-shedding and obedience, whereby it was so thoroughly and completely justified so as to be without blame before God; and his "sanctifying and cleansing it with the washing of

water by the word" points to the work of sanctification by the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, whereby it is made holy— here initially, hereafter perfectly; the ultimate end of both her justification and sanctification being "that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

And, adopting for the present the usual reading, all this "in love," for love was the moving cause, as it will be the final consummation of the whole counsel of God. He, therefore, says: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love." There is the moving cause. "Therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee." There is the carrying out of the purposes of his heart, in the drawing of her unto his own bosom by the cords of his loving-kindness, here to taste, there fully to enjoy, when, perfect in holiness and blameless in righteousness, the Church will be presented by her heavenly Bridegroom faultless before the presence of the Father, with exceeding joy; (Jude 24;) and thus will she dwell for ever in his love.

3. The next spiritual blessing is "*predestination into the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself*: "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." (Eph. 1:5.)

We have mentioned that we prefer putting the stop after "before him," and thus to connect the words "in love" with the next verse, reading the whole thus "in love having predestinated us," &c. The reasons why we prefer so to read it we will now, therefore, endeavour, to explain. First, it removes a little difficulty which seems to present itself in the way of clearly understanding the meaning of the expression, "being without blame before God in love;" for, though we have given an interpretation of the words as we believe they are usually explained, yet we confess that we are by no means fully satisfied with the explanation. It is easy to understand the meaning of being chosen unto perfect holiness, and to spotless blamelessness before God; but, according to our view, it is not so easy to see what is signified by being so "in love;" for it is not love which produces either the holiness or the blamelessness, though it enhances and completes both. But if we join "in love" to the next clause, not only is this little difficulty removed, but we are furnished with a beautiful and blessed reason why God has predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself; and we thus make it fully harmonise with the words of John on the same point: "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath

bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God; therefore, the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not." (1 John 3:1.)

We may also add, as a point of learned criticism, that some of the oldest versions and ancient fathers so read the passage, and that it has been adopted by the best and newest editions of the Greek Testament. But our main reasons for so connecting the words, we shall presently more fully unfold. Adopting, then, this mode of reading the connection, we will now consider the meaning of God's having "predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself."

1. And, first, what is the difference between election, and predestination? or is there any difference between them? It is hardly worth while to draw, in such difficult points, minute distinctions, and yet we may safely conclude that there is some difference between them, or the Apostle would not have used the two words. We may, then, briefly say that election is the first act in the mind of God whereby he "chose the persons of the elect to be holy and without blame, and that predestination was the second act, which ratified by fixed decree the state of those to whom election had given birth. Having chosen them in his dear Son unto a perfection of holiness and righteousness, his love went forth, not only to fix their state by firm decree, but to add another blessing, the highest and greatest which even his love could bestow, viz., to make them his own children by adoption, and thus himself become their Father and their God. He might, so to speak, have rested short of this. To choose them to perfect holiness and spotless perfection would have abundantly secured their happiness, for this is all that the angels have. But his love to his dear Son was so vast, yea, so infinite, that having chosen a people in him, his love went out towards them as one with his own Son, and in the depth of that love he predestinated them unto the adoption of children unto himself.

Here, then, we see a solid and substantial reason why "in love" should be prefixed to "having predestinated;" for it more clearly and distinctly shows us the movements of God's love, in enriching the Church with that greatest and best of all blessings, the adoption of children unto himself. Viewing them in Christ, in union to the Son of his love, he would do more for them than make them perfect in holiness and righteousness. He would adopt them as his own children, and love them with the same love as that wherewith he loved his dear Son. A figure may perhaps help us here. A father chooses a bride for his son, as Abraham chose one of his own kin for Isaac, and gives her a goodly dowry, besides presenting her with bridal ornaments, such as Eliezer put

upon Rebekah. But on becoming the spouse of his son, she becomes his daughter, and now his affections flow forth to her, not only as a suitable bride for his dear son; not only does he admire her beauty and grace, and is charmed with the sweetness of her disposition, but he is moved also with fatherly love towards her as adopted unto himself, and thus occupying a newer and nearer relationship. Figures are, of course, necessarily imperfect, and as such must not be pressed too far; but if the one which we have adduced at all help us to a clearer understanding of the wondrous love of God in the adoption of us unto himself, it will not be out of place. We thus see that predestination to the adoption of children is a higher, richer, and greater blessing than being chosen unto holiness and blamelessness, and may thus be said to follow upon them as an additional and special fruit of God's love.

But the love of God, in predestinating the Church unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, has even a deeper root than viewing her as the Bride of his dear Son. It springs out of, and is most closely and intimately connected with the true, real, and eternal Sonship of Jesus. Being chosen in Christ, the elect become the sons of God. Why? Because he is the true, real, and essential Son of the Father; and thus, as in union with him, who is the Son of God by nature, they become the sons of God by adoption. Were he a Son merely by office, or by incarnation, this would not be the case, for he would then only be a Son by adoption himself. But being the Son of God by eternal subsistence, he can say, "Behold I and the children which thou hast given me." "I thy Son by nature, they thy sons by adoption." We see, then, that so great, so special was the love of God to his only-begotten Son, that, viewing the Church in union with him, his heart embraced her with the same love as that wherewith he loved him.

The Apostle, therefore, adds, "Unto himself." No words could so well set forth the thoughts of God's heart toward the Church, and the ultimate consummation of his eternal purposes. In choosing the Church in Christ unto holiness, and in predestinating her unto the adoption of children, it was to bring her into union and communion with himself. But this she could not have as a creature, however holy and perfect, except by union with the Son of God. Angels are holy and without blame before God, but they have not union and communion with him. Why? Because they have not union and communion with his dear Son. "He took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham." Christ could not, therefore, say of angels, "I in them and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one." Nor could he use

of them those wondrous words, "That they all may be one; as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us." (John 17:21, 23.)

But as we must not linger too long on any one point, we pass on to our exposition of the next words, "According to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved." (Eph. 1:5, 6.) Two things are spoken of here as moving causes in the mind of God: 1. The good pleasure of his will; 2. The praise of the glory of his grace. We will look at these separately.

1. "According to the good pleasure of his will." This we may call the determining cause of the whole of God's counsel in the choice of the Church, and blessing her with all spiritual blessings, as the praise of the glory of his grace was the ultimate end. Thus to endow and bless her was his sovereign will; and observe the expression, "the *good pleasure* of his will." All things are and subsist only by the will of God; that is, his naked, absolute, sovereign will. But when he willed that there should be a Church in union with his dear Son; he rejoiced and delighted in that peculiar act of his will. It was, therefore, the "good pleasure of his will." An earthly sovereign must sometimes punish. It is necessary to good government that the law should be strictly executed; but, though his will, it is not his good pleasure. He does not delight in executing a necessary act of justice; but, in exercising his prerogative of mercy in the pardon of a criminal, he may enjoy a sensible pleasure. So God is said to delight in mercy; (Micah 7:18;) whereas to punish is "his strange act," (Isa. 28:21,) as if it were foreign to his merciful disposition. When, then, God chose the Church unto holiness and blamelessness, and predestinated her unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself, it was not only his will, but the good pleasure of his will. And this gives us another reason for connecting "in love" with "having predestinated;" for the good pleasure of his will, according to which he chose and blessed the Church, was the carrying out of his love into a positive act of pleasurable will.

How beautiful it is to see the sweet and glorious harmony between the love of God, the good pleasure of God, and the will of God, and all moving in blessed concert in electing the Church in Christ to holiness and righteousness, and predestinating her to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto himself. What views it gives us of God, not merely as an absolute sovereign, and as such disposing all things according to the counsel of his own will, but going forth in goodness and love! That as we see and feel our lost and ruined state, we may, by the power of his grace, know and believe the love that God hath to

us, (1 John 4:16,) and be thus encouraged ever to look and wait upon him.

2. The next point to be considered is the ultimate end of these counsels of God: "To the praise of the glory of his grace." But as this is a wide subject, we must defer our thoughts upon it to our next paper.

### III.

What God does he does for his own glory. All his wonders in creation, all his dealings in providence, all his actions in grace are for this end, that his great name might be magnified, and his glory be visibly manifested. Were there, indeed, no creation, no providence, no grace, God would still be the same; nothing would be wanting to his happiness, nothing wanting to his eternal and infinite perfections. We can, therefore, in imagination, look back to that period in eternity when there was no creation, when "as yet he had not made the earth, nor the fields, nor the highest part of the dust of the world;" (Prov. 8:26;) and we can similarly fix our eyes on that moment when "he laid the foundations of the earth, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." (Job 38:4, 7.) But creation, with all its wonders, added nothing to the glory of God. It became, indeed, a vast theatre for its visible display to millions of angelic and human intelligences; but the wisdom and power of God would have been the same had he never said, "Let there be light, and there was light," or made man in his own image, after his own likeness. But it was his holy will that there should be a visible manifestation of his glory; in other words, that there should be a display of his wisdom and power, and of every other such attribute of his divine character, as should bring eternal praise and honour to his name. Thence his original wonders in creation, thence his daily acts in providence, in opening his hand and satisfying the desire of every living thing. How beautifully is all this unfolded by the psalmist: "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all; the earth is full of thy riches. So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts. There go the ships; there is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein. These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season. That thou givest them they gather; thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good." (Psa. 104:24-28.) And why this display of his power? "The glory of the Lord shall endure for ever; the Lord shall rejoice in his works." (Psa. 104:31.)

But we need not dwell on the glory of God as thus visibly manifested in creation and in providence. The point which more immediately concerns us, as being connected with our present exposition, is the manifestation of this glory in a special way of grace: "To the praise of the glory of his grace." At this point, therefore, we resume our exposition of the chapter before us. "To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved." (Eph. 1:6.)

We showed in our last paper that "the good pleasure of God's will" was the moving cause of his choosing the Church in Christ before the foundation of the world, and blessing her with all spiritual blessings in him. As, then, we may call "the good pleasure of his will" the *moving cause* of his choice, so we may term "the praise of his glory" its *ultimate end*. This is expressed by the Apostle in the words now before us, "To the praise of the glory of his grace." Let us look a little, then, into this deep and blessed subject.

We are usually so much taken up with looking at grace as suitable to ourselves, that we are apt to forget or overlook it as glorifying to God. It is, indeed, hardly to be expected that, in early days, we should lose sight of ourselves, when our own miserable condition as sinners before God is forced so continually on our thoughts, and so deeply and sensibly impressed upon our consciences. And it seems to be the will of God that we should practically and experimentally learn our need of grace as suitable to ourselves, before we rise up into a higher knowledge of grace as glorifying to him. It is for this reason that we are made to feel the burden of our sins, the holiness and justice of God, and what we deserve at his hands as transgressors. This is a view of the glory of God in the law, as reflecting his justice; but not a view of him in the gospel, as reflecting his grace. But it is still divine teaching, for we read: "Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teachest him out of thy law." (Psa. 94:12.) Under, then, this heavenly teaching, producing a sense of sin and of the justice of God in punishing it, all hope or help in self is cut off, and down we sink, body and soul, before the face of the Almighty, just able to cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner."

Now this view of the glory of God in the law prepares us for a view of his glory in the gospel; and a knowledge of sin by the ministration of condemnation and death fits us for a knowledge of salvation by the ministration of life and righteousness. As, then, salvation by grace is manifested to the eyes of our enlightened understanding in the word, and is inwardly revealed by the power of God to the soul, how sweet and suitable is the melodious sound, as it thus

reaches both ears and heart. It is this blessed suitability of God's way of saving sinners by grace, when every other door is shut and every other refuge cut off, which makes salvation by grace the sweetest tidings which can ever fall on the ears of man. Nor does an increasing knowledge of grace, both in its Fountain and in its streams, lessen either its suitability or its sweetness. Nay, the more deeply that we are led into a knowledge of the mystery of ungodliness, the more suitable and precious does salvation by grace become, as opening to our faith and hope the only escape from the wrath to come, and the only remedy that we can see or find, in heaven or earth, to meet the whole extent of our desperate case.

As, then, the benefit and blessedness of grace become more clearly and fully manifested, and its freeness, sovereignty, and superaboundings are made more experimentally known, it is more warmly and lovingly embraced, more closely cleaved unto, more fully and unreservedly looked to and hung upon, as the only hope of our tried and tempted, and often cast down and dejected soul.

But during all this time we may have but very dim and scanty views of the grand and glorious truth here presented to us by the Apostle, that this grace, which is so suitable to us, is also glorifying to God. We seem to love and admire the gift more than the glory of the Giver. Our own salvation by the fulness and freeness of his grace, not his praise and glory in thus fully and freely saving us, as it was at first our chief concern, so it seems to form too often afterwards our chief thought and pleasure. Now this is surely not rendering to God the glory due to his name. It is not making his will our will, nor his glory the chief joy of our soul; and we thus fall short of what should be the main desire of our hearts. And as we thus fail in rendering to God the glory due to his name, so we proportionately lose much of what would be for our own comfort and stability, had we a clearer apprehension and a more abiding sense of the intimate connection between the grace of God and the glory of God. But when we are somewhat farther and more clearly led into a vital, experimental knowledge of the great mystery of salvation by Christ, and can see by the eye of faith that God's own glory is far more deeply interested in saving us freely and eternally by his grace than if it were merely from a feeling of pity and compassion to us as lost, undone sinners, then we seem to get a new view of what grace is, as dwelling eternally in the bosom of God, and see that it is not only for our salvation, but to the praise of his glory. As, then, we thus rise out of self into the purer and higher atmosphere of the glory of God, we see that this view of the true nature of grace gives it a deeper root, a firmer foundation, and makes it a more rich, copious, and ever-flowing spring

of salvation and sanctification, of holiness and happiness, than were it merely God's free favour to undone sinners, in which his own glory had little share.

Now it will ever be found that as the glory of God is the ultimate end of all his thoughts and counsels, words and works, so a dim and defective view of this glory will impair our spiritual judgment, weaken our faith, becloud our hope, and diminish our love. To be always thinking of ourselves, and never lift up eye or heart to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, is a kind of spiritual selfishness, which, like moral selfishness, cramps and contracts the heart, and, by shutting out the glory of God, may, in a sense, be said to shut out himself.

But we need hardly wonder that so many of the living family of God have such dim and imperfect views of the real nature of grace, when we think how deficient in this point is the ministry of the day. There are but few, speaking comparatively, who preach salvation by grace at all; but even of those who do preach it, most seem to represent it rather as a remedy for the fall, a kind of expedient which God, moved with compassion, devised, almost as an after-thought, to repair the breach, than as a fruit of his eternal counsel and good pleasure for the manifestation of his own glory. They speak well of grace as opposed to works; and they proclaim, at least many of them, clearly and boldly, that salvation is all of grace from first to last. But they do not seem to see and admire how the glory of God shines forth with such conspicuous lustre in his grace, and that he saves man, not merely as touched with pity and compassion for his case, but that, long before man sinned and fell, it was his determinate will that the love of his heart, the wisdom of his counsels, the power of his might, and the triumphs of his grace should bring to himself a revenue of eternal praise.

This, then, is what we should seek to realise by the power of faith, and we shall then see that this view of grace identifies, if we may use the expression, God in his glory with grace in its manifestation, and that it arrays, therefore, on the side of grace, not merely the sovereign will of God, but that glory which is the end of all his works. Thus it is, as the Apostle here declares, "to the praise of his glory." That his glory in manifesting his favour to the poor, needy children of men should be eternally praised, and form the theme of thanksgiving and blessing of myriads of redeemed sinners through millions of revolving ages, as it was the ultimate end of God's counsels, so in it will he eternally rest and be satisfied. And as this alone will satisfy God, so it alone will satisfy the objects of his love and the subjects of his grace.

And you, poor needy reader, who are often pressed and bowed down with a sense of your sins, have you not sometimes felt that none would so bless and praise God as you, if admitted to his presence, for of all sinners you have been and are in your feelings the vilest and worst, and of all extreme, peculiar, and complicated cases, yours seems to be at times the most deep and desperate? Well, then, you will have something to bless and praise God for, should you reach heaven at last; and to do this with an immortal tongue, as it will be your highest happiness, so it will be to God's own eternal glory.

But the Apostle goes on still further to unfold the nature and the triumphs of sovereign grace: "Wherein he *hath made us accepted in the Beloved.*" That the grace revealed in the gospel is wholly in Christ must never for one moment be lost sight of. This is the reason why the Apostle keeps pressing it again and again on our attention, lest we should unawares lose sight of it.

The point, then, here chiefly developed is our *acceptance*:—"Accepted in the Beloved." The word means literally "graced" us, or given us favour, "in the Beloved," that is, of course, the beloved Son of God.\* The word occurs only in another place in the New Testament, viz., Luke 1:28, in the salutation of Gabriel to the Virgin, where it is rendered in our version, "Thou that art highly favoured," and in the margin, "Graciously accepted," or "much graced." But we cannot mend our translation, "Hath made us accepted," which we consider a very happy rendering. Acceptance, then, means being in a state of favour of God; and "acceptance in the Beloved" gives us the reason of this state of favour, that it is in consequence of possessing such a union with Christ, and of being so identified with him, as to be viewed with the same favour as he is by the Father. What a light this throws upon the union of the Church with Christ and the fruit of this union. How close, peculiar, and intimate must be the union of the Church with the Person of the Son of God, if by virtue of it the Father loves her with the same love, rejoices over her with the same delight, and bears toward her the same favour as he does to his only-begotten Son. This union with Christ is, then, the only ground of the acceptance of our persons; and, as such, is the first fruit of distinguishing grace. Until we were thus personally accepted, there could be no flowing forth of the streams of love and mercy, some of which we have already touched upon, and others which we hope soon to trace.

\* "His Son" is added in one or two excellent MSS., and is the reading of the Vulgate, that is, the generally received Latin translation; but as it is not found

in the Vatican, the Sinaitic, or the Alexandrine MSS., the three great authorities, and is not necessary for the sense, it is best omitted, as in the received text.

Indeed, we may say that it is almost in divine as in human love. A woman must be personally acceptable to a man before love can fix itself upon her. He may and should love her for the qualities of her mind; but it is her person, for the most part, which first catches and entangles his affections. And if this be thought a carnal view of divine love, may we not appeal to that portion of the Book of which heavenly love forms the chief subject? In that record of the loves of Christ and the Church do we find the heavenly Bridegroom unmindful of, or insensible to the personal charms of his bride? How much of the divine Song is taken up with the mutual admiration of each other's personal beauty. How we seem to see the Bridegroom's loving looks and hear his loving tones: "Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast doves' eyes within thy locks; thy hair is as a flock of goats, that appear from Mount Gilead." "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." "Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse; thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes, with one chain of thy neck." (Sol. Song 4:1, 7, 9.) But what is all this personal beauty which the heavenly Lover so much admires in the Church but the reflection of his own comeliness in her? It is with her as the Lord said to the Church of old: "And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty; for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord God." (Ezek. 16:14.) The Church, then, being viewed as one with Christ, the beloved Son of God, his beauty and comeliness are seen put upon her and reflected in her; and the Father, viewing her as thus one with his dear Son, contemplates her with the same complacency, approbation, and favour as that with which he looks upon the Son of his eternal love. Our Lord, therefore, said of his people to the Father, "And hast loved them as thou hast loved me." (John 17:23.) This, then, is being "made accepted in the Beloved;" and this acceptance of our persons, as it is the first result of our union with Christ, so it is the source of all subsequent acts of favour. A man can never do too much for the woman that he loves. "Christ loved the Church, and gave himself for it." No sacrifice was too great, no suffering too severe for him not to endure for her sake. From love to her he laid his glory by, took part of the flesh and blood of the children, hid not his face from shame and spitting, and endured all the agony and ignominy of the cross. But this is a subject on which we need not enlarge, as it would take us too far afield. Suffice it to say that all subsequent thoughts, words, and acts of love towards the Church were built, as it were, on this

foundation. "I was," the Church says, "in his eyes as one that found favour." (Song 8:10.) But why? Because she was made accepted in the Beloved.

But as this is a grand point, not only of Christian doctrine but of Christian experience, we trust to be excused if we dwell a little longer upon it, and show how it bears upon the work of the blessed Spirit on the heart.

We are ever looking for something in self to make ourselves acceptable to God, and are often sadly cast down and discouraged when we cannot find that holiness, that obedience, that calm submission to the will of God, that serenity of soul, that spirituality and heavenly-mindedness which we believe to be acceptable in his sight, and to make us acceptable too. Our crooked tempers, fretful, peevish minds, rebellious thoughts, coldness, barrenness, and death, our alienation from good and headlong proneness to ill, with the daily feeling that we get no better but rather worse, make us think that God views us just as we view ourselves. And this brings on great darkness of mind and bondage of spirit, till we seem to lose sight of our acceptance in Christ, and get into the miserable dregs of self, almost ready to quarrel with God because we are so vile, and only get worse as we get older. Now the more we get into these dregs of self, and the more we keep looking at the dreadful scenes of wreck and ruin which our heart presents to daily view, the farther do we get from the grace of the gospel, and the more do we lose sight of the only ground of our acceptance with God. It is "in the Beloved" that we are accepted, and not for any good words or good works, good thoughts, good hearts, or good intentions of our own. Not but that the fruits of godliness are acceptable in God's sight; not but that our continual sins are displeasing in his eyes. But we must draw a distinction between the acceptance of our persons and the acceptance of our works, between what we are as standing in Christ and what we are as still in the flesh. If our acceptance with God depended on anything in ourselves, we should have to adopt the Wesleyan creed, and believe we might be children of God to-day and children of the devil to-morrow. What comfort that doctrine would give us, we leave our exercised readers to judge of for themselves. If it did not drive an exercised soul to despair, we know not what either hope or despair is. What, then, is to keep us from sinking altogether into despair, without hope or help? Why, a knowledge of our acceptance "in the Beloved," independent of everything in us, good or bad. Here is a firm foundation for our faith and hope. And how the Scriptures pour in, as it were, on all sides their confirming testimony: "Their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord." "In the Lord shall all the seed of Israel be justified and shall glory." "Ye are complete in him." "By him all that believe are justified from all things. Who

of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption," "That he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." "Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee." What a universal chorus of harmonious voices do we hear all sounding forth the same melodious strain, that the Church stands before God accepted in the Beloved.

But we need not further enlarge on this point, especially as we have other precious truths still in reserve. We pass on, therefore, to the next verse: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."

It will be, perhaps, observed that we now come to a spiritual blessing connected with, and dependent upon the fall. The blessings which we have hitherto been considering we may view as antecedent to and, therefore, unconnected with the fall of man. Election in Christ before the foundation of the world, a state of perfect holiness and blamelessness before God, predestination to the adoption of children to himself, and acceptance in the Beloved,—these four choice blessings are irrespective of the entrance of sin into the world and of death by sin. And observe how, as being antecedent to and irrespective of the fall, they gave the Church a standing in Christ which preserved her from being personally wrecked and ruined by the fall; we say "personally," that is, as regards her person; for as regards her state she fell in Adam, being in his loins when he committed the first transgression. A figure may help us here. A king marries his son to a pure, chaste bride, and presents her with a goodly dowry. Now, she might be carried off by pirates, dragged into slavery, reduced to a state of great poverty and misery, and yet with all this remain the king's daughter and the son's wife. And if her husband should go after and undergo every kind of peril and privation to find her out and bring her back, this would not make her any more his wife than she was before. What made the Church to be the bride of God's dear Son? You cannot surely say that redemption made her such, any more than being rescued from the hands of the pirates, in our figure, made the freed captive to be the king's son's wife. We see, therefore, that the Church had a standing in Christ as his chosen bride before she fell in Adam, and thus the blessings which we have named and gone through in our exposition were given her antecedent to, and irrespective of the fall. We do not say that the fall was not foreseen and foreprovided for; we do not say that in the everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure, regard was not had to it. All we contend for is, that the choice of the Church in Christ, her union with him as his bride, and her acceptance

in him as the beloved Son of the Father, were blessings antecedent to, and irrespective of the Adam fall.

But though it is not our object to dispute, or split hairs in divinity, yet as it is in our judgment a blessed part of revealed truth, we shall close our present article with an extract from Dr. Goodwin, who, in our judgment, of all authors whom we have ever read, has written most clearly and beautifully on this point:

"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.'—(Verse 7.)

"I stand here at the 7th verse, between two of the greatest—what shall I call them?—heights or depths of God's wisdom and grace toward us; and as that angel in the Revelation had one foot upon the earth and another upon the sea, so I stand with one foot upon the blessings ordained us from eternity, and intended us when we come in heaven, and the other upon the blessings intended us here in this world. They are both of them two vast arguments, and therefore you shall give me leave to be somewhat larger than ordinary about them. For of all the mysteries of the gospel, since I knew it, this hath most swallowed up my thoughts.

"Two things I shall observe about these two sorts of decrees and blessings: First, I shall show you how these blessings differ, as before I showed you what was common to them among themselves; and, Secondly, I shall give you a glimpse of that infinitely glorious harmony between these two contrivements, and of the wisdom of God that shines in them both. The greatness of the point deserves this.

"For the First. How these blessings differ.

"First. The first sort of blessings, perfect holiness, adoption, &c., were ordained us without the consideration of the fall, though not before the consideration of the fall; for all the things which God decrees are at once in his mind. They were all, both one and other, ordained to our persons. But God, in the decrees about these first sort of blessings, viewed us as *creabiles*, as creatures which he could and would make so and so glorious. For God can easily ordain the subject, and the utmost well-being of it, both at once; and this might well be the first idea taken of us in God's purposes, because such is the perfection of God's understanding, that he at first looks to the perfection

and end of his work. But the second sort of blessings were ordained us merely upon consideration of the fall, and to our persons considered as sinners and unbelievers. And the first sort were to the praise of God's grace, taking grace for the freeness of love; whereas, the latter sort are to the praise of the glory of his grace, are with an endearment of a greater degree of his grace, unto a further glory of his grace, and an illustration of it, taking grace for free mercy.

"Secondly. Those first sort of blessings are ordained to have their full and plenary accomplishment, and to take place in that other world, and are suited to that state into which we shall then be installed. And as in God's primary intention they are before the other, and therefore are said to have been 'before the foundation of the world,' (ver. 4,) so they are to take place after this world ended, they being the centre of all God's thoughts towards us. Then we shall be so holy as Satan himself shall find no ground to carp at us. Then we shall receive the adoption of children; and though we are now the sons of God, yet then it shall appear to us and all the world, by that infinite glory that God will then bestow upon us. But those second sort of blessings were ordained for our entertainment in this world, and are suited unto that condition which we shall run through unto the day of judgment.

"Thirdly. The first sort are founded merely upon our relation to the Person of Christ, as is manifested in all those three mentioned, (ver. 4-6,) 'chosen in him,' and therefore holy; because as he, being the Son of God, was to be holy, (Luke 1:35,) 'That holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God,' so are we, we being members of him. And as this is true of holiness, so of the other two it is more plain. But this second sort are founded merely upon the merits of Christ; as redemption through his blood, and so forgiveness, conversion, &c. In a word, these latter blessings are but the removings of those obstacles which, by reason of sin, stood in our way to that intended glory. In the fulness of time God sent his Son to redeem them that were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons. (Gal. 4:5.)"—*Dr. Goodwin's Works*, vol. 1, p. 117.

#### IV.

We have already more than once pointed out what we have called the key-note of the Epistle to the Ephesians, and have endeavoured to show that its dominant theme is the peculiar relationship which the Church occupies to the

**Lord Jesus Christ as her covenant Head. In no other part of Scripture is this personal and peculiar relationship so fully or so clearly unfolded; and indeed we may almost say that all that is elsewhere spoken of the Church would have lost much of its force and significancy to our apprehension but for the light cast upon it by this Epistle.**

**We have also dwelt upon the foundation of this relationship, and shown that it is based upon the eternal union of the Church with the Son of God. If, then, we press these points again and again upon the attention of our readers, it is from our firm conviction that it is only so far as we spiritually apprehend, and bear them steadily in mind, that we can enter into the treasures of divine truth which are stored up in the Epistle before us, or in the chapter of which we are now attempting the exposition.**

**If our readers have rightly apprehended the distinction drawn in our last paper, and so ably opened up by Dr. Goodwin, in the extract that we gave from his works, between spiritual blessings antecedent to and irrespective of, and blessings consequent on and relating to the fall, they will be more fully prepared to follow us in our exposition of verse 7: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace."**

**We observed that there were four spiritual blessings antecedent to and irrespective of the fall. These were: 1, election in Christ; 2, a perfection of holiness in him; 3, adoption into the family of God; 4, acceptance in the Beloved. Had the Church never sinned or fallen, she would still have been, 1, chosen in Christ; 2, perfect in his perfections; 3, a daughter of the King of heaven; 4, accepted in the Beloved. But it was the secret permissive will of God that the Church should fall. Why, we know not. It is one of those mysteries which are hidden from our eyes. But this we gather from the sacred record, that it was for the manifestation of his own glory. This, however, is a question on which we shall not dwell. There are subjects into which it is well not to enter, lest we venture upon ground where we cannot walk steadily and safely, and where it is best to say with the Psalmist, "Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it;" or with the Apostle, "O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33.)**

**As, then, there are four blessings spoken of by the Apostle in this chapter as antecedent to and irrespective of the fall, so there are four blessings also**

mentioned as consequent to and dependent upon it. These are, 1, redemption; 2, justification; 3, regeneration; 4, sealing.

We shall endeavour to trace out these four blessings thus brought before us by the Apostle.

### **1. Redemption occupies the first place.**

No heart can conceive or tongue express into what a state of degradation and misery the fall cast the whole of Adam's ruined race; and as the Church was in his loins when he sinned and fell, she sinned and fell in and with him to the utmost extent of the fall. The Scripture compares the state to which the fall reduced us to that of bondage or slavery; and thus "redemption," as expressive of a spiritual blessing in Christ, signifies a deliverance from a state of slavery and bondage.

When we look at Adam as he was before the fall and as he was after the fall, we see at once how suitable and appropriate is the figure of a free man as compared with a bond-slave. Before the fall he was free to serve and worship his Maker according to the light then vouchsafed him. He was free to walk before God in uprightness and innocency, and hold communion with him as made in his own image after his own likeness. He was free to stand and, we may add, free to fall. But he chose the worser part, and by his one fatal act of disobedience:

**"Brought death into the world, and all our woe."**

He thus deliberately and wilfully sold himself to the worst of all masters, and into the most miserable and degrading of all possible degrees of servitude, for he became the bond-slave of sin and Satan. As the Church, therefore, sinned in and with him, she fell in and with him into the same state of bondage, misery, and degradation.

Now, we are well convinced that no one can know or feel what this state of bondage is until his soul is quickened into divine life; and therefore that none can either know or prize redemption but those who, as possessed of divine life, have felt the iron enter into their soul. It is the spirit of freedom in a man longing for liberty which makes the yoke of slavery so intolerable. It is so naturally. Many a slave in the Southern States, before that accursed system was shattered to pieces, preferred slavery to freedom. If he were well taken

care of, if lightly worked, if a pet domestic, he looked on his own condition as far superior to that of "the white trash," as the meaner class of whites was termed,\* who had to work hard and get little. But let the same man be sold to a harsh and cruel master; let him be overtasked with hard work, badly fed, miserably clothed, frequently flogged, and treated worse than the beasts of the earth; and in that miserable condition let an inextinguishable thirst for freedom spring up in his heart, would he then prefer slavery to liberty? Would he not then envy the birds of the air, and the wild animals of the wood, and every creature which was free to breathe, move, act, and live? So it is with us spiritually. There was a time when we loved our slavery, when freedom from the dominion of sin would have been to give up our chiefest delight and choicest pleasure. But when divine light and life made us see and feel what a hard master was sin, and what a cruel oppressor was Satan, and a thirst for liberty was kindled in our bosom from some glimpse of the King in his beauty, and of the land—the free and happy land, as yet afar off, then, as we groaned under our yoke and burden, we knew the miserable state to which the fall had brought us, and longed for deliverance from it.

\* "Trash" is the name given to the stalks of the sugar-cane after all the sweet juice is got out of them, and is a term of contempt in the Southern States for the mean whites, who are often more debased and degraded than the black slaves.

Now, how blessed it is to believe, "In whom we have redemption through his blood." O redemption, redemption! What a blessing is in that word, as experimentally made known to a groaning captive, a miserable prisoner, who not only is sin's and Satan's slave through original transgression, but has wilfully, wantonly, and deliberately sold himself to them by plotted and executed transgression! And observe, "*In whom.*" How the Apostle still keeps to his grand point, and, as it were, urges it again and again upon us—the union of the Church with Christ, as the foundation and source of every spiritual blessing. Observe, also, how "in whom" effectually does away with the vain figment of universal redemption. Are all men in Christ? Have all union with him? If it be "in him" that we have redemption, it can be only in him; and out of him, out of union with him, redemption there can be none.

And see, also, how the same truth—the limitation of redemption to the elect of God, flows from the intimate nature of this union as antecedent to and irrespective of the fall. But for the fall the Church would not have needed redemption. But for her previous union with the Son of God, he would not, if

we may venture so to speak, have redeemed her. But because she was his Hephzi-bah, his virgin bride, in whom was all his delight, the chosen partner of his throne, no scenes of sin, misery, slavery, and degradation could or should tear her from his heart. But then, if he would still have her, he must redeem her, bring her out of this state of slavery, and pay a price such as would satisfy the justice of God, and be a full and equivalent ransom and release.

It is when we consider what our own personal transgressions have been, how dreadful in themselves, and how horribly aggravated by the wilfulness and determination under which they were committed; it is when we look at even a few of our sins—for who can call to mind a thousandth part of what God has seen us think, plot, devise, say, and do?—it is when, in some solemn moment of close inquiry, we view this and that and the other iniquity which conscience registers, that we really see what a holy law and strict justice demand. What, then, shall we say to the full score? Where hide our guilty head? How face either God or man, were all our sins charged to our account? It is such an experience as this, and of our own utter inability to pay one farthing of this huge, this stupendous load of debt, which makes us see and feel our need of redemption in and by Christ; and to value, also, the *price* paid—viz., his blood.

We have shown that the leading idea of the state to which the Adam fall had reduced the Church was that of bondage and slavery. So, similarly, the leading idea of redemption is the price paid to buy the slave his liberty: "Ye are bought with a price." "Feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." (Acts 20:28.)

Redemption is usually spoken of as two-fold: 1. Redemption by price; and 2. Redemption by power. There is some truth in this distinction; but it should be carefully observed, that the one implies the other, and that there would have been no redemption by power unless there had first been redemption by price. Thus when it says, "The Lord redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt," (Deut. 7:8,) it was a redemption by power; but it was only so because Israel had been first redeemed by price. They were the Lord's own people, that is, typically and figuratively so; a type of the redeemed elect; and were detained unlawfully in Egypt. So, when a price has been paid down for an elect soul, he, having been bought with the blood of God's dear Son, may be redeemed with power, on the simple principle that if the ransom of a prisoner has been paid, and his master

afterwards unjustly detain him, the prison where he is wrongly kept may be lawfully and justly broken up, and the captive delivered by main force. Thus had there been no redemption by price, there could be no redemption by power. But now Jesus can say to sin and Satan, on behalf of every redeemed prisoner, "Loose him, and let him go. He is mine, not yours. I have bought him with my blood. He is my property, and I will and must have him."

But you will observe, also, that sin and Satan are rather jailers than masters. The real master is the law, as commissioned by justice, and sin and Satan are but the mere warders of the jail into which the law, at the command of justice, has cast the prisoner. And this the prisoner feels. He is the law's prisoner, because the law-breaker. It is so naturally. The crime committed is the cause of the man's imprisonment. But who made the prison; and committed the criminal into custody? The law, which is the written expression of justice. So spiritually. If there were no law, no strict justice, there would be no prison. It is not, therefore, sin which has to be satisfied, but that which makes sin to be sin; for "whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law, for sin is the transgression of the law." Thus sin has to be atoned for that justice may be satisfied and every demand of the law fulfilled. This was effected by the obedience, blood-shedding, and death of the Son of God. His blood was the price paid for our redemption. But what gave it such amazing, such stupendous worth, value, and efficacy, that the blood of Christ should be a sufficient price to redeem millions from the curse of the law, and so satisfy law and justice that each should say, "It is enough?" See how the eternal Deity of the Son of God comes in here to answer the question. It is because it is the blood of the humanity taken into ineffable and indissoluble union with the Person of the Son of God that it has such infinite unspeakable value. It is the obedience, bloodshedding, and dying of the pure humanity, for God, as God, cannot obey, bleed, or die; but because that pure humanity is in intimate union with Deity, there is stamped upon it all the value and validity of Godhead.

If we have a view by faith of what this redemption through the blood of Christ is, we shall certainly see in it these two leading features: 1, The depth of the fall, and the horrible, dreadful, damnable nature of sin as discovered by the length and breadth of the law, and the curse attached to it; and, 2, The fulness and completeness of the redemption wrought out by the bloodshedding and obedience of God's dear Son. Here are two lessons which we are learning all our lives long, and to which every day's experience adds, so to speak, or at least should add a fresh line. Sometimes we sink, as if overwhelmed by a view

of the depth of the fall, and a sight and sense of our own actual sins and inherent sinfulness; and then again we are raised up by a believing view of the finished work of the Son of God, and of that precious blood which cleanseth from all sin.

2. But this brings us to the *fruit* of this redemption, "the forgiveness of sins." This blessing we have called "justification," for though, strictly speaking, justification is by the imputation of Christ's righteousness, yet as the Apostle tells us that we are justified by his blood, (Rom. 5:9,) we may apply the word justification to the forgiveness of sin, as including both pardon given and righteousness imputed. In fact, forgiveness of sins through the blood of the Lamb, and justification by the imputation of his obedience to those who believe are so connected, both in the mind of God and in the experience of the believer, that they may be considered virtually one.

Men think that it is an easy thing in God to forgive sin, because they do not know what sin really is. In fact, to forgive sin was the hardest thing for God to do; so hard that it would have been impossible for him to have done it, had it not been for the redemption made by the blood of his own Son. To create was easy for infinite wisdom and infinite power. The difficulty was to mend what was marred. We know that even in works of art, to make is much easier than to mend, and that a blow or a fall may cause irreparable fracture. Not only, then, to restore the Church to her original standing, but to wash her from all her filth in the blood of his dear Son, and so clothe her in his imputed righteousness, that she should be fairer than before; so to satisfy law and justice; so to harmonise every perfection of Deity; so to manifest the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of they love of Christ; and so to set forth the riches of his grace—what a display is here of the infinite depths of the combined wisdom, power, mercy, and love of God, so as to boa mirror into which angels may even look with admiration, (Eph. 4:10; 1 Pet. 1:12,) as well as form for the redeemed an anthem for eternal praise!

And we are very sure that, of all spiritual blessings made known to the soul by the power of God, "a knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins" is the hardest to be obtained, and most prized when got. How many poor tried, exercised, distressed souls are at this very moment sighing and crying for the manifestation of this one blessing. These well know, and some of them by the painful experience of many years' hard bondage and travail, how hard it is to get forgiveness sealed on their heart. Not that it is really hard on the part of God now to forgive, that is, in experimental manifestation; for it is already

done to and for all the elect of God: "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, *having forgiven* you all trespasses." (Col. 2:13.) And, so our text: "In whom we have" (not "shall have" but "have," that is, now have) "redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins." Though he may not be able to lay hold of it for himself, appropriate it as a personal blessing, and feel sweetly and blessedly assured, in his own heart and conscience, of the forgiveness of all his sins; yet every quickened soul is really forgiven all his trespasses, past, present, and to come. It is one of the spiritual blessings with which he has been blessed, already blessed, in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. His believing it gives him the unspeakable comfort and sweet assurance of it; but it is really already his before he thus enjoys it, as the heir of a large property is really the possessor of the estate, though, as under tutors and governors, being still a minor, he cannot fully call it his own. Forgiveness of sins is, indeed, the necessary fruit and consequence of redemption through blood. The price has been paid which justice and law demanded. Did the law demand a perfect obedience? It has been rendered. The law has been magnified and made honourable, and every demand fully and gloriously fulfilled by the obedience to it of the Son of God. What higher honour could be paid to the law than that God's co-equal, co-eternal Son should be subject to it, obey it in every point, jot, and tittle, bear its curse, and suffer its extreme penalty? Justice surely must be fully satisfied when the Just One put himself in the place of the debtor, and discharged the whole debt due to its requisitions. Thus if God forgive sin, it is not because sin is a light thing and easily forgiven, but because his own dear Son has made full atonement for it, and thus opened a most blessed channel through which the love, pity, mercy, and grace of God might flow down freely and fully to poor lost, ruined sinners. It is in this way that God can be "just, and yet the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Rom. 4:5.) How blessedly and beautifully is the whole subject opened in those words, which we will say not only deserve to be written in letters of gold, but to be written by the finger of God on every believing heart: "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." (Rom. 3:21-26.)

And all this according to "the riches of his grace." Yes, "the riches of his grace." What a full, what a beautiful expression! He had said before, "to the praise of the glory of his grace;" but here, it is "according to the riches of his grace." It is worth observing, how often, in this epistle, the Apostle uses the words "rich" and "riches" as applicable to the mercy, grace, and glory of God. Thus he says, "But God, who is rich in mercy;" (2:4;) "That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace;" (2:7;) "That I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;" (3:8;) "The riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." (1:18.) So in Romans he speaks of "the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God;" (Rom. 11:33;) and in the Colossians of "the riches of the glory of the mystery of Christ." (Col. 1:27.) All these expressions show not only the exceeding value which he put upon the mercy, grace, wisdom, and glory of God, as revealed in the face of his dear Son and brought to light in the gospel, but the wealth that is stored up in them for the poor and needy. Grace and mercy, as seated in the bosom of God, are like a mine full of inexhaustible treasure, which has enriched millions, and can enrich millions more; or like an everflowing and overflowing river, carrying, as the Nile to Egypt, fertility and abundance wherever they come. We are thus encouraged to come to him with all our wants and woes, to receive thankfully what he gives so bountifully. But O, our poor narrow, unbelieving hearts! How we measure God by ourselves, and because we are so poor in receiving, think that he is also poor in giving.

3. The next spiritual blessing connected with the fall we have set down as *regeneration*. This we gather from the words: "Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself." (Eph. 1:8, 9.) It will, perhaps, have been observed that hitherto the Apostle has spoken of blessings in themselves apart from any personal manifestation of them. The spiritual blessings of election, blamelessness before God, adoption into his family, acceptance in the Beloved, redemption through the blood of Christ, and forgiveness of sin as its fruit, are blessings in themselves, independent of their manifestations and communication. They are intended for us, but they exist before they are given to us. But not so with the blessing which is now before us. There is "a making known unto us of the mystery of his will," and this "according to the abundant wisdom and prudence of God." This blessing, then, we may call regeneration, as the commencement of manifested blessings, and thus distinct from blessings before their manifestation.

By "the wisdom of God" we may understand generally those wise ways in which he deals with the souls of his people in bringing them to a knowledge of himself; and by his "prudence" the skill manifested in the variety of his dealings according to the disposition, the circumstances, the future lot of the individual believer, and the intentions of God toward him. Thus "wisdom" signifies the general character of God's dealings in making known to his people the mystery of his will, and "prudence" his special skill in dealing with individual cases. There is not a vessel of mercy called by grace in whom God does not show forth the abundance of his wisdom; but there seem to be special cases which call forth what perhaps we may term the practical skill of God. May we illustrate this by the practical skill of a physician as distinguished from his general professional knowledge? He has long and deeply studied his profession, and has a thorough acquaintance both with diseases and remedies. This suffices in a general way. But every now and then cases come before him which demand something beyond this thorough knowledge; a special discernment is needed of a very obscure or uncommon disease, or a special mode of treatment, or a peculiar management, say of diet, or nursing, or the use of some rare medicine—all which test and bring to light a peculiar skill in dealing with a special case as distinct from great and acknowledged ability in ordinary cases. We do not very much like the rendering of our version, "prudence," and yet we do not know how to alter or amend it. But, like many other renderings, it falls short of the meaning of the original, and almost brings down the heavenly character of the special wisdom of God to an earthly prudence; that, at least, being the idea which we usually associate with the word. That is, however, not the mind or meaning of the Holy Ghost. We may, perhaps, however, exemplify its meaning better than we can define it. God has some special work for a man to do. He has to call and qualify an Augustine, a Bunyan, a Whitefield, a Huntington, a Hart, for a special work in his vineyard. Here is his prudence, his special skill, as distinct from his general wisdom to call, fit, and qualify this particular instrument. His dealings, therefore, with this individual will differ from the general course of his dealings with the bulk of his people.

But as this is a somewhat wide subject, we shall defer the further consideration of it to our next paper.

V.

**Our readers will remember that in the course of our exposition of the chapter before us, (Eph. 1,) we pointed out, as laid down by the Apostle, four spiritual blessings antecedent to and irrespective of the Adam fall, and four blessings as consequent upon and connected with it; and that we endeavoured to open the peculiar and distinctive character of each of these blessings according to the ability which God gave us. It is with this last class of blessings that we are now engaged, the third, or Regeneration, having occupied a portion of our Meditations in our last paper, and being still under consideration as not then fully completed by us.**

**But the thought has struck our mind that perhaps some of our readers may consider the referring of Eph. 1:8, 9 to the blessing of Regeneration to be a somewhat strained interpretation of the passage, and others may be of opinion that the Apostle means rather the outward promulgation of the gospel than the inward reception of it. As our desire, then, is to remove every stumbling-block out of the path, as well as clearly and distinctly open the mind and meaning of the Apostle, we shall, before we proceed any further, explain why we have interpreted those verses as referring to the spiritual blessing of Regeneration, that is, the inward revelation of the will of God, rather than to the preached gospel, that is, the outward revelation of it. This we think will be best done by first quoting and then tracing out the connection of the whole passage: "In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence; having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself." (Eph. 1:7, 8, 9.)**

**The first point to be observed is that all the blessings consequent upon on the fall are here linked together in one connected chain. Redemption, the first of these blessings, takes the lead; for before the Church was redeemed by blood from the consequences of the fall, nothing effectual was or could be done for or to her in a way of grace. Forgiveness of sins and Justification by Christ's blood and righteousness is the next link, and follows as the blessed result of Redemption. And now in this connected chain is not Regeneration the next spiritual blessing? Have not redemption and forgiveness of sin to be manifested and made known to the soul? and how can this be done until it is made alive unto God by regenerating grace? As soon, therefore, as the Apostle dropped the words, "The forgiveness of sins," he added, "According to the riches of his grace, wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence." The words "wherein," (that is "in the riches of his grace,") "he**

hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence," evidently mean the special display of the wisdom and prudence of God in making redemption and forgiveness of sins personally known to the soul, rather than the outward promulgation of them by the preached gospel; and this view seems confirmed by what immediately follows: "Having made known to us the mystery of his will." It is true that this is done in the outward promulgation of the gospel; but the words "us," "abounding toward us," "having made known to us," point to individual and personal blessings as distinct from and beyond the general declaration of them by the preached word. Connecting, therefore, the abounding of God's wisdom and prudence with the making known to us, in the display of that wisdom and prudence, the mystery of his will, we seem to arrive at some special and personal revelation of divine truth to the soul; and as this is done in and by regeneration, we have for this reason explained the words of the Apostle as referring to that choice spiritual blessing. But we wish it to be fully understood that when we call this blessing "regeneration" we mean to include in that term not merely the beginning of divine life, but the whole of that work of God on the soul whereby he makes known to us "the mystery of his will" and abounds toward us in all wisdom and prudence. Here, then, we resume our exposition.

In our last paper we drew a distinction between "the wisdom" of God and "the prudence" of God, applying the former to his more usual and general, and the latter to his more special and peculiar dealings with the souls of his people. But whether these dealings are of a usual or of an unusual character, the result is the same. In and by them God makes known to the soul the mystery of his will. What this will is, why it is called a mystery, and how it is made known, are all points deserving our attentive consideration.

1. It will be observed that the Apostle speaks of three distinct things in the mind of God, but all moving together in perfect concert and harmony to a definite end. There is first God's "*will*;" secondly, his "*good pleasure*;" thirdly, his "*purpose in himself*."

His "*will*" stands first as being the more general and comprehensive expression of the mind of God; for his will takes the widest range, exercising supreme control over all things and all persons in heaven and in earth, there being nothing too great and nothing too small to escape its sovereign domain. We therefore read: "And he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?" (Dan. 4:35.) Dominion and will go together, as in the case of Alexander the Great, intimated by the prophet: "And a mighty

king shall stand up, that shall rule with great dominion, and do according to his will." (Dan. 11:3.) The will of God, then, extends beyond the domain of his grace, and reaches and influences every event. It is not, therefore, this general will of God which he makes known to the objects of his regenerating grace, but his special will, as manifested in the Person and work of his dear Son, and revealed in the gospel.

But it will be observed that this part of his will moves in special concert with his "good pleasure"—his *eudokia*. The word in the New Testament generally means an object with which God is specially well pleased. It, therefore, occurs in that particular expression of his approbation, given with an audible voice from heaven at the baptism of Jesus: "And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." (Matt. 3:17.) So the multitude of the heavenly host at the birth of Jesus, when they praised God, said: "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." (Luke 2:14.) So our Lord, thanking his heavenly Father for hiding the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven from the wise and prudent, and revealing them to babes, says: "Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight." (Matt. 11:26.) Where the words "seemed good in thy sight" are literally, "for so it became a good pleasure before thee." So "of his good pleasure;" (Phil. 2:13;) "all the *good pleasure* of his goodness," (2 Thess. 1:11,) "it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom;" (Luke 12:32;) "it *pleased* God," or, rather, God was well pleased, to save them that believe;" (1 Cor. 1:21;) "It *pleased* God to reveal his Son in me;" (Gal. 1:15;) "It *pleased* the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." (Col. 1:19.) If all those passages are carefully examined it will be found that God's "good pleasure," or will, specially respects the manifestation of his grace in the gospel of his dear Son. It is, therefore, that part of the will of God in which he takes special delight. All his will has his approbation, for the two cannot be severed; but that part of his will whereby he has willed the gift of his dear Son, with all the benefits and blessings which spring out of and are connected with his Person and work, in *that* is the peculiar good pleasure, the special delight of God.

And that this "good pleasure" of his will might be fixed without the shadow of a turn, it was settled by a resolve in his own immutable mind. This firm "decree" is expressed by the Apostle, in the words, "which he hath purposed in himself." Thus God's will, God's good pleasure, and God's purpose in himself, all combine and move together, in harmonious concert—the sovereignty of his will, the approbation of his good pleasure, and the decree of his purpose, forming a threefold cord never to be broken.

2. But what are we to understand by "the mystery of his will?" The word "mystery" in the New Testament has chiefly two significations: 1. It means generally those facts, doctrines, principles, &c., into which, as being beyond all human knowledge, we must be initiated by divine teaching. 2. It signifies specially the secret purpose of God as revealed and brought to light by the gospel. It does not mean what we often understand by the term "mysterious," as if it were something wrapped up in an inscrutable cloud. On the contrary, the word "mystery" means a secret, but which, when revealed and brought to light, is no longer mysterious, but becomes plain and clear. The word is borrowed from the ancient mysteries at which persons were initiated with many peculiar rites and ceremonies, and certain traditionary secrets made known to them which they were bound never to disclose. The gospel, therefore, was a mystery or secret hidden in the bosom of God, but in due time brought to light, and made known to the initiated, *i.e.*, those who were called by distinguishing grace. Thus, when the Apostle says, "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; as I wrote afore in few words, whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ," (Eph. 3:3, 4,) he does not mean that there is something dark, mysterious, and inscrutable in the gospel, but just the contrary—that there was a secret purpose in the mind of God, 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. Now what was this secret purpose of God, this mystery revealed by the Spirit to the holy apostles and prophets? It was "That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel." (Eph. 3:6.) He, therefore, adds, "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 hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ." (Eph. 3:8, 9.) The mystery, then, of God's will, the good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself, is that Jew and Gentile should be fellow-heirs, should belong to the same mystical body of Christ, the Church; and enjoy in common every spiritual blessing wherewith he has blessed her in heavenly places in Christ. It is in the gospel that this mystery of God's will is revealed externally; but when this precious gospel is made known to the soul by a divine power, there is a display in it of the aboundings of the wisdom and prudence of God in making known this mystery of his will by and through regenerating grace. But the Apostle goes on to show more particularly what the mystery of this will of God is: "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather

together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him." (Eph. 1:10.)

When man stood in his primeval innocence, and especially when the Church stood in all her virgin purity, as the chosen bride of the Son of God, there was a harmony between heaven and earth. Elect angels above and unfallen man below, though of distinct natures, were one as regarded purity of creation, and each could serve God acceptably according to their intelligence and knowledge of him. When God, therefore, laid the foundations of the earth, the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy. (Job 38:7.) But the fall broke that bond of harmony asunder. Fallen man and holy, unfallen angels could no longer meet on the ground of obedience and worship. Angels, therefore, became God's ministers, to execute his commands against man, not for him; and as the first fruit of this work, were placed at the gates of Eden to keep with flaming sword the way to the tree of life.

Now it was the will of God, the good pleasure which he had purposed in himself, to reunite this family, but in a different way, and on a different footing. It was to put them both under a common Head, even his dear Son, and that not simply as his Son, but as incarnate, as the Son of God and the Son of man in one glorious Person, Immanuel, God with us. Thus by taking our nature into union with his own divine Person, the blessed Lord became not only the Head of the body of the Church, but the Head of angels, and thus gathered together into one family redeemed men and elect angels under his glorious and abiding headship. We, therefore, read: "Of whom the whole family of heaven and earth is named." (Eph. 3:15.) Thus angels, though not redeemed, though not in union with the Lord the Lamb, are as much interested in the incarnation of the Son of God as we are; for being gathered together into one family under his headship, they are eternally secured in their angelic condition, and can never fall away after the manner and example of the apostate angels who kept not their first estate.

But here lies the depth and sweetness of the mystery that the Church, though fallen, should, by virtue of Christ's incarnation, bloodshedding, and death, be promoted to a place higher, and what is more wonderful, nearer and dearer to the Lord of heaven and earth than elect angels ever had or could have. We may view it thus by way of illustration, and it will serve to show how the Lord Jesus is the Head of the Church, and the Head also of angels. Take the case of the master of a house. He is the head of all that belong to the house. Wife, children, and servants, he is head to all; but to each in a different way, and in

a different relationship. To the wife he is head: "The husband is the head of the wife," (Eph. 5:23,) but he is also husband. To the children he is head, as father; to the servants he is head, as master. So the Lord Jesus is the head of the body the Church, but he is her husband too. This is a much nearer, dearer, sweeter, and more intimate relationship than angels can possess or enjoy. They have not, therefore, union and communion with the Lord, as the Church has. They are filled with all happiness and holiness; they love, worship, and adore; they admire the manifold wisdom of God made known to them by the Church, (Eph. 3:10,) and gladly and willingly do they now perform their appointed office when they are sent forth as ministering spirits to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation. But the intimacy, the nearness, the love-embraces, the intercommunion of heart of husband and wife are not theirs. Angelic nature by original creation is superior to human, but, through the holy humanity of Jesus, human nature is now advanced above it. Angelic nature is not, and never can or will be in immediate and intimate union with Deity; but human nature, in the Person of Immanuel, is indissolubly united to it. This is the great mystery that Christ and the Church are one flesh, as the husband and wife are one flesh; and thus "we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." (Eph. 5:30-32.) The angels, therefore, as seen by John, were "round about the throne"—forming the outward circle, but not "in the midst of the throne," with the four living creatures and the elders—the inner circle. At the marriage supper of the Lamb, the Church his wife sits at the table as a bride adorned for her husband. The angels look on, and reverently and admiringly wait, for envy and jealousy have no place in their pure and holy breasts; but they do not sit down at the table with the bride.

3. "In the dispensation of the fulness of times," that is, when the times are full and the set season comes, this mystery will be made openly manifest. God will then visibly gather together in one, under one Head and one headship, "all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth, even in him." The mystery is not yet finished. (Rev. 10:7.) There is a work on the wheels still to be accomplished. Elect souls have to be called or gathered home, and the living stones to be quarried and hewed here below, as were those of Solomon's temple, before the temple is complete in all its glory. Now, at and by regeneration this mystery of God's will is made personally and experimentally known. There is therein a gathering of the soul as one of "the things on earth" into Christ. There is a making-known to it of "the mystery of God's will, according to his good pleasure," for as Christ is made known to the soul, believed in, hoped in, and loved; as union and communion with him

are sensibly felt and realised, there is a gathering of the understanding, of the will, of the conscience, and of the affections unto him, so as to centre wholly in him. The understanding is enlightened and informed, so as to approve of this mystery of God's will; the will is won over to join in sweet harmony with the will of God as thus revealed; the conscience is made alive, and being purged by blood, becomes clean and tender; and the affections are kindled and drawn forth to embrace the wonderful mystery of the love of God in Christ Jesus. The soul thus taught and led looks forward to the glorious day when the mystery will be complete, when the Lord himself will come and all his saints with him, and will openly claim and manifest his bride, and gathering together in himself in visible manifestation all things which are in heaven and on earth, will reign gloriously as Head of all.

It is well worthy of observation how the Apostle ever blends Christian doctrine with Christian experience, and thus brings doctrinal truth to bear upon our individual possession and personal knowledge of these heavenly mysteries: "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." (Eph: 1:11.) "In whom." Observe how again and again the man of God dwells upon union with Christ as the foundation and the fountain of all spiritual blessings. "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance." The words rendered literally mean, "In whom we have been allotted," or "chosen and apportioned unto by lot." They have, therefore, when thus rendered, a rather wider range than they have according to our translation, for they will bear two consistent senses: 1, that we have been allotted to Christ for his inheritance; 2, that he has been allotted to us for ours. Both are scriptural, both rest on the same foundation, God's predestinating purposes, and both are intimately connected with the peculiar relation which the Church bears to Christ as her covenant Head.

1. Christ, in all his glorious fulness, is the portion and inheritance of his people: "The Lord is my portion, saith my soul;" (Lam. 3:24;) "The Lord is the portion of my inheritance and of my cup." (Psa. 16:5.) The Levites, therefore, had no inheritance among the other tribes as being typical of those who are priests unto God, and offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to him by Jesus Christ. (1 Pet. 2:5.) "But unto the tribe of Levi Moses gave not any inheritance; the Lord God of Israel was their inheritance, as he said unto them." (Jos. 13:33.) And does not this flow out of the peculiar relationship which the Church bears to Christ? Is not the husband the wife's best portion? To a loving wife her husband is her earthly all. His love, his approving smile, his tender caresses, and affectionate embracements, his protection and

companionship, his counsel, watchful care, and ever-ready help, and above all himself, as the object of her warmest love, and possessed by her as her own for life;—is not this a better inheritance for a fond wife than a few dirty acres left her by her father, or a few hundreds in a bank which she may lose at a single stroke?

Such a manifest union with the Son of God, and such sensible communion arising out of it as shall enable the soul to say, "My Beloved is mine and I am his," is an inheritance indeed. To have the Lord himself for our inheritance so as to be able to say, "Having Christ I have all I want, desire, or need; in possessing him I possess all things. His Person, his work, his blood and righteousness, his dying love, his all-sufficient grace and future glory—all are mine as my enduring and eternal portion"—could God give to his people a greater portion, a more blessed inheritance than this? What is all that earth can give compared with such an inheritance? Thus in him, the poorest, meanest, weakest believer obtains an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

2. And as the Church has obtained an inheritance in Christ, so Christ has obtained an inheritance in the Church. "Israel is the lot of his inheritance." "Ask of me," said the Father to the Son, "and I shall give thee the heathen for thy inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." But as we shall have occasion to enter into this point more fully when we come to the consideration of verse 18, we shall not now further dwell upon it, but direct the attention of our readers to the predestinating purpose of God, by which this mutual inheritance of Christ by the Church, and of the Church by Christ, was definitely fixed. "In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." (Eph. 1:11.)

The obtaining of this inheritance, or as we have preferred to render the words, "the allotment of the portion," is referred here by the Apostle to the predestination of God. We may observe four things spoken of in reference to this predestination, and its effects,—the purpose of God, the will of God, the counsel of God, and the work of God.

1. His will we have before pointed out as the sovereign supreme author or controller of all persons and events in heaven and in earth; and as manifested in his dear Son is "the good and acceptable and perfect will of God," which we have to prove by divine teaching and personal experience. (Rom. 12:2.) It

is, therefore, called "his own will," as implying sovereignty and supremacy.

2. But there is "the counsel" of this will. By this we may understand the infinite wisdom of God, and that as especially manifested in the dealings of his grace. It is not, if we may use the expression without irreverence, an unthinking, unreasoning, arbitrary will, such as we see in the case of earthly sovereigns and irresponsible despots. But it moves in concert with the most perfect and infinite wisdom. There is in reality and truth no prior or posterior, no first or last in the various acts of the mind of God; but to make the point more clear to our understanding we may say that the counsel of God preceded the will of God in planning and fixing the economy of grace. He took counsel, so to speak, with his infinite wisdom in the whole plan of grace before his will went forth as a sovereign act of his mind; and when his infinite wisdom had devised the way his sovereign will fixed it beyond the possibility of a change. It is beautiful to see the wisdom of God engaged in every transaction of his grace; and that in a matter of such difficulty, where every perfection and attribute had to be harmonised in the salvation of the Church, he took counsel with the depths of his infinite wisdom. But no sooner had infinite wisdom fixed the plan than the will of God went forth in sovereign approbation of it, and it then became his fixed "purpose."

3. The word "purpose" means fixed resolve, and this is the immediate result of God's will. Thus counsel comes first to plan, will next chooses what counsel advises, purpose next fixes what will approves, and work, lastly, effects what God thus predestinates. We find the word "purpose" elsewhere ascribed to the fixed resolves of God in the economy of grace. Thus we read of them who are "the called according to his purpose;" (Rom. 8:28;) so "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Eph. 3:11.) So: "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began." (2 Tim. 1:9.)

4. Here we are said to be "predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." The question may, therefore, arise, what is the distinction between the purpose of God and the predestination of God? The difference seems to be this—that predestination goes one step further and beyond purpose. It is the final expressed decision of it. Let us illustrate this by taking a glance at human actions. The first thing we do in a difficulty is to take counsel with our own mind how to get the better of it. When the way suggests itself, and has been well considered, the next step is

to approve of the plan thus suggested; then follows a resolve on our mind to adopt it; then an expression of this resolve by some utterance of mouth or writing of hand so as to fix it beyond recall; and lastly some act to put the whole into execution. So in the grand economy of grace. There is God's counsel to plan, his will to approve, his purpose to resolve, his predestination to unalterably fix, and his work to execute. Predestination, therefore, is beyond purpose, as being more definite. Thus God swore, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec." This was predestination in the oath sworn to his dear Son. The writing of the names of the elect in the book of life was also a predestinating act. It was fixing the persons who were to be saved as well as fixing the way by which they should be saved. This makes predestination a step beyond purpose, as the more definite expression of it by word or deed. I may have purposed in my own mind to help a friend, and it may be a fixed purpose too, only wanting time and opportunity, but when I have once promised him, or entered into a written engagement, it is fixed beyond recall. In this way, therefore, God's predestination goes a step beyond God's purpose, and makes that purpose as the open expression of his will irrevocable.

5. Then follows the execution: "Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." The expression is wide, for it takes in "all things;" but we may limit it here to the execution of the purposes of his grace. In this sense and this way God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. "He worketh." Here again we come to the same point, the work of God on the soul, whereby he makes known the mystery of his will. As God's will embraces all persons and all events in heaven and on earth, so it specially has to do with the dispensation of his grace. He that worketh all things after the counsel of his own will works in his people both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

But as the effect of this work is more fully explained in the next verse, we shall defer the further consideration of it to our following paper.

## VI.

In meditating on the eternal and unchangeable purposes of God, as unfolded to our view in the chapter now before us, four things seem mainly to strike our mind as worthy of our most attentive consideration: 1. The *ultimate end* that is to crown the whole, which is the *praise of the glory* of God's grace; 2. The *intermediate cause* that moved and prompted the heart of God, which was the *riches* of his *love* and *favour*; 3. The *directing counsel* that planned and still

guides all his purposes from first to last to their full and final accomplishment, which is his infinite *wisdom*; and 4. The effectual execution of his purposes, which is by his *omnipotent power*. These four things move together in united harmony, and work together in mutual co-operation, so that every blessing which grace could give, every way of manifesting love and favour which wisdom could devise, every act by which the purposes of grace could be effectually accomplished, all move forward in the most blessed and harmonious concord towards the grand crowning consummation of the whole, when there will be heard rising up from innumerable myriads one universal anthem of praise; when "everything which hath breath will praise the Lord;" when "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 and ever." (Rev. 5:13.)

The fourth point to which we thus draw attention, viz., the effectual *execution* of the purposes of God's grace by his omnipotent power, we briefly noticed in our last paper in our exposition of verse 11. We then took occasion to remark that the words, "Who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will," though they included God's universal power, yet here had reference to the execution of the purposes of his grace. By these words, therefore, the Apostle brings before our eyes God's omnipotent power as carrying into effectual performance the counsel of his own will towards the objects of his distinguishing favour. An especial blessing is couched in this. Next to a believing view of the purposes of God's grace, and a sweet persuasion of our interest in them, nothing is more strengthening and encouraging than a realising apprehension of the power of God to carry them into full execution. Feeling, as we do, our own miserable helplessness, sinking under the pressure of our daily weakness, mourning over continual failures, and grieving on account of perpetual backslidings, encompassed by foes, and distressed by fears, how strengthening it is to our faith, thus tried to the utmost, to believe that he who has purposed has power to perform. This persuasion of the almighty power of God was the support and strength of Abraham's faith, which bore him up in the face of seeming impossibilities, and whereby he gave glory to God. (Rom. 4:18-21.) When, then, as walking in the steps of the faith of Abraham, we can look up believingly to the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, as we behold sovereign grace in his heart, and infinite wisdom in his mind, so we see almighty strength in his arm, and thus become sweetly persuaded that all which his loving heart feels, his infinite wisdom directs, and his omnipotent power can execute.

But observe how the Apostle brings all this rich display of the grace, the wisdom, and the power of God to bear on personal experience: "That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ." (Eph. 1:12.) From not knowing or not attending to the original Greek, and, we may add, not properly considering the analogy of faith, and the consistent harmony of the dispensation of grace, some commentators on the passage, and, we rather think, good old Dr. Hawker among them, have sadly misinterpreted the meaning of the Apostle's words, "Who first trusted in Christ." Observing that the words stand in immediate juxtaposition, and therefore seemingly in close connection with the previous word, "his," and not knowing or not remembering that in the Greek they are in the plural number, and what is called the accusative case, which necessarily defines the persons of whom the Apostle speaks, the commentators to whom we have alluded, and many preachers, doubtless, following in their track, have referred the words, "who first trusted in Christ," to God himself, as if it were *he*, not *we*, who first trusted in Christ; and they have explained it as if God beforehand trusted in Christ, that he would perform his covenant engagements; and therefore, before he came into the world, gave him credit, so to speak, for the whole of his finished work, as believing he would repay all that was thus previously lent him. Now all this may seem very pretty and very plausible, and when put forward by a popular or favourite preacher with great confidence, as most of those fanciful interpretations are, such an interpretation may fall on the ears of many of the hearers as one of those wonderfully deep explanations which scarce any one but their minister is favoured to see and give. But such an interpretation the original scatters to the winds; for, by all the laws of language, it fixes the persons who "first trusted in Christ" as grammatically connected with the preceding "we." But in this, as in almost every other case of a strained or fanciful interpretation, a man need not know Greek to detect its falsehood; for to our mind there is something very repulsive in the interpretation itself. Christ as the Father's servant, Christ as man, trusted in God. He trusted him in life, and he trusted him in death, for into his hands he committed his expiring spirit; and so evident was his trust in God that his bitter enemies taunted him with it; and its apparent fruitlessness. (Psa. 22:8; Matt. 27:43.) But we never read that God trusted in Christ in any way analogous to the manner in which a creditor trusts beforehand a debtor, in full expectation of payment at a time specified. The Father sent the Son; (John 10:36;) he upheld him; (Isa. 42:1;) he delighted in, and was well pleased with him; (Matt. 3:17;) he glorified him; (John 17:1;) but to say that he trusted in him, and that before his incarnation, is a vain and foolish idea, and

inconsistent with the harmony of the economy of grace, which always maintains the due relationship of the Father and the Son, and never attributes to the Sender that which especially belongs to the Sent.

But there is another reason why so foolish an interpretation cannot stand, and which needs no knowledge of Greek to see and understand. If you look at the marginal reading, which is often more literal and nearer the original than the text, you will find the words, "or *hoped*." In fact the Greek word means "hoped" rather than "trusted;" and the whole verse should be thus translated: "that we should be to the praise of his glory, *we* who first hoped in Christ."

But what is the meaning of the expression, "we who first hoped in Christ?" It means that those of whom the Apostle speaks, he himself included, were among the first fruits of the outpouring of the Spirit after the ascension and glorification of Christ. Looking forward therefore to those who should be hereafter called by God's distinguishing grace, Paul viewed himself and the saints of his day with a kind of holy triumph as the first trophies of Christ's victory over sin, death, and hell. These first fruits would seem to be in an especial manner dedicated to the praise of the glory of God's grace. As the first fruits under the law were offered at the feast of the Passover before the Lord, being a sheaf of corn cut from the field as a pledge and earnest of the whole harvest, so was it with these first believers. This first rich display of the purposes of God's grace filled the Apostle's heart with holy joy. That he himself, a bloodthirsty persecutor, who had made havoc of the Church, that the blind idolaters at Ephesus, once dead in trespasses and sins, should have been chosen to be the first to hope in Christ, and thus be the foremost to place a crown of glory on the Redeemer's head,—this made him rejoice with holy admiration. He felt the blessedness of a personal religion, of an experimental and enjoyed interest in an eternal inheritance; and that he and they to whom he wrote did not merely look on as spectators of the triumphs of redeeming blood, or were, like thousands, unconcerned hearers of the gospel which proclaimed salvation by grace, but, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, had obtained an inheritance in Christ. And what was their evidence of this personal interest, and that they were Isaacs, not Ishmaels; Jacobs, not Esaus; Davids, not Sauls? It was that they were the "first who hoped in Christ."

Observe how a hope in Christ, that is, of course, a good hope through grace, manifests our personal interest in Christ, and proves that in him we have

obtained an inheritance. How this, as realised and felt, enables the soul to praise the Lord for his distinguishing grace; and as whoso offereth praise glorifieth God, those who hope in Christ are "to the praise of the glory of his grace." This tribute of praise the first who were called by grace were the first to bring. And as the first fruits under the Levitical dispensation were an earnest and pledge of the future harvest, so was it with these first believers. Their call by grace and the work of the Spirit on their hearts were a pledge and earnest of a whole harvest to be reaped and garnered. Thus Epenetus and Stephanas are spoken of as being "the first fruits of Achaia," (Rom. 16:5; 1 Cor. 16:15) meaning that they were among the very first called in that part of Greece of which Corinth was the capital. (2 Cor. 1:1.) These Ephesians were, therefore, among the earliest trophies of the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, as being among the first who as quickened from a death in sin had been raised up to a hope in Christ. Having been blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ, having been chosen in him before the foundation of the world, and accepted in the Beloved, they had been made alive to God by regenerating grace, and had thus proved in their own consciences that they had obtained an inheritance in Christ, and this not for any goodness of their own, but because they had been predestinated to it according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.

If the interpreters to whom we have already alluded had duly considered these points they would not have so thoroughly mistaken the meaning of the words "who first trusted in Christ." Even had they paid attention to the marginal reading, "hoped," they must have shrunk from such an interpretation, for they could not have asserted that God "first hoped in Christ." To ascribe faith and hope to God is ten thousand times worse than the error which Mr. Huntington so severely lashes of Onesimus, who ascribed faith and hope to the saints in heaven. But enough of this fanciful interpretation, which like most of its class, is but a cloak for error.

Following his divine theme, the Apostle goes on to show how the Ephesian saints were farther led on in the divine life so as to know their personal interest in these heavenly blessings: "In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." (Eph. 1:13.) It will be observed that the word "*trusted*" is in italics, showing, that it is not in the original, but was supplied by our translators to complete, as they considered, the sense. But, in our judgment, they were altogether wrong in supplying the ellipsis, as the omission of a word is termed, by the expression

**"trusted." If they had supplied the ellipsis at all, which was not necessary, they should have put "believed;" for the words "after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation" come in as if in a kind of parenthesis, and the whole verse should have been rendered thus: "In whom ye also, having heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation," (here the Apostle goes back to where he began) "in whom also having believed, ye were sealed," &c. There is no reference to their having first trusted in Christ, as would appear from the translation, but the Apostle passes on to another point,—their faith in Christ from their hope in Christ, and to what followed as a testimony to the truth and reality of their faith. It is therefore as if he said: "All we to whom the gospel first came with power; all we who as first fruits of Christ's victory have had grace given to us before all the rest of the crop who are to be gathered in after us; all we were predestinated to the praise of the glory of God's grace. But among the first fruits are ye also, ye saints at Ephesus, ye who have heard the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation, and have believed in him of whom that gospel testifies. God has abounded in it towards you in all wisdom and prudence; it came to you not in word only, but in power, and in the Holy Ghost and in much assurance. And what was the consequence? Ye believed in him of whom the gospel testified. And what followed upon believing? "Ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." The Apostle thus joins together three things as following each other in gracious succession: 1. Hearing; 2. Believing; 3. Sealing.**

**Hearing the word of truth, the gospel of their salvation, was the first. For three years had they heard the gospel from the mouth of Paul. A mighty work was wrought through him at Ephesus, for the word of God mightily grew there and prevailed. (Acts 19:20.) "Faith," we read, "cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." So was it with these Ephesian saints. They heard, they believed. Paul preached to them Christ and him crucified. The Holy Ghost gave them ears to hear and hearts to feel. By his mighty and efficacious operation faith in the Son of God was raised up in their souls, and they received him, as of God made unto them wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.**

**And what followed? Sealing. "They were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise;" that is, that Holy Spirit whom the Lord had promised to send; (John 16:7;) and this Holy Spirit, for the word "which" refers, not to the sealing, but to the Sealer, was an earnest of their inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession.**

Several things claim our consideration here, and mainly these four: 1. The Sealer; 2. The sealing; 3. The earnest of the inheritance; 4. The redemption of the purchased possession.

1. The *Sealer*.—This is the Holy Ghost. He it is who puts his attesting seal upon two things—two mighty and efficacious works: 1. The finished work of the Son of God, whereby he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; and 2, upon his own gracious work on the heart of those who believe. Having first effectually convinced us of sin, this blessed Teacher and Holy Comforter next opens our eyes to see, and our hearts to believe in the glorious Person of the Son of God, and to rest upon and hope in his blood and righteousness. He then afterwards, in various ways and at different seasons, seals upon our heart and conscience the reality and blessedness of what he has thus taught us. In doing this he takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto us, glorifies Christ by revealing him in us, makes him dear, near, and precious, and thus seals upon our heart who and what he is in himself as the Son of God, and what he is to us by faith. He thus confirms and strengthens our faith in him, encourages and reanimates our hope, and draws forth our love. What we have seen in Christ, heard of Christ, and received from Christ he sets home upon the heart with an attesting power, so that we find and feel we have not followed cunningly devised fables in believing what the Scriptures declare of Jesus but that he is all, and more than all, we have tasted and experienced him to be.

2. And now the *sealing*. This is in an especial manner the blessed Spirit's attestation to his own work—the inward witness of the Spirit whereby he bears his peculiar testimony to his own previous teachings and operations.

But sealing implies several things. 1. It is *subsequent* to believing: "In whom *after* ye believed, ye were sealed." In legal documents the writing always precedes the sealing. *That* is the last act, and follows even the signing, putting an attesting stamp on the whole document, from the first word to the last signature. So in grace. The Spirit begins the work. He writes the first lines of divine truth on the soul; he makes the first impression on the heart of stone, which under his operation becomes a heart of flesh; he writes every truth that he thus makes known on the fleshy tables of the heart. He thus gives faith and hope, and then he comes with his special inward witness, and seals the truth and reality of his own work, so as not only to make it plain and clear, but to ratify and confirm it beyond all doubt and fear, questioning or dispute, either by ourself or others. The work of God on the soul sometimes seems to lie as if

dead and dormant; little prayer goes up, little answer comes down. Then doubts and fears arise whether the work be genuine, and much bondage and darkness sensibly gather over the mind like a dark and gloomy cloud, which much obscures the handwriting of the divine finger. Now the blessed Spirit revives his work by some application of the word with power, some softening and melting of the hard heart by his divine influence, some communication of a spirit of prayer, some discovery of the gracious Lord, some strengthening of faith, reviving of hope, and drawing forth of love. He thus puts the seal on his own work, and stamps it as genuine. Under the sweetness and blessedness of this attesting seal many a poor child of God can look back to this and that testimony, this and that Ebenezer, this and that hill Mizar, this and that deliverance, blessing, manifestation, answer to prayer, special season under the word or on his knees, which were almost lost and buried in unbelief and confusion. But especially when he bears witness with their spirit that they are the children of God and shedding abroad the love of God in their heart becomes in them the Spirit of adoption, whereby they cry Abba Father, is his sealing manifest and complete.

2. But seal sometimes means *proof*: "He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true." (John 3:33.) There it means that he who has by faith received the testimony which God has given of Christ has such an internal proof and testimony that he is the Son of God, that he can set his personal attestation to the truth and reality of his Sonship, and that the words which he spake are true. So the Corinthians are declared by the Apostle (1 Cor. 9:2) to be "the seal," that is, the attesting mark or proof of "his apostleship." The Holy Ghost having called, qualified, commissioned, and sent him to preach the gospel, every saint quickened and called under his ministry was a seal or an open manifest proof to the Apostle, to himself, and to all others that Paul's apostleship was of God.

3. It therefore means especially an *approving* testimony. Sealing is a general term to signify a special attestation; but when we read of our blessed Lord, "him hath God the Father sealed," (John 6:27,) it means the approving seal which the Father set on the Person, work, miracles, and testimony of his dear Son, and whereby he especially commends him to our faith and acceptance.

But we need not further dwell on the sealing of the Spirit,\* as our object is rather to explain the general meaning and connection of the chapter before us than preach a series of sermons on it, or say upon it all that might be experimentally and profitably said. We pass on, therefore, to show how the

**Holy Spirit of promise is "an earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." An earnest is a part of the sum agreed on, paid in advance, as a binding pledge of the payment of the whole amount at the stipulated season. Thus in hiring a servant, a small sum is paid as an earnest to make the agreement valid and binding on both parties. In purchasing a house or an estate, a certain sum called the deposit money is paid as a pledge of the payment of the whole price at the fixed time. In this sense the blessed Spirit is himself the earnest of our inheritance, for the word "which" grammatically refers to him. His gifts and graces, his teachings, influences, and operations, his quickenings, revivings, renewings, his anointings and indwellings, and especially his sealings are so many earnest and pledges of the truth and reality of the inheritance, and of its being ours. And observe that the earnest is not only a pledge of the receipt of the whole sum, but is in itself of the same kind and nature. The first fruits, under the Law, were not only a pledge and earnest of the whole harvest, but were, as wheat or barley, of the same actual kind as the whole crop. The money paid at hiring, or the deposit at a purchase of land, are in the same coin as the rest of the sum, or they would not be part payment. So the earnest of the inheritance and the inheritance itself are of the same kind and nature. Both are Christ; first Christ in grace, then Christ in glory; Christ revealed here, Christ seen face to face hereafter; Christ in his visits, his presence, his love, his power on earth; Christ, the same blessed Christ, in all the fulness of his presence and love in heaven. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people. Holy are its inhabitants, holy its employments, holy its enjoyments. The Holy Spirit, therefore, in his sealing, sanctifying operations, and the communication of a holy, spiritual, and divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4) is the earnest of his holy and heavenly inheritance, making us, as the Apostle says (Col. 1:12) "meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." This is a very important consideration, for it plainly shows that unless we know something of the teaching, the work, and witness of the Holy Spirit here, and are made partakers of a new, holy, spiritual, and heavenly nature, we have no pledge or earnest of our interest in the inheritance of the saints in bliss. A carnal, unsanctified, unholy, unrenewed heart is utterly incapable of understanding, entering into, longing after, and loving an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that passeth not away. But every holy desire, heavenly affection, gracious longing, spiritual enjoyment, and believing, hoping, loving, looking unto and cleaving to the Lord of life and glory by the power of the Holy Spirit, are all so many pledges and earnest of an interest in the glorious inheritance of the saints in light. The love, the joy, the peace, the calm tranquillity, and holy acquiescence in the will of God; the ravishing views of the glory of Christ which change the soul**

into the same image, from glory to glory; the delight felt in him, and the whole surrender of the heart and affections to the blessed Lord as the chiefest of ten thousand, and the altogether lovely, are all so many earnest of the inheritance above, as, being heaven begun below.

\* Our late dear friend and co-editor, J. M'Kenzie, published a beautiful and deeply-experimental sermon on the subject, which might be read with much profit and advantage, as the fruit of his personal experience of it.

But what is the meaning of "the redemption of the purchased possession," until which the spirit is the earnest of our inheritance? Two things here demand our consideration: 1. What is meant by the expression "purchased possession." 2. What we are to understand by the "redemption" of this purchased possession.

1. First, then, what is the meaning of the expression "purchased possession?" In the original it is but one word, and signifies literally acquisition, or obtaining and gaining possession of an object. It is used in this sense 1 Thess. 5:9, where it is rendered in our translation "to obtain:" "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Thess. 5:9.) Thence it is used to signify "salvation," as Heb. 10:39, where our version renders the word "the saving of the soul." But our translators have well and wisely rendered the word in the passage now before us "the purchased possession;" the substantive borrowing the idea of purchase from the verb, from which it is derived, possessing that meaning, as in Acts 20:28, where it is rightly translated "purchased." By this purchased possession, then, we are to understand the Church, which the Lord purchased with his own blood. She is his possession, his acquisition, his inheritance, and, as bought with a price, (1 Cor. 6:20,) his purchased possession. Peter, therefore, writing to the elect strangers, says: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a *peculiar* people; (1 Pet. 2:9;) where the word "peculiar" is the same as is used here, and may be translated, as in the margin, "a purchased people." We do not hold with purchased blessings, because we believe that God blessed the Church with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, as the pure gift of his grace. All will admit that the love of God shed abroad in the heart is the best and greatest of spiritual blessings; and yet who that knows the truth will venture to say that this love was bought by the blood of Christ; when it was this very eternal love of God which moved him to send his only-begotten Son? (John 3:16; 1 John 4:9, 10.) But though we do not hold with purchased blessings, we fully believe

in a purchased people; and we also believe that no blessing comes to that purchased people except through the cross of Christ, that being, as it were, the consecrated channel through which every favour comes, and by which alone reconciliation was effected. We do not, therefore, at all quarrel or find fault with such expressions as "blood-bought pardon," for though not strictly bought in a way of purchase, yet pardon of sin was so wrung out of Christ's sorrows and sufferings that in a sense it may be said to have been bought by them. The Church of Christ, then, viewed in its entirety, as the body of which he is the glorious Head, the wife of whom he is the Husband, the inheritance of which he is the Lord and heir, (Mark 12:7,) is the purchased possession of which the Apostle here speaks.

2. But as connected with this point, now comes the question, What is the meaning of the expression the "*redemption*" of this purchased possession? What is this redemption, and why is it spoken of as still future? Redemption, in Scripture, taken in its widest sense, means deliverance, and chiefly and primarily by the payment of a ransom. Thus a captive might be delivered from captivity by a relation or friend paying the ransom set upon him by his captor. The Lord said, therefore, of Cyrus that he would "let go his captives, not for price or reward," which was the usual way of their liberation, but gratuitously, which he did when he let them return from the Babylonish captivity, without exacting from them any ransom, tax, or tribute. (Isa. 45:13.) Similarly a free-born Israelite, who, through poverty, had sold himself as a slave to a stranger, might be redeemed by one of his brethren, or, if able, might redeem himself. (Lev. 25:47-52.) Here, again, a ransom price, calculated according to the number of years to the Jubilee, was needful for redemption. A third case is that of a field or parcel of land like Elimelech's, which had become mortgaged, but might be redeemed by the goel, or next kinsman in blood,\* (Ruth 4:3) paying off the mortgage.

\* The reason why the next kinsman refused to redeem the parcel of land was because he must have married the widow, and the son, by that marriage, would not have been considered his, but Elimelech's. He would, therefore, have lost his independent standing by merging, as it were, into a second Elimelech, and would thus have marred or lost his own inheritance as the head of a distinct family employed to deliver the servant, or recover possession of the land if either were unjustly detained.

All these cases which we need not further dwell upon are instances of redemption by price—by the payment of a ransom. And this is the primary

meaning of the word "redeem." But there is also a redemption by *power*, as in the passage, "Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy." (Psa. 107:2.) In this sense God is frequently said to have "redeemed his people from the house of bondage," where the word means deliverance without any express idea of a price being laid down, or a ransom paid. (Deut. 7:8; 13:5; 15:15.) But it will be observed, that redemption by price makes a way for redemption by power; and that the one so precedes and implies the other, that there could and would have been no redemption by power had there not first been a redemption by price. Law and justice would cry aloud against taking away by main force one who had voluntarily sold himself to be a servant unless his value were paid, or against re-entering on a mortgaged piece of land without paying off the mortgage. But when the price had been fully and duly paid, and that to the satisfaction of the owner of the servant, or of the mortgagee, then power might be lawfully employed to deliver the servant, or recover possession of the land if either were unjustly detained.

These remarks may throw light on the expression "until the redemption of the purchased possession." The Church has been redeemed by price, but is not as yet fully redeemed by power. Christ has bought with his precious blood both the souls and bodies of his people, but he has not yet redeemed them openly. This redemption is still future, and will not be accomplished till the glorious resurrection morn, when the bodies of the dead saints will be raised, and the bodies of the living saints changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump. This, therefore, is "the redemption of the purchased possession;" and this being future we have to wait for it, as the Apostle speaks, "But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." (Rom. 8:25.) Our body is not yet redeemed from its native corruption. But, in the resurrection morn, when the dead will be raised incorruptible, then the redemption of the body will be complete. Then the inheritance will be fully entered into. The risen and glorified saints will inherit Christ, and Christ will inherit them; and his purchased possession will be for ever delivered from every foe and every fear, from every sin and every sorrow, from every corruption of body or soul, and be crowned with an exceeding and eternal weight of glory. Unto this day of redemption the Holy Spirit seals all the living family of God, (Eph. 4:30,) not only by assuring them of their interest in the inheritance, and himself being the earnest of it, but as thereby securing to them the most certain possession of it.

Here, then, we see the distinct work of each person in the blessed Trinity. The Father chooses the Church in Christ, and blesses her with all spiritual blessings in Him. The Son accepts her as his Bride and inheritance, and, when fallen, redeems her by his precious blood. The Holy Ghost quickens the souls thus chosen, blessed and redeemed, makes them meet for the inheritance, and seals them for the present enjoyment of it in grace, and the future enjoyment of it in glory. And to what does all this redound, but "to the praise of God's glory?"—praise to the Father, praise to the Son, and praise to the Holy Ghost; praise to the Father who loved the Church and chose her; praise to the Son who loved the Church and gave himself for her; and praise to the Holy Ghost who loved the Church, and seals her unto that glorious day when the purposes of God's grace will be all fulfilled, and the Church reign with her covenant Head in glory for ever and ever.

## VII.

Among the many prominent features which are so clearly and powerfully stamped upon the character and conduct of the Apostle Paul, as one of the most eminent saints and servants of Christ whom grace ever made or manifested, none seems to us more signal than the spirit of prayer and supplications which dwelt in his breast on behalf of the churches and individuals to whom he addressed his Epistles. Such was his love to the Lord Jesus and to all his saints as members of his mystical body, such his desire for their spiritual prosperity, and such his persuasion that the Lord was able to do for them exceeding abundantly above all they could ask or think, that when the churches came before his eyes, there gushed immediately out of his soul a flow of prayer and thanksgiving on their behalf; of thanksgiving for the wonders which grace had wrought in and for them, and of prayer for more and more visible manifestations of what grace could still accomplish in their hearts and in their lives. It would be a most instructive task, if task it could be called, for a spiritual mind carefully to examine and prayerfully to meditate on the various prayers which the Apostle records as put up by himself for the churches. We should thus see more clearly what blessings we should desire for ourselves and others and what spiritual gifts and graces we should ask for when presenting our supplications before the throne of grace. It is a subject on which we cannot now enter, but it is one full of the choicest instruction if we had the opportunity to lay it fully before our readers. For these prayers, see Rom. 15:5, 6, 13; Phil. 1:9-11; Col. 1:9-12; 1 Thess. 5:23; 2 Thess. 1:11, 12;

**Philemon 6; Heb. 13:20, 21. What a beautiful collection of inspired prayers for spiritual blessings!**

**This epistle furnishes us with two of the longest, fullest, and choicest of all the prayers thus recorded as offered by the Apostle for the churches. One is contained in the chapter now before us; the other in 3:16-19. The course of our exposition brings us to the first of these prayers: "Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers." (Eph. 1:15, 16.)**

**Tidings had been brought to the Apostle when a prisoner at Rome, (Acts 28:16, 20; Eph. 6:20,) most probably by Epaphras, (Col. 1:7,) of the faith in the Lord Jesus and love unto all the saints, which these Ephesian saints so clearly manifested.**

**These glad tidings at once touched the secret springs of love in his heart, and, knowing the power and prevalence of prayer, as the Spirit inspired and dictated, he poured forth his soul in petitions and supplications for them; and by the guidance of the same blessed Teacher, put upon permanent record the substance of these prayers, that not only the Ephesian saints, but the Church of God in all ages might see and know what blessings are to be sought for and obtained from the God of all grace, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We would draw, therefore, particular attention to this prayer of the Apostle; and may the same blessed Spirit, under whose special aid and inspiration it was raised up, drawn forth, dictated, and recorded, help us so to unfold and to enforce it that a special blessing may attend it to our readers.**

**Faith in the Lord Jesus, and love to all the saints, are the two great marks of divine life; and there is this special blessedness attending them, that they are comprehensive and inclusive evidences; in other words, they comprehend in their embrace, and include in their circle, all the true saints of God, from the least to the greatest. It is not a question of strong faith or weak faith, of much love or little love, but of the reality of these two Christian graces. He is a saint, and he only is a saint, who believes in the Lord Jesus with a faith that is God's gift and work, and who loves his people with a love of God's communicating and shedding abroad. For all such true saints the Apostle poured forth his prayer—a prayer as suitable to us, if saints, as it was to them for whom it was particularly offered, and here specially recorded.**

**It is worthy of observation how continually the Apostle blends thanksgiving with prayer. This was his usual practice. (See Rom. 1:8, 9; 1 Cor. 1:4; Phil. 1:3, 4; Col. 1:3; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:3; 2 Tim. 1:3; Philemon 4.) Remembering that these Ephesian saints had been before quickened into divine life, when they were without God, and had no hope in the world, and believing that, as chosen in Christ they had been blessed with all spiritual blessings in him, Paul's heart was melted into continual gratitude for what God had already done for them. It was as if his soul was ever full of praise and prayer, and that these continually flowed forth, mingled and blended with each other. It were good for us if we could more follow his example, and mingle praise more with our prayers. Praise gives, as it were, wings to prayer, mounting up more directly from earth to heaven, and being especially acceptable to God, for "whoso offereth praise glorifieth him." Incense, under the law, was a compound of various spices, (Exod. 30:34, 35,) and it was the blending of one with the other which made the perfume of it so refreshing and fragrant. It was, indeed, a special type of the intercession of our great High Priest; but it may be viewed also as representing typically the prayers of the saints, and their fragrance before God; for the Lord says, by the prophet: "For from the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same my name shall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incense shall be offered unto my name, and a pure offering; for my name shall be great among the heathen, saith the Lord of hosts." (Mal. 1:11.) Similarly we read: "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints, upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand." (Rev. 8:3, 4.) Among these sweet spices, praise is one of the most refreshing and fragrant; refreshing to us, fragrant before God; and were we enabled to blend more fully and frequently this spikenard with all the chief spices, we might not only find our own house filled with the odour of the ointment, but our Beloved might come oftener into his garden, when the south wind blows and the spices flow out, to eat his pleasant fruits. (John 12:3; Song Sol. 4:16.) We cannot enlarge upon this point, but if our readers will consult the following passages, they will see how fully they confirm our words. See Psa. 50:14, 15; 100:4; 107:1, 8, &c.; Phil. 4:6; Col. 2:7; 4:2; Eph. 5:20; Heb. 13:15.**

**But the chief point before us is the prayer of this man of God: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him; the eyes of your**

understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." (Eph. 1:17, 18.)

Several points here demand our attentive consideration.

i. The *titles* which the Apostle here gives God will furnish us with some profitable meditation. They are two. He calls him, 1, "The God of our Lord Jesus Christ;" 2, "The Father of glory." We will, the Lord helping us, examine both of these titles.

1. Let us first observe that these titles, as used here by the Apostle, are not arbitrary names of God; by which we mean that, besides their real and intrinsic character as designating God the Father, they have a peculiar bearing upon and reference unto the blessings prayed for. This is almost always the case in other parts of Scripture, and it may be taken as a general truth, that wherever God speaks of himself, or is spoken of by his prophets and apostles, under certain titles, they have a special reference to the matter then in hand. Compare, for instance, the titles which God gives himself, (Exod. 34:6,) with the prayer of Moses. (Exod. 33:12-18.) A Lord God merciful, and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and yet that would by no means clear the guilty, impenitent sinner, was the very God to go before and with Moses. Compare also the titles which the Lord gives of himself, (Isa. 40:28,) with the complaint of Jacob and Israel in the preceding verse, and see how the titles suit and exactly meet the complaint. Thus in the words before us, the Apostle having certain requests to make for the Ephesian saints, addresses God by those titles which are suitable to those particular blessings. The reason of this is because, being in himself what his titles declare of him, it is that part of his character which is in the sweetest harmony with the blessings prayed for, and thus affords a pledge and a security that he will grant the special petitions. It is, therefore, not merely a reminding God of the revelation which he has made of his great and glorious name, and a prevailing plea with him to grant the blessings prayed for, but an assurance to his people that he will, in consonance with his own gracious character, as unfolded by these titles, grant the petitions put up to him. The first title is a peculiar one, and one which, if we remember right, does not often occur in the New Testament under the same form. God the Father is continually called "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," but not often "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ."

**Our readers will bear in mind that the grand subject of the epistle is the union of the Church with Christ, as her Covenant Head, and the blessings and privileges which spring out of this union. God the Father is, therefore, here called "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ," to show that, as being his God, and he being the Church's Head and Husband, all that belongs to him belongs to her. Our blessed Lord, therefore, after his resurrection, sent this message to his disciples: "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." (John 20:17.) Why your Father? Because my Father. Why your God? Because my God. Thus, because God is "the God of the Lord Jesus Christ," the Church's living Head, he is the God of the Church also; and because he has blessed her with all spiritual blessings in him, he will grant these requests also.**

**But he is the God of the Lord Jesus Christ in several ways. As the Lord Jesus Christ is the true, proper, and real Son of the Father, in truth and love, God is in this sense his God. We cannot understand, much less explain, the mystery, but we receive it by faith that the blessed Lord is "the only-begotten of the Father," "the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father." (John 1:14, 18.) As such, therefore, God the Father is the God of the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**He is also his God as man, and the Son of man. We, therefore, find him claiming this peculiar title, even when sunk into all the sufferings and ignominy of the cross. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" burst forth from the dear Redeemer's lips in the moment of his most dolorous agony. Rejected by men, and for the moment forsaken by God, when the very sun hid its light, and the firm earth trembled, the Son of the Father in truth and love still held by his claim, and cried out in the face of the curse of the Law and the sufferings of death, "My God." Blessed Lord, despair never seized thy holy soul. Thou didst fight; thou didst conquer; and didst not yield up thy spirit until thou couldst say, "It is finished." "The Lord heard thee in the day of trouble; sent thee help from the sanctuary and strengthened thee out of Zion; remembered all thy offerings and accepted thy burnt sacrifice; granted thee according to thine own heart, and fulfilled all thy counsel." And now what remains for us but to say, "We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners. The Lord fulfil all thy petitions." (Psa. 20:1-5.)**

**But he is in a more especial manner "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ," viewed in his present mediatorial glory at the right hand of power. As his only-begotten Son from all eternity, God was his God; as the Father's messenger and servant, doing his will upon earth, even in his lowest humiliation, God was his God; and now that he is risen from the dead and gone up on high to be the great high priest over the house of God, now that he is entered into his glory and ever lives to make intercession for us, God is still his God.**

**This view of Jesus is most strengthening and encouraging to faith. The great and glorious God, the great self-existent I AM, the God in whom we live and move and have our being, the God who made us and has preserved us in life and being to the present hour, the God before whom we stand with all we are and have, the God against and before whom we have so deeply and dreadfully sinned—this great and glorious God is "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ." We may, therefore, draw near unto him with all holy boldness, present our supplications before him, call upon his holy name, and worship him with all reverence and godly fear as the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, and our God in him. A believing view of God, as revealing himself in the Person of his dear Son, as reconciling us to himself by his precious blood, as accepting us in the Beloved, and not imputing our trespasses unto us, disarms God of all his terrors, removes the bondage of the law out of our hearts and the guilt of sin from our consciences; enlarges, comforts, and solaces the soul, soothes the troubled spirit, and casts out that fear which hath torment. Every other view of God but that in his dear Son disturbs and disquiets the mind, troubles the conscience, straitens the soul, contracts and narrows up the spirit, and either leaves us a prey to every lust, or engenders distrust, despondency, and despair.**

**But God is also called here "the Father of glory." This may mean, by a frequent Hebrew idiom, the glorious Father; but we prefer to follow the strict literal meaning of the expression, and to understand by it that God is the author, the source and originator of all glory. All the glory of heaven is because God, in an especial manner, there manifests the brightness of his presence. Apart from him, and out of him, there is no glory in heaven or in earth; and to see his glory face to face constitutes the eternal bliss of the saints. On earth they have a foreview, a foretaste of this glory when God shines into the heart to give the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ; and as the veil of unbelief is taken off the heart, and they see with open or unveiled face the glory of the Lord, they are inwardly and**

experimentally changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. (2 Cor. 4:6; 3:18.) This, therefore, is the connection between the title given to God and the petition presented to him. The portion of the Church is to behold the glory of Christ here by faith, and hereafter by sight, as our gracious Lord prayed, or rather expressed his holy will: "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me; for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." (John 17:24.) This glory, then, being their predestinated portion, there is a beautiful propriety in the Apostle begging that "the Father of glory" would give the Ephesian saints the blessings asked for; and we may add that it is as glorious for him to give as for them to receive.

ii. But we will now consider the particular blessings thus earnestly prayed for, and we would direct the especial attention of our readers to the petitions thus put up, as showing us what should be our desires and prayers for ourselves and others. We may be sure that the Lord the Spirit inspired and raised up these prayers in the breast of the Apostle, and that they are left on permanent record to be a pattern of instruction to the end of time. There is such a thing as asking and not receiving, because we ask amiss. (James 4:3.) We know not what we should pray for as we ought, (Rom. 8:26,) and, therefore, need the blessed Spirit to help our infirmities, and among them the infirmity of ignorance. But this he does, not only by himself interceding in us and for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, but by recording in the inspired word such prayers as men of God were taught by him to put up. Thus viewed, these prayers of Paul have a special value as instructing us into those blessings which we should peculiarly ask for by prayer and supplication.

1. The first blessing prayed for is "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ." By the Spirit is meant the Holy Spirit, that sacred and divine Person in the glorious Trinity, whom he has before called "that Holy Spirit of promise." There is a heavenly wisdom which the Holy and Blessed Spirit alone can give, and he is, therefore, called "the Spirit of wisdom," not only as containing in himself all wisdom, but as the gracious communicator of it to the saints. It will be observed that it is not the gift of wisdom, even of heavenly wisdom, for which the Apostle prays so much as the Spirit himself of wisdom. We might have wisdom in the letter of truth, and learn much from the Scriptures; but how inferior is all this to the personal indwelling of the Holy Ghost, making our bodies his temple, and himself giving us blessed lessons, sealed with his own witness, and accompanied with his own light, life,

unction, and power. He thus sheds a sacred light on his own word of truth, and by his personal and living teachings, opens, enlarges, and persuades the heart to receive what he thus shows and teaches. We all know how different a living teacher is from a mere lesson-book in all matters of natural education; and that there are arts and sciences, and especially languages and accomplishments, which no book can teach, but which must be learnt from the lips of the teacher himself. So in grace, however valuable and blessed the book of God is, we cannot be made wise unto salvation by the word itself without the special teachings of the Holy Ghost as a personal and living instructor. He can suit his teachings to our case, knows when, where, and how to teach us, can bear with our ignorance and stupidity, give us the right lesson at the right time and in the right way, and do for us what no earthly teacher can, write his own laws upon our hearts and give us will and power to keep and obey them.

But it is specially as giving us a knowledge of Christ that he is a Spirit of wisdom; for a spiritual, experimental knowledge of Christ is the sum and substance of all true wisdom. To flee unto Jesus, believe on him, trust in him, look continually to him, and cleave to him with purpose of heart; to cast away all hope and help but what centres in him and comes from him; to renounce all our own wisdom, strength, and righteousness; to hang upon him and him only, as of God made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, this is true wisdom, and, issuing in the salvation of the soul, will shine forth in a blaze of glory when all earthly wisdom will be quenched in endless night.

2. But he is called also "the Spirit of revelation," a title which demands our especial consideration.

Revelation means literally an uncovering or unveiling of a concealed or covered-up object. It is used, therefore, sometimes in the sense of manifesting, making known, or bringing to light, what had before been hidden in darkness and obscurity. This revelation is, therefore, either outward in the word, or inward in the soul, and the two strictly correspond to and are counterparts of each other. This is well unfolded by the Apostle, (2 Cor. 3,) where he is speaking of a double veil in the case of the literal Israel, viz., a veil upon the word of truth, and a veil upon the heart: "And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished: but their minds were blinded; for until this day remaineth the same veil untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament;

which veil is done away in Christ. But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart." (2 Cor. 3:13-15.) The veil which Moses put upon his face was typical of this double veil; and as in them, so in all who are still in the darkness, ignorance, and unbelief of unregeneracy, there is a veil spread over the understanding. The Spirit of revelation, then, is that gracious, holy, and blessed Spirit who, by his divine operations, takes off this double veil; and, therefore, the Apostle says: "Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty." (2 Cor. 3:16, 17.) The day will come when the literal Israel will turn to the Lord, and then the veil now spread over them will be taken away. But what is true prophetically is true experimentally; what will be fulfilled in Israel after the flesh is now being continually fulfilled in Israel after the Spirit. Immediately that, by the power of divine grace, a poor Gentile sinner turns to the Lord, the Spirit of revelation removes the veil off the Scriptures, and off his heart. Have we not found it so? What a sealed book was the word of God once to us! How we read or heard it without one real ray of light to illuminate the dark page; and what a thick veil was there of ignorance, unbelief, prejudice, self-righteousness, and impenitence on our heart. But the gracious Spirit of revelation took this double veil away, and by giving us the light of life, made the word of God a new book, and gave us a new heart; and ever since the day when the entrance of his word gave us light, God's word has been a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path.

But the Spirit of revelation is chiefly given to lead us into a spiritual, experimental, and saving knowledge of Christ. The Apostle, therefore, prays that "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him." Without this blessed Spirit of revelation, Christ cannot be effectually or savingly known. When, therefore, Peter made that noble confession of his faith in Christ as "the Son of the living God," our Lord said to him: "Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona; for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." (Matt. 16:17.) So he speaks on another occasion: "At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in thy sight. All things are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him." (Matt. 11:25-27.) Without this inward revelation by the Spirit of revelation, Christ cannot be savingly known. Paul, therefore, says of his own experience: "But when it pleased God, who

separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood." (Gal. 1:15, 16.) But we are not to suppose that this special and inward revelation of Christ by the Spirit has anything in it of a mystical or enthusiastic nature. It is not a matter of dreams, voices, or visions, sights or sounds, visible objects or supernatural appearances. By such imitations and delusions, Satan, as an angel of light, has wrought at various times sad mischief with individuals and churches. It is especially needful here to have "the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind;" to "gird up the loins of our mind," (not be entangled in the loose robes of enthusiasm;) "to be sober," (not flighty and visionary;) and "hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto us," (not sights in the sky or voices in the air,) "at the revelation of Jesus Christ." (2 Tim. 1:7; 1 Pet. 1:13.)

But the Apostle goes on to show the effect of the gift of this Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. It enlightens the eyes of the understanding: "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened." Among the benefits and blessings of heavenly teaching, a gracious understanding of divine truth is not the least or last. Some good people, and amongst them even ministers, do not seem to see clearly the difference between a gracious understanding of the truth and what is commonly called "head knowledge." But no two things can be more different in their source, their nature, and their effects. God is the author of one, man of the other; one is grace, the other nature; one is seated in the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him who created him; the other in the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; one is attended with faith, and hope, and love, is tender, humble, simple, and sincere, saves and sanctifies; the other puffs up with pride, hardens the heart, sears the conscience, knows neither faith nor repentance, and for the most part holds the truth in unrighteousness. There cannot well, then, be a greater mistake than to trample and beat down a gracious understanding of truth as so much dry and dead head knowledge, and thus confound the spiritual light which dwells in the enlightened mind of a saint with the carnal knowledge of the letter of truth, which has its seat in the head of a professor. One of the chief features of the present day is the want of this gracious and enlightened understanding among the people of God. Being accustomed to hear all knowledge of the truth in an enlightened understanding beaten down as mere notions and head knowledge, they are afraid of everything beyond immediate feelings; and thus, instead of being firmly established in the truth, are often tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness,

whereby they lie in wait to deceive. The want of this gracious understanding of the truth was never more painfully visible than in the late controversy about the Sonship of Christ and our wonder has often been that, amidst so much ignorance on the subject in the churches of truth, the people of God were for the most part so preserved from instability on a point so vital and important as the true, real, and eternal Sonship of our blessed Lord.

But we shall here close our remarks on this point of gracious experience, reserving for a future paper a more extended opening of the subject in connection with the rest of the passage.

### VIII.

Pursuing our subject, we desire to walk step by step with this holy man of God, as we find him pouring forth his heart, under divine inspiration, for the saints of God at Ephesus. He and they need such prayers no more. They are with Christ, seeing him as he is, and behold him and his glory, not as they once did and we do now, by faith, as in a glass darkly, but face to face, and know him as they also are known. But we who are still in this wilderness, struggling onwards to reach the same heavenly home, cannot be sufficiently thankful, and especially so in these days of error and evil, that the Holy Ghost inspired him so to pray, and to leave also on permanent record the petitions which he thus put up, that they might be for our instruction and edification. And we desire to bless and praise God for all the sweetness, suitability, and blessedness which we have seen and felt in them, and that he has thus far enabled us to lay before our spiritual readers what we hope has been for the profit of their souls. May he give us grace and wisdom still further to open the treasures of heavenly truth which are stored up for enlightened understandings and believing hearts in that portion of the Apostle's prayer which remains to be considered.

We showed in our last paper that there were certain blessings mentioned by the Apostle as attending the gift of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. These blessings are mainly four: 1. An enlightening of the eyes of the understanding; 2, A knowledge of the hope of his calling; 3, A knowledge of what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints; 4, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power which God wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, &c.

**The first of these blessings we have partly considered; but, as we proposed to examine it more fully in connection with the rest of the passage, we shall now attempt to redeem our pledge.**

**Viewing, then, the soul of man as the seat and subject of those gracious operations of God the Holy Ghost which give it a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light, we may say that it possesses, 1, intellect; 2, will; 3, conscience; 4, affections; and viewing it as regenerated and renewed from above, we may add that the blessed Spirit is to it and in it, 1, a Spirit of light in the understanding; (2 Cor. 3:16-18; 1 Cor. 2:9-12;) 2, a Spirit of life and power in the will; (Psa. 110:3; Phil. 2:13;) 3, a Spirit of godly fear in the conscience; (Jer. 32:40;) 4, and a Spirit of love in the affections. (Rom. 5:5.) The Scriptures, it is true, do not lay all this down in so many express terms, with a kind of mathematical or metaphysical accuracy, for that is not the way in which God has been pleased to reveal divine truth, but it is easy to trace it out from the word when we read it with an enlightened eye. Thus in Psalm 119, which we may take as a most beautiful and blessed description of the work of grace upon the heart, through the power of the word, we find the Psalmist sometimes testifying to, or crying out for a shining in of divine light: "The entrance of thy words giveth light;" (130;) "Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law;" (18;) "Give me understanding, and I shall live." (144.) See also verses 27, 33, 73, 105, 169. Who that knows and feels the darkness of his mind does not from time to time seek and sigh after that divine light which, whilst it enlightens his understanding, at the same time softens and comforts his heart? How foolish, then, if not worse, to beat down as mere head knowledge that heavenly light, which, beaming into the soul out of the fulness of Christ, illuminates the mind and leads us into a spiritual knowledge of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven! We should like to show how the same Holy and blessed Spirit is a Spirit of life and power in the will, a Spirit of godly fear in the conscience, and a Spirit of love in the affections; but it would take us too much away from our present subject.**

**2. But as another fruit of, and as attending this enlightening of the eyes of the understanding, the Apostle prays that the saints at Ephesus "might know what was the hope of Christ's calling." There is much precious truth couched in these words, if we have but grace and wisdom to open them up. We shall find in Rom. 8:28-30, a blessed key to the meaning of the Apostle in uttering this prayer: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his**

Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom, he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified." (Rom. 8:28-30.) In that glorious chain of divine blessings, foreknowledge is the first link, predestination the second, calling the third, justification the fourth, and glorification the fifth. Thus calling, as an intermediate link in this glorious chain, is connected on one side with predestination in eternity past, and on the other with glorification in eternity to come. In the bosom of calling, therefore, is lodged the love of God from all eternity as its cause, and the enjoyment of this love to all eternity as its fruit and effect. When, then, the Apostle prays that they might know what was the hope of this calling, he desires that they might clearly realise the certainty of their having been effectually called by the grace of God, and might know what he elsewhere terms "the hope of eternal life," (Titus 1:2,) which was couched in it. Now, as eternal life embraces a being hereafter with Christ where he is, a beholding and partaking of his glory, (John 17:22-24,) and a perfect conformity in body and soul to his glorious image, no heart can conceive, or tongue of men or angels describe, in what an ocean of bliss and blessedness, of holiness and happiness, and of an eternal weight of glory, effectual calling will issue. How blessed then to know, realise, and enjoy now what is the hope of this calling, termed by the Apostle "*his calling*," as being immediately from Christ himself, that being cheered and animated by a good hope through grace, and looking forward to a blissful eternity, when we shall for ever have done with all the sins and sorrows of this life, we may feed our thoughts with prospects of the glory that shall be revealed, and thus be lifted up out of the mud and mire of this wretched world and the miserable dregs of bondage, legality, and self, which cleave so closely to us! It is as if he would say to us, "Have you any testimony to your effectual calling? Has grace indeed laid hold of your heart? Have you heavenly light in your understanding, divine life in your will, a godly fear in your conscience, and heavenly love in your affections, as so many evidences of having received the gift of the Spirit as a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ? O that you might know more fully—God grant that you may know it more powerfully—what a blessed hope of eternal life is laid up in the bosom of this heavenly calling, that it may cheer and encourage you to press on more and more to realise all that he given you in Christ both for here and hereafter, in present grace and in future glory." Thus, in knowing what is the hope of their effectual calling, the saints of God learn that this hope embraces all things which are made theirs in Christ, whether life or death, or things present or things to come, that all are theirs; and for this blessed and all-sufficient reason, that they are Christ's and Christ is God's. It

is by making sure our calling that we make sure our election, (2 Pet. 1:10, )— for the one is the sure evidence of the other; and thus, if doubt and uncertainty hang over our calling, the same doubt and uncertainty must rest upon our election to eternal life. But as these doubts and fears are removed by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, and we can clearly see and fully believe that the grace of God effectually called us out of darkness into his marvellous light, then we see by faith what is laid up in the bosom of this calling, and what a glorious hope of eternal life is thereby afforded as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and thus abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost. (Rom. 15:13; 1 Cor. 3:22, 23.)

3. The next fruit and effect of this gift of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation is "to know what are the riches of the glory of Christ's inheritance in the saints."

Observe how the Apostle pours out his soul in earnest prayer and supplication that the saints of God might have a spiritual knowledge of the glorious inheritance which the Lord Jesus has in his Church and people. And shall we, with this prayer before us, despise and disparage that divine illumination of the understanding which the Apostle begs for so earnestly as the fruit of the gift of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ? If it be but mere head knowledge, letter faith, and dry speculation, let us beat it down with both our feet, tread it down, and stamp it out as a deceit and a delusion; but let us beware of casting away precious gold because there are counterfeit sovereigns, or throwing away diamonds because there are fictitious jewels. To know Christ for ourselves by his blessed manifestations, to know his truth in its liberating, sanctifying influence and power, and to be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge so as to be filled with all the fulness of God—what choice blessings are these! And are they not all held forth as such in the Scriptures? But how shall we attain to the saving knowledge of them? Are they not made known to us through the gift of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, opening to our enlightened understanding and sealing on our believing heart the blessed mysteries of our most holy faith as revealed in the word of truth?

Now, amongst these heavenly mysteries is a knowledge of the riches of the glory of Christ's inheritance in the saints. If we have an inheritance in Christ, Christ has an inheritance in us. The saints, that is, the whole body of the sanctified, are his allotted portion. Of this Israel of old was a type: "For the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." (Deut. 32:9.)

Moses, therefore, made this his prevailing plea when he would arrest his outstretched arm: "O Lord God, destroy not thy people and thine inheritance." (Deut. 9:26.) But to show that this inheritance was not limited to the typical Israel, God said to his dear Son: "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." (Psa. 2:8.) When, then, in the counsels of eternity, God the Father presented to his eternal and only-begotten Son the Church in all her virgin purity to be his bride, and he espoused her to himself, to be his for ever and ever, she became his inheritance. He did not view her, as we now see her, wrecked and ruined by the fall, but as she will one day appear, radiant in all the beauty of her perfect conformity to his glorious image, with all her sins washed away in the fountain of his most precious blood, clothed in his spotless righteousness, with every stain of mortal woe and weakness gone, and able to enjoy and return his love, in that bridal day when the espoused bride will become the wedded wife. That after he had espoused her to himself she should have so fallen from her virgin purity; that he should, out of the depths of his infinite love and pity, have gone down from heaven to earth for her rescue; that he should have so toiled, groaned, sweated great drops of blood, and suffered for her all the agonies of the cross, that he might wash out every stain of sin and guilt in his precious blood; that he should have died for her, and risen again, and gone up on high as her Mediator, Intercessor, and Advocate; that he should have watched over every member so tenderly, borne with all their sins and provocations so unweariedly, quickened and delivered each at the appointed season so faithfully, preserved them through all the storms of life, so efficaciously, and brought each and every one to full, and final glory so triumphantly; will not all this double his love and joy to his beloved bride when he rejoices over her in his Father's mansions with joy and singing? As in the married life, to share in its sorrows and afflictions endears to each other husband and wife as much as, if not more than, to share in its joys and happiness, so that the gracious Lord should have been "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief," and that the Church should have had fellowship with him in his sufferings will only more endear her to him and him to her when eternal glory crowns their mutual love and happiness.

It is the glory of Christ that he should have this inheritance in the saints. God being essentially invisible, the Son of God could not have been seen and known, and therefore not fully or sufficiently glorified as the Father would have him to be but for his incarnation as the Son of Man. He was, indeed, as his only-begotten Son, "the brightness of his glory and the express image of his Person;" but that there might be a visible representation to created

intelligences of the character of God, that the love, the grace, the mercy, the compassion, the wisdom, truth, and power of a Triune Jehovah might be made known, and thus for ever adored, it pleased the Father, in the depths of his infinite wisdom, to prepare for his dear Son a body in which he might reveal those adorable excellences. When, then, the Lord Jesus was here below, he was a visible representation of the invisible God. Thus John testifies: "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him." (John 1:18.) To believing eyes this representation of the image of God was full of glory: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." (John 1:14.) They saw the glory of God in the face (or person) of Jesus Christ, and beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, were changed into the same image, from glory to glory, by the sanctifying operations of the Spirit of God on their hearts. (2 Cor. 3:18; 4:6.) We thus see that the glory of God shines forth in the face of Jesus Christ, and that it is reflected from him through the glass of the gospel upon his saints—here in present grace, hereafter in future glory. In the eyes of Christ this glory is exceedingly great. The Apostle, therefore, calls it "the riches of his glory," as if the Lord viewed his saints with his grace now in their hearts, and eternal glory their assured portion hereafter, as enriching himself with ineffable glory. He sees his own image in them, his own grace shining forth, his own love manifested, his own obedience, his own holiness, his own example, discovered and displayed. The whole world lieth in the wicked one. All, in a state of nature, are slaves to sin and Satan, enemies to God and godliness. But his saints, his own inheritance, whom he has redeemed by his blood and justified by his righteousness, whom he has quickened by his Spirit, in whose hearts he has planted his fear, to whom he has revealed and made himself known, and whom he has thus taught to believe in him, love him, and obey him—in these he glories as his own inheritance. Of them he says: "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; I have a goodly heritage."\* (Psa. 16:6.) These to save, these to sanctify, these to conform, first to his suffering, afterwards to his glorified image, was the joy set before him, for which he endured the cross, despising the shame, &c. The Apostle then prays that as a fruit and effect of the gift of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, we might know what are the riches of his glory in this inheritance. What do we for the most part see in the saints? Weakness and imperfection. We see them only as they are, not what they shall be. Nor indeed do we sufficiently value even the grace which we see in them, though we love it and love them for it. Often, indeed, it is so clogged and loaded with infirmities, so buried under corruption, so little shining forth as the mind and image of

**Christ, that we can hardly recognise it in ourselves or others. But so far as we fix our eyes, not on the infirmities of the saints, which is the very spirit of the world, but on the grace which is in them, have we the mind and Spirit of Christ. This therefore requires spiritual eyes to see, and a spiritual mind to love. In viewing the riches of his glory in his inheritance in the saints, the Lord sees them as they are complete in him, with all their sins washed away in the fountain of his precious blood, and as arrayed in his robe of righteousness. Our infirmities he pities, knowing that we are dust, and that they are not from wilful rebellion or enmity of heart against him, and that we truly and really love him, though, from the weakness of our flesh, we continually say and do things which grieve our spirit, and are inconsistent with our holy profession.**

**\* That this is the language of Christ is evident from verse 10; "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell," &c.**

**Now, in proportion as this part of the Apostle's prayer is fulfilled in us, we shall esteem and love the dear family of God. In earthly matters we know with what respect everything is looked at connected with royalty. If at Windsor Castle one should say to us: "This is the Queen's private garden; this is her favourite walk; she often sits on that seat under the tree;" we should naturally feel a respect for the objects thus pointed out; and sad will that day be for England, should it ever come, when this instinctive feeling of respect and loyalty to the Sovereign dies out of the English heart. But now apply the figure. If we were more imbued with love and loyalty to our exalted King, we should more love, esteem, and respect his inheritance, and the places of his daily resort. This inheritance, it is true, is now, as viewed by ordinary eyes, a wreck and a ruin, more like some neglected garden, overrun with thorns and briars, the fences all broken down, nettles growing in every corner, the summer-house fallen in, and the walks overgrown with moss and grass, than "a garden inclosed," where grow "spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices." (Song 4:12-14.) But as a practised gardener sees in a neglected garden more what it may be made into than what it now is, and as his eye can discern here and there valuable shrubs struggling for life amidst the weeds which well-nigh choke them, so should we whose eyes have been enlightened, view the Church of Christ, though now such a wreck and ruin, and look at her more as she will be than what she now is. So also will the believing eye see the graces of the Spirit which from time to time manifest themselves in the people of God, under their various trials and afflictions, though struggling as if for life, amidst all the rubbish of nature, by which they so often seem as if choked**

and suffocated. But it requires grace to see and love grace, and when that grace is but dimly visible, or much borne down by natural infirmity and corruption, it needs proportionate grace to discern and feel union with it. Thus to perceive and love the image of Christ, however faint and feeble, is, let it ever be borne in mind, as utterly distinct from that false and universal charity which thinks well of everybody and doubts nobody, as it is from that harsh, severe, and cutting spirit which would mow down into one common heap everything and everybody which does not exactly tally with a prescribed standard. No eye is so discerning as the eye enlightened by the Spirit of wisdom; no heart so tender as the heart blessed and softened by the Spirit of revelation in the knowledge of Christ. Such an eye sees, such a heart loves the riches of the glory of Christ's inheritance in the saints, and sees and loves it because it is his. Were we then favoured to view the suffering members of the mystical body of Christ more with the eyes of faith and less with the eyes of sense, what a glory should we see in many a poor despised child of God, which we now seem to lose! Instead of looking at this poor old man, coughing and gasping with an incurable asthma, almost as the union doctor eyes him, and getting away from him, perhaps, as soon as we decently can; or as the parish undertaker views him, only fit for an elm coffin and a pauper's grave, we should see in him, as the purchase of Christ's blood and a partaker of his Spirit, an heir of the glory that shall be revealed, and as clothed in the righteousness and conformed to the glorified image of the Son of God, one day to outshine angels. Instead of seeing a withered old woman, shrunk into nothing by poverty and illness, or a poor miserable creature dying of a cancer, loathsome to herself and to all around her, we should behold a precious jewel in that crown of glory which is in the hand of the Lord. Or, not to take extreme cases, were our eyes more anointed from above to see the glory which Christ has put upon his saints, and the delight which he takes in them, we should in our daily intercourse with them treat them with more esteem, affection, and respect than we are wont to do. Viewing them as the purchase of Christ's precious blood, now partakers of his grace, and as such heirs of an eternal and unspeakable weight of glory, we should see in them, even in their present condition, a beauty, a dignity, a blessedness which would call forth the highest esteem and the tenderest love. So far from despising any who were weak in mind or poor in estate among them, so far from resenting any real or fancied injuries, so far from treating them with coldness and shyness, or, fostering a spirit of jealousy, division, and strife; so far from wounding their feelings and hurting their minds by words and conduct unbecoming our profession, we should seek to walk with them here, in some measure as we hope to walk with them hereafter. How dear must those be to God whom he

has loved from all eternity! how precious must those be to his dear Son for whom he shed his own blood! how beloved by the Holy Ghost who has quickened them into spiritual life and who so tenderly watches over his own work of grace in their heart! Should they not then be dear to us? And if so, how should we manifest that love but by seeking their good in every way that lies in our power?

Thus we see that in this portion of the prayer of the Apostle there is much that is eminently practical as well as deeply experimental, and that its fulfilment in our heart would not only lead us into clearer and deeper views of what the Church of Christ is in present grace and what she will be in future glory, but would much influence our mind and conduct in our daily walk and intercourse with our fellow-saints. Shallow and low views of the Person of Christ, of his finished work, and of his risen glory, will always be attended with shallow and low views of the Church, his bride, as the chosen companion of his glory; a shallow and low knowledge of the truth as revealed in the Person of Christ and his manifested glory will always be accompanied with a feeble experience of its power; and a feeble experience of the power of truth as connected with what the Lord Jesus is in himself and is to his people will almost always issue in worldliness of spirit and too often in general lightness and looseness of walk, conduct, and conversation.

To most; however, who name the name of Christ, these grand and glorious truths of our most holy faith are as unknown as they are distasteful; and that is one reason why this prayer of the Apostle is so little understood, felt, and realised. Satisfied with a few dead and dry notions, and mistaking the accusings and excusings of natural conscience (Rom. 2:15) for a gracious experience, hundreds, like the Laodicean Church, think they are "rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing," not seeing that, whilst destitute of a gracious knowledge of the truth, and an experience of its liberating, sanctifying influence and power, they are "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

Here, however, we must pause, reserving the remainder of the Apostle's prayer to our next paper, when we hope, if possible, to conclude our exposition of the chapter.

IX.

Our readers will perhaps remember that we pointed out in a previous paper four spiritual blessings which the Apostle prayed for on behalf of the saints at Ephesus, that they might be bestowed upon them as special fruits of the gift of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. These four choice blessings are 1, an enlightening of the eyes of our understanding; 2, a knowledge of the hope of our calling; 3, a knowledge of the glory of Christ's inheritance in the saints; and 4, a knowledge of "the exceeding greatness of the power of God to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead," &c.

As we have already examined the first three of these blessings, the fourth and last will now engage our attention; and sincerely do we wish that we could open it in any way proportionate to its surpassing grace, glory, and blessedness. But this we may well despair to do, for apart from our own personal inability, there is, perhaps, scarcely a passage in the whole compass of Paul's epistles more pregnant with vital and glorious truth, more elevated in language, and more sublime for strength and beauty of expression.

4. In opening the meaning and force of this last blessing, two leading points will, with their various branches, mainly demand our attention: 1, First, what is intended by the Apostle when he prays that "we might know what is the exceeding *greatness of the power* of God to usward who believe." 2, The *measure* and *standard* of that power as evidenced and afforded in and by the resurrection, exaltation, and glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ.

i. The first point, then, which we have to consider in unfolding this signal blessing is a spiritual and experimental knowledge of the exceeding greatness of the power of God to those that believe.

The power here spoken of is evidently the power of God as put forth by him in his divine work on the soul; and this we may divide for clearness' sake into three distinct branches: 1, the power put forth in first communicating; 2, in subsequently maintaining; 3, in finally completing and consummating the work of grace in the heart.

Power may be evidenced as well as measured in two ways: 1, by the difficulties which it meets with and overcomes; 2, by the results and effects which it produces. Take both these evidences and measures of power as manifested in the work of grace.

1. Consider first the difficulties which grace has, so to speak, to encounter in the *quicken*ing of a dead soul into spiritual life. View the depths of the fall. See the death of the soul in trespasses and sins; its thorough alienation from the life of God, through the darkness, blindness, and ignorance of the understanding, the perverseness of the will, the hardness of the conscience, and the depravity of the affections. View its obduracy, stubbornness, and obstinacy; its pride, unbelief, infidelity, and self-righteousness; its passionate love to, habitual practice of, and long inurement in sin. Consider its strong prejudices against everything godly and holy; the desperate, implacable enmity of the carnal mind against God himself; its firm and deep-rooted love to the world in all its varied shapes and forms; and remember also how all its hopes, happiness, and prospects are bound up in the things of time and sense. O what a complicated mass of difficulties do all these foes form in their firm combination, like a compact, well-armed, thoroughly trained army, against any power which would dislodge them from their position. Add to this all the power, malice, and arts of Satan, as the strong armed man, keeping the palace night and day, and yielding to none but the stronger than he. Consider, too, the sacrifices which must often be made by one who is to live godly in Christ Jesus; the tenderest ties, perhaps, to be broken; the lucrative or advantageous prospects which have to be abandoned; old friends to be renounced; family connections to be given up; position in life to be lost; and often the shame and contempt to be entailed on one's family and oneself. All, indeed, are not so hedged about with these peculiar difficulties which we have just named; but few are wholly free from them, and he who thus describes them had much personal experience of them in his first setting his face Zionward. Viewing, then, a soul dead in sin with all these difficulties and obstacles in their complicated array, must we not pronounce that to be a mighty act of power which, in spite of all these apparently invincible hindrances, lifts it up and out of them all into a new and spiritual life as distinct from everything natural as Christ from Belial? So fully and thoroughly is this the fruit and effect of omnipotent power, and of omnipotent power alone, that it is spoken of in the word as a divine begetting; (James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:3;) a new and heavenly birth; (John 3:3-5;) a new creation; (2 Cor. 5:17;) a resurrection; (John 5:25; Eph. 2:1;) all which terms imply a putting forth of a divine power as distinct from and independent of any creature cooperation. Now say, then, whether the work of God on the soul, in its first putting forth, is or is not a work of peculiar and omnipotent power. It is called by the Apostle "the exceeding greatness of his power;" not merely "power," but "the greatness of his power," and not only "greatness," but "the exceeding greatness." The word

**"exceeding," in the original, means literally, "throwing beyond," the idea being of men throwing a weight in rivalry, as in athletic games, and the strength of the victor manifested in throwing it beyond all the rest. Such is the work of grace in the soul, outdoing and surpassing every other work of God, except that which will soon come under consideration.**

**But power, we said, is measured also by its fruits and effects. When we look at an Egyptian obelisk pointing to the sky, or at one of the huge stones still standing upright at Stonehenge, or at the tubes of the Menai tubular bridge, a hundred feet above the water's edge, we see at once what a wonderful feat it was of human strength and skill to set up and fix such ponderous masses in their present position. So, in grace, we must view not only the difficulties which had to be encountered, but the difficulties as triumphed over and the results accomplished; for unless something visible has been achieved, a survey of the difficulties only convinces us of the weakness of the power unsuccessfully brought to bear upon and overcome them. Thus the power put forth by God, in the quickening of our souls into divine life, we may view under these two heads: 1, The difficulties which it had to encounter in our own particular case; and, 2, How grace overcame and triumphed over them in our own personal experience; for this is what the Apostle prayed that we might know, real religion being such a personal matter. But how can we know either of those things, except by first taking a solemn review of what we were as fallen, helpless sinners, and how we were circumstanced in providence also before we were quickened into divine life, and next realise what we were made to see, know, believe, and feel under the first quickenings and teachings of the blessed Spirit, and how we were moved and led to act according to the power which worked in us? We shall thus more clearly see what a mighty power was put forth in turning us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, and how it was the outstretched arm of Omnipotence alone which could deliver us from the power of darkness and translate us into the kingdom of God's dear Son.**

**2. Similarly we have to know, as a fruit of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, the mighty power of God in *maintaining* divine life in our soul when it had been communicated. We have to see and feel what mountains of difficulty, what seas of temptation, what winds and storms of error, what assaults and snares of Satan, and the latter more dangerous than the former; what floods of vileness and ungodliness without and within; what strong lusts and passions; what secret slips and falls, backslidings and departures from the living God; what long seasons of darkness, barrenness, and death; what**

opposition of the flesh to the strait and narrow way; what crafty hypocrites, pretended friends, but real foes, false professors and erroneous characters, all striving to throw down or entangle our steps, we had to grapple with; what helplessness, inability, and miserable impotency in ourselves to all that is good; what headlong proneness to all that is evil—all these things we have to pass in solemn review. We have also to ponder over what we have been and what we still are since we professed to fear God, and how, when left to ourselves, we have done nothing but sin against and provoke him to his face from first to last, and yet still have divine life maintained within. And thus as we hold in our hands, and read over article by article, this long dark catalogue, still to have a sweet persuasion that the life of God is in our soul, and that because Jesus lives we shall live also—this to realise, believe, and feel, and bless God for his surpassing, superabounding grace, is to know the exceeding greatness of the power of God to usward who believe, in maintaining divine life after it had been first communicated.

3. And then to look forward in the well-grounded hope that he who has begun will still carry on and *complete* the good work wrought in us by his grace, in spite of all without and within that may still await us; will *perfect* that which concerneth us, and will not despise the work of his own hands; that he will still regard the prayer of the destitute and not despise their prayer; that he will work in us all the good pleasure of his will and the work of faith with power, and will never leave nor forsake us for his own name's sake, but will keep us by his own power unto salvation; this blessed hope for the future, with all that is included in it, which we have not now space to dwell upon, forms another part of what is to be known in sweet and personal experience as the mighty power of God to usward who believe.

ii. But the point to which we wish to direct special attention is what we have termed the *standard* and *measure* of this power. It is thus laid down by the Apostle: "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." (Eph. 1:19-21.) Though beautifully enlarged and amplified to the end of the chapter by the wondrous pen of this man of God, we may arrange under two heads the truths thus advanced and dwelt upon by him. These two are, 1, the Resurrection; 2, the Exaltation of Christ. This resurrection and this exaltation are made the standard and measure of the

power of God put forth in communicating, maintaining, and completing the life of God in the soul. The Holy Ghost by the pen of the Apostle would lead us rightly to understand and realise the surpassing greatness of the work of grace in the heart; and therefore, brings before us a measure whereby to examine it. This measure is no less than the mighty power which God put forth when he raised Christ from the dead and exalted him to his own right hand. This last was the very greatest work which God ever wrought, and the next greatest is the work of God in the soul. Both these works are connected together, and we shall, therefore, when we have opened the nature and display of the power of God in the resurrection of Christ, attempt to show how they bear upon each other.

We would first call attention to the peculiar language of the Apostle in speaking of the power put forth in the resurrection of Christ: "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." (Eph. 1:19, 20.) Observe the expression, "According to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ." It is in the margin, "the might of his power." This is more literal, and nearer the original, than the version in the text; but even this does not give the full meaning and peculiar force of the Greek, which we may translate, "according to the active energy of the victorious might of his strength, which he effectually wrought in Christ." There is first his "strength," as a general expression of the power of God; then the victorious might of his strength, as able to overcome all difficulty and opposition; and then the active energy of it as actually and effectually put forth, in accomplishing the work.\*

\* Bishop Pearson's remarks, in his celebrated work upon the Creed, upon these words are so much to the purpose that we cannot forbear quoting them. Having cited the words of the original, he makes upon them the following comment. "Which words our translation comes far short of, and I doubt our language can scarce reach it. For first here are two words to express the power of God, and the validity and force of it, but not sufficient; wherefore there is an addition to each of them of two words, more to express the eminent greatness of this power and force, but not sufficient yet; and therefore, there is another addition to each addition, to set forth the eminence and activity of that greatness; and all yet, as it were but flat and dull till it be quickened with an active verb. All which he set on work, all which he actuated in Christ, when he raised him from the dead."

Now it is very evident that unless the work of raising Christ from the dead had been one of surpassing and extraordinary power, the Holy Ghost would not have used such amazing and almost unparalleled strength of language to set it forth. This question, therefore, at once suggests itself: "Why was the resurrection of Christ such a special act of omnipotent power? Was the raising of his dead body to life, though undoubtedly a miracle of omnipotence, yet one of such amazing magnitude that the utmost strength of human language fails to set it adequately forth? Are there not several instances of resurrection from the dead, both in the Old and Now Testaments? Did not God, in answer to the prayers of both Elijah and Elisha, raise the dead to life? (1 Kings 17:21, 22; 2 Kings 4:34, 35.) Did not the Lord himself raise up Lazarus and the widow's son at Nain? Why, then, is the resurrection of Christ here spoken of as an act of such wondrous and surpassing power?"

This question we shall endeavour to answer, to the best of our ability, as it involves truths of the deepest nature and of the greatest importance.

Bear, then, in mind that the resurrection of Christ is the very corner stone and solid foundation of the faith of God's elect, and that on it rest all our hopes for eternity. Our faith, if genuine and saving, believes in Christ as the Son of God; but it was by his resurrection from the dead that he was "declared (literally, "determinately marked out") to be the Son of God with power." (Rom. 1:4.) The Apostle, therefore, argues with the greatest cogency, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain and our faith vain; ye are yet in your sins; then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished." (1 Cor. 15:14-18.) The chief force, then, of Christ's resurrection lies in this, that by raising him from the dead God gave his attesting seal, in the most open and visible manner, that Jesus was what he had declared himself to be—the Son of God, and that he had finished the work which the Father had given him to do. It is this attesting seal of God to his Sonship which makes the resurrection of Christ the very foundation of our most holy faith.

But this does not answer the question before us, why the resurrection of Christ was an act of such peculiar might and power. We have then to show how his resurrection was not only a proof of his divine Sonship and of the truth of his mission, but how it differed from what we may perhaps call those minor examples of resurrection to which we have referred, and which, though all displays of omnipotent power, yet were not characterised by the peculiar features which were stamped upon the resurrection of Christ. These

characteristic features we will now therefore examine.

Consider, then, the peculiar circumstances which attended the *death* and *burial* of the Lord Jesus. No such circumstances attended the death and burial of Lazarus, which was but a simple, ordinary resurrection as his was a simple, ordinary death. But the Lord Jesus died as a necessary part of his oblation and sacrifice: Two things are needful to constitute sacrifice; 1, blood-shedding, and 2, death. If blood be not shed, it is no sacrifice; for "the life of the flesh is in the blood; and it is the blood that maketh atonement for the soul," (Lev. 17:11,) "and without shedding of blood there is no remission." (Heb. 9:22.) Our blessed Lord therefore shed his precious blood on the cross in his wounded, bleeding hands, and feet, and side. But the death of the victim was necessary to complete the sacrifice, as we find all through the sacrifices of the Levitical law; and thus our Lord "died for our sins," (1 Cor. 15:3,) "while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us," (Rom, 5:8,) was "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," (Phil. 2:8,) "in due time died for the ungodly," (Rom. 5:6,) all which testimonies of Holy Writ prove that the death of Christ was a necessary and integral part of that oblation which he offered to God when "he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself;" (Heb. 9:26;) and gave himself for us as "an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour." (Eph. 5:2.) As, then, his death was no common or ordinary death, so his resurrection was no common or ordinary resurrection; but corresponded with and bore an exact proportion to his death. It is only, then, as we connect Christ's death with Christ's resurrection, and bring together how and for what he died, and how and for what he rose again, that we can take any measure of the power put forth in his resurrection from the dead. But to help our thoughts a little further upon this point, consider the following circumstances attending Christ's death and resurrection in their *mutual correspondence* with each other.

1. Consider first what Peter calls "the *pains of death*," which God "loosed" when he raised him from the dead. (Acts 2:24.) The word translated "pains" means properly the pangs of a woman in travail, and thus seems to refer to the travail of Christ's soul on the cross, (Isa. 53:11,) when "the sorrows of death compassed him, and the sorrows of hell (or as it might be rendered "the cords of the grave,") compassed him about." (Psa. 18:4, 5.) These death-pangs, like those of a woman in travail, came on him gradually. Four or five days before his death, he said, "Now is my soul troubled." (John 12:27.) But specially in the night on which he was betrayed on his first entrance into the gloomy garden, he was "heavy and sore amazed," and said, "My soul is

exceedingly sorrowful, even unto death." (Matt. 26:37, 38.) These pangs as of one in travail kept increasing until "being in an agony he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground." (Luke 22:44.) But it was chiefly on the cross that these pangs of death rose to their full height; for that was the scene of both conflict and of conquest. Then it was that "the pains of death," of all that death involves both of body and soul, both of the first and the second death, seized most fully on the blessed Redeemer, when the wrath of God and the curse of the law, and the hidings of his Father's face, all fell upon him in one terrible storm, and were "unto death," for he must have died under them had not his Godhead sustained his suffering manhood. But when the work was finished which was given him to do, and full satisfaction made to every demand that could be made upon the Surety, God loosed the pains of death. Justice being satisfied, the law fulfilled, complete propitiation for sin made, and every perfection and attribute of God fully harmonised and glorified, his Father lifted up upon him the light of his countenance, and then he had but to die to complete the sacrifice.\* But till God had loosed the pains of death as accepting his propitiation for sin, he could not die.

\* Some writers, and even ministers, have spoken very unadvisedly of the sins which Christ bore by imputation sinking him into his grave as if he died under their load, and that when rose he left them behind in the tomb. No. Sin was fully put away before Jesus bowed his sacred head and gave up the ghost, or he never could have said, "It is finished." Had he died under the load of imputed sin, he would have died under the curse and wrath of God; and could not have said to the dying thief, "To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise;" or to his heavenly Father, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit."

But the Hebrew word, Psa. 18:4, (to which Peter refers,) rendered "*sorrows* (or pains) of death," means also, as translated in the Septuagint, the "*cords* of death." There were no pains of death in the grave of Christ, for they were all over and gone; but there were "cords," and these cords had to be loosed by the power of God, for, dying as the Lord did, the cords which held him down in death were of strength corresponding with and proportionate to the nature and circumstances of his death. The resurrection of Christ can only be properly measured by his death; and therefore as his death was such as none but himself could or did die, so his resurrection was such as none but he could be raised up by. The same circumstances which set the death of Christ at an infinite distance from all other deaths, set the resurrection of Christ at an infinite distance from all other resurrections. If, then, we have low, faint, and

feeble views of the sufferings and death of Christ, as a manifestation of his grace, we shall have equally low, faint, and feeble views of the power of his resurrection as a manifestation of his glory. And though we are sorry to say so, may we not well inquire if this be not one reason why the resurrection of Christ, which is the grand foundation of all our faith and hope, which formed the main subject of every sermon recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, which Paul sets forth here with a strength and force of language without a parallel, is scarcely ever touched upon in the ministry of the present day? We do not wish to dwell upon this point, but cannot forbear adding that such was neither the preaching nor experience of Paul when he could say that he counted all things but dung, not only that he might win Christ, and be found in him, but also that he might "know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable to his death." (Phil. 3:10.)

2. Consider also the reproach, shame, and ignominy under which the Lord Jesus died. We read that he "endured the cross, despising the shame." (Heb. 12:2.) But though in himself the glorious Son of God, and losing not one ray of his eternal and essential glory in his humiliation, though veiled by it from the eyes of men, yet he sank into the grave under the heaviest load of reproach and shame which ever was laid upon the head of man. He therefore said to his heavenly Father, "Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour;" (Psa. 49:19;) for this was a part of the sufferings of the cross. For we must measure his shame by his glory. It is no shame to a beggar to be clothed in rags. But if a prince, the heir of a mighty throne, were clothed in rags and covered with vermin, as was the case with the unhappy dauphin, the eldest son of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette, when confined in the Temple at Paris during the Reign of Terror, it would be, if not really, as not procured by himself but, as inflicted upon him by cruel foes, to outward eyes, the lowest depth of shame. To the two malefactors it was not the shame, but the suffering and death on the cross under which they writhed in torment. But to the glorious Son of this Father in truth and love, the cross was the scene of such shame as none but he could know, and of such sufferings as none but he could feel. Abandoned by nearly all his disciples, mocked and scorned by his implacable foes, and for a time forsaken by his God; bearing our sins in his own body on the tree and made a curse for us; drinking the cup of God's wrath against sin to the lowest dregs, that not one drop of that terrible wrath might fall upon us—was any sorrow like unto his sorrow? And that he who was the brightness of his Father's glory and the express image of his Person should die a death of all others most reproachful, as inflicted on none but

slaves and malefactors—was any shame like his shame? Blessed Lord, thou hiddest not thy face from shame and spitting, (Isa. 50:6,) that shame and everlasting contempt might not be our justly-deserved portion. And now thou art clothed with glory and honour as the due reward of all thy shame when here below.

3. But consider also the circumstances under which the Lord Jesus died in being *made a curse* for us. We have already shown that he had put away sin by his bloodshedding before he died, and that it was in order to complete the sacrifice that he laid down his life (for no man took it from him, he laid it down of himself) as a voluntary offering. (John 10:17, 18.) But though the dear Redeemer had effectually put away sin before he gave up the ghost, and died under the approving smile of his Father and his God, yet, as dying on the cross, he died by a death to which God himself had attached a curse, as the Apostle speaks: "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree." (Gal. 3:13.) He, therefore, to the eye of man, sank into the grave under a curse; and in this much consisted the triumph of his cruel foes, that by getting him crucified they had brought him, body and soul, under the curse pronounced in the law against all who died that death. And as God did not deliver him, and he himself did not come down from the cross, as they half expected or feared he might, they were hardened in the persuasion that they had done right in crucifying him, and that God himself had settled the question on their side. Here, then, was another strong cord which held him in death, and which the power of God alone could loose.

4. We are to consider, also, that by his sufferings, bloodshedding, and death our gracious Lord not only made a complete atonement for sin, fulfilled every demand of the law, washed his people from all their iniquities in the fountain of his precious blood, and wrought out and brought in a perfect and everlasting righteousness for their justification, but "*through death destroyed* him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." (Heb. 2:14.) It was by the death of the cross that the gracious Lord "*spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in it.*" (Col. 2:15.) It is a point little considered, though one of much importance, that the Lord Jesus had, as if personally, to grapple with and overcome the prince of the power of the air, to hurl Satan from his usurped throne, to destroy his works, and overthrow his kingdom; and this not by an act of omnipotent power, but by an act of the lowest weakness, for "*he was crucified through weakness.*" (2 Cor. 13:4.) According to our simple views, we might think that all that was

needed to overthrow Satan was an act of omnipotent power. But this was not God's way. The king over all the children of pride, in the depths of infinite wisdom, was to be dethroned by an act of the deepest humility, of the most meek and submissive obedience, of the intensest suffering of God's own beloved Son, as standing in the place of those over whom Satan and death had triumphed through sin. We read that "the Son of God was manifested that he might destroy (literally, "loosen" or "untie") the works of the devil." Thus he came, not only to untie and undo all that Satan had fastened and done by traversing, as it were, the whole ground, from the first entrance of sin and death, and, by a course of holy and meritorious obedience, repair the wreck and ruin produced by the primary author of all disobedience, but, as the final stroke, to destroy and put down the disobedient and rebellious prince of darkness himself.

To open further these various points would occupy too much of our space, but they must be all taken into consideration when we look at the work accomplished on the cross by the sufferings, bloodshedding, and death of the Lord of life and glory, and thus bring together the circumstances of his death and the power of his resurrection.

Now, these thoughts may help us to see what power was needed to raise up Christ from the dead. Persons often misunderstand the meaning of power as put forth by God, and conclude, because he is almighty in power, he can therefore do one thing as easily as another. But they do not see that infinite power in God is but one of his glorious perfections. He is infinite also in holiness, in justice, in wisdom, in knowledge, &c. The question, therefore, is not what God *can* do, but what God *will* do; and thus his power, not his absolute power, but his power moving in harmony with all his other glorious perfections, is to be taken into consideration. There is, therefore, what we may call God's *moral* power, that is, his power as working with, and co-ordinate to all his other perfections, as well as his almighty power. Now, to raise Christ from the dead was the act of God's moral power as well as his omnipotent power. This we showed in the case of Lazarus. To raise Lazarus merely demanded almighty power. There were no circumstances attending the death of Lazarus which drew upon the depths of infinite justice, infinite holiness, infinite wisdom, as well as infinite grace, mercy, and love. The death of Lazarus was as widely different from the death of Christ as Lazarus himself, a fallen sinner, was different from the Son of the Father in truth and love; and thus the resurrection of Christ was as different from the resurrection of Lazarus as the only-begotten Son of God differs from a worm of earth.

**5. But consider also that in raising Christ from the dead, God *raised* at the same time, and by the same act, *every member of his mystical body*. In grace as in nature, when the Head rose the body rose. We read, therefore, that God "quickened us together with Christ, and raised us up together." (Eph. 2:6). We are also said to be "risen with Christ," (Col. 3:1.) Thus, to raise Christ from the dead, was not merely to raise him as an individual, but as the Head of the Church, and to quicken at the same moment and by the same act all the countless millions who will see him as he is in the great day, and partake of his glory. What an act of power, not merely infinite power; but of power in harmony and co-ordinate with infinite mercy, wisdom, love, and grace was this to raise up at once Head and members! What a resurrection was here; how sure a pledge and first-fruits of the resurrection of the saints at the last day, as well as its meritorious cause and blessed precursor! View the dead bodies of all the elect of God; behold the sleeping dust of apostles, prophets, martyrs, saints, and the whole assembly of the Church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven, reposing in the silent tomb. Change the scene; stand by faith, as Ezekiel stood in vision, in the valley of dry bones, and see them all standing up upon their feet, an exceeding great army. Behold this mighty host, and view them all raised up in glory and immortality on the resurrection morn; and then consider that this countless multitude was virtually and mystically raised from the dead at Christ's resurrection. Now, can you see why all the strength of language failed the Apostle to set forth the power which God put forth when he raised Christ from the dead?**

**6. Consider, also, that "Christ's resurrection was the sure pledge and meritorious cause of the Church's regeneration. The whole body of the elect was "quickened together with Christ," as well as raised up together with him; that is, mystically quickened, as they were mystically raised, quickened in a mystical regeneration of soul, as well as raised up in a mystical regeneration of body. How wonderful is this, that every soul quickened into divine life in time is so because mystically quickened as a member of Christ when he was raised from the dead. Now view the whole body of the elect as dead in sin. Then view them quickened, one by one, in all their countless multitude, during the whole stretch of time. Consider the power put forth in the regeneration of each individual. Then take a view of the quickening of the dead body of Christ, as prior to the resurrection, and the whole body of the elect mystically quickened together with him. Do you see no act of infinite power, and power in harmony with love and grace here? Where are the eyes of your faith, if you see not this? Where your admiring love, if you do not adore this act of love to**

the Church, as in union with her covenant Head? Was not that a mighty act of power and love which, at one moment, and by one and the same act, mystically quickened millions of souls which shall live for ever in the presence of God?

7. And lastly consider the resurrection of Christ in *connection with his exaltation*. View him as man in his grave, view him as man at the right hand of the Father, on his mediatorial throne of grace and glory, and measure, if you can, by faith, the distance between the dead body of Jesus in the tomb and what that same body now is in the full blaze of his present glory.

But this blessed subject must occupy a future paper. We were in hopes, and made a kind of half promise that we would finish the chapter with the year. But the greatness and importance of the subject have prevented us accomplishing both our wishes and our intention. We would not justify unnecessary prolixity, but when we undertake a subject it is usually with these two conditions attached to it: 1. That we understand, or, at least, think that we understand it; 2. That we do it full justice. Now we cannot, in a few short, hasty papers, written, as some speak of doing, in a railway carriage, and usually at railway pace, do justice to such a chapter as Ephesians 1. Such deep subjects need much thought and examination, much comparison with the Scriptures and the analogy of faith, and therefore very careful writing and proportionate space. We must, therefore, either hurry over the grand and vital truths which remain to be considered, or defer their consideration to the opening year. And if we judge aright, our spiritual readers will say, "Go on with your exposition, even if it compel you to break in upon a fresh volume and another year. Do not hurry over the exaltation of our gracious Lord. God has exalted him in our hearts, and we love to hear him exalted by tongue and pen. The Lord help you to exalt him more and more; and you cannot begin a new year better than by setting him on high whom we so dearly love." To this we say, "Well, be it so. Amen."

X.

The death, the resurrection, and the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ are three vital, fundamental doctrines of our most holy faith, and, as revealed to the soul by a divine power, become well-springs of hope, of strength, and of consolation, in exact proportion to the measure of faith whereby they are apprehended, embraced, and lived upon. In and by his sufferings,

bloodshedding, and death, we see sin fully and for ever put away, an effectual atonement made for transgression, the law fulfilled and magnified, reconciliation between God and man effected, and every bar and hindrance which had kept them asunder thoroughly removed.\* In and by his resurrection we see him declared to be the Son of God with power, the attesting seal of God set to the truth of his mission and work, and infallible proof given to a vast number of chosen witnesses that he was the Christ of God, the promised seed in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed. (Acts 1:3; 2:32; 10:40-42; Rom. 1:4.) Similarly in and by his exaltation we see him an ever-living Mediator at the right hand of the Father, a glorious High Priest over the house of God, an all-prevailing Intercessor, able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, and a sceptred King, ruling with sovereign sway all things in heaven and on earth, angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him. These three vital truths, as embraced and realised in their various openings and bearings on our spiritual experience, and as seen and felt in their suitability and application to our innumerable wants and woes, form the food of all living faith; and, therefore, if we do not find or feel any such life, power, or blessedness in them, it shows our little knowledge of, our little faith in the very truths of the gospel which we profess to receive and embrace.

\* A friend has called our attention to some expressions in our last paper, page 264, respecting the sufferings and bloodshedding of Christ, which he considers lay us open to the objection that we draw a hurtful distinction between bloodshedding and death, and make something less than the death of Christ to have satisfied justice and made complete propitiation for sin. Far from us be any such doctrine, sentiment, or expression as would seem to diminish the value of the death of the blessed Lord, and make anything less than his actual dying needful to put away sin; nor was it our intention to convey any such idea, for we distinctly stated that the death of Christ was a necessary and integral part of his sacrifice. The Scriptures are too plain upon this point to be misunderstood by any the eyes of whose understanding have been enlightened, and too positive to be denied by any who desire to know and revere the truth of God as a most precious possession. The doctrine which Paul first of all delivered was what he first of all received, that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures. (1 Cor. 15:3.) Whatever doctrine, therefore, contradicts or is not in harmony with this grand primary truth, that Christ died for our sins, is not according to the Scriptures, and is not the gospel which Paul preached, putting under a solemn curse every preacher of another gospel, were he even an angel from heaven. We here, therefore, distinctly

**declare that we firmly hold that for the putting away of sin, the death of Christ was as needful as his bloodshedding, and his bloodshedding was as needful as his death, bloodshedding and death constituting in their inseparable union the one only sacrifice for sin.**

**But the line which we took, and which fairly interpreted by what we have thus laid down will explain the meaning of some of our expressions, was in opposition to such phrases as we hear sometimes put forth, as that "Christ died in the dark;" that "he sank under the curse and wrath of God;" that "the weight of our sins followed him and pressed him into the grave;" "that he left all our sins behind him in the tomb, when he rose from the dead." In opposition to such sentiments and speeches, which have sometimes quite shocked our mind, our object was to show that though the Lord died for our sins, yet that he died under the Father's approving smile, and that imputed sin and its consequences did not rest upon his sacred head after he bowed it in death, and saying, "It is finished," gave up the ghost.**

**We may, perhaps, be allowed to add, that both Dr. Goodwin and Mr. Huntington concur in giving the same interpretation of the words of Peter, where he speaks of "God's loosing the pains of death," (Acts 2:24,) as that which we have given in our last paper.**

**But before faith can be raised up and drawn forth thus to act and live upon these precious truths of the everlasting gospel, we must, according to the prayer of the Apostle, have the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation given us in the knowledge of Christ; for a mere doctrinal knowledge of them, however sound, a mere letter faith in them, however strong, falls utterly short of conveying into the soul their sweetness and blessedness as made known by the Spirit of revelation. One grain of living faith, if it be but a grain, as raised up and drawn forth by the power of the Holy Ghost in a revelation of Christ, will do more for the soul in five minutes as to vital union and communion with the Lord Jesus, than heaps—whole heaps, tons, whole tons of the clearest, soundest doctrinal knowledge and the strongest letter faith would do in fifty years. Well, then, may we join, heart and soul, with the Apostle in his prayer that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ; that we may personally realise and enjoy the efficacy of his death, the power of his resurrection, and the daily benefits and blessings of his exaltation.**

In our last paper, we gave as our reason for not closing our exposition of Ephesians 1 with the closing year, that we could not bring ourselves to hurry over so glorious and blessed a subject as the exaltation of our gracious Lord. And do we not find some responsive echo here in the hearts of many of our readers? Who that has ever seen by faith the blessed Mediator seated on his throne of grace; what poor, tried, tempted soul that has ever longed for or felt the tender sympathy of a compassionate High Priest; what almost despairing wretch who has clung almost in agony to an Intercessor able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him; what perplexed, storm-tossed vessel that needs a mighty hand to guide the helm, and a voice of power to calm the winds and waves, that does not cling to a Christ in heaven—a risen, exalted, and glorified Jesus; who has but to speak and all is well? But for his exaltation to the right hand of God, where would be all our prayers, desires, longings, sighs, and groans; where would be our hopes and expectations; where any strength, support, or consolation; where any triumph over death, or victory over the grave? Can we, then, hurry over or pass by as of little import the exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ, when with it we may be of all men most happy, without it, of all men most miserable?

But to proceed with our exposition. The exaltation of the Lord Jesus Christ necessarily followed upon his resurrection. He was raised that he might be glorified. The Scriptures, therefore, always connect the two together. It is hardly necessary to quote passages to prove this; but if you will read carefully Peter's sermons and addresses in the early chapters of the Acts, and Paul's at Antioch in Pisidia (Acts 13) and at Athens (17), you will see how both these apostles bring together Christ's resurrection and glorification. The resurrection, therefore, of Christ, and the power put forth therein, having formed the subject of our previous Meditations, we shall now proceed to consider his exaltation. That we might know this in its experience and power was the prayer of the Apostle: "And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to usward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." (Eph. 1:19, 20.)

If we may draw a comparison, the power put forth in setting Christ at the right hand of the Father in heavenly places was even greater than that of raising him from the dead. The one was but the beginning of the other—the first step toward it, but which would have been incomplete without it. The crowning act was not when he came forth in power from the sepulchre, but when he entered the courts of bliss, when the everlasting doors lifted up their

heads, and the King of glory went in. The great, the overwhelming mystery of the exaltation of Christ, and of the power displayed therein, lies in this, that it is in *our nature* he is exalted above the highest heavens. There is no special mystery in his exaltation as the Son of God. As such he can claim it by lawful right. He that made angels, principalities, and powers, is originally and eternally above them. The mystery is that he should be exalted above all the glorious hierarchy of heaven as the Son of man. If we examine with a believing eye the three great doctrines of which we have before spoken—the death, the resurrection, and the exaltation of the Lord, we shall see that all their grace and glory, all their beauty, blessedness, and suitability rest upon the union of two distinct natures in the one glorious Person of Immanuel, God with us. This is the great mystery of godliness—God manifest in the flesh. But this mystery has, so to speak, two sides, which alternately present themselves to view. In his death and resurrection, the mystery chiefly turns upon his divine, in his exaltation chiefly on his human nature. Let us explain this. That human nature should suffer, bleed, and die, is in itself no special mystery; that a dead human body should be raised from the dead is also no great mystery; but that he who died, that he who rose again as man, should be the Son of God and God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and the Holy Ghost, there is the mystery. And yet take away the Deity of Christ from his humanity, as suffering, and dying, and rising again, and you make the death and resurrection of Jesus of scarcely greater import than the death and resurrection of Lazarus. We thus see that it is his divine nature which makes the sufferings, bloodshedding, and death of the Lord Jesus so full of grace, and his resurrection so full of glory. But in his exaltation the mystery does not turn so much upon his divine as on his human nature. It is no great mystery that the Son of God should be exalted to the throne of power. It is but a step from the bosom of the Father to his right hand. But that one in our nature should be exalted to that seat of pre-eminence and power; that the Mediator between God and man should be *the man* Christ Jesus; that the hands which once were nailed to the cross should now hold the sceptre, and that the feet which once walked on lake Gennesaret, which were weary and dust-soiled at Jacob's well, which were washed with a sinful woman's tears, and kissed in penitential grief and love with polluted lips—that these very feet should now have all things put under them both in heaven and earth, *there* is the mystery. And yet what food for faith. The living family of God want a living Saviour, one who can hear and answer prayer, deliver out of soul-trouble, speak a word with power to the heart when bowed down with grief and sorrow, sympathise with them under powerful temptations, support them under the trials and afflictions of the way, maintain under a thousand discouragements

his own life in their soul, sustain under bereavements the mourning widow, and be a father to her fatherless children, appear again and again in providence as a friend that loveth at all times and a brother born for adversity, smile upon them in death, and comforting them with his rod and staff as they walk through the valley of its dark shadow, land them at last safely in a happy eternity. Do but take your eyes for a few moments off yourself and your own peculiar trials and sorrows, and look around you at the dear children of God whom you personally know. Now as you call to mind this and that suffering brother or sister in the Lord, and remember that those whom you know are only a small part, solitary specimens, as it were, of that large number of living saints who through much tribulation are entering the kingdom, do you not see what a poor and needy, tried and tempted, burdened and sorrowful, harassed and exercised family God's people for the most part are? But look a little further, and see the reason why they are thus dealt with. Do not all their various trials and exercises make them need a Saviour at hand and not afar off, a very present help in trouble, a Lord to whom they can speak and who can speak to them, and thus have union and communion with him as a risen and exalted Christ? Is not this your case, too, as well as theirs? for how ignorant you must be of the power of vital godliness not to have some personal experience of this. This, then, is all the difference between a faith which stands in the power of God and a faith which stands in the wisdom of men—between a living religion, kindled and maintained by divine communications and a dead, formal religion, which, with all its knowledge, gifts, praying, and preaching, working and willing, rests in the mere letter of truth, that the one is ever seeking or realising union and communion with a risen and exalted Lord, and the other is satisfied with making a fair show in the flesh.

Now in this risen and exalted Lord we feel to have one whom we more or less know; and this draws out faith toward and upon him. He is revealed in the word of truth, and through the power of the word, in the hands of the Spirit, he becomes revealed to the heart. Thus our faith in the Lord Jesus is not a floating fancy, or mere matter of doctrinal sentiment, or traditionary opinion, or grovelling superstition, or wild delusion; but a solid, substantial reality, for it is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." And it acts thus. We read his own blessed words, as they first fell from his lips, and were then preserved and stored up in the inspired Gospels. We thus see set before us by the Holy Spirit, in the word, a perfect representation of what the Son of God was when here below; we see his tender pity and compassion for poor sinners, his wondrous miracles when he went about doing good, and the

grace and truth which shone in every word and work. We follow him step by step, pondering over his promises, his precepts, his invitations, his declarations of his Sonship and oneness with the Father, his last discourses with his disciples, till we reach his sufferings and death; and as faith embraces and is mixed with what is thus revealed in the word of truth, and we feel its sweetness and power in our soul, we seem to get some spiritual and experimental knowledge of him as thus evidently set forth before our eyes, (Gal. 3:1,) and, by the power of his grace, become enabled to believe in him and to love him. When, then, we see him by faith risen from the dead, and, by the same faith follow him up to the courts of heaven, we feel to have there as our Mediator, High Priest, Advocate, and King, not one unknown to us, but the same Jesus whom we have already seen, known, and believed in through the power of the word of his grace upon our heart. Thus, however high he is exalted, faith can still follow him up to the height of his glory, for he is still the same Jesus in the loftiest height that he was in the lowest depth; and as he is the same Lord, so the faith in him is the same faith; for as there is but one Lord, so there is but one faith. (Eph. 4:5.)

In harmony with this, the prayer of the Apostle was that we might know the power put forth by God in the exaltation of his dear Son, and thus have a personal experience of it, as raising us up to him who sits at the right hand of the Father. Let us then take a view of this exaltation as brought before us by the Apostle:

i. God hath "set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places." The right hand is the place of *dignity*, pre-eminence, and power.

1. It is first the place of *honour* and *dignity*. (1 Kings 2:19; Psa. 45:9; Matt. 20:21.) We therefore read of Jesus being "crowned with glory and honour" (Heb. 2:9); and Peter told the wondering multitude at the healing of the lame man at the gate of the temple, that "the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of their fathers, had *glorified* his Son Jesus." (Acts 3:13.) The glory with which he is thus crowned is not the glory of the divine nature as distinct from the human, nor the glory of the human nature as distinct from the divine, but the glory put upon him as God-Man Mediator. It may therefore be termed his mediatorial glory—the peculiar glory which God has given him as a reward of his humiliation and obedience unto death, even the death of the cross. (Phil. 2:8, 9.) It was this glory which he expressed to his heavenly Father, in his memorable prayer, his holy will that his believing people might be with him to behold and to enjoy. (John 17:24.)

2. But the right hand is especially the seat of *authority* and *power*; and this seems to be the chief feature in the exaltation of Christ as brought forward by the Apostle, for his particular object evidently is to bring before us the investing of the Lord Jesus with supreme authority, power, and dominion over all things in heaven and in earth. What a wonderful subject for meditation is opened for us here. The presence of Jesus in heaven, of the man Christ Jesus, of the same man who was here below, who here suffered, bled, and died, is thus set before the eyes of our faith. John speaks of looking: "And behold a door was opened in heaven." (Rev. 4:1.) And is not this an opening of a door in heaven, when we can look up and see the man Christ Jesus at the right hand of God? This was the sight which comforted the martyred Stephen: "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." (Acts 7:56.) We thus see by faith the same Jesus, of whom we have heard and learnt from the word of truth, to whom we have come, in whom we have believed, to whom we are daily looking, exalted above the highest, greatest, and most glorious of all angelic beings, and invested with supreme dominion and power.

It would seem from the Apostle's words here and elsewhere, especially Col. 1:16, where he says, "whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers," that there is in heaven what has been termed a celestial hierarchy, in other words various ranks and orders of angels. It is not a matter of faith, still less of speculation, but of reverential acceptance of revealed truth without an intruding into those things which we have not seen. In this spirit, therefore, we accept the words of the Apostle, that in the celestial courts there are "principalities and powers" which hold delegated dominion—we say delegated dominion, for their power and authority is not their own, but one with which they are commissioned, and therefore exercise as servants ("are they not all ministering," that is, serving, "spirits?" (Heb. 1:14), not as masters. But though servants and messengers\* yet their power is so great as to be inconceivable by us. They are said, therefore, to "excel in strength," margin "mighty in strength." (Psa. 103:20.) John at one time saw "a strong angel" (Rev. 5:2), at another "a mighty angel, whose face was as the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire; who set his right foot upon the sea, and his left foot upon the earth" (Rev. 10:1; 2); and at another an angel who thrust in his sickle into the earth, and gathered in the vine of the earth, and cast it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. (Rev. 14:19.) An angel smote in one night, in the camp of the Assyrians, a hundred fourscore and five thousand. What strength was here!

**\* The word translated angels both in Hebrew and Greek means messengers.**

**What strength there was in the angel whom David saw standing between heaven and earth with a drawn sword in his hand stretched out over Jerusalem to destroy it. (1 Chron. 21:16.) And what a mighty power will be displayed by angels at the great day, when the Son of man will send them forth to gather out of his kingdom all things that do offend, and them which do iniquity, and to cast them into a furnace of fire. (Matt. 13:41, 42.) We need not pursue this point further, as we have brought it forward chiefly to show how great and glorious are those angelic beings, above whom our blessed Lord has been exalted as the Son of man.**

**Now this, as we have before pointed out, is the mystery and the blessedness of this exaltation, that by virtue of its union with the Person of the Son of God, a nature naturally inferior is promoted and exalted above a nature naturally its superior. To understand this, let it be observed that the nature of angels is by essential and original constitution of a higher character than that of man. They were created wholly pure spiritual subsistences (Heb. 1:7), and not as we of an immortal soul united to a body formed out of the dust of the ground. They are therefore essentially and by original constitution immortal. (Luke 20:36.) In power, too, as we have already shown, in original nearness to God, as ever beholding his face, and dwelling in his blissful presence (Matt. 17:10; Luke 1:19), in the perfection and swiftness of their obedience (Matt. 6:10; Dan. 9:21), and their being entrusted with the performance of works and offices beyond the natural capability of man even before the fall, they are a class of beings far superior to man. But it was the eternal purpose of the invisible God to make himself seen and known in some more visible way than the display of his power, wisdom, and glory in creation; or even in the effulgence of his brightness in the highest heavens as seen by angels. There were perfections in the Godhead, such as grace, mercy, love, &c., which creation could but dimly if at all unfold, or heaven itself manifest, but which it was his eternal good pleasure to make visibly and signally known. He chose, therefore, that his only-begotten Son, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his Person, should come into open manifestation, that in him he might be seen and known. But here is the mystery of wisdom and grace that the Son of God, the Son of the Father in truth and love, should come into this open manifestation, not by taking on him the nature of angels, but by taking on him the seed of Abraham; and by taking part of the flesh and blood of the children (Heb. 2:14-16), should exalt our nature, as in union with his**

divine Person, above the highest and most glorious angels. This, we repeat, is the wondrous mystery whereby God has chosen to display the riches of his grace, the wonders of his love, the depths of his wisdom, and the greatness of his power.

## XI.

In pursuing our Meditations on the exaltation of our gracious Lord to the right hand of the Father, we would recall to the mind of our readers a point on which we have already dwelt, that the deep mystery, and, we may add, the special blessedness of the glorification of Jesus, consist mainly in this, that it is in *our nature* that he is thus exalted to the highest place of dignity and power. Besides the unspeakable benefits and blessings which flow down to the Church from this exaltation of her glorious Head, the honour thus put upon human nature itself is beyond all expression or conception. That a nature, originally and intrinsically inferior to angelic, should be elevated and exalted far above all principality and power, and every name that is named not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, this is the grand and solemn mystery on which the Apostle would have us fix the eyes of our enlightened understanding, and receive into our believing heart as a special fruit of the gift of the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. Let us, then, endeavour to follow out a little further this blessed theme, as not only displaying the infinite wisdom and love of God, but as comprising in it boundless supplies of strength, encouragement, and consolation to those who, stripped of all hope or help in self, look to a risen and enthroned Mediator, High Priest, and Advocate to plead their cause, fight their battles, supply their needs, subdue their iniquities, and save them to the uttermost as ever coming to God by him.

When the Son of God condescended to take our nature into union with his own divine Person, he, by that act of love and power, qualified it not only to share in the lowest depths of his humiliation, but to participate also in the loftiest heights of his heavenly glory. For it was an indissoluble union; and therefore no circumstances of depth or height, of suffering on earth or of glory in heaven, could separate what was thus for ever joined together. But as the humiliation of our blessed Lord went before his exaltation, and was the necessary introduction to it, according to his own words, "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?" so must we learn by experience the one, before we can learn by experience the other. In other words, we must view by faith, experimentally know, and make as it were some

personal acquaintance with Christ in his humiliation, to fit and prepare us to view, know, and make some personal acquaintance with him in his exaltation. The Scriptures therefore always connect the two together, as may be seen by comparing Phil. 2:5-11 with Heb. 12:2. As a part of this humiliation, our Lord was, as the Apostle speaks, "made a little lower than the angels." (Heb. 2:9.) How wondrous that he who, as the Son of God, made angels (Col. 1:16), should be made inferior to them, and even need and receive their ministering aid and succour. (Matt. 4:11; Luke 22:43.) O the depths of humiliation to which the blessed Redeemer stooped, carrying down into their lowest point that pure, spotless, holy humanity which he had assumed into union with his divine Person as the Son of God. And let us ever bear carefully in mind that humiliation is not degradation. Our blessed Lord "humbled himself" by a voluntary act of surpassing grace; and it was no more in the power of men or circumstances to debase him of his glory than of lying witnesses to strip him of his innocency. The spotless purity of his sacred humanity, as in union with his divine nature, and as filled with and upheld by the Holy Ghost, preserved it from degradation in its lowest humiliation. The crown of thorns and the purple robe, the mocking knee of the Roman soldier and the taunting scoff of the Jewish priest, though they called forth the grace, did not tarnish the glory of our suffering Lord. His holy obedience to his Father's will in drinking the bitter cup, his meek dignity amidst the worst of insults, and his calm resignation to all the weight of suffering which God or man laid upon him, all shone forth the more conspicuously under every attempt to dishonour him. It is most sweet and blessed to look down as it were into some of those depths of humiliation into which the Redeemer sank, and to see that in the lowest depths of his soul travail, when he was poured out like water, and his heart, broken with grief and sorrow, was melted within him like wax, he was, in the midst of all, the glorious Son of God, though then the suffering Son of man; and that he was the same Jesus yesterday when hanging on the cross, as he is to-day at the right hand of his Father, and will be for ever in the realms of heavenly bliss.

Now it is a view by faith of the humiliation of Jesus which prepares us for a view by faith of the exaltation of Jesus, the two being, as we have observed, so closely and intimately connected together. The eye of our faith must be ever fixed on Jesus, for the Person of Christ is the grand object of faith, and to lose sight of him is to lose sight of the Way, the Truth, and the Life. As then faith views, contemplates, and acts upon the blessed Lord in the lowest depths of his humiliation, so faith—the same faith, for there is but "one faith" (Eph. 4:5)—views, contemplates, and acts upon him in the heights of his glorious

exaltation. And there is this peculiar feature and blessedness in faith's having viewed, and as it were made acquaintance with him in his humiliation, that it can carry this acquaintance with him into his exaltation. Is he not the same Jesus now that he was on earth? He is exalted, it is true, to an inconceivable height of glory, so that when John saw him, even as if in some measure veiled, he fell at his feet as dead. But he is the same Jesus now as when he was the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as he wears the same human body, so he has the same tender, compassionate heart. All that he was upon earth as Jesus, he is in heaven still. All that tenderness and gentleness, all that pity to poor sensible sinners, all that compassion on the ignorant and on those that are out of the way, all that grace and truth which came by him and were manifest in him, all that bleeding, dying love, all that sympathy with the afflicted and tempted, all that power to heal by a word all manner of sickness and disease, all that surpassing beauty and blessedness whereby he is to those who have seen him the chiefest among ten thousand and the altogether lovely, he not only retains in the highest heavens, but is, so to speak, endowed with greater capacity to use them, for all power is given to him in heaven and earth, and all things are put under his feet, and that not only for his own sake, but that he might be the Head over all things to the Church. Returning, then, to our exposition, we are thus brought to see some of the special benefits and blessings which flow down to the Church out of the exaltation of her glorious Head.

i. The first named by the Apostle is that God hath "*put all things under his feet.*" There is an allusion here to the language of Psalm 8. In that Psalm, the psalmist having contemplated with wonder and admiration the glory of the starry heavens, turns his thoughts upon man as compared with them, apparently so mean and insignificant. But the Holy Spirit in him, as a Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ, directs him to view man not as man, but to view man in the God-man, and to contemplate human nature not as we see it daily in ourselves and others, but as assumed into union with the Person of the Son of God, and thus, though by natural constitution made a little lower than the angels, yet, after the ascension of Jesus, exalted to sovereign rule and dominion. Under this view by faith of the dominion given to the exalted God-man, he breaks forth in the following exalted strain: "What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet." That such was the mind of the Holy Ghost in that psalm may be clearly

seen by comparing with it the inspired comment on it, Heb. 2:6-10, and observing also the reference made to it, 1 Cor. 15:25-27, the whole forming a remarkable instance of what we may call the pregnancy of Scripture, and showing what depths of divine truth are laid up in passages beyond the reach of the common eye. And yet, read in the light of this interpretation, how appropriate the whole is, and what light it casts on the original donation of dominion in Adam. Adam, we know, was a type of Christ (1 Cor. 15:45-49); and thus the dominion given him over every living thing that moveth on the earth (Gen. 1:28) was typical of the dominion which should be given to the second Adam, he recovering all, and more than all, that Adam forfeited and lost, and, by his incarnation, exalting human nature as it never could have been exalted, even if Adam had continued in his state of created innocency. The putting of all things under the feet of Jesus, thus highly exalted, seems to imply three things:

1. The *voluntary* submission of *friends*.
2. The *compulsory* subjection of *foes*.
3. The subjection of all *things, events, and circumstances*.

1. The *voluntary* submission of *friends*. One grand distinction between those that are Christ's and those that are not, is that the one meekly and submissively take his yoke upon them as being made willing in the day of his power; whilst the others say in heart, if not in lip, "We will not have this man to reign over us." Driven at first by necessity, and then subdued and overcome by the discoveries of his grace and the power of his word as made spirit and life to their souls, Jesus' blood-bought people fall at his feet, and acknowledge him as their Lord and their God. They not only believe the gospel, but obey it, for it has been "made known to them for the obedience of faith" (Rom. 16:26); and as it is the desire of their souls to be in everything subject to Christ (Eph. 5:24), to keep his commandments, to do his will, and live to his praise, so it is their chief grief and complaint that they cannot do the things that they would on account of the strength and power of the sin that dwelleth in them. But he who has brought them to his feet will perfect that which concerneth them, and will in his own time and way bring into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. (2 Cor. 10:5.)

2. But the words specially point out the *compulsory* subjection of *foes*. As God has put all things under Christ's feet, every one will be made, eventually, subject to his dominion; for this dominion is prospective as well as present. "We see not yet," says the Apostle, "all things put under him" (Heb. 2:8); but

**"he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." (1 Cor. 15:25.) The kings of the earth may set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against his anointed; but God hath set Jesus upon his holy hill of Zion, and he will break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Fear not, then, your foes, ye trembling saints. As the typical Joshua brought forth the captive kings, and bade the men of Israel put their feet on their necks (Josh. 10:24), so Jesus puts his feet, and would have you, by faith, put yours on the neck of your enemies—enemies, not personally or privately, enemies, not from jarring and quarrelling, strife and contention, but enemies as enemies to Christ, enemies of God and godliness. They may rage and rave, may persecute and oppress you; but Jesus has them all under his feet, and, sooner or later, you will see them all fall before you. Commit your way unto the Lord, wait patiently upon him, and you will see all the workers of iniquity, sooner or later, cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.**

**3. But in putting all things under his feet, God has put also under them all *things, events, and circumstances*. How vast, how numerous, how complicated are the various events and circumstances which attend the Church of God here below, as she travels onward to her heavenly home! What an intricate maze they often seem and how much they appear opposed to us, as if we never could get through them, or scarcely live under them. Now, if all *things* as well as all persons are put under Jesus' feet, there cannot be a single circumstance over which he has not supreme control. Everything in providence and everything in grace are alike subject to his disposal. There is not a trial or temptation, an affliction of body or soul, a loss, a cross, a painful bereavement, a vexation, grief, or disappointment, a case, state, or condition, which is not put under Jesus' feet. He has sovereign, supreme disposal over all events and circumstances. As possessed of infinite knowledge he sees them, as possessed of infinite wisdom he can manage them, and as possessed of infinite power he can dispose and direct them for our good and his own glory. How much trouble and anxiety should we save ourselves, could we firmly believe, realise, and act on this! If we could see by the eye of faith that every foe and every fear, every difficulty and perplexity, every trying or painful circumstance, every looked-for or unlooked-for event, every source of care, whether at present or in prospect, are all, as put under his feet, at his sovereign disposal, what a load of anxiety and care would be often taken off our shoulders.**

ii. But God has not only put all things under his feet, but has also given him to be "the *Head over all things to the Church.*" This point we therefore have now to consider.

In the early part of our exposition, we pointed out that the relationship which Christ bears to the Church as her covenant Head, and the relationship which the Church bears to him as his mystical body, form, as it were, the key-note to the whole of the Epistle. Unless, therefore, we clearly see and continually bear in mind this mutual relationship of Head and members, we shall lose much of the peculiar force and beauty of every doctrine, declaration, and precept revealed or enforced in it, and have very dim and imperfect views either of the glory of Christ, or of the grace bestowed on the Church. It is indeed a subject so surpassing all human thought or conception, that we need not wonder at our inability to rise up to it; except by the power of divine teaching, and a faith of God's special giving. And yet this relationship of Christ to the Church, whereby he was constituted her glorious Head, and she made his mystical body, had a special place in the counsel of the Lord which standeth for ever, and deeply engaged those thoughts of his heart which are to all generations. For the Church, the Son of God came into this world, and took upon him her nature in the womb of the Virgin; for her he lived, for her he obeyed, for her he suffered, bled, and died; for her he rose again, and for her he ascended on high, and had all things put under his feet. It is, then, as her Head that he is now over all things. Bearing all this carefully in mind, let us now view what this headship means and implies.

1. It means, first, that the Lord Jesus is the Church's Head in a way of *pre-eminence*. Has not our natural head a pre-eminence over all the members of our body; and is not this its distinguishing feature? Its very commanding position in the body, the way in which it is set over the other members in its high and exalted place, gives our head an acknowledged pre-eminence. But this pre-eminence it uses and exercises for the benefit of the whole body. So it is with the headship of Christ. Its very pre-eminence is for the benefit of the members. Here, then, we see the way in which the offices which the Lord Jesus sustains are sustained by him as the Head of the Church for her special benefit. As her Head he intercedes for her as High Priest within the veil; as her Head he teaches and instructs her as Prophet; and as her Head he guides, directs, and rules over as King. This invests the offices of Christ with such peculiar force and blessedness that every transaction carried on by him in connection with them is as the Church's risen and glorious Head. This relationship gives them, if we may use the word, a special *definiteness*, as well

as invests them with a peculiar tenderness. Does he, as High Priest, ever present before his Father the merits of his sufferings, bloodshedding, and death? Is that sweet incense ever rising and filling the courts of heaven with unspeakable fragrance? It is for the Church as her risen and glorified Head that he thus pleads and intercedes.

He is the Church's Representative in the courts above, and thus his very presence there as her Head is a sure pledge of the prevalence of his intercession for her. Can she fail or have her suit rejected with such an Advocate to plead her cause?

Similarly, what tenderness and definiteness does the Headship of Christ give to his office as Prophet. How tenderly does a husband teach a wife! What a docile affectionate pupil does he find in her! How he can mingle words with smiles, and counsels with kisses! (Song 1:2.) As Milton beautifully says of Eve, anticipating a relation from Adam of the discourse of the angel,

**"From his lip  
Not words alone pleased her."**

So also viewed as King. Jesus is no arbitrary monarch to his Church, but an enthroned Husband who rules for her and in her; who claims her heart, for he has fairly won it, and her loving obedience as best for her own happiness. His dominion over her, therefore, is the gentle, loving dominion of a husband over a wife, or, to preserve the figure, the rule of our natural head over the members of our body. For the body our eyes see, for the body our ears hear, for the body our lips speak. What we should do, where we should go, how we should act, what we should follow, what we should shun, how we should walk, run, fight, stand still, and do everything but turn back, our head advises and directs. So it is with our spiritual Head.

2. He is, therefore, secondly to the Church a Head of *influence*. This he manifests chiefly in three ways, viz., as a Source of life, of movement, and of strength.

1. In him we *live*, for he is "our life." (John 14:6; Col. 3:4.) From him it was first derived, for "the Son quickeneth whom he will;" (John 5:21); and by him it is maintained, for he has promised, "Because I live ye shall live also." Whilst the Head lives, the body cannot die.

2. From him too comes all spiritual *movement*—all activity, energy, warmth, zeal, earnestness. Does the hand firmly grasp the sword? Does the foot move actively forward? Is there any willing service rendered to the cause of truth, to the afflicted saints, to the poor and needy? Is there any labour of love to distinguish the doer from the talker, the warm-hearted, self-denying, tender, sympathizing follower of Jesus from the lazy, self-indulgent, dry, and daring professor? It comes from Jesus as a living Head.

3. So also as the Church's living Head of influence; he is the source of all her *strength*. "All my springs," said one of old, "are in thee." The Head spake thus once to one of its suffering members, "My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." And what replied the strengthened member? "Most gladly; therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

But we must hasten to a close. The Church is here declared to be "his body, the fulness of him which filleth all in all."

In the mind of God, and as chosen in Christ, the Church is a perfect body. It is, therefore, the fulness of Christ. Just as our head and members, in their union with each other, form one perfect harmonious body, so is it with Christ and the Church. As the natural head would be incomplete without the body, as the body would be incomplete without the head, so it is with Christ mystical, and his body the Church. Each lacks the other, and the union of both makes the whole complete. The Son of God, by becoming incarnate, needed a body of which he should be the Head. Without it, he would be as a bridegroom without the bride, a shepherd without the sheep, a foundation without the building, a vine without the branches. He did not need the Church as the Son of God, but he needed her as the Son of man. In that sense, therefore, she is "his fulness." In her all his love is complete, his work complete, his grace complete, his glory complete; and when she is brought home to be for ever with him in glory, then all the purposes of God, all his eternal counsels of wisdom and grace, will be complete.

In this sense we may understand the expression, "the fulness of him that filleth all in all." What a wonderful thought it is that he who, as the Son of God, filleth all in all—filleth all places with his omnipresence, should yet deign to have a relative fulness in his body the Church! Thus there is not only his universal presence, but his *gracious* presence, with which he fills, according to the measure of their capacities, his saints whilst here below; for it is he who,

out of his own fulness, now supplies all their need; whose mind he fills with a knowledge of himself; whose hearts he fills at times with joy unspeakable, and full of glory; whose consciences, by the application of his precious blood, he fills with peace; whose wills he fills with earnest longings and spiritual desires, as well as submission under afflictions; and whose affections he fills, by drawing them up in love to himself, and to all who love him. And there is also his *glorious* presence, with which he will fill all the members of his glorified body, when, according to his prayer, they shall be with him where he is, that they may behold his glory, which the Father has given him.

But what heart can conceive or tongue express the treasures of grace and glory which are thus revealed and brought to light in the chapter of which we have attempted the exposition? With all our desire, and attempt to unfold these heavenly mysteries to the spiritual understanding and believing reception of our readers, we feel how short we have come of setting before them these deep mysteries of our most holy faith. Still, we would desire to commend them to the blessing of that holy and gracious Spirit, by whom they have been recorded in the word of truth; and seeking pardon for everything defective or inconsistent, of which we may have been guilty, we now, in closing our exposition of this wondrous chapter, cast our bread upon the waters, hoping it may be found, after few or many days, to the glory and praise of a Triune God.

## 2.—MEDITATIONS ON THE SECOND CHAPTER OF THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

As we have reason to believe that our Meditations on the word of truth have been, for the most part, favourably received by our spiritual readers, we feel encouraged to continue them; and as exposition of the Scriptures, if one has the necessary grace and gift to understand and open the mind of the Spirit in them, is generally allowed to be both instructive and edifying, we desire to direct our Meditations into that channel, in the hope that the Lord may condescend to bless his own word to his own people as thus brought before them.

Having been for many years a student of the Scriptures, especially those of the New Testament, and having at times seen, felt, and tasted much sweetness and blessedness in them, we desire to cast into the treasury what we may have thus gained by trading; and if we should be the favoured instrument of thereby

enlightening the understanding, strengthening the faith, encouraging the hope, and drawing forth the love of any of the living family of God upon his dear Son and the word of promise in him, we shall consider ourselves well repaid for all our labours.

It has been a question with us whether we should go on with our exposition of the Epistle to the Ephesians, or take up some other portion of the word of truth; and amongst them 1 Pet. 1 has presented itself to our view as a portion in which we have seen much edifying and instructive matter for exposition. Each course would have its distinctive advantages. By taking up 1 Pet. 1, we should break up, as it were, new ground, and thus afford a little variety of subject, which is, to a certain extent, desirable, as one continued strain of thought has a tendency to weary the mind of both writer and reader. But, on the other hand, by going on with the Epistle to the Ephesians, we should have the advantage of building on a foundation already laid, and thus be able to bring the great and glorious truths which we have already opened up to an experimental and practical issue. The second chapter of Ephesians is a most beautiful development and application of the sublime and glorious doctrines set forth in the first, and unfolds very clearly and distinctly the fruit of those spiritual blessings with which we are blessed in Christ in the heavenly places. As then in our exposition of the first chapter we have laid the foundation, we think that the advantage of rearing on it a fitting superstructure preponderates over breaking up fresh ground; and therefore, in that hope and confidence, we have decided, with the Lord's help and blessing, to go on with our exposition of the Epistle to the Ephesians.

"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." (Eph. 2:1.)

It is worthy of observation, what an experimental and practical turn the Apostle gives to the resurrection, exaltation, and glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ. He does not leave it as a mere doctrine, barren and inoperative, but comes at once to personal and practical fruits: "And *you* hath he quickened." He thus appeals to the personal experience of the Ephesian saints, as carrying in their own bosom a living proof of the glorious truths which he had laid down concerning the risen Head of the Church. "You," he would say, "have a proof and evidence in your own bosom of the resurrection and glorification of the Lord Jesus, for, as risen and glorified, he has breathed divine life into your soul." He could, therefore, write to them, as Peter spake when he stood before the council: "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus,

whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to them that obey him." (Acts 5:30-32.) We see here, then, the connexion between the glorification of Christ and the gift of the Holy Ghost. Our gracious Lord, in his discourse with his disciples, said to them, "Nevertheless I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you." (John, 16:7.) John, therefore, declares, "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified." (John 7:39.) We see from these passages that the giving and sending of the Holy Ghost was the immediate fruit as well as the visible testimony that God had glorified his dear Son, and exalted him to his own right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour. By going up on high and taking with him within the veil the incense of his sacrifice and death, and thus presenting himself before the eyes of the Father as the great High Priest over the house of God, he removed every barrier which had checked, so to speak, the free flow of the Holy Ghost in his gifts and graces to the children of men.

But the question may, perhaps, arise in the mind of some of our readers: "If this be the case, it would seem as if the Holy Ghost was not given till Christ was glorified; and if so, what was the faith and hope, and what was the religion of the Old Testament worthies? Were they not taught by the Holy Spirit? Had they not the Holy Ghost? Does not David expressly say, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me?" To this we answer, First, that indubitably the Holy Ghost was given to them and was in them; for Peter, speaking of the ancient prophets, says of them that they "searched what or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow." (1 Pet. 1:11.) But he was given *prospectively*, in the same way as pardon for sin was given. Properly speaking, there was no pardon of sin till the Son of God had put it away by the sacrifice of himself. But prospectively God pardoned sin with a view to the atonement which was to be made by his dear Son for it. So all the gifts and graces of the Holy Ghost before Jesus was glorified were prospective; for till his ascension, he had not received gifts for the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell among them. And, 2, the Holy Spirit was not yet poured out in *all the fulness* of his gifts and graces. There was not yet that full baptism of the Holy Ghost which the Lord promised to his disciples before his ascension: "For John truly baptized with water, but ye shall be baptized with the Holy

**Ghost not many days hence." (Acts 1:5.) But now having gone up on high, the gracious Lord, as Mediator between God and men, has not only opened a way whereby poor sinners may draw near freely unto God, but a way also whereby he can freely and fully send forth the Holy Ghost to testify of himself. And that holy and blessed Comforter delights in fulfilling his covenant office in taking of the things of Christ, showing them to his people, and thus glorifying him. In the resurrection, the ascension, and glorification of Jesus we see a treasure of heavenly grace; for it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell. To quicken, therefore, into divine and spiritual life those members of his mystical body who are yet dead in sin, is in his heart and his hands to whom all power has been given in heaven and in earth.**

**Now, whatever a man may be in the sight of God as chosen in Christ Jesus before the foundation of the world, and blessed, already blessed, with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in him, he must be quickened into divine life before he can be brought into that manifest union and communion with God's dear Son which puts him into a spiritual possession of, and real participation in the blessings of the gospel. But consider, for a moment, in what a state a man is before thus divinely quickened, and see how he is "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness and hardness of his heart." Then observe what a wonderful display it is of sovereign grace and omnipotent power to breathe spiritual life into a soul so utterly sunk in death. The special character of God is that he *lives*. It is, therefore, the chief attribute by which he swears when he swears by himself, "As I live, saith the LORD." What emphasis is here! What a dwelling upon his own Eternal existence! And so when godly men of old swore by him, their language was, "As the LORD liveth." Now life and death, even on earth and between man and man, can have no union or communion. When Sarah, the beloved partner of Abraham, died, the aged patriarch said to the sons of Heth: "I am a stranger and a sojourner with you; give me a possession of a burying-place with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight." (Gen. 23:4.) She who had so long been the delight of his eyes, the wife of his bosom and the mother of his Isaac, must now be buried out of his sight; for death had come between them, and with death had come those necessary accompaniments of death which demanded her removal out of his sight. A living Abraham and a dead Sarah could live no more in the same tent, and lie no more in the same bed. If, then, this be true in the things of earth, and in those ties which bind together one human being to another; how much more is it so in the things of heaven. What union, what communion can there be between a living God and a dead soul?**

**But there is something even worse than death. "Dead in *trespasses and sins*." In natural death, corruption and putrefaction are worse than the mere decease, than the pale cheek and cold rigid form, more loathsome, more disgusting, more cutting off union and communion with the living. Could our beautiful maidens see themselves, or could their doting lovers behold them, as they will appear a week or two after they have been buried out of sight, what a knell would it ring to all the charms of beauty. But even natural corruption, the hideousness of putrefaction, the loathsome change which has passed upon beauty's soft cheek and flashing eyes are nothing to the loathsomeness of sin in the sight of a holy God. Even our moral sense sometimes sees and feels this. We may admire the charms of maidenly modesty, but we loathe the painted cheek of the flaunting harlot. We may picture to ourselves in imagination the loathsomeness of a putrefying corpse, but all that the eye might see or the imagination suggest of such a scene would fall far short of what man is before the eyes of his Maker as dead in trespasses and sins. We can never, therefore, sufficiently magnify, and adore the riches of his free sovereign and distinguishing grace if we have any clear testimony that the Lord has quickened us who were dead in trespasses and sins, for never, never could we have given life to our own dead soul. As well might a corpse raise itself from the grave and come forth to breathe and live in the light of the sun, and walk amongst living men, as a soul, dead in trespasses and sins, quicken itself out of death to live in the light of God's countenance, and walk in union and communion with his dear Son and his living people.**

**Death in sin is of course a figure, and must be interpreted as such; for moral death is its meaning, and by moral death we understand the utter absence of everything holy, heavenly, spiritual, and divine; the entire want of participation in, and conformity to the life which God lives as essentially and eternally holy, pure, wise, and good, and for ever dwelling in the glorious light of his own infinite perfections. To be dead, then, is to have no present part or lot with God; no knowledge of him, no faith, no trust, no hope in him; no sense of his presence, no reverence of his terrible Majesty; no desire after him or inclination toward him; no trembling at his word, no reliance on his promise; no longing for his grace, no care or concern for his glory. It is to be as a beast before him, intent like a brute on satisfying the cravings of lust, or the movements of mere animal passion, without any thought or concern what shall be the issue, and to be bent upon carrying out into action every natural purpose, as if we were self-creators, and were our own judge, our own lord; and our own God. O! what a terrible state is it to be thus dead in sin, and not**

to know it; not to feel it; to be in no way sensible of its present danger and certain end, unless delivered from it by a mighty act of sovereign power. It is this want of all sense and feeling which makes the death of the soul to be but a representation of, as it is the prelude to, that second death which stretches throughout a boundless eternity.

But the Apostle now changes the figure: "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world." Clearly, if a man were actually, literally dead, he could not walk; and if the soul of man were dead within him, so as to be deprived of all understanding, feeling, desire, will, or affection, it would be as incapable of any movement within the body, as a directing influence, as a dead body would be incapable of any bodily movement. The death of the soul, therefore, is its death Godward. It is lively and active enough in the ways of sin, lively and active enough in following and carrying out every inclination and movement towards self-gratification. It knows no death there. Its death is only as regards God. It is lively enough as regards man. And as the whole world is but an aggregate of human beings, all equally dead to God, but all equally alive to self; as the same passions, desires, thoughts, feelings, lusts, and inclinations sway with more or less force every bosom, the whole forms what the Apostle calls "the course of this world." As in a river every drop flows with the rest in one course toward the sea, as in a crowd all rushing to see the same sight, each individual man makes up with the rest a continuous stream of men, all intent upon the same object, so there is "a course of this world," individuals being but drops in the stream, each man being a unit of a sum exceeding calculation; but the whole collective body forming one mass, like a concourse of people rushing forward with common aim, and each pushing on his neighbour with unresisting, irresistible force. Now, combine the two ideas of the Apostle, though we shall presently see that there is another agency to come into force; but combine and compare the two ideas of death in sin, and walking according to the course of this world, what do we gather from this combination? Is it not that to walk according to the course of this world is to be dead in sin?

The course of this world is not always or perhaps often a course of that decided open transgression which is generally stamped by the name of sin. Many a worldly man cannot afford to be an open sinner. He would lose caste, he would forfeit character, he would damage his reputation, and with his reputation his hopes of advance in life, if he allowed himself the open, unchecked practice of those breaches of morality against which the world in general and good society in particular has affixed its mark of reprobation. But

he may not be the less a wicked man—not only dead, but dead in trespasses and sins. He may be a secret infidel, though he regularly attends his church or chapel; an inward mocker and scorner of all vital godliness, though a decent observer of its form; a thorough hater of God and his people, though too prudent or too decorous to give his enmity open vent; a presumptuous rebel, a proud, covetous, stony-hearted, iron-handed oppressor of the poor, an unkind husband, a despotic father, a rigid, unfeeling master, a scheming, unprincipled moneygrubber, a selfish wretch, incapable of a noble thought or generous action; and yet all the time he may keep within the range of the strictest morality, and deal out harsh measure against the least deviation from it. Thousands of such men, more or less approaching various points of this sketch, though we will not say embodying all its worst features, tread every day the London pavement, sit in easy-chairs in counting-houses, draw cheques on their bankers, serve their customers in shops, and fill every rank and grade of society, from the millionaire rolling home from the City in his carriage to the sweeper at the street crossing, to whom, in the overflowing liberality of his heart for a successful stroke in business, he throws a penny. Here, too, are to be found, in thickly serried ranks, scores of men and women who consider themselves and are usually considered very religious, and who would count it a stigma and a reproach not to profess some kind of religion, more or less marked with outward and distinctive form. Unstained by outward sins, moral and consistent in conduct, kind, generous, and liberal, active and energetic in various works of philanthropy and benevolence, really possessed of many amiable and admirable qualities, endowed in large measure with domestic and social qualities worthy of respect and imitation, most useful and honourable members of society, the very stay and support of our favoured country; yet they bear the fatal mark stamped upon them, that they walk according to the course of this world. Their religion has never really separated them from, or crucified them unto it. Whatever they may be before men (and we have freely allowed their possession of many admirable qualities), before God, who seeth not as man seeth, and who looketh to the heart, they are dead in sin, as walking according to the course of this world. In a crowd of men, all moving one way and bent on the pursuit of the same object, there may be great outward differences. Some may be clothed in rags, and others in choice apparel. Some may rush along with oath and noise, others move forward silently and steadily; some may lead and others follow; some may urge on the lagging, and others seem more driven by compulsion than full of eagerness and animation to be first and foremost in the race; but they all follow one course—a course which leads all to the same eventual end. So it is with all who walk according to the course of this world. Were they searched to the very

core, were their hearts laid naked and bare before the eyes of him with whom we have to do, they would be found to have no single eye to his glory, no godly fear or holy reverence of his great name, no sincere aim to please him, or dread to offend him; no earnest longing or breathing forth of earnest desire to know his will and do it; in a word, nothing heavenly, holy, spiritual, or gracious; nothing as the fruit of a new birth, and springing out of the operation of the Spirit of God upon the soul. Their motives, principles, aim, object, and, desire; what they live by, and what they live for; the whole tenor and drift of their words and actions, are worldly, and according to the course of this world; masked, indeed, by a thin veil of a devout profession and a religious phraseology, whereby they deceive themselves and others into the confident persuasion that they are not as other men are, but bid fair for, if they do not stand at present high in the favour of God. How a ray of divine light, entering as a word from God's mouth with quickening power into their heart, would rend asunder this deceptive veil, and piercing their conscience as a two-edged sword, would lay them and their profession naked and bare before him who, in his glorious Majesty, is a consuming fire.

But there is another mark of "the dead in trespasses and sins" given by the Apostle, another reason assigned by him why such as walk according to the course of this world are at present without hope and without God. They are *under a Satanic influence*. This is dreadful to think of, and were it fully realised, enough to make all such as are under it start back with dread and horror. And yet if we accept the word of God as pure infallible truth, it is as undeniable a fact as that of his own existence. The words of the Apostle are, "According to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience." You will observe here that the word "according" is connected with their walking; and that as they are said to walk "according to," that is in union with, in obedience to the moving power, impulse, and influence of this world, so also do they walk "according to," that is, under the impulse and influence of the prince of the power of the air. But this demands a little closer and fuller examination.

By "the prince of the power of the air" Satan is here intended, for he is "the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience." Several things are noteworthy here: 1, The solemn fact that there is such an infernal being, full of deadly enmity to God and man; 2, That his seat is in the air; 3, That he worketh in the children of disobedience; 4, That all who walk according to the course of this world are under his influence.

**1. The very existence of such a being as Satan is now by many denied. The Scripture doctrine concerning the devil is now often viewed as a Jewish tradition, or as an oriental myth, or as merely a strong and figurative representation of evil, investing it by way of metaphor with a bodily shape, and that all belief in the personal existence of the devil should be considered in our enlightened times as on a par with crediting the existence of witches, ghosts, apparitions, and the effect of charms and magical incantations. But the personal existence of Satan, as an evil spirit, is so strongly laid down in the Scriptures, both Old and New, and so interwoven with the history of the Lord himself in the Gospels and the language of inspiration in the Epistles, that we must either believe it on the force of God's testimony or acknowledge ourselves infidels as regards receiving the whole and undiminished word of God. It is indeed a part of Satan's own peculiar subtlety to persuade men of his non-existence, that he may more successfully entrap them in his snares, as Hart well says:**

**"The devil can self-denial use,  
And that with dev'lish, selfish views;  
His being and his state disown;  
And teach that devil or hell there's none."**

**To deny, then, his existence, is not only to deny the word of God, but clearly shows that he has all the more successfully blinded the eyes of those whom he is leading at his will by hiding from them that he is their guide. On this point, however, we need not further dwell. It is sufficient for us on this as on every other point of revealed truth to say, "Let God be true and every man a liar."**

**2. But he is called in the words before us "the prince of the power of the air;" from which we gather these three things, that he is a prince, that he possesses great power, and that his seat is in the air. Our gracious Lord calls him "the prince of this world," and the Apostle Paul terms him "the god of this world." (John 14:30; 2 Cor. 4:4.) The very words "prince" and "god" imply dominion and authority. What this dominion is, and in what this authority mainly consists, the Scripture does not clearly inform us. But we find again and again in the word of truth, both of the Old and New Testament, a dominion and authority ascribed to Satan whereby he rules and reigns over the children of men. Into this subject, however, we cannot now fully enter. Its most formidable feature is that it is unseen, and yet of amazing strength and power. Bounds indeed are set to it by the overruling providence and absolute dominion of God; and in the case of his dear children this power is broken,**

and only suffered to come so far near them as may be consistent with the purposes of God and their eventual benefit. Were not the power of Satan under God's overruling authority as regards his own family, this earthly scene would soon become a wild arena of death and destruction, and the witnesses for God's truth be swept out of by the malice of the prince of this world and the furious enmity of his agents and followers.

3. The seat of this prince, his dwelling-place from which he surveys the wide extent of his domain, is the air above and around this earthly ball. This gives him such velocity of flight, such ready access to all spots and places, such ability to transport himself with more than the swiftness of the eagle to his quarry, or of the vulture to the fallen prey. Satan is not ubiquitous, that is, he is not present in every place; for universal presence belongs only to God. But as a spirit, and retaining, though a fallen spirit, the original qualities of an angelic nature, he can transport himself with a readiness and a velocity of which we have no conception to every point of the compass, and to every spot on which his eye is fixed as a scene of infernal action. Now these are not mere speculations, or even sound deductions from the language of inspiration, but are pregnant with warning and admonition. Are we surrounded by Satan and a whole host of infernal angels, all ready at his beck and call, and all in league with him, little perhaps inferior to him in strength and subtlety, and all equally bent to work us woe if not ruin? How careful, how watchful, how cautious should this make us in all our movements, as feeling that wherever we go or wherever we are we are watched by an infernal adversary, hovering around us in the air, like a bird of prey watching for a favourable moment to swoop down upon us, and if not destroy, to wound and maim us. And how it should lead us to be unceasingly putting ourselves, so to speak, by faith and prayer, under the protection of our Almighty Friend, that he may be our Protector and Preserver from the open assaults and inward temptations of our deadly adversary. In the last chapter of this epistle the Apostle gives us a solemn exhortation to "put on the whole armour of God;" and why? "That we may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil." And then he adds: "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Ephesians 6:12.) By referring to the margin we see that "high places" are translated "heavenly places," that is, the lower heavens, corresponding to the airy region in which Satan has his seat.

4. But the main point before us is the solemn fact that Satan "worketh in the children of disobedience." How wide, how comprehensive are these words.

**But as this subject demands a more ample consideration than we can now give it, we must reserve our comment upon it for our next paper.**

## **II.**

**Our greatest dangers are usually least seen, our subtlest foes least suspected, our strongest snares least apprehended. Who of us, for instance, when dead in trespasses and sins, knew his own death, or apprehended from it any danger; when walking according to the course of this world, had the remotest idea that the whole world, the moral as well as the immoral part of it, lieth in wickedness; when under the influence of Satan, was sensible of his poisonous breath, though at that very time it was diffusing itself through and tainting his life blood? We have heard or read of a traveller, who once rode by night over an unknown but most dangerous piece of ground, and reached his destination in safety. Struck, however, by what he had seen in the dim night of the rugged and precipitous road by which he had come, and how slowly and carefully his trusty horse had here and there picked his way, he felt an inclination to survey it the next morning by the light of day. But when he saw stretched before him in the broad daylight the road, which he had traversed under the cover of night; when he perceived how he had in this place ridden on the very brink of a deep precipice, and in that had passed over the broken arches of a bridge with a roaring river underneath, he was so overwhelmed with a sight of the fearful perils of the road, and a sense of his own preservation, that he swooned away through agitation of mind. May we not apply this little incident, be it true or false, to our own experience of the dangers which we have escaped, and the way by which we have come? How perilous was our state by nature; how dangerous our condition; how beset with steep precipices, hidden from view, was our path; and how, but for special grace and the leading and upholding of our wise and yet invisible Guide, we might have been hurled down from some giddy height and been dashed to pieces, or fallen through the broken arches of time into that roaring flood which has swallowed up so many in destruction and perdition.**

**These thoughts may perhaps prepare us to look a little more solemnly and feelingly into the point now before us, which we therefore resume from our last paper, viz., the inspired declaration that Satan, called "the prince of the power of the air" for reasons already explained, worketh as a spirit in the children of disobedience. Several things are worthy of notice in this inspired declaration:**

1. The persons or *characters* in whom he thus worketh. They are termed "the children of disobedience." We need hardly observe that these are the same characters as the dead in trespasses and sins, with this difference, that the one is a negative and the other a positive mark. Their death implies the total absence of all in which consists the life of God; their disobedience implies an active principle in them of opposition to the will and word of God.

"The children of disobedience" is a Hebrew idiom, signifying those who are so thoroughly and entirely disobedient to the expressed will and word of God that they may be considered as much under its influence, authority, and power as if disobedience had given them actual birth and being, and exerted over them all the claims and demands of a parent. It is a peculiar feature of that strong and vivid language in which the Old Testament was written to invest objects with personal qualities. Thus sparks are called "sons of the burning coal" (Job 5:7, margin); an arrow, "the son of the bow" (Job 41:28); anointed ones, "sons of oil." (Zech. 4:14, marg.) A man sentenced to die is called "a son of death" (Psa. 79:11; 1 Sam. 20:31; 2 Sam. 12:5); rebels, "children of rebellion" (Numb. 17:10); and one deserving to be beaten, "a son of stripes." (Deut. 25:2.) We shall presently meet with an almost similar expression, "children of wrath," by which is meant that as the children of death are those over whom death will reign in all its power and authority, so wrath will reign unchecked over all to whom it is due, and upon whom it is poured out. The children, therefore, of disobedience are those so thoroughly and completely under its power and dominion that they can do nothing but disobey.

2. But now observe the expression, "worketh." It is in the original a stronger word than "worketh," and means not only working, but powerful working, being in fact the word from which our term "energy" is derived. It means, therefore, a powerful, energetic, unwearied, active working—the working of one who neither sweats nor tires, but labours at his infernal work with all the unflagging strength of an angel, and all the infuriate malice of a devil.

The *mode* of this active energy is in a good measure hidden from us, though there are few of us probably who have not felt it—at least been painfully sensible of a spirit working in us allied to, and yet distinct from our own spirit. Thoughts, imaginations, workings, heavings of a peculiarly infernal and diabolical kind worthy of the devil, and such as only that foul, malicious, blasphemous spirit could suggest, most of us have painfully felt. But we

cannot explain how he gains this access to our mind, or influences its movements. Yet there is this clear and most blessed distinction between his influences for evil and those of the Holy Ghost for good, that they are not creative or permanent—at least not in the vessels of mercy. He worked in us all in days past, but he did not seal us for perdition as the Holy Ghost seals us for salvation. He found us sinners, and acted on our sinful nature, but did not create in us a Satanic nature, as the Holy Ghost creates a spiritual nature, or assimilate us permanently to his own likeness, as the blessed Spirit assimilates us to the likeness of Christ. And when dislodged and spoiled of his goods, he never again enters the palace of the saint's heart, though he may annoy him by his passing breath.

But we have now mainly to consider his working in the children of disobedience. Satan has in them a ground on which he can work. He finds them all ready and fully prepared to fall in with his suggestions, and act under his prevailing influence. He has but to breathe, so to speak, into them his own infernal enmity, rebellion, pride, and desperate malice against God and all that God is or has, and he finds them willing to fall in with all that he suggests to their mind. Satan, as a fallen angel, retains, as we have pointed out, angelic qualities, and especially that spiritual subsistence which is the essence of angelic nature. "He made his angels spirits." "Are they not all ministering spirits?" He is therefore a spirit, though a fallen spirit, a foul spirit, an unclean spirit, and is said in the words before us to be "the spirit" that now worketh in the children of disobedience.

This working is partly direct and partly indirect. It is direct when he breathes into the children of disobedience his own special sins, such as pride, enmity, rebellion, malice, blasphemy, and what the scripture calls "spiritual wickedness" (Eph. 6:12) and "the depths of Satan." (Rev. 2:24.) But he works indirectly when he presents to the corrupt mind of man those fleshly temptations which he is not himself subject to or indeed capable of. These are comprehended in the words of John as "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." None of these lusts is Satan capable of. He has no flesh to gratify, no carnal eye to please, no worldly pride to indulge. But he finds all these things in us, and by presenting to each of these lusts its suitable object, and we may add by darkening the mind and hardening the heart, gives them fresh prevalence and power.

It seems also that some, as a mark of God's judicial displeasure, are specially given up to Satan. Thus he entered into Judas after the sop (John 13:27), and

filled the heart of Ananias (Acts 5:3), taking, as it were, full and final possession of them in body and soul. This is different from merely working in them, as we see in the case of Judas, for he first put into his heart to betray Christ. (John 13:2), and then when the temptation was received and entertained and determined to be acted upon, he entered into him, and got full possession.

**"Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind."**

It is worthy of observation how the Apostle would remind us of the state and condition in which we were, not only as dead in trespasses and sins, but as actually walking in those base lusts, and carrying out in practice those sensual desires which were connected with our spiritual death. And he does this for two reasons, first, that he may thereby magnify the riches of God's grace, and secondly, by bringing before us what should be a matter of the deepest humiliation and self-abhorrence, remind us of our base original. How clearly, too, does he show that there is no difference between the saved and the lost, except what grace makes between them; that all, elect and non-elect, are equally dead in trespasses and sins, that, all equally walk according to the course of this world in their unregenerate condition; and that all are equally led and acted upon by the prince of the power of the air, that foul and accursed spirit which we see even now working everywhere around us in the children of disobedience.

Observe, too, how completely the Apostle identifies himself with the vilest and the worst. We know, from his own testimony, that he was, before called by grace, a man of the strictest severity of life, and that his walk and conduct externally were so unblemished that he could say of himself, "touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless." But here he puts himself among and on a level with the heathen Ephesians, abandoned as they had been to all that outward ungodliness, which, as we see from Rom. 1, 1 Cor. 6:9, 10, was common to all the Gentile world. "We all," he says, "I and you, and every one of us, without exception, had our conversation, that is, lived and walked, as the rule and habit of our life, in the lusts of our flesh, our chief, our only object being to fulfil and gratify the desires of the flesh and of the mind, whatever they were. I was by birth a Jew, brought up in the very straitest sect, that of the Pharisees, imbued from earliest childhood with the strict maxims and traditions of the fathers; and when I reached maturer age came to Jerusalem, and there sat as a pupil at the feet of Gamaliel, to learn more

thoroughly and devote myself more fully to the most intense practice of all external obedience, that I might gain eternal life by my good works. You, on the contrary, were blind heathens, abandoned to the worship of idols, destitute of the commonest principles of morality, and without the least knowledge of the only true God. You, therefore, walked and lived, wallowed, rolled, and weltered in all manner of vile filth, brutality, sin, and crime. Still, whatever outward difference there was thus between us, in this point we were fully alike, that the flesh was everything with us both; and, so long as we could fulfil its lusts, and desires, we were well content. My flesh was pious flesh, and yours impious; I was the whited sepulchre on the outside, and you were the foul sepulchre inside. I, in my Jewish zeal, hated and persecuted the Church of God, and you, in your heathen zeal, would have killed all who did not worship the great Diana of the Ephesians. But we were alike bent upon serving the flesh, though in different ways and by different means."

We may observe here a distinction drawn by the Apostle between the desires of the flesh and the desires of the mind. Both are opposed to God and godliness, both are the fruits of our fallen nature; but the desires of the flesh seem to be those grosser and more sensual lusts and passions which are connected, so to speak, with the lower part of our nature; and the desires of the mind are those which are connected with its higher qualities. Thus some are steeped up to the very lips in all manner of vile abominations of sensual lust, in the gratification of which they find all their pleasure; whilst others, who would scorn or at least are not tempted to the baser lusts of the flesh, carry out with equal ardour the promptings of a more refined character and disposition. Ambition to rise in the world; thirsting after power over their fellow-men, a craving for fame and distinction in any particular branch of art or science, discontent with their present situation in life, envying every one superior to them in birth, wealth, talent, accomplishments, position, or worldly happiness; attempts, more or less successful, to rise out of obscurity, poverty, and subjection, and to win for themselves name, fame, and prosperity—how wide a field does this open to our view, as embracing "the desires of the mind!" And observe how the Apostle puts upon a level the desires of the flesh and the desires of the mind, and stamps them both with the same black mark of disobedience and its consequences, the wrath of God. We look around us. We see the drunkard staggering in the street, we hear the oath of the common swearer, we view the sons and daughters of Belial manifesting in their very looks how sunk they are in deeds of shame. These we at once condemn; but what do we think of the pushing tradesman, the energetic man of business, the active, untiring speculator, the man who,

without scruple, puts into practice every scheme and plan to advance and aggrandise himself, careless who sinks if he rise? Is he equally guilty in our eyes? What think we of the artist devoting days and nights to the cultivation of his skill as a painter, as an architect, as a sculptor; of the literary man, buried in his books; of the naturalist, devoting years to the particular branch of study which he has selected to pursue; or similar examples of men, whose whole life and all whose energies are spent in fulfilling the desires of their mind? As far as society, public welfare, the comfort of themselves and their families, and the progress of the world are concerned, there is a vast difference between these two classes; and we should do violence to right feeling to put them upon a level. But when we come to weigh the matter as before God, with eternity in view, and judge them by the word of truth, we see at once that there is no real difference between them; that the drunkard does but fulfil the desires of his flesh, and the scholar, the artist, the man of business, the literary man, in a word, the man of the world, whatever his world be, little or great, does but each fulfil the desires of his mind. Both are of the earth, earthy; both are sworn enemies to God and godliness; and could you look into the very bottom of his heart, you might find the man of intellect, refinement, and education a greater foe to God and his word than the drunkard or the profligate. The sin in both is one and the same, and consists in this, that in all they do they seek to gratify that carnal mind which is enmity against God, which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. God is not in all, or indeed in any of their thoughts. Instead of living to and for him in whom, as creatures of his hand, they live and move and have their being, they live wholly unto and for themselves, and thus are practical rebels against God, as rejecting his rightful claims upon their obedience. We must have very slight and superficial, not to say altogether false and wrong ideas of sin, if we limit it to certain outward acts, condemned generally by men's natural consciences. Sin is not to be weighed in this scale, nor measured by this standard. It is to be measured by the holiness of God and the demands of his righteous law, which extends itself to the inmost thoughts of the heart. Sin is of a much deeper, subtler, wider nature than most men apprehend, or indeed than any can know or feel until they experimentally learn that God's commandment is exceeding broad, that it demands purity in the inward parts, a perfection of obedience of body and soul, and a thorough yielding up to the service of God of every faculty of the mind, of every member of the body, of every thought of the heart, of every word of the tongue, of every action of the hands. Measured by this standard, and the glory of God demands no less, we are brought to see what sin really is, and that whatever men be outwardly and morally, yet that inwardly, as they stand before the eyes of infinite purity, and

as weighed in the balance of a righteous law, there is, as the Apostle elsewhere testifies, "no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." It is, indeed, in this coming short of the glory of God that the Essence of sin mainly lies. So great, so unspeakably great is the glory of God, that to come short of it, that is, to come short in rendering that full obedience and devotion of the whole man which it requires, is to sin against God, and as the prophet speaks to "provoke the eyes of his glory" (Isa. 3:8), as if those glorious eyes which run to and fro throughout the whole earth (2 Chron. 16:9) viewed with holy indignation those creatures of his hand that pay him not the tribute which is his due. And as the law is the manifestation of God's holiness, and as a word which has issued from his lips in order to bind all who are under it to a perfect obedience to its commands, every mouth must be stopped by a sense of guilt and shame where that law is revealed in its spirituality and power, as the Apostle testifies: "Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God." (Rom. 3:19.)

Now what is the consequence of this universal sentence of condemnation? That which the Apostle adds, and to which we now come in our exposition: "And were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."

We have already pointed out the meaning of the expression, the children of wrath. This point therefore need not detain us long. To be a child of wrath is to be deserving of wrath, as a child or son of death was one who deserved death; and as children are naturally heirs of their father's property, so to be a child of wrath is to be an heir of it, and to have it for a full and everlasting portion. This wrath is the just indignation of God against sin and sinners, without respect of persons, according to that testimony: "But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile." (Rom. 2:8, 9.)

But the question naturally arises, "Is there, then, no difference between the elect and the non-elect in this matter? You have already told us, and laid it down very fully and clearly from the first chapter of this epistle, that the elect were blessed from all eternity with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, that they were made accepted in the Beloved, and ever stood before God in the Person and work of his dear Son without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. How, then, can they be children of wrath, even as others? Was there not from all eternity a distinction between them and the rest of mankind

who were to be left to fill up the measure of their iniquities?"

Now this difficulty, if indeed it is worth calling a difficulty, is cleared up by the words "*by nature.*" The distinction between those that are saved and those that are lost is by grace; by nature distinction between them there is none. In Adam they all alike sinned by original transgression; in themselves they have all sinned by actual transgression. Take away grace, view them only as they are by nature, there is no difference between them. Their sins are as great, if not greater, their nature as corrupt, their hearts as evil, the whole bent and course of their thoughts, words, and works, before called by grace, were as saturated with sin and crime. And as all these things deserve wrath, and but for grace, would draw down wrath as their everlasting portion, they are rightly and truly said to be by nature children of wrath, even as others. It is very necessary ever to bear in mind that there are certain immutable laws of right and wrong, of obedience and disobedience, of things pleasing and displeasing to God as the great and glorious Jehovah, and that no acts of God in grace in the least degree alter, diminish, or supersede these immutable laws which have their birth from his glorious perfections. Grace does not alter the nature of sin, render it less damnable in itself, or turn away from it the wrath of God. It turned indeed the wrath of God from the person of the sinner to the Person of the Surety; but when it met and encountered sin in Him, it burst forth so furiously that he cried out, "I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death." (Psa. 22:14, 15. And, again, in the person of Heman: "Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves, I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up; while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted. Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off." (Psa. 88:6, 7, 15, 16.) It is an utter misunderstanding of grace, and of the whole wondrous scheme of salvation, to think that because the elect are accepted in the Beloved and have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace, their sins are not sins, nor as such deserving of punishment, or that they themselves are not by nature children of wrath, even as others. The testimony of God's word, and the experience of every saint, will amply contradict any such presumptuous notions. Nay, the very sweetness of grace lies in this, that it has put away deserved wrath; and this makes the Church sing aloud: "And in that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee; though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me." (Isa. 12:1.) Such a view is,

indeed, quite to lose sight of the mind of the Holy Ghost, as here expressed by the Apostle, for his object clearly is to remind us of our obligations to distinguishing grace by showing us that we deserve nothing at God's hands but wrath, and that had we our just due, it would be poured out upon us to the uttermost. And surely every one who has felt anything of the wrath of God as his just due, on account of his personal transgressions, will freely acknowledge that he is by nature a child of wrath, even as others, and that there are thousands in hell who have not sinned as he has done.

We need, not, however, dwell further on this point, nor indeed should we have touched upon it, except to clear up what might have been considered a difficulty, if not a contradiction to any previous statement of divine truth. Let us rather, with the Apostle, bless and adore the rich mercy of God extended towards us in the Person and work of his dear Son, according to the words which we shall now further open: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us." We may observe here the blessed union of mercy and love in the bosom of God, and the way in which the Apostle sets forth and exalts both as thus united. He does not simply say that God is merciful, but that he is "rich in mercy;" nor does he merely declare that he loved us, but that the love wherewith he loved us was "great love."

As love was the first moving cause in the mind of God, according to that testimony, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son" (John 3:16); and again: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:10); we will consider that point first.

1. The testimony of the word of truth is that "God is love" (1 John 4:8)—pure, perfect, holy, eternal love. Love is one of his brightest, most blessed, and glorious perfections, softening, if one may so speak with all holy reverence, the severe and more terrible features of his Divine Majesty, such as his justice, holiness, wrath against sin, and inflexible determination by no means to clear the guilty. But it is specially to be remarked that this alike glorious and amiable perfection of love shines forth to us only in the Person of his dear Son. Whatever love God has to the creatures of his hand, as to the holy angels who stand in his presence, or to the stranger to whom he giveth food and raiment (Deut. 10:18) as an act of pure beneficence, we poor sinners, as sinners, can only know him as pure love in the Person and work of the Son of his love. When, then, under divine teaching, in favoured moments, we can look up to God as manifesting himself in the Person of his dear Son, we see in him

nothing but pure and perfect love; and as this love is manifested to faith, and shed abroad in the heart by the Holy Ghost, it raises up and draws forth love to God in return, as being in himself pure Love in its fountain, of which he vouchsafes to believing souls this blessed stream.

But this love the Apostle would specially exalt as being great; "for his *great* love wherewith he loved us." Its greatness is to be measured by two things; first and mainly by the gift of his dear Son, secondly by our miserable, undone, and most wretched condition as sinners in his sight.

The Scriptures are very full, clear, and blessed upon the love of God as manifested in the gift of his dear Son. Thus, besides the testimonies which we have already quoted, we find the Apostle declaring: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8.) And, again: "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32.) How great this love is to the people of his choice is declared by our Lord in that most remarkable expression in the prayer which he offered up just before his sufferings and death, which we have thought sometimes is the greatest word in the whole book of God: "And hast loved them as thou hast loved me." (John 17:23.)

The love of God to his dear Son must be so infinite as to exceed all conception of men or angels. Now, that he should love the people of his choice with the same love—the same in nature, the same in degree as that with which he loves his dear Son, is one of the most overwhelming thoughts which can move and stir a human breast. Indeed, so overwhelming is it in its sublime mystery and unapproachable depth, that as it can only be received by faith, so faith itself can only fall down in reverent astonishment and admiration before it, and cry out, "O the depth! O the blessedness of this love!"

Love does not, however, necessarily imply mercy. This latter attribute regards us as sinners, and is the flowing out of love in a way of pity and compassion to us as cast by sin into a most miserable and truly deplorable condition. We may know something of the blending of love and pity as two distinct and yet united affections in our own experience. A parent loves his child distinct from and independent of any feeling of compassion or pity for it; for the child may not be in circumstances to draw out any such latent feeling. But if the child is sick or afflicted, or in any circumstances of distress, then pity and compassion flow forth out of the bosom of love; and the deeper the love, the more tender

will be the pity. This blending of love and pity is beautifully represented in that lively comparison of the Church to an outcast child: "None eye pitied thee, to do any of them unto thee, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the loathing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born." (Ezek. 16:5.) No eye pitied this poor outcast child, and it was too senseless to pity itself. But the Lord pitied it, and had compassion upon it. With his pity there was love, and with love came acts of love: "Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness; yea, I swore unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord God, and thou becamest mine." (Ezek. 16:8.) We see this mingling of love and pity illustrated also by the parable of the prodigal son. The father loved him because he was his son independently of his conduct, good or bad. But when his repenting prodigal came back with grief in his heart, and confession of his sin and unworthiness in his lips, we read that "when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him." What a blending was here of love and pity. Pity moved the father to run to meet the returning prodigal, and love to fall upon his neck and kiss him. Had there been no previous love, and we might add no previous relationship of father and son, and had he not been in so miserable a plight, there would have been no pity; but loving him as his son, and because he was his son, pity and compassion flowed forth, as he came home in poverty, hunger, and rags, in guilt, and shame, and sorrow, and the two combined to bring forth the gracious command to clothe him in the best robe, to kill the fatted calf, and to rejoice over him who was dead and is alive again, who was lost and is found.

Now, as God is great in love, his love in fact being infinite, so his mercy is rich, or rather, he is rich in mercy. Mercy well suits a sensible sinner; and the riches of God's mercy especially suit those who are brought down in real extremity of soul to see and feel how abundant he must be in mercy, how overflowing in the exceeding riches of his grace, that they may venture to entertain a hope of an interest in it, as freely coming down to them in their low and lost estate. We know mercy, feelingly and experimentally, before we know love. Love is first in God, but it is not first in our experience of it; nor do we go to God when made first to feel our need of mercy, as if we were objects of his love, or could venture to entertain the remotest idea that a God so holy could love a sinner so vile; but we go to him to obtain mercy, as the Apostle speaks: "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need." (Heb.4:16.) Mercy is the first thing sought for at the throne of grace; and when this mercy is obtained,

then grace is ever after continually sought for to help the helpless and dependent soul in every time of need, which need lasts all through life; and until grace is swallowed up in glory. Was not the simple plea for mercy the publican's prayer in the temple, "God be merciful to me a sinner?" And such has been the prayer of all and every one, whose heart has been touched by the finger of God.

When, then, God graciously bows down his ear and listens to the sigh and cry of the repenting, confessing sinner, and manifests mercy to his soul, he at the same time sheds abroad his love in his heart, and then the mercy of God and the love of God, as they are one in him, unite and become one in the sinner's bosom.

But the point on which the Apostle chiefly dwells, as a proof and mark of the riches of God's mercy and the greatness of his love, is the quickening of those who were dead in trespasses and sins. As this, however, opens up a fresh portion of our subject, we shall defer our exposition of it to our next paper.

### III.

Love and mercy, as dwelling in the bosom of God to poor sinners, and especially as manifested in the gift of his dear Son, were the two leading and prominent features in this last part of our exposition of the chapter now before us, and we remarked, at the close of our paper, that the point on which the Apostle chiefly dwells, as a proof and mark of the riches of God's mercy and the greatness of his love, is the quickening of those who were "dead in trespasses and sins." At this point, therefore, resuming the thread of our exposition, we shall commence the present article. "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved.)" Eph. 2:4, 5.

It will, perhaps, be observed that, according to our version, there is a little apparent ambiguity as to the connection of the words, "Even when we were dead in sins," and that they may be taken either in connection with the preceding clause, "wherewith he loved us," or with the following clause, "hath quickened us." If taken in the former connection, we should read, removing the comma after "us," "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us even when we were dead in sins." If we adopt the latter

connection we should read it, "Even when we were dead in sins hath quickened us together with Christ." Each would be equally true in doctrine, each would almost equally set forth the love and mercy of God, but one seems almost to bring before us his love more brightly and conspicuously than the other. Our translation has made the point rather ambiguous by putting the stops as they stand in our version; and as in the original manuscripts stops are never used at all, there may seem to be the same ambiguity in the Greek as in the English. And yet as that language is much more clear and precise than our own, though it would not be bad or ungrammatical Greek to adopt the first interpretation, yet after giving the point some consideration and examination, we are inclined to think that it is more consistent with the original to connect the clause, "Even when we were dead in sins," with the words which follow, rather than with those which precede. Still, as the point is ambiguous, we shall drop a few remarks upon that connection which we have spoken of as fairly admissible, and which certainly is a grand gospel truth. The doctrine, then, laid down by the Apostle, according to this view of the subject, is that God loved his people even when they were dead in sins. Now when we consider what is involved in being dead in sins, when we take a view of who and what God is, and who and what men dead in sin are, it may well make us pause and ask ourselves the question, "Does God, can God love his people, when they are dead in sins?" To this, consistently with his truth, there can be but one answer. If once you hold with the doctrine of election, if once you believe that God loved and chose his people in Christ before the foundation of the world, if once you believe that with God there is no variableness neither shadow of turning, you must necessarily believe that no circumstances which occur in time can alter or affect what was done in eternity. Having been loved in Christ, having been blessed in him with all spiritual blessings, and made accepted in the Beloved, however they may have lost the image of God in which they were originally created, however low they may have sunk in the Adam fall, however they may have become dead in sins and personally defiled by actual transgression, the original and eternal love of God towards them could not be impaired or diminished, much less utterly cease. He loved them therefore when they were dead in sins. Though there was everything in them to make them hateful and loathsome in his pure and holy eyes, though he hates their sins with perfect hatred, though no heart can conceive or tongue of men or angels express the infinite disparity which there is between a God so holy and sinners so vile, yet if we once admit that the love of God to his people depends on their obedience to his word, and that it comes and goes according to their spiritual life and death, their holiness and unholiness, we at once overthrow the whole plan of salvation, and destroy the very foundation of

electing love. But you say, "It is inconceivable that God can love sinners in all their sins, dead in them, without repentance, faith, and love, or one spark of goodness or holiness." It is indeed inconceivable, and that makes it so deep and high a mystery. Yet what would be the consequences of any other view? Ask yourself, for instance, Why did God quicken your soul when dead in sins? You will say, perhaps, "His unspeakable mercy moved him. He saw my ruined state; he knew that I could not quicken my own soul, and he therefore bade me live, because he would not let me sink into eternal death." True, most true. The mercy and compassion of God to poor sinners is a blessed truth, and is beautifully set forth by the Apostle in the words, "But God, who is rich in mercy." But we have already shown that in the bosom of God love and mercy blend together, and that love is the moving cause of mercy. He does not love because he pities, but he pities because he loves. Was not this shown in the parable of the prodigal son? Did not the father pity his truant child because he loved him? He was his son; this drew forth his love. He was hungry and in rags; this drew forth his pity. There might be others as hungry, naked, ragged, and destitute; but they were not as sons, the objects of the father's love. As this point, however, is so obvious, we shall not further dwell upon it; though we might ask a caviller, how he would understand Paul's declaration, when, speaking of the love of Christ, he says, "Who loved me and gave himself for me." If Christ gave himself for Paul, it was because he loved him. Now who, where, and what was Paul when Christ gave himself for him on the cross? Was he alive unto God, or was he dead in sin? Did Christ, then, love Paul when he was holding the clothes of the witnesses who stoned Stephen, and was thus consenting to his death as a righteous act? Did he love Paul when he was breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord? If not, will you fix the exact time when Christ began to love him? And if you put it at any period after the crucifixion, you will contradict the words, "Who loved me and gave himself for me." However inconceivable, then, by our mind, however surpassing every thought of our heart, we must still, if we would hold the truth with a firm hand, abide by this, that God loved his people even when they were dead in sins, and that that is one reason why his love is so great.

But now let us look at the other connection of which we have spoken, and let us read the passage thus, "Even when we were dead in sins hath quickened us together with Christ." This leads us to see the cause of that quickening into spiritual life which is granted to every member of the mystical body of Christ. Of the eternal union subsisting between the Head and the members we have before spoken, and we have also connected the resurrection of Christ with the

resurrection of his members; and yet a few further thoughts upon this point may not be unprofitable or unacceptable.

In the resurrection, then, of Christ from the dead, we may view the virtual and efficient resurrection of all his members. If we may use, without disparagement, such a figure by way of illustration, is there not some similarity in this point between nature and grace? Is it not our head which is the first to awake each morning out of sleep? Whilst our head slumbers, every member of the body slumbers with it. But the head awakes, and awakes first. In and with this awaking each sleeping member awakes also—after the head, but in union with it; and as each member is aroused into the renewed vitality of a freshly awakened life, it rises through its connection with the arising head. Of course, the figure is but an illustration, and a faint and feeble, if not wholly imperfect representation of a spiritual truth from a natural comparison. But taking the truth itself, as it stands in all the strength of its beautiful simplicity, without the aid or hindrance of any natural illustration, see what a gracious and glorious light it casts over the quickening of each mystical member of the body of Christ; and to make the matter more plain and clear to your own mind fix your attention upon some individual who, though still dead in sins, is yet, according to the supposition, a member of Christ's mystical body. Now observe how, in this particular instance, the light and life of the Spirit from above are to visit and quicken his dead soul. Fix, then, your faith firmly on this point. Though now dead in sin, though now walking according to the course of this world, though now by nature a child of wrath even as others, yet there has been that done for him in Christ which is a sure pledge of that which shall be done in him by Christ. He was quickened together with Christ. Being, then, already a partaker of so unspeakable a blessing, when the grace of God visits and quickens his soul into divine life, it is but the passing over into his heart of that life wherewith he was virtually quickened when Christ rose from the dead.

If this be difficult to understand or to believe, look at it from another point of view. Do you believe in the resurrection of the dead? Do you believe that when Christ comes there will be a resurrection of the body? Now what is the virtual cause and pledge of that resurrection of the body? Is it not the resurrection of the body of Christ? As this is the grand argument of 1 Cor. 15 we need not trace it out. We see then that the resurrection of the body is intimately connected with the resurrection of Christ from the dead. Now why should there not be a similar connection in what we may call the resurrection of the soul? For as the dead body will rise hereafter in the literal resurrection, so the

dead soul rises now in its spiritual resurrection. Observe also what a pledge is thus given to the work of grace upon every vessel of mercy—upon every member of the mystical body of Christ. A dead soul is as powerless to quicken itself as a dead body to raise itself. Whence then come both regeneration and resurrection but from a risen Christ? In his resurrection there was the grace which quickens as in his resurrection there is the power that will raise.

We lament to see so little of what is called conversion work going on. It pains our mind to look around and see how few there are who bear marks of being called by sovereign grace. But are there more or are there fewer to be called by grace than are members of Christ's mystical body? Can that number be added to, can that number be taken from? If the soul of man is as thoroughly and actually dead as the Scriptures declare, what short of divine power can quicken it into spiritual life? Means of grace should be employed and that without ceasing, prayer and supplication made, and the blessing of God be earnestly sought for and asked. But when all this has been done we still want the quickening breath. Bone may come to bone, and sinews and flesh come up upon them, and the skin cover them above; but there will be no breath in them till the Spirit of God breathes upon them that they may live. Thus though on the one hand it may seem discouraging to all our efforts that, do what we can, do what we may, we cannot make the gospel effectual to the quickening of those that hear, yet on the other hand it is equally encouraging to believe that in the resurrection of Christ there was a pledge given as well as a virtual quickening of those members of his body who are still dead in sins. A servant of God looks around his congregation, and knowing from personal and painful experience what death in sin means, and seeing how he is surrounded on every side by such, hope seems almost to die out of his heart that any word spoken by him can so touch men's hearts, or so reach men's consciences as to make their souls alive unto God. But let him look again, and instead of looking around let him look up, and fix his believing eyes upon the risen Son of God whose servant he is, whose gospel he preaches, in whose name he stands. Will not this draw down into his soul a sweet encouragement that as the mystical members of the body of Christ were virtually quickened in and with him when he rose from the dead, there is every hope and reason to believe that he will now fulfil that pledge, and make the word of his grace life and spirit to those souls by actual regeneration who have been already mystically and virtually quickened in and together with him at his resurrection?

Now it would almost seem as if some such thoughts passed through the mind

of the Apostle as he thus connected the quickening of those who were dead in sins first with the rich mercy and the great love of God, and secondly with the resurrection of Christ. He therefore throws in, by way of parenthesis, the words, "By grace ye are saved." At first sight there seems to be no special reason for their abrupt introduction and the interruption which they cause in the sentence. But when we view them as gushing out of the Apostle's heart in his holy admiration of the wondrous truth which we have endeavoured to unfold, then we see a beauty in them. Our readers may also perhaps observe with us the change of person from "we" and "us" to "ye." It is we who were dead in sins, it is we who were quickened together with Christ—you and I, I Paul, a Pharisee of the Pharisees, and you Ephesians, abandoned to every filthy lust and vile idolatry. But perhaps this is too great a mystery for you to receive. You can scarcely believe that you were quickened together with Christ; but do you not know that by grace ye are saved? Is not salvation, the whole of salvation—salvation first and last, entirely of grace? Then if it be only by grace that ye are saved, why should you hesitate to believe that when you were dead in sins you were quickened together with Christ? Were salvation of works, you would have been quickened by virtue of your obedience; but salvation being not of works but grace, to have been quickened together with Christ is but a branch of that full and glorious salvation which in grace begins, which by grace is carried on, and which by grace will be fully accomplished.

One grand and blessed distinction between works and grace is this, that there is a limit to one, but no limit to the other. When a man has done his best, done his all, even assuming that his obedience is, as far as it goes, perfect, it has a limit; it can only rise to a certain height, the faculties of the creature; and its reward is limited by its extent. If you pay a workman for his work, you pay him according to the character, the amount, and the goodness of the work done. When he has that, he has all that he can demand or expect. You may give him more than his wages, but all the surplus is a gift, not pay. All work, therefore, and all reward of work, must be limited. But grace knows no limit. Whatever the love of God can embrace, whatever his wisdom can contrive, whatever his power can perform, are the only limits which can be assigned to his grace, or, taking the word in its true and primary meaning, his favour. To make this point a little more clear as well as a little more simple, contrast the love with which a husband regards and shews to his wife with the wages which he pays to a servant. There is a limit both to a servant's work and to a servant's wages; but there is no limit to love, and therefore no limit to the gifts and fruits of love but the power of the bestower. How much more blessed then

is it to be under grace, to have a place in God's heart, a share in his favour and love, than be upon the footing of a servant, doing work and expecting wages. Ahasuerus was willing to give to Queen Esther half of his kingdom; but the highest reward granted to the man whom the king delighted to honour, was but to be arrayed in his apparel, ride his horse, and wear his crown for an hour in a passing pageant.

Now apply this to the point immediately before us. The Apostle is speaking of God's great love in quickening us together with Christ, when we were dead in sins. This was a special act of grace, which, therefore, made the Apostle throw in that parenthetical clause, "By grace ye are saved." But he goes on to show how this grace was still further manifested: "And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." (Eph. 2:6.) The quickening of the natural body of Christ in the tomb was the first step toward his resurrection; for the entrance of life into his dead body must have been the first act in the raising up of that body from the temporary sleep of death. At that moment, as we have pointed out, the whole mystical body of Christ was virtually quickened. But in order that the blessed Lord might come out of the tomb in all the power and glory of his resurrection he had to be raised up as well as quickened. Now his mystical body, as it was quickened together with him when life entered into his dead body, was raised together with him when he came out of the tomb. God is said therefore to "have raised us up together with him." We thus see that there is a distinction between being quickened together with Christ and being raised up together with him. To be raised up together with Christ is a fuller, more complete, more definite, and more glorious act than to be quickened together with him. Is not this true in the experience of God's people? To be quickened into divine life, to be convinced of sin, to have the fear of God planted deeply in the soul, is the commencement of a work of grace. But this is not a deliverance, not a being raised up out of darkness, bondage, doubt, guilt and fear. This is not a knowledge of Christ and of the power of his resurrection; this is not a full coming out of the dark and silent tomb into the glorious light and warmth of day. There is, therefore, a difference between being quickened and being raised; between an interest in that grace and power which give life, and an interest in great grace and power which give liberty. But here is the great blessedness of a mystical union with the Lord Jesus Christ that, as by virtue of interest in him there is a partaking of the benefit and power of his having been quickened, so there is a partaking in the benefit and power of his having been raised up. God does not quicken a soul into divine life to let it remain in the dark tomb of doubt, fear, guilt, and bondage. In raising up Christ there was not only a pledge of the spiritual, but

a virtual resurrection of the members of his body. Liberty then, the liberty of the gospel, deliverance from all doubt and fear, the manifestation of pardon and peace, the shedding abroad of the love of God in the heart, are blessings as much assured to the members of Christ's mystical body as their first quickening into spiritual life. They have no more power to bring liberty into their own minds or to speak peace to their own consciences than they had to quicken themselves when they were dead in sins. But both are equally assured them in Christ their covenant Head.

But the Apostle goes on still further to show the blessings and benefits of union with Christ: "And made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." The ascension of our blessed Lord followed upon his resurrection from the dead. He rose from the dead not to tarry here below, though he graciously continued upon earth for forty days after his resurrection, but that he might go up on high and take his seat at the right hand of the Father. Now, as the members of his mystical body were ever, and must ever continue to be, in union with him, they ascended together with him, and this made the Apostle say, "Hath made us sit together (that is, with him) in heavenly places."

Christ is gone before as their Head and Representative to prepare a place for them, that he may come again and receive them unto himself, that where he is they may be also.

But as we have shown experimentally what it is to be "quickened together with Christ and to be raised up together with him," let us now show what it is, in sweet and living experience, to "sit together in heavenly places in him." This is the sitting together with him in affection as the Apostle speaks: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth." (Col. 3:1, 2.) When as risen with Christ we seek those things which are above, when we set our affections on them, when our heart and conversation are in heaven, then are we made to sit together in heavenly places in him. Here is the only true rest, pleasure, and happiness of the soul, when it can live above all the carking cares, sorrows, and afflictions of this miserable world, and in anticipation of an eternity of happiness, live, speak, and act as if already through Christ in possession of it.

At this point, however, we must pause for the present, leaving to our readers, if so blessed and favoured, their own meditations upon this wondrous mystery

of eternal love, which we trust may coincide with our own when further opened in our next paper.

#### IV.

Unless, by the power of divine teaching and divine testimony, we can enter in some good measure spiritually and experimentally into the grand and glorious truths of the everlasting gospel, we can neither see their peculiar beauty, nor feel their peculiar sweetness and blessedness. Take, for instance, the grand truths on which we have been lately dwelling in our exposition of the chapter now before us (Eph. 2:1-6). How can we enter into the heavenly truths there unfolded so as to see their divine beauty, and realise their power and preciousness, unless we can read them more or less in the light of our own experience? What we were as dead in trespasses and sins, what we are as quickened and made alive unto God, what we hope to be when enjoying in full that of which we have now the earnest—how can we see eye to eye with the man of God as he unfolds these mysteries in the verses to which we have just referred; unless we can realise them in some good measure as our own, both in faith and feeling? The main reason why men stumble at noonday as in the night, and halt and boggle both in understanding and expression when they attempt to handle these divine epistles, is from want of an experience of the truths set forth in them. They want the right key to fit the wards of this intricate lock, and therefore uselessly poke at it with false keys, which, though they cannot spoil the lock, plainly show the ignorance of the workmen.

Bearing this, then, steadily in mind, we now resume the thread of our exposition.

Our readers will remember that three points have hitherto mainly engaged our attention as connected with the calling into life of those who were dead in trespasses and sins. These were: 1. The quickening of them when dead; 2. The raising them up with Christ; 3. The making them to sit together with Christ in the heavenly places. We have more than once pointed out that these three successive steps are all in the closest and most intimate connection with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and his ascension to the right hand of the Majesty on high, and are the fruits and results of the eternal and indissoluble union which exists between the Head and members.

But we have just now laid it down as a vital point that there is no seeing the beauty nor feeling the blessedness of this union with Christ in his resurrection and ascension on high, except by a spiritual knowledge of, and experimental entrance into it. Before, then, we pass on to consider more fully the point at which we paused in our last article—viz., the sitting together with Christ in the heavenly places, we would observe that as there were three successive steps in the actual resurrection and ascension of Christ personal, so there are three successive steps in the spiritual resurrection and ascension of Christ mystical; in other words, that as the Head was first quickened, then raised, then taken up on high in fact, so are his members in feeling. 1. First, then, they are "quickened." This is the beginning of the work of grace upon their hearts—the first communication of divine life to their dead souls. This, therefore, comprehends and embraces all those convictions of sin, all that work of the law on their consciences, all that guilt, bondage, distress, and misery which they experience before deliverance. They are alive, yet in the tomb; quickened, but not brought forth; still in darkness, because the stone is not yet rolled away, nor the resurrection fully accomplished. In Christ personal we may well suppose this was but a moment; but that is no reason why it should be so momentary in Christ mystical. All will allow that time is an element of little importance in a work of grace, and that as in the natural, so in the spiritual birth it is not the length or severity of the labour which makes the deliverance, but the bringing forth of a living child. It is, therefore, no objection to this view that what was accomplished in an instant in the actual body of Christ is accomplished in a longer interval of time in the members of his mystical body; or, to speak more correctly, that the interval between quickening and deliverance is more prolonged in their case spiritually than in his case actually. It is amply sufficient for all spiritual purposes that the quickening of his dead body in the tomb was the pledge, first fruits, and initial cause of the quickening of their dead souls into spiritual life.

2. The next step, then, is actual resurrection. This in Christ personal was accomplished in his coming forth out of the tomb in power and glory; but in Christ mystical is the deliverance of the soul from the bondage of the law into the liberty of the gospel. This deliverance was not only symbolised by, but is the express fruit of the resurrection of Christ; for, in the language of the Apostle, God "hath raised us up together with him." The actual coming forth, then, of Christ personal from the tomb not only symbolises; but is the initial cause of the deliverance of the soul from the bondage of the law into the liberty of the gospel; for as Christ personal, that is, Christ himself, in all the

dignity of his glorious Person, rose from the darkness and narrow limits of the tomb into the light of day, and into all the fulness of his resurrection power and glory, so does the member of his mystical body rise out of darkness into light, and out of bondage into liberty when delivered from the condemnation of the law by a revelation of the Son of God with power.

3. But the chief point to which we would draw the attention of our readers is the third step, or the sitting together with Christ in the heavenly places. This, it will be observed, was not only symbolised by the ascension of Christ, and his sitting at the right hand of God, but is the initial cause\* of it. Our blessed Lord said to his sorrowing disciples, "I go to prepare a place for you." When, then, he ascended up on high, and sat down in the heavenly places, the members of his mystical body ascended also, and sat down with him, for as they were buried with him, and rose with him, so they ascended with him; and, when he took possession of the seat given to him in glory, virtual possession was given them of the mansions in his Father's house, in and with him as their Head and Representative. He said, therefore, to his and their heavenly Father, "The glory which thou hast given me I have given them." (John 17:22.) And this will explain the meaning of those words of the Apostle, "Whom he justified, them he also glorified." (Rom. 8:30.) They are glorified in anticipation, as already mystically sitting with Christ in glory in heavenly places.

\* As this expression, which we have used several times, may not be fully understood by some of our readers, we would briefly observe that the cause of an action may be either final, or instrumental, or initial. Take the following illustration of these three causes. A man goes to work. Why? For wages. Then wages is the *final* cause, as being the end and object of his going to work. To earn these wages he works all day in the harvest field. This then is the *instrumental* cause, for by it as an instrument he gains his end—wages. But something is still needed to set him on to his work. This is the will of his employer, which is therefore the *initial* cause, as originating the work, and making him the instrument of its execution. If not strictly logical, this will explain what we mean when we say that the resurrection of Christ was the *initial* or originating cause of our regeneration.

But the chief point for us to consider is not so much, or rather not only the doctrine which we have thus endeavoured to unfold, but the gracious experience connected with, and flowing out of this ascending with Christ, and sitting together with him in the heavenly places. This is briefly, but very clearly and powerfully, set forth by the Apostle in those striking words: "If ye

**then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." (Col. 3:1-3.)**

**When, then, our desires and affections ascend to where the Lord Jesus Christ now is, when raised out of all the smoke and fog, din and strife, noise and bustle, cares and anxieties, pursuits and pleasures, sins and sorrows of this earthly scene, we can in faith and hope, in love and affection, live above and beyond all things here below, and beholding with unveiled face the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord—this is being made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.**

**When the Lord Jesus went up on high, he entered into his glory. (Luke 24:26; John 7:39.) As then we behold him in his glory in faith and love, there is the reflection of his glory, as we have just intimated from 2 Cor. 3:18; and saints thus favoured enter into heaven when still upon earth, and have the foretaste of the glory which is to be revealed at the Lord's coming before they are for ever clothed with it. There are, indeed, comparatively few who are so highly favoured, and even they only at rare intervals, and for short moments; but that does not affect the truth and certainty of the fact. It is a most blessed truth that if we are members of the mystical body of Christ, the deficiency of our experience, though it deprives us of much of the enjoyment, does not deprive us of our interest in, or union with, our great Covenant Head, and of the fruits which spring out of it.**

**But the Apostle proceeds to unfold one main reason why God has thus quickened, delivered, and made to sit together with Christ in the heavenly places the members of his mystical body. "That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." (Eph. 2:7.)**

**What we now see or feel of the kingdom of grace is but a beginning of what is one day to be revealed. The counsels of God are an unfathomable deep of wisdom, love, and grace; and all that has been yet displayed of them is but a drop of that vast ocean. We, indeed, may well suppose that in the gift of his dear Son, and in the glorious mystery of God manifest in the flesh, there was more wrapped up than the salvation of a few poor souls here and there, and that there was intended to be a richer and greater display of the kingdom**

given to the Lord Jesus Christ than has ever been yet witnessed in this miserable world, where sin and Satan have so long reigned supreme.

We could not, indeed, unfold this subject, or rather our views upon it, without getting upon controversial or at least doubtful ground, which we wish to avoid; but it is plain, from the whole tenor of Scripture, that there will be one day a display of the exceeding riches of God's grace, beyond all that has ever yet been seen or known. All that God can do, and has promised to do, in the riches of his grace, has not yet been fully accomplished.

We are but the first fruits of a glorious harvest. At the council at Jerusalem James well expressed the nature of the present dispensation: "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name." (Acts 15:14.) God is now in his dealings with the Gentiles taking out of them a people for his name; but a time is coming when there will be a fuller display of the riches of his grace. God's own word, which cannot be broken, is, "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord." (Numb. 14:21.) And agreeably with that oath or promise, runs the declaration of the prophet, that the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea. (Isa. 11:9) Without entering into disputed points, may we not simply ask, Have these promises been yet fulfilled? Has the earth been yet filled with the glory of the Lord? Look how the waters cover the seas from shore to shore. Has the knowledge of the Lord thus filled the earth from sea to sea, from shore to shore, so that every place has been full of the knowledge of the Lord? Are not the dark places of the earth still full of the habitations of cruelty? Not to speak of such countries as India, China, Turkey, look at France, Italy, Germany, even our own favoured isle, and see how sin runs down our streets like water, and instead of the knowledge of the Lord filling the lands as waters cover the sea, see rather how ignorance of him, contempt of his word and will, open disobedience to his clear commands, and iniquities of every shape and name, fill every place and spread themselves from shore to shore.

We cannot pursue this subject, but it is sometimes refreshing to a soul wearied with the spectacle of the sins and sorrows which make this world such a scene of misery, to believe on the testimony of God himself in his holy word, that it shall not be always so, that a time is coming when the kingdoms of this world will become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign for ever and ever. In these ages to come God will show in a more full and complete manner the exceeding riches of his grace, of which he has already

given us a pledge, earnest, and foretaste in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

The mention of grace fires, as it were, the Apostle's soul, and therefore he drops for the moment the view which he had cast into the ages to come of the exceeding riches of grace, then to be more fully revealed, and directs his pen to the clearer opening of the nature of grace, and of salvation by grace: "For by grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Eph. 2:8, 9.)

It is hardly necessary for us to explain what grace is or means. The simplest view of it is the truest and best. View it then as simply meaning favour, and thus expressive of that peculiar favour with which God regards his people in Christ. The point on which the Apostle chiefly dwells both here and elsewhere is the grand distinction between grace and works in the matter of salvation. It must be either by one or the other, for they are mutually opposed to each other, as he argues elsewhere: "And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work." (Rom 11:6.) It is clear that if I am to be saved, it must be either by my own obedience to the law of God, or apart from that obedience as an act of pure favour on the part of God toward me. I must either be one or the other; for if works be once taken into account, then there must be a strict and rigid examination of these works to ascertain whether they are really good; and if, on examination by the holy and unswerving law of God, they be found not good, their condemnation must ensue as a necessary consequence. If I have a debt to pay, and the money which I bring is forged, false, or counterfeit, it is not only not paying my debt, but it is adding a crime to non-payment. All, then, being alike debtors, and none able to pay a farthing of their debt for want of good and right money, those who are acquitted of their debt must be so on the footing of pure favour from their great Creditor, or else they must incur the due penalty, which is to be shut up in the prison of everlasting woe.

Now, by this grace or pure favour of God we are saved through faith, faith itself being the special gift of God; and thus the very medium by which we receive salvation, and become manifestly interested in it, is not of ourselves. The eye which sees salvation in the person and work of the Son of God, the ear which hears and receives the glad tidings, the hand which lays hold of and embraces the Saviour in his atoning blood and justifying obedience, are all the special gift of God. Do we see Jesus and salvation in and through him? God

has opened our eyes to see. Have we heard his blessed voice? God has given us ears to hear. Have we laid hold of him, and brought him into our heart in all his saving benefits and blessings? God gave us that faith by revealing his dear Son in us, and making him spiritually and experimentally known to our souls.

But the Apostle assigns a special reason why salvation should not be of works, "Lest any man should boast." It is a peculiar feature in the revealed character and government of God that he will not allow any one to boast himself in his presence. He is a jealous God, and will never suffer the creature to arrogate to itself any part of the glory which belongs solely to him. The Apostle, therefore, assigns this as a sufficient reason why Abraham could not be justified by works, for if he were he would have whereof to glory; but this, he says, "not before God," that is, can never be allowed before and in the presence of God, for it is opposed to the whole of his character, to his revealed will, and fixed determination. (Rom. 4:2.) He therefore says, in the same strain of argument, "Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." (Rom. 3:27, 28.) As if holding in his hand the balances of the sanctuary, and weighing in them salvation by grace and salvation by works, that which turns the scale is which of these two ways excludes boasting. As, then, salvation by works favours boasting, and salvation by grace excludes it, the matter is at once decided; that scale must weigh the heavier in which there is no human glory. You will observe that the Apostle does not introduce into this question the point of the goodness or badness of the works. He merely takes the principle of works generally as meritorious, and enabling the worker to present them as such for acceptance. That they should allow boasting is sufficient for his argument, as an unanswerable and *a priori* objection to their claim being for one moment tolerated. Thus the doctrine of salvation by works is cut up *in limine*; directly it comes into court, before the advocate is suffered to plead, the judge asks him, "Does this plea of yours admit of boasting on the part of the plaintiff? If it does, it cannot be entertained in this court, and I shall stop the trial at once. This is the King's court, and no cause can be heard or tried here which allows of any glory except to our sovereign Lord the King." This is the whole force of the Apostle's argument, and so strong was it that he draws from it the certain conclusion that we are justified by faith, because it excludes boasting, and not by works, which allow it. "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." (Rom. 3:28.) The great question has always been, "How is a man to be saved?" Now there are but two possible ways—by works or by grace, by merit or by favour. Paul declares himself for salvation by grace, by favour, and not by merit, in

which he stood alone against all the legalists of his day. And such views had he of the honour and majesty of God, and such a holy zeal for the glory of God, that it was sufficient for him to decide the whole matter that salvation by grace brought glory to God and salvation by works brought glory to man. On this point he takes his stand; here he firmly plants his foot. There needed, therefore, no long and laborious examination of this or that man's works, not even of Abraham's, the very friend of God, whether they were good or bad. It is a sufficient argument to dispose of the whole question, that as the creature is not allowed to boast itself before God, a way of salvation which, as a principle of merit, allows of that boasting, is *ipso facto*, primarily, thoroughly, and fundamentally wrong, and must, without further investigation, be condemned and cast out of court, as utterly opposed to the character of God and repugnant to the eyes of his glory.

But we must reserve to our next paper the further consideration of salvation by grace, and not of works, lest any man should boast.

V.

Among the innumerable displays of the infinite wisdom of God which the gospel of his grace has revealed and brought to light, must be named the special provision which he has made, that good works should hold therein a fitting and appropriate place. One of the strongest objections which cavillers and opponents have in all ages brought against the doctrine of salvation wholly and solely by grace is, that it supersedes the necessity of good works, and thus by virtually, if not nullifying, yet reducing them to insignificance, opens a door directly or indirectly for licentiousness. Could this charge be substantiated, it would be almost fatal to the claims of free grace as a divine revelation, for a holy God could not sanction, much less devise and reveal, a scheme of salvation which, by encouraging sin, should break down the very barriers of moral rectitude. Even our natural conscience, even our dim and misty notions of right and wrong, virtue and vice, good and evil, would be shocked at, and revolt from any conclusion which would impair the holiness of God, or represent him as sanctioning or licensing sin. In order, therefore, to secure the gospel from so fatal a charge, God has made a special provision that good works shall occupy in it a high and honourable place. That good works should save is one thing, that they should be wholly set aside is another. Not only, then, shall they, according to God's appointment, not be set aside, but they shall be raised in worth and value. They shall be made a means of

glorifying God, which sets on them a higher and nobler stamp than if they merely effected or concurred in the salvation of man. They shall be done from higher, better, and purer motives; they shall be wrought by the blessed Spirit; they shall be accepted by and approved of God as fruits of righteousness which grow upon and manifest the living branches of the only true Vine.

But let us, taking up the thread of our exposition, observe more particularly the place in which they are set by the Apostle in the chapter before us: "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." (Eph. 2:10.) Several points, thus placed before us, demand our attentive observation.

1. Observe, first, what is here declared of those who are saved by grace through faith—that they are God's "*workmanship*." The word here translated "workmanship," means in the original not so much the act or skill of the workman as the effect and product of that act and skill, and may therefore be more simply rendered "work." "We are his work"—the fruit and product of his creative hand. All, then, that we are and all that we have that is spiritual, and as such acceptable to God, we owe to the special operation of his power. There is not a thought of our heart, word of our lips, or work of our hands, which is truly holy and heavenly, simple and sincere, glorifying to God or profitable to man, of which he is not by his Spirit and grace the divine and immediate Author. Now beautifully is this expressed by the Church of old, and what an echo do her accents find in every gracious heart: "But now, O Lord, thou art our Father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand." (Isa. 64:8.) How suitable, how expressive is the figure of the clay and the potter. Look at the moist clay under the potter's hand. How soft, how tender, how passive is the clay; how strong, how skilful are the hands which mould it into shape. As the wheel revolves, how every motion of the potter's fingers shapes the yielding clay, and with what exquisite skill does every gentle pressure, every imperceptible movement impress upon it the exact form which it was in his mind to make it assume. How sovereign was the hand which first took the clay, as the Apostle declares: "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" (Rom. 9:21.) And as divine sovereignty first took the clay, so divine sovereignty shapes it when taken into form.

Good works, therefore, properly so called, spring out of the inward operation of God's grace. By making the tree good he makes the fruit good. (Matt. 12:33.) He works in us first the will to do that which is good, and then he gives

us the power. He thus works in us both to will and to do of his good pleasure. (Phil. 2:13.) Under the operations of his grace we are transformed by the renewing of our mind to prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God; (Rom. 12:2;) and as this will is sought after to be known and done, good works follow as the necessary fruit. All those acts of love and affection, of kindness, sympathy, and liberality towards the Lord's people; all those instances of self-denial and willingness rather to suffer than to do wrong; all those proofs of disinterested desire to do all the good we can according to our means, position, and circumstances of life; all that striving after and maintaining integrity and uprightness of conduct in all matters of business and trust; all that strict and scrupulous adherence to our word, even to our own injury; all that Christian fulfilment of our relative duties, and the social relationships of husband and father, wife and mother, which the scripture has enjoined—in a word, all those works which by almost unanimous consent are called "good" by men, are only really and truly good as wrought in the heart, lips, and life by the power of God.

But we must not linger too long on this one feature of good works, but pass on to show how they are the fruit of special *ordination*. Thus we are said to be "created in Christ Jesus unto good works which God hath before *ordained*, that we should walk in them."

The performance of good works by his people, God, according to this testimony of the Apostle, has secured by three things: 1. Sovereign ordination; 2. Actual creation; 3. Effectual operation. The last point we considered first, because the Apostle first names it by declaring that we are God's "workmanship." The two other points we shall now briefly consider:

2. Observe, then, that God has before *ordained* that we should walk in good works; that is, in the performance of them. Good works, therefore, are subjects of divine decree. This secures their performance, and they are thus as much a matter of predestination as the persons of the elect. Peter therefore declares that we are "elect unto obedience." (1 Peter 1:2.) Election unto eternal life, unto salvation, unto the blood of sprinkling many gladly hear of, receive, and profess. This, they say, is sweet and precious doctrine. And so indeed it is. But do they find or feel any similar sweetness and preciousness in being chosen and ordained to know and do the will of God? Do they see and feel the blessedness of the precept being secured by divine decree, as well as the promise: and that there is a constraining power in the love of Christ, under which they experience a holy and sacred pleasure in no longer living

unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose again, similar in kind, if not in degree, to the pleasure which they experience in knowing they were ordained unto eternal life? We hear much of election unto salvation. Many preach it, more profess it. But how many of these preachers, how many of these professors of the doctrine of election gladly preach or gladly hear of being elect unto obedience, or being ordained unto the performance of good works? And why, but because, even by the verdict of their own consciences, their want of obedience would disprove their election, and their non-performance of good works would show they had neither part nor lot in this divine ordination? But until this obedience be rendered, until these good works be brought forth, half of the sweetness and blessedness of real religion and of salvation by grace is not felt or known, nor the liberty of the gospel thoroughly realised or enjoyed, for the gospel must be obeyed and lived, as well as received and believed, that its full liberating, sanctifying influences may be experienced, as sweetening the narrow and rugged path of doing and suffering the whole will of God.

3. But observe further, that believers are "*created* in Christ Jesus unto good works." The word "unto" means "for the purpose of." Among other ends, therefore, for which believers are made new creatures in Christ, one is that they may be fruitful in every good word and work.

This creation in Christ Jesus unto good works carries out their ordination unto them. As because they were ordained to eternal life, they were called by grace, and thus effectual calling follows upon and proves their predestination, so because they were ordained unto good works, they are created unto the performance of them. This creation is that new creation of which the Apostle elsewhere speaks: "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature," or, more literally, "creation." (2 Cor. 5:17.) So also in this epistle: "And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Eph. 4:24.) And again: "And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him." (Col. 3:10.) All these texts speak the same clear, uniform language, that good works are the fruits of that new nature, that heavenly and divine principle which, as born of the Spirit, is spirit. This, therefore, sets good works in a very high, holy, and honourable place, and effectually distinguishes them from the good works of amiable, benevolent, active, and zealous men, which, however useful and beneficial to suffering humanity, are not wrought in them by the power of God, nor fruits of a new creation in Christ Jesus.

**By thus keeping close to the inspired language of the Apostle, we avoid two great mistakes as regards good works: 1. We do not ignore them, neglect them, slight them, and by never mentioning, dwelling, or insisting upon them, virtually set them aside. 2. We do not legalise them, and thus make out of them a yoke of bondage. They are not the tree, nor the sap of the tree, but the fruits of the tree, by which the nature and goodness of the tree are made manifest, and openly seen and known. As the goodness of the vine is seen and known by the goodness of the grapes; as their number, colour, size, and flavour manifest to all who see and taste them the exact sort, cultivation, and character of the vine itself, so it is with the good works of the saints of God. They are outward marks and proofs of the inward grace of God, and by them the true saints of God are manifested to be trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified. And similarly by the want of them are distinguished those dead professors, who so abound in our day, of whom Jude speaks, as "trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots."**

**But as we are not preaching on the subject of good works, but attempting to open the chapter before us in a way of simple, experimental exposition, we shall now proceed with the Apostle: "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; that at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." (Eph. 2:11, 12.) There is a break in the subject here. Up to this point, from the very commencement of the epistle, the Apostle had been dwelling upon the rich and wondrous blessings which God in his grace had bestowed upon the saints in Ephesus and the faithful in Christ Jesus. Commencing with their election in Christ, he had traced out blessing after blessing in him, till he had brought them out as trees of righteousness, bearing abundant fruit, and thus glorifying God. But now, lest they should be lifted up with pride, and think that there was something in them more than in others which drew down upon them those distinguishing favours, he reminds them of their base original, and especially of this circumstance, that they were Gentiles, and as such had no interest in the promises made to the literal Israel. "The Circumcision in the flesh made by hands," that is, the literal Israel, Israel after the flesh, the lineal descendants of Abraham, the Jews, had an interest in the promises, and especially in the great promise of the Messiah, who was to come from Israel and to Israel. As Israel after the flesh has been for a time cast off from the favour of God, we are very apt to overlook the privileges**

possessed by it, and much study of the Scriptures, both Old and New, and simple adherence to the testimony of God therein, in spite of our own powerful prejudices and current opinions, are necessary to understand the mind of the Spirit concerning the ancient family of God. Paul enumerates the privileges of ancient Israel very clearly and concisely: "Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." (Rom. 9:4, 5.) It would take us too far from our subject to explain the privileges thus enumerated, and to show the position of Israel after the flesh at the time when the gospel was first preached as well as now. That position is well and clearly opened in Peter's address to them (Acts 3:22-26); and by Paul and Barnabas. (Acts 13:46) 47.) In Christ, as chosen and blessed in him, there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile, as Paul speaks: "Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise." (Gal. 4:28.) And again: "Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free; but Christ is all, and in all." (Col. 3:11.) But there is a distinction in privilege, and this distinction is clearly opened in the words: "Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers; and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy; as it is written, For this cause I will confess to thee among the Gentiles, and sing unto thy name." (Rom. 15:8, 9.) Thus what the Jew received at the first promulgation of the gospel, he received by promise; but what the Gentile received he received by pure mercy. The distinction between them may be thus illustrated. Here are two men, equally needy. To the one I have promised help, to the other not. When, then, I give a present to the former, I give it according to promise; when I give a present to the latter, I give it of pure favour. As Gentiles, therefore, these Ephesian saints had no claim upon God. They were not children of any covenant which God had made with their fathers. Intimations, indeed, of intended mercy for the Gentiles were scattered up and down the Scriptures, some of which the Apostle quotes, Rom. 15:10-12; and the grand promise made to Abraham, that "in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed," folded in its all-embracing arms Gentile as well as Jew. But as Gentiles they were far off from God, and their wicked lives, their foul idolatries, their gross superstitions, their dense ignorance, their natural atheism and infidelity set them farther still. The Apostle, therefore, sets before them their state as Gentiles, that he may impress more clearly and powerfully upon them their obligations to free, sovereign, and superabounding grace.

Thus he goes on to tell them: "That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world." (Eph. 2:12.) They were, in their natural state, before divinely quickened and made alive unto God, "without Christ," that is, without manifest union and communion with him. The word translated "without" is the same as occurs in the expression, "Without me ye can do nothing;" where we read in the margin, "severed from me." Though in the purposes of God, and by their eternal election in Christ, they were members of his mystical body, they had not been baptized into Christ by the Spirit so as to be made living members of his spiritual body, the Church (1 Cor. 12:13), and therefore had not "put on Christ." (Gal. 3:27.) And as they were, such were we. We were "without Christ" in our Gentile days. He had no place in our thoughts. We knew nothing of his Person and work, blood and righteousness, beauty and blessedness, grace and glory. He was to us a root out of a dry ground, and in our eyes he had no form nor comeliness. His name might have been on our lips, but his Spirit and grace were not in our hearts. And if matters be in any way different now with us, if there be any faith on him, hope in him, or love to him, grace has wrought it all. Let us never forget what we were before we were called by grace. Let the remembrance of our sins and of the whole bent and current of our lives be bitter to us, that we may all the more prize and admire the riches of that sovereign grace which stooped to us in our low and lost estate. The paschal lamb was to be eaten with bitter herbs. The remembrance of Egyptian bondage should ever accompany the enjoyment of gospel liberty, and godly sorrow for sin the feeding on the flesh of Christ.

They were also "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel." It is hard for us to realise now the peculiar position which Israel occupied as the outward people of God. The word "commonwealth" means rather "polity"—its literal translation; and by the polity of Israel we are to understand the whole of their civil, religious, and national fabric. God himself had built them up into a nation different from all other nations. He had assigned them a peculiar land, of which he put them into possession. He gave them a code of laws—moral, civil, and religious. He appointed rites and sacrifices, by which he was to be approached and worshipped. He set apart a peculiar tribe, that of Levi, to minister in his service, and a peculiar family of that tribe, the house of Aaron, to minister at his altar and in his tabernacle. He thus made of Israel a peculiar commonwealth, or rather a polity, and as such it had privileges peculiar to itself, and such as no other nation on earth ever possessed. Now, the Ephesian saints, and all other Gentile believers in common with them, were "aliens

from this commonwealth of Israel," and therefore had no part or lot, share or interest in the laws, privileges, sacrifices, and ceremonies of that peculiar people. When, then, the blessings of the gospel were extended to them, God went, so to speak, out of his way—not, indeed, out of the way of his secret will and the firm decrees of the everlasting covenant, but out of the way marked in the lines of his word; and when Israel, as a people, by the voice of their leaders rejected the Son of God and crucified the Lord of glory, the stream of blessing was diverted from its natural and prescribed course, and turned into the Gentile wilderness, to make the desert rejoice and to blossom as the rose.

Similarly they were "strangers from the covenants of promise." There is a little apparent difficulty in the word "covenant," as being in the plural, not the singular number; for God's covenant with Israel after the flesh was really but one, and is so spoken of by the Apostle, Gal. 3:15-17; 4:24; Heb. 8:9, 13; 9:1. But he speaks also, Rom. 9:4, of the "covenants" as Israel's peculiar privilege. We explain the difficulty thus: The covenant made with Israel was really and truly but one, but as given and renewed on more than one occasion, it may be viewed as several. There were two special occasions on which this covenant with Israel was made. 1. It was made first with Abraham (Gen. 15:18; 17:2-8.) 2. It was made secondly with the children of Israel at Mount Sinai. (Exod. 34:10, 27; Deut. 5:2.) Thus though the covenant with Israel was really but one, yet as thus repeated and enlarged, and stored with fuller and clearer promises, it may be spoken of as more than one. In a similar manner we speak of "the charters" of our early English kings, though really and truly Magna Charta is the great and only charter, of which all subsequent charters were but the renewing, enlarging, and re-establishing. These covenants contained promises, some absolute and others conditional, and therefore are called "the covenants of promise." The original promises made to Abraham were absolute and unconditional. These were mainly three. 1. That the Lord would be a God to him and to his seed after him. 2. That in his seed Christ (Gal. 3:16) all the nations of the earth should be blessed. 3. That he would give the land of Canaan to him and his posterity for an everlasting possession. These promises were absolute and unconditional, and have never been revoked, though the first and third are in abeyance. But the promises made at Mount Sinai were conditional. See, for instance, Deut. 28, and observe how conditional the promises contained in it are. Every blessing was promised them if obedient; every curse threatened if they were disobedient. The conditional character of those blessings is well summed up, Deut. 30:15-20. Now the Gentiles were strangers to those covenants of promise. They were not altogether without promises, for they had an interest in the one great promise,

besides scattered promises of intended mercy; but they had no promises made to them in and by a specially revealed covenant. Mercy, therefore, comes to them out of the overflowings of God's grace, and this makes it doubly precious.

## VI.

How graphic, how forcible is the language of Scripture! How a few simple words, inspired and dictated by the holy Ghost, describe our condition by nature, and especially that of the heathen world, as uninspired man could never have expressed it, with the utmost of his boasted wisdom, knowledge, or skill. "Dead in trespasses and sins;" "By nature the children of wrath even as others;" "Strangers from the covenants of promise;" how forcible are these expressions, and how, by a few simple touches, they lay out, as it were, for open view the whole length and breadth of man's fallen state.

And now come two expressions which seem almost more than any other to describe the forlorn and miserable condition of man as alienated from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in him, because of the blindness of his heart: "Having no hope, and without God in the world."

Pursuing, then, our fixed track, we shall now proceed with our exposition of the chapter before us.

1. The first expression which demands our attention is "*having no hope*," as specially descriptive of the state and condition by nature of the Gentile world before God.

By "having no hope" is meant that they had no well-grounded hope, no hope such as God would recognise, or to which salvation was attached (Rom. 8:24); and the reason was because no special promises had been given to them or prospect of deliverance held out to them by the word of God from their state of death in sin, or from the wrath of God, which was their due as sinners. For them there was no covenant of which God could be mindful. They might groan under their misery. The whole earth might be filled with the habitations of cruelty; widows and orphans might be plundered and oppressed; torrents of innocent blood be shed; wickedness triumph; crime go unpunished, and earth be a charnel house, in which the victims of ambition and war should be slaughtered by myriads without help or hope. As Elihu said, "By reason of the

multitude of oppressions they make the oppressed to cry; they cry out by reason of the arm of the mighty. But none saith, Where is God my Maker, who giveth songs in the night?" (Job 35:9, 10.) None of the oppressed could say, "Where is God my Maker?" To none of them were given "songs in the night," in the hope of deliverance; but they perished in sullen silence, or reckless despair. Whatever misery they suffered, it was not with them as with the children of Israel in Egypt—that God heard the groaning of the prisoners, for there was no covenant that he had made with or for them which he had to remember. (Exod. 2:24.) Thus on the side of God they had no hope, for he was not bound to look upon them, or have respect unto them; and on their own side they had no covenant to look to (for a covenant implies two parties,) as containing any promises of mercy for them. Nor had they any written revelation\* of the mind and will of God afforded them, and nothing beyond the faint remains of tradition, such as sacrifices, which they abused, or what they could learn of his eternal power and Godhead—those invisible things which were to be seen and understood by the things that were made, but which not retaining in their knowledge, they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. (Rom. 1:20, 21.) How different from this condition was that of Israel! An Israelite under oppression or trouble had a covenant to which he could look, full of promises; sacrifices which, to an enlightened mind, spoke of atonement by the blood of Messiah to come; a written revelation which he could read, as unfolding to him the mind and will of God; priests who could teach him (Mal. 2:6, 7); and prophets who could warn, admonish, or encourage him.\*\* To the Jew, therefore, there was hope, for to him belonged the promises. But to the Gentile there was no hope, for with him God had made no covenant, and to him, therefore, there were, on that ground, no promises. We find, therefore, the apostles preaching the gospel in a different way to the Jews and the Gentiles. To the Jews it was preached as a fulfilment of the covenant and the promises made to their fathers. Thus Peter, after telling them that "the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of their fathers, had glorified his Son Jesus," whom they had denied and killed, at the close of his discourse says: "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." (Acts 3:25, 26.) In almost a similar way Paul preached to the Jews at Antioch, in Pisidia: "And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art

my Son, this day have I begotten thee." (Acts 13:32, 33.) But when they preached to the Gentiles, they preached simple faith and repentance: "To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins." (Acts 10:43.) "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men everywhere to repent; because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead," (Acts 17:30, 31.) Our space does not admit of our dwelling further on this point, but, unless clearly seen and understood, much of the Acts and the Epistles will be dark and obscure. In fact, it was the great and absorbing question of that day.

\* This distinction between Israel and the Gentiles is very clearly put by Moses, Deut. 4:5-10; 30:10-15.

\*\* The prayer of the Levites (Neh. 9:5-37) most beautifully and touchingly unfolds the peculiar privileges of Israel, with their abuse of them, and yet the infinite, unchangeable mercies of God in spite of their disobedience. If individually and personally, or even to a great extent nationally, the children of Israel abused all these privileges, and made God's name blasphemed among the heathen (Rom. 2:24), that did not affect their relationship to God by outward covenant, nor cancel his promises to them.

To return, then, to our exposition. "Having no hope." What a knell do these words seem to ring to the whole of the Gentile world! "Having no hope." Picture to yourself an emigrant ship, crowded with passengers, which has just struck on a hidden rock in the middle of the sea, and is now slowly sinking in the deep waters; figure to yourself their terror when the captain, abandoning all further effort to save the ship, says, "There is now no hope!" Or take the idea of a beloved husband on his dying bed, and picture the agony of the poor distressed wife, soon to be a forlorn widow, when the physician says, "There is no hope!" Or, what is nearer still, figure to yourself a dying man, almost if not wholly in the jaws of despair, feeling and crying out, "There is no hope! I must go to hell, with all my sins on my head!" How forlorn, how dreadful are all these cases! To have lost all hope is to have lost what often is our chief support under pain, trouble, and affliction, which we only bear with some degree of patience as looking forward in hope to a change for the better.

But suppose, just as the ship is about to sink, deliverance comes in the near approach of a vessel; or a favourable turn is given to the sickness of the dying

man; or the Lord breaks in on the soul of the poor despairing sinner. There is now hope, and this is a hope which maketh not ashamed. The passengers and crew are saved; the dying husband restored to health; the despairing sinner blessed with pardon and peace. Such is the gospel to the poor Gentile, when it becomes to him the power of God unto salvation, and all the more prized and precious because it comes to him when without hope.

2. But now comes the last and as if finishing touch to this powerful description of the Ephesian Gentiles before called by grace: "And *without God in the world.*" The word rendered "without God," is literally "atheists." But what a description does this one lifelike touch give of the carnal, godless, atheistical state of the heathen world. Ignorant of him in whom they lived and moved and had their being, and who had given them life and breath and all things, they thought, spoke, and acted as if they had had no Creator who had called them into existence, no Preserver who had maintained their being, no Judge to whom they were accountable for their actions, no Avenger of oppression, no Protector of the oppressed. They were atheists in the true and proper sense of the word, for their gods were either dumb idols of wood and stone, or deified representatives of every lust and crime which had debased human nature below the beasts. Jupiter, their head god, at whose nod Olympus trembled, was guilty of incest, adultery, rape, and other crimes for which, in this country, he would have been hanged; Bacchus was a drunken profligate; Mercury was an accomplished thief; and Venus a prostitute. Thus their very religion, such as it was, debased and degraded their minds, fostered every vile lust and passion by the example of their deities, and was really, as the Apostle declares (1 Cor. 10:20, 21), a service and a sacrifice to devils. But we need not pursue this point further, as it is sufficiently plain.

Let us then apply this description of the state of the Gentiles by nature to our own case. It is true that, viewed outwardly, we do not stand exactly in the same position with the heathen nations. Living in a nominally Christian land, the word of God having come to us in both Old and New Testaments the gospel being preached with more or less clearness in our midst, many examples of Christian men and women being daily before our eyes, having had parents, or teachers, or friends who knew something of the only true God and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent, our case by nature was not outwardly so hopeless, or our state so thoroughly atheistic as that of the Ephesian Gentiles. We should be unmindful of, and ungrateful to the providence of God which has cast our birth in this highly favoured land, if we despised as worthless and valueless all such privileges; and yet, spiritually and experimentally viewed, as

far as the salvation of our souls is concerned, there was but little real difference between us and them, for we had no well-grounded hope of eternal life, and, if not speculatively and avowedly infidels or atheists, practically and really we were without God in the world. Acknowledging him by our lips, we denied him in our hearts and by our lives; and if we did not worship gods of wood and stone, or deify our lusts, yet idols filled every niche of our heart, and we lived in rebellious defiance of the God of heaven. Thus practical, if not speculative infidels and atheists, we thought, spoke, and acted as if there were no God who searched our heart, heard our words, marked our actions, hated our sins, or would bring us into judgment for them. Such we were, such we should have continued to be, such we should have lived, and such should we have died, but for the sovereign, superabounding grace of God.

**"O to grace how great a debtor!"**

It is only by taking a view of our state by nature, and seeing and feeling what grace has delivered us from, that we learn how free, how full, how superabounding grace is.

Having thus beautifully and graphically described the state by nature and practice of these Gentile Ephesians, the Apostle now goes on to show how mercy, pure mercy, reached their case: "But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." (Eph. 2:13.) How continually does the Apostle bring before us union with Christ Jesus as the foundation of all spiritual blessings! If you will read carefully the first chapter of this Epistle, you will see how again and again he says, "in Christ Jesus," "in Christ," "in the Beloved," "in whom," as if he would dwell on this union as a bee dwells on a flower to suck all its sweetness, and bear away the honey for others also. And observe also, as to be "without Christ" is to have no hope, and to be without God in the world, so to be "in Christ" is to be made nigh unto God by his precious blood. As poor Gentile sinners we were "far off." Sin had set us at an infinite distance from God. For us there was no hope; and being dead in trespasses and sins, under the influence and guidance of the Prince of the power of the air, children of wrath, even as others, without Christ, having no hope and without God in the world, we were as far from God as sin and Satan could set us. Whence, then, and why did mercy come to us in our low and lost estate? The key to it lies in the words "in Christ Jesus." These three simple words harmonise the two chapters. Taking us back to eternal election in Christ, and to redemption through his blood, they tell us why these poor hopeless and godless heathens, and we among them, who were

sometimes (that is once, or formerly) afar off have been made nigh by the blood of Christ. Thus it is not the whole of the heathen world who are made nigh by the blood of Christ, either by universal redemption, or as put, as modern divines teach, in a salvable condition. But it is those who had been blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ before the foundation of the world, and therefore were interested in that everlasting covenant which was both anterior and superior to the covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. There was no covenant made with the whole body of the Gentiles as with the whole body of the Jews; and therefore the whole body of the Gentiles was not brought nigh by the blood of Christ as the whole body of the Jews by the blood of the sacrifices. The blood of the everlasting covenant was shed for elect Gentiles, and elect Jews, and these only are brought nigh unto God by it. It was, therefore, only as having an eternal union with Christ, as being chosen in him before the foundation of the world, and having redemption by his precious blood as a fruit of that union, that these poor, godless Gentiles were brought nigh unto God. These, and these only, are called by grace; these, and these only, are quickened from a death in sin, for it is by grace only, that is the free, distinguishing favour of God, that they are saved. We, therefore, read: "And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved," or, as the word might be rendered, "Those who were to be saved." (Acts 2:47.) And again: "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed." (Acts 13:48.) We must carefully distinguish between the world at large and the elect, whether Jew or Gentile, or we shall fall into confusion. Whatever distinction there was between Jew and Gentile as to outward privilege, distinct from, and independent of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ, no such distinction exists between them as viewed in union with him. In him all such distinctions vanish. As chosen in his dear Son, as blessed with all spiritual blessings in him, accepted in the Beloved, and redeemed by his precious blood, all the elect of God, whether Jew or Gentile, stand before him one in Christ Jesus.

But how are they brought nigh by the blood of Christ? They are so in two senses: 1. As regards their persons; and 2. As regards their experience.

1. As redeemed by the blood of Christ, the separation and distance from God, caused by sin, are put away and removed. It was sin which separated between them and God. (Isa. 60:2.) Being enemies in their mind by wicked works, they were far off from him. But when Christ put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (Heb. 9:26), he by his precious blood reconciled their persons unto God, and thus brought them nigh unto him.

**2. And when they receive the atonement (or "reconciliation," margin, Rom. 5:11), that is into their hearts and consciences, then they are brought nigh unto God in their own happy experience. There is no other way of being made nigh unto God, either as regards the acceptance of our persons or access to his presence.**

**But now observe what further benefits and blessings spring out of being thus brought nigh by the blood of Christ: "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." (Eph. 2:14.) He is our peace. This necessarily springs from being reconciled and brought nigh by the blood of Christ. Sin has not only made us enemies to God, but made God an enemy to us. What peace, then, can there be between us whilst thus mutual enemies? Peace is between friends, not between foes. During this state of hostility and warfare, as there is no real, so there can be no felt or enjoyed peace. But the removal of the cause of the war brings about peace, first really and then experimentally. Christ has made peace through the blood of the cross. (Col. 1:20.) There is now no enmity on the part of God, for it was a law enmity. God always loved his people in Christ; and as he is unchanging and unchangeable, he never could or did hate them. But as a judge is an enemy to a criminal, even were that criminal his own son, so as Judge and Lawgiver, God was an enemy to his own elect, viewed as law-breakers. But when the law was fulfilled, and all the breaches of it atoned for by the obedience and death of his dear Son, then this law enmity was removed, and the anger of God against sin and the sinner pacified. Sin, therefore, being put away, the whole cause of that law enmity is removed; and when we believe in the Son of God, and receive the atonement by his precious blood, then there is no enmity on our side; for the goodness, mercy, and love of God melt the heart into the sweetest humility, affection, and love to and before him.**

**But Christ "is our peace" in another sense, and this seems to be the chief drift of the Apostle here. There existed a deadly enmity between Jew and Gentile. The Jew loathed and abhorred the Gentile, and the Gentile hated and despised the Jew.**

**To the Jew the Gentile was an unclean dog, with whom he would neither eat nor drink, whose very touch was profanation, and his presence in the land of Judea a hateful and intolerable burden. To the Gentile the Jew was odious from his narrow bigotry, his obstinacy, his refusal of all intercourse, his**

**grasping covetousness, and his hatred of a foreign yoke. When, then, elect Jew and elect Gentile were alike brought nigh by the blood of Christ, they needed to be reconciled to one another as well as unto God, and as all those distinctions which had kept them separate were done away in Christ, they were to be united in the closest bonds of affection and love. As one in Christ they must also be one with each other. In this sense Christ is "our peace."**

**The Apostle therefore adds: "And hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." There seems to be some allusion here to the temple at Jerusalem, in which there was a low wall separating the court of the Gentiles from the inner court, which none but Jews might enter. There is a similar allusion to this in Rev. 11:1, 2, where the outer court of the temple is given to the Gentiles. This middle wall of partition symbolised, therefore, the separation between Jew and Gentile, which was one cause of the enmity between them. The Jew, as we see from Acts 21:28-31, viewed the entrance of a Gentile into the temple, or even beyond the outward court, as polluting the holy place, and a crime worthy of death. And the Gentile so resented this exclusion that the object of every foreign conqueror, as in the case of Antiochus, Heliodorus, Pompey, &c., was to break through this restriction, and personally enter into and profane the most holy place. As long, then, as the middle wall of partition stood, Jew and Gentile were kept asunder. But the blessed Lord, as our peace, and by uniting into his own mystical body elect Jew and elect Gentile, and thus making them one in himself, broke down (it is literally "loosened," or "dissolved") the middle wall of partition between them. Thus all distinction between Jew and Gentile is dissolved and gone. No middle wall of partition now separates them, for they are one in Christ Jesus.**

**All this may seem very plain and simple to us, but it was not so when first revealed and made known. Indeed it was the mystery made known to Paul by special revelation. "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in 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 his 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." (Eph. 3:3-6.) This mystery, or, as the word means, heavenly secret, hidden in the bosom of God from the beginning of the world, was the union of elect Jews and elect Gentiles into one mystical body, of which Christ should be the ever-living and glorious Head. He had, therefore, to remove out of the way all**

causes of separation between them, and thus break down the middle wall of partition.

But there was another cause of separation of which the middle wall in the temple was but a symbol: "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace." (Eph. 2:15.) The Jews had a law which the Gentiles had not. This law the Apostle calls "the law of commandments contained in ordinances." By this we understand chiefly the ceremonial law, which he calls "the enmity," as being the main cause of the enmity which existed between Jew and Gentile. It was by the ceremonial law that the Jew was peculiarly separated from the Gentile. At Mount Sinai God gave not only the ten commandments, or moral law, but all those ordinances of worship which we call ceremonial, as chiefly consisting in the performance of a number of prescribed rites and ceremonies. These rites and ceremonies being for Israel only, and intended not only to give them a right and acceptable worship of God, but to keep them separate from all other nations, fostered, through the depravity of man's heart, enmity against the Gentiles. God bade separation, as needful for their preservation as his peculiar people; but their national and religious pride turned separation into enmity. Similarly, the Gentile burnt with enmity against the Jew for his exclusive spirit, and against the ordinances which caused it and fostered the enmity which sprang out of it.

This law of commandments, then, contained in ordinances Jesus abolished in his flesh, that is in and by his incarnation, for by his sufferings, bloodshedding, and death he not only fulfilled the moral law, but the ceremonial. All the sacrifices, rites, and ceremonies of that burdensome law he fulfilled by his one great sacrifice. All these types and figures he, the anti-type, accomplished, and they then, having served their appointed purpose, were virtually abolished. When, then, he abolished in his flesh the law of commandments contained in ordinances, he abolished at the same time the enmity between Jew and Gentile by abolishing the cause of that enmity. All that had separated them and kept them separate was now removed. Circumcision, sacrifice, temple worship, meats clean and unclean, fasts and feasts, and the whole Jewish ritual, were virtually abolished; and these causes of separation being removed, the mutual enmity between Jew and Gentile fell with them. All causes of enmity being thus removed, the Lord now could "make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace."

But we must defer the consideration of this point to our next paper.

## VII.

Among the many sad and dreadful fruits of the Adam fall, the enmity between God and man, and the enmity between man and man which sprang out of it, for we class them both together as produced by the same cause, was not the least or last. Sin, which set man at variance with God his Maker, set man also at variance with man his brother; and, as a proof of the breach thus made, the original sin which drove Adam out of Paradise speedily manifested itself in the actual sin which armed the hand of Cain against Abel. As long, then, as sin, the cause, remains, enmity, the effect, must remain too; and nothing but the removing of sin can remove the enmity which sprang out of it, whether it be between God and man, or between man and his fellow.

But as the expression "enmity between God and man" may strike some of our readers as harsh, let us explain what we mean by the term.

We have already observed that the enmity on the part of God is what we have called "a law enmity." There is not, there never was on the part of God any real enmity against the people of his love and choice, for enmity and love are incompatible with, and mutually destroy each other; but infinite Justice viewing them as sinners, God was of necessity an enemy to their sins. But this enmity against their sins is not enmity against their persons, nay, is perfectly consistent with the purest, deepest love toward them. And here we may, for the sake of clearness, draw a distinction between enmity and anger. Anger reaches the *person* as well as the *sin*; but enmity may reach the sin without reaching the person. The Lord was angry with Moses (Deut. 1:37), with Aaron (Deut. 9:20), with Solomon (1 Kings 11:9)—angry with them personally on account of their sins, but was never at enmity with their persons. Moses was still God's servant, faithful in all his house (Numb. 12:7); Aaron was still the anointed high priest, and the saint of the Lord (Psa. 106:10); and Solomon was still beloved of the Lord (2 Sam. 12:24). We have a very simple, yet forcible illustration of this distinction between anger and enmity in the case of a father and his disobedient, unruly, or profligate son. The father is an enemy to his son's sins, but not to his son's person; and the more deeply and tenderly that he loves his son the more is he at enmity with those sins and that conduct which make a separation between them. But as regards his anger, not only is he angry with the sins of his son, but he is angry with his son also on account of those sins. But assume that his son has been drawn into bad courses by the

arts of some vile tempter. How does the father feel toward this base wretch through whose instigation or example his son has been drawn aside into sin or crime? Does he not feel enmity against his *person*, against the *man* himself, as well as against his vile practices? We thus see that God is an enemy to the persons of the ungodly as well as to their sins; but as regards his people, he is an enemy to their sins, but not to their persons. But assume further that his son repent of and forsake his sins, and to make our illustration more complete, let the father be a gracious man, and let grace manifestly touch the son's conscience, and let him come home, like the repenting prodigal, with weeping eyes and a broken heart, confessing his crimes, will there be enmity or even anger between father and son any longer? We would confidently appeal to any gracious father who reads these lines, and whose grief and affliction it is to have an unruly son, if all his anger would not at once melt away like a snow wreath before the sun at the sight of his boy, and could he well refrain from falling on his neck and kissing away all his doubts and fears of a kind reception? But suppose still further that this prodigal son had run deeply into debt, and that it was necessary that these debts should be paid before he could resume his place in his father's house, would there be any sacrifice which his father would not be willing to make that all those debts might be fully discharged, and that his repenting and reclaimed son might live with him honourably and happily without fear of creditor or gaol? All illustrations must, of course, necessarily be imperfect: but there is still a sufficient analogy between an earthly and a heavenly father which may be available to throw a clearer and fuller light upon the relationship in which God stands to his people and his consequent dealings with them. When, then, our gracious Lord rendered full satisfaction to offended Justice by his obedience, bloodshedding, and death, this law enmity on the part of God was removed out of the way, and eternal love could now freely and fully flow forth from his bosom without let or hindrance. It is so necessary for our walking with God in peace and equity\* to understand, believe, and realise this that we have been induced thus to dwell upon it.

\* The word rendered (Mal. 2:6) "equity" means properly "straightness," and thence signifies, as it is sometimes translated, "righteousness," and "uprightness." To walk, then, with God in equity as well as in peace is to walk with and before him as justified by Christ's righteousness, and with that uprightness of heart, lip, and life which is the fruit and effect of it.

But closely connected with the removal of enmity on the part of God is the removal of enmity on the part of man, both against God and against his

brother; and as this is not only a point of great importance, but the main subject of the Apostle's argument in that portion of the chapter which is now before us, we shall here resume our exposition. "For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby; and came and preached peace to you which were afar off and to them that were nigh." (Eph. 2:14-17.)

There was apparently in the Apostle's mind a blending of several things together which has given to his language a degree of difficulty. It will be, therefore, our pleasing task to unravel, as far as we have light and wisdom bestowed upon us, his mind and meaning, and thus set the whole matter in a clearer point of view before our readers. His grand topic here is reconciliation between God and man and between man and man by the blood of the cross. We shall have, therefore, to unfold the nature and means of this reconciliation in both these instances.

The enmity between God and man, and the enmity between man and man, of which we have spoken as springing out of the fall, is of the widest and most desolating nature. When this spark was first lighted it was the kindling of a fire which burns to the lowest hell, the first breaking out of a deadly disease, which has filled earth with the deepest misery and peopled with millions of inhabitants the gloomy regions of eternal despair. No thought or tongue of men or angels can conceive or describe what it is for a man to be at enmity with God; and the records of misery produced by the enmity of man against man might well be written in characters of blood. The havoc, the ruin, the misery, produced by this state of enmity none but the Son of God could repair, and he only by bearing our sins in his own body on the tree, and by enduring in his own Person the wrath of God justly due to us. The reconciliation thus effected by his bloodshedding and death is beautifully described by the Apostle in the words, "And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight." (Col. 1:21, 22.)

But as reconciliation necessarily implies the removal of all enmity, or it would not be complete, it is needful to observe that this work of reconciliation consists mainly in these three things: (1) the reconciling of the persons of the elect unto God; (2) the reconciling of their understanding, their conscience,

their will, and their affections; and (3) the reconciling of them to each other. These three fruits of redeeming blood are expressed or implied by the Apostle in the words before us, which we have already quoted. The reconciliation of their persons, whether Jew or Gentile, is expressed by the words, "And that he might reconcile both unto God." The reconciling of our understanding, conscience, will, and affections is implied by the words, "For he is our peace." And the reconciling of man to man, and especially of Jew to Gentile, is expressed by the words, "For to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace."

But these points need and deserve a fuller explanation, not only for a clearer unfolding of the mind and meaning of the Apostle, but as also involving blessed experimental truth. Upon the first point, the reconciling of our *persons* unto God, we shall not dwell, as we have already sufficiently touched upon it. But the reconciliation of our understanding, conscience, will, and affections, and the reconciliation of us to one another, are subjects which well deserve our closest attention.

Reconciliation implies the removal of enmity both in its cause and effects, and the uniting of the contending parties in amity, friendship, and peace. The blood of the cross by the atonement made thereby for sin removed the law enmity on the part of God; and the same blood as experimentally revealed, applied, and sprinkled removes also the enmity which there is in our understanding, in our conscience, in our will, and in our affections, and thus produces in them harmony, amity, and peace. But as this enmity must be seen, known, and felt before it can be sensibly removed, we shall, at the risk of a little digressing from our subject, show how it is discovered and brought to light. And here we see the effect of the moral law as distinct from the effect of the ceremonial law. The ceremonial law, as we showed in our last number, provoked and stirred up enmity between Jew and Gentile; but the moral law, entering into the conscience, stirs up and provokes the enmity of the heart against God. This enmity against God, which is the very breath and being of the carnal mind, lies for the most part benumbed and torpid in the heart till roused up as a sleeping lion from his lair, or as a serpent awaked out of its winter's sleep by a ray of light shining into its hole. How many amiable persons do we find who, never having seen or felt the enmity of their heart against God, would be shocked if they were told that they by nature hated him with perfect hatred. And, on the other hand, into what deep distress, guilt, and bondage is many a dear child of God thrown by the hissing of the venomous serpent within, by the awful rebellion and enmity which seem to

break forth at times as with an overwhelming flood, as if the end would be eternal misery and despair. Now it is the entrance of the law into the conscience which not only discovers, but stirs up, provokes, and, as it were, puts life into this dreadful enmity of the carnal mind. So Paul felt and found it. "Without the law," he says, that is, without the application of it, "sin was dead." Lust, and enmity, and every other evil lay in him as if dead, without breath or motion; and being able to discharge all his moral and religious duties without let or hindrance, "touching the righteousness which is in the law," that is, its external performance, he "was blameless." Thus he was "alive without the law once;" "but when the commandment came," that is, when the law in its spiritual meaning, power, and authority came into his heart, sin, which before was dead, revived, and taking occasion by the commandment deceived him and slew him. And thus he died before God, smitten down by the curse and condemnation of the law, without help or hope.

The enmity thus discovered, and irritated also and provoked by the application of the law to the conscience, must be removed before any inward reconciliation can be felt or known. The Apostle, therefore, tells us that it is slain, and shows us how: "And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby." (Eph. 2:16.)

The "one body" of which he here speaks is his mystical body, and as this mystical body is made up of both Jews and Gentiles, and they are alike enemies to God by wicked works, there was a necessity that both should be alike reconciled unto God, that being knit together as living members of Christ they might have union and communion with him their head, and with each other in him. But this union and communion cannot be felt or realised as long as there is enmity in the heart either against God or against one another. Hence arises the need of reconciliation *internally* as well as of reconciliation *externally*—internally of the soul, as externally of the person. It is by the cross, and by the cross alone, that this twofold reconciliation is effected. On the cross and by the cross the blessed Lord slew the enmity, the law enmity which severed God from man, and the carnal enmity which severs man from God.

We have shown how the law in its application to the conscience discovers and provokes this enmity of the carnal mind. As, then, it was needful to remove the law out of the way as being a bar to God's friendship with man, so it was needful to remove it out of the way as being a bar to man's friendship with God. This the Apostle beautifully unfolds in those striking words: "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to

us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross." (Col. 2:14.) These words, taken in connection with the passage which we are now attempting to open (Eph. 2:16), throw a clear and blessed light on the wondrous way by which this enmity is slain. "The handwriting of ordinances" spoken of as being "blotted out" is not the ceremonial, but the moral law, for it is this which is "against us" as sinners, and "contrary to us," as condemning us for transgressing it in thought, word, and deed. It is called "the handwriting of ordinances" because written by the finger of God on the two tables of stone which he gave to Moses; and we may observe that what the finger of God wrote nothing but the finger of God could blot out. When, then, the Son of God fulfilled the law both by his perfect obedience and by enduring its curse, he, so to speak, with his own divine fingers blotted out the handwriting by sprinkling it all over with his most precious blood, and he thus "took it out of the way," so that it should no longer stand against us as a bill of charges, but become null and void; and not only so, but "he nailed it to his cross," that none might take it down as a condemning law, but that it might ever stand and be seen as blotted out, and to be to all ages a permanent trophy of his victory over the curse and condemnation of the law.

When, then, under a sweet and blessed revelation of the Person and work, blood and righteousness of the Son of God to the soul, it is seen by the eye of faith that this cursing, condemning law was blotted out and taken away by the blood of the cross, then the enmity of the carnal mind stirred up by the law is slain, the bar between God and man removed, peace proclaimed, and sin forgiven. The Apostle, therefore, connects the forgiveness of sin with the blotting out of the handwriting of ordinances, clearly showing thereby that "the handwriting of ordinances" is not the ceremonial, but the moral law; for it is that, and not the ceremonial law, which brings us in guilty before God. "And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses, blotting out the handwriting," &c. (Col. 2:13, 14.)

To know and enjoy this reconciliation is to receive the atonement (Rom. 5:11, margin), and to be reconciled unto God internally, feelingly, and experimentally by receiving the ministry and word of reconciliation. (2 Cor. 5:19, 20.)

Now this reconciliation as an inward blessing spreads itself, so to speak, over every faculty of the soul, and reconciles everything in it which before was at variance with God. Thus 1. It reconciles the *understanding* by showing how

"God can be just, and yet the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus," filling it with a heavenly light and a holy admiration of the wisdom of God in contriving such a way of saving sinners through the blood of his dear Son, and thus making mercy and truth to meet together, righteousness and peace to kiss each other. 2. Secondly, it reconciles the *conscience*, which before was full of guilt, and purging it by the blood of sprinkling, gives it peace with God. 3. Thirdly, it reconciles the *will*, removing out of it its frowardness and disinclination to submissive obedience, and brings it into harmony with the will of God. 4. And fourthly, it reconciles the *affections* by dethroning all idols, and filling the heart with the tenderest love to him who is the altogether lovely. It thus makes a complete conquest of the soul, reconciling and harmonising every inward faculty to move in sweet unison with the will and word of God, and to enjoy peace in believing.

But from this inward reconciliation with God flows reconciliation with all the dear family of God, and the removal of that enmity which set the hand of man against his brother, and, as we showed in our last paper; especially set at variance Jew and Gentile. For, as these were to be reconciled in one body by the cross, so as to be knit together in one harmonious body, they must also have peace one with another that this harmony and union might be complete. The Apostle therefore says, "To make in himself of twain (that is, the two, viz., the Jew and Gentile) one new man, so making peace."

The Apostle seems to draw here a distinction between the "one body" and the "one new man;" at least, as the expressions differ, we may well assume that the meaning intended by them is different also. By the "one body," then, we may understand that mystical body of Christ of which elect Jews and elect Gentiles are alike members; and by the "one new man" that possession by them of a new and divine nature whereby, as baptized into and made to drink of one Spirit, they have spiritual union and communion with one another.

To set this point in a clearer light, let us ask, What is the main cause which separates between, and divides asunder the living family of God? What is it which rends churches to pieces, often separates chief friends, causes coldness, shyness, and even variance between those who once walked in love and affection, and thus mars harmony and peace? Is it not the flesh? Pride, ambition, covetousness, wrath, stubbornness, obstinacy, self will, prejudice, slander, hasty tempers, cutting speeches, unkind actions, are not these and other similar fruits of the flesh almost the sole causes of division and disunion among the family of God? Did any circumstance ever arise to divide a church

or separate bosom friends which cannot be traced to the old man, the body of sin and death which we carry about with us? And ask again, What brings together, unites and cements soul to soul, heals divisions, restores peace when broken, and knits together in sweet harmony and love the living members of Christ? Is it not the new man of grace—that "new man which after God (that is, after the image of God) is created in righteousness and true holiness?" If ever we have felt in our own bosoms the bitterness, the misery, the bondage, the sadness, the mournful days and sleepless nights, produced by disunion and strife in churches or between Christian friends; or if, on the other hand, we have ever felt the happiness, the sweetness, and the blessedness, the spiritual profit and comfort, of walking in love and union with the dear family of God, we know by our own experience that the old man in ourselves or others has been the cause of all the misery, and that the new man in ourselves and in others has been the spring of all the sweetness we have ever felt in the company and conversation of the living saints of the Most High. We see then and know from our own experience both of the bitter and the sweet what is the Apostle's meaning when he speaks of our gracious Lord making in himself "of twain one new man, so making peace." It is thus that he makes peace between those who were once at variance by communicating to them of his own grace and Spirit, and thus knitting them together by the unity or the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We see from these remarks, if, at least, we have rightly interpreted the mind and meaning of the Spirit, how inward reconciliation unto God brings with it reconciliation to man, and unites all the mystical members of Christ, not only into one body, but also into the possession of one Spirit, as the Apostle speaks: "There is one, body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling" (Eph.4:4), and to the same purpose: "By one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free, and have been all made to drink into one Spirit." (1 Cor. 12:13.) In Christ, and by union with him, all those distinctions which separate man from man, and are of the flesh, are lost. Rank, sex, age, station, all natural and worldly distinctions, melt away before a spirit of love and union. When this is felt toward any dear child of God, we think no longer of any difference that there may be naturally between us. The rich and the poor, the young and the old, the educated and the uneducated, the master and the servant, the mistress and the maid, are all one in Christ. All natural distinctions are swallowed up and lost by virtue of union with him and with one another in him. As we experience and realise this sweet union of heart with heart and spirit with spirit, we "put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the

image of him that created him; where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision; Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all." (Col. 3:10, 11.) And again: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus." (Gal. 3:27, 28.) O how clearly and blessedly does the Holy Ghost in these passages of inspired truth set forth the nature of that spiritual union which knits together in Christ the living family of God! And O that it were more fully realised, felt, and known, that there might be a visible fulfilment in us of that wondrous prayer of our gracious Lord: "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word, that they all may be one: as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." (John 17:20, 21.)

## VIII.

The main theme of our last paper was Reconciliation by the blood of the cross, embracing 1, chiefly and primarily, Reconciliation of man unto God; and 2, as its fruits and consequences, Reconciliation of man unto man. We shall now, therefore, at this point resume the thread of our subject. "And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father." (Eph. 2:17-18.)

Having made peace through the blood of the cross, the blessed Lord came and preached it, not personally, but ministerially. Personally he had gone up on high, and had entered into his glory. The world should see him no more in his visible presence, nor behold him going about doing good. Israel, to whom he specially came, had rejected him by the voice of its rulers, had denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto them. (John 1:11; Acts 3:14; 13:27, 28.) Jerusalem knew not the time of her visitation, and therefore never again would he personally tread her streets, or should she hear the accents of his voice. But he would come spiritually and ministerially, and preach peace to those who were afar off and to them that were nigh. It was, then, by pouring out the Holy Ghost first on the day of Pentecost, and afterwards by the continual supplies of his Spirit and grace, clothing their word with power, that the Prince of Peace came by his Spirit and presence, and thus ministerially preached peace by his apostles. They were his

**"witnesses" (Acts 1:22; 2:32; 5:32) and "ambassadors," to whom he had given the word and ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18-20), whom he had put in trust with his gospel (1 Thess. 2: 4), that as preached by them it might be the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. (Rom. 1:16.) In this sense, therefore, the Lord came by the mouth and ministry of his apostles, and preached peace to them which were afar off, that is, the Gentiles, and to them that were nigh, that is, the Jews. Not that the one was actually nearer to God than the other; but the Jew was nearer to God by external privilege and outward covenant, and was not so debased by idolatry, so sunk into thorough ignorance of the only true God, or so foully and grossly stained by the unchecked practice of those abominations which prevailed in all the heathen nations. In this sense the Jew was relatively nearer to God than the Gentile; but as regarded his actual state, there was no difference, as the Apostle elsewhere speaks: "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise; for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin." (Rom. 3:9.) Was the Jew, with all his privileges, better than the Gentile whom he loathed and despised? No; in no wise. All alike were under sin; all alike had sinned, and come short of the glory of God. Therefore, whether relatively near or relatively far off, both Jew and Gentile needed the same Saviour and the same salvation. Peace was preached by Jesus Christ alike to both in the ministry of the gospel. Elect Jew and elect Gentile were alike reconciled to God, united into one mystical body, and, when called by grace, were baptized with, and made to drink into one Spirit. Thus they were one in Christ, outwardly and inwardly, actually and experimentally, in right and in enjoyment; "for through him," adds the Apostle, "we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."**

**Access unto God is only through Jesus Christ, and as reconciled and brought near by his blood. It is one of the first and most precious fruits of peace as preached by Jesus Christ, and experimentally received and made known in a believing heart. There is no access through a broken law, nor through any other mediator but the risen and glorified Son of God. Nor can we draw near so as to have any felt or sensible access unto the Father except through the operations, influences, and power of the Spirit.**

**But the chief object of the Apostle in dwelling on this point here is to show that this is the privilege and the blessing alike of Jew and Gentile, and that thus it forms a ground of spiritual union, and a hallowed spot of mutual communion. This we know in vital experience, as distinct from being Jew or Gentile. Some of us seem in our feelings far off from God, and others seem**

nigh. The tempted, the tried, the burdened with sin, the cast down by reason of the difficulties of the way, feel as if they were far off. The blessed and favoured, the comforted and the indulged, feel to be nigh. But whether far off or nigh, all meet at the mercy seat. Is not that the sacred ground, the hallowed spot where all differences cease, and all believing hearts are knit together into one? There are not two spirits in praying souls. It is "one Spirit," as there is but "one Lord." There is no approach, no access, no drawing nigh, no acceptable worship, no communion with the Father but through his dear Son, for he is the Mediator, the only Mediator between God and men. (1 Tim. 2:3.) We continually find it by experience a solemn truth that whether on our bended knees privately, or in the worship of God publicly we attempt to draw near to the Majesty of heaven, we have no sensible access unto the Father but by Jesus Christ; and we know also in the same way and by the same means, that it is only as the blessed Spirit helpeth our infirmities, and himself maketh intercession for us according to the will of God (Rom. 8:26, 27), that we can offer a spiritual sacrifice, or sensibly feel any communion with the Father of all mercies and the God of all comfort. We may use words, and there may be what is called a gift, enabling the possessor to pray with much fluency and propriety; but this is a very different thing from that inward access of the whole heart and soul unto God, when, solemnly impressed with a sense of his holiness and majesty, and deeply penetrated with a feeling of our own sinfulness and unworthiness, we yet approach him through his dear Son under the sweet and sacred influences of the Holy Spirit. But so to draw near is the special privilege of the children of God; and on this ground, therefore, all the redeemed and regenerated, all the reconciled and accepted sons and daughters of the heavenly Father meet. This, then, is the grand point of union—the blessed meeting place, the hallowed spot, the consecrated ground where all true believers meet, and are of one heart and one soul. As through sin, all being alike sinners, there is no difference, so through grace, all being alike saved, there is no difference. No one on his bended knees can say to his kneeling brother, "You are a greater sinner than I," or, "I am more saved than you." But as alike reconciled to God through the blood of the Lamb, as alike believing in the Son of God, as alike approaching the throne of grace in earnest prayer and supplication, and thus alike finding access by one Spirit unto the Father, both those that are afar off and those that are nigh meet together as children of one Father, who is above all, and through all, and in them all.

But we must not enlarge further on this point, as much lies before us worthy of our attention and meditation. "Now therefore ye are no more strangers and

foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." (Eph. 2:19.) By nature we all are strangers to God and godliness. Our understanding is darkened, and we are alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in us, because of the blindness of our heart. (Eph. 4:18.) We neither know God nor want to know him, and say in thought, if not in word, "Depart from us, for we desire not a knowledge of thy ways." (Job 21:14.) But when grace touches our heart, and especially when by faith in the Son of God we receive the atonement, then this alienation or estrangement, as the word means, from the life of God is removed, and we are no longer strangers to him, to his word, to his will, or to his ways. A divine light shines upon his word, for the entrance of the word giveth light; divine life is felt in the soul, making the conscience alive and tender in his fear; and what he speaks with divine authority and power is received by faith into a reverent, submissive, and obedient heart. We thus come "to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he hath sent;" and though this divine light is often beclouded by the darkness, unbelief, infidelity, and carnal reasonings of our natural mind, and this divine life often sadly interrupted by the workings of sin, temptation, guilt, and legal fear, yet it still holds good that "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." (Prov. 4:18.)\*

\* The word translated "perfect" properly signifies "steady, fixed," and thus means the steady light of a clear bright noon, so compared with the struggling misty light of a cloudy morning.

But as points of divine truth are sometimes set in a clearer light by contrast, we shall shew first what it is to be a stranger to God, before we shew what it is not to be a stranger to him. To be a stranger to God, then, is to be a stranger to his character as revealed in the word, and as made known through the word with a divine power to the soul. It is to be a stranger to his holiness, majesty, heart-searching eye, and universal presence, so as not to be affected or influenced by it in our thoughts, words, or works. It is to be a stranger to his gracious dealings, divine leadings, spiritual teachings, and gentle, yet powerful intimations of his holy will. It is to be a stranger to his fatherly corrections, wise yet tender chastisements, inward reproofs, secret rebukes, and the various ways whereby he searches the heart, and tries the reins. It is to be a stranger also to the visitations of his mercy, the consolations of his gracious presence, and the sheddings abroad of his love. In fact, it is to be a stranger to everything in which the power of true religion and vital godliness consists. And as to be a stranger to God is to be a stranger to everything which

can make the soul holy or happy, and to everything which it is our chief, our only blessedness to know and to enjoy, so not to be a stranger is to be admitted to all that friendship, intimacy, familiarity, communion, and intercourse with God, and enjoyment of him, which is the special privilege of his redeemed and regenerated family. Those whom he has reconciled unto himself by the blood of his dear Son, he draws to his breast by the cords of his love, that they may no longer be strangers to him, but be made near, and may walk with him and before him in the light of his countenance. O what wonders of grace, what depths of unspeakable mercy, what riches in possession, what treasures in prospect, are stored up in being reconciled to God through the blood of the cross! Truly we may say, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:32.)

And as reconciliation through the blood of the cross opened a way whereby those who are thus reconciled should be no more "strangers," so also it provided and accomplished that they should be no more "foreigners." A "foreigner" is one who cannot speak the language, is unacquainted with the customs, is bound by no ties of allegiance, is imbued with no love and affection to the country in which he takes up his abode. Many such foreigners we have in this country, who, though they are in it, yet are not of it, to whom it is not their country or their home, and who, though they may mix with Englishmen, have not an English heart in their bosom, or any of those English feelings which are found so strong in the natives of our beloved isle. Such is the state and character, spiritually, of one who moves among the family of God without belonging to that family. Many such foreigners, in a religious sense, fill our chapels, and go in and out among the living people of God. But though with them, they are not of them. They cannot speak their language, at least, not from the heart; they do not really and truly love the same things; have not the same hopes or the same fears; are unacquainted with their joys or their sorrows; have not their faith, or their godly fear; nor their reverence of God, nor their spirit of prayer, nor their contrition for sin, nor their brokenness of heart under a sense of God's goodness and mercy; nor their tenderness of conscience, desire for, and love to holiness; nor their anxiety to be right, and dread of being wrong. In all these, and similar points, they are foreigners, who speak inwardly, if not outwardly, a different language, live under different motives and influences, and do not serve, worship, obey, or love the same God.

But now let grace reach the heart of any such foreigner who has gone in and out, it may be for years, amongst the family of God, hearing the same truths

and attending the same house of prayer, and yet untouched, unaffected, uninfluenced by the word, because he has never felt its power, what a change will it make in him. We need not trace out the work of grace upon his soul, for that would take us too far from our subject. But let us assume that he is reconciled and brought near unto God by the blood of the cross, that he who is our Peace comes to him in the ministry of the word and preaches peace to his soul, and that he finds access through Jesus by one Spirit unto the Father. He is now no longer a stranger and a foreigner. He can now understand and learn to speak the language of Canaan; and, though it may be at first with a broken accent and imperfect utterance, yet, as it is the real language of his heart, those who know what is the language of a broken heart and contrite spirit can feel a union with him and he with them, and thus he is a foreigner no more.

But this brings us to still further blessings and privileges which he is made to enjoy. And as those which we have already considered are indirectly negative, so these are directly positive. "But fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God." Two blessings are spoken of here: 1. A participation in all the rights and privileges of the city of God, and 2, a place in his house and family.

1. The city here spoken of is the city of the saints, of which by grace those who once were strangers and foreigners, being now reconciled unto God, and having access by one Spirit unto the Father, have become citizens, and thus possess all those rights and privileges which belong to the free-born inhabitants. One peculiar feature of Greek and Roman civilisation was the gathering of communities into usually walled and fortified, and, as thus capable of self-defence, enjoying special privileges and immunities. It was something analogous to our borough towns under a municipal government, but much more complete and organised, society being in those days, in many points, widely different from our own. Now, when a foreigner was admitted to the rights of citizenship of any of these free communities, he was at once put into possession of every privilege enjoyed by the free-born natives. There seems to be some allusion in the words of the Apostle here to Israel as the city of God both by privilege and possession. Till the middle wall of partition was broken down, the city of the saints was limited to the Jews. Of that city the Gentiles were not citizens, for they had no hope, and were without God in the world. But now, as reconciled by the blood of the cross, and having access by one Spirit unto the Father, believing Gentiles become incorporated into the city of God, and are thus fellow-citizens with the saints. This city, as being the

city of the saints, represents the Church of God under two aspects: 1. Its present state of grace; 2. Its future state of glory. Glorious things are spoken of this city of God. (Psa. 87:3.) Thus it has *foundations*, as it is said of Abraham, that "he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." (Heb. 11:10.) It has also *walls* and *bulwarks*: "We have a strong city; salvation will God appoint for walls and bulwarks." It has also *gates*: "Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in." (Isa. 26:1, 2.) It has also a *river*: "There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High." (Psa. 46:4.) This river is the "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb"—a river of life and love, emblematic of those pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore. This city belongs wholly to the saints,—that is, those who were sanctified and set apart by God the Father (Jude 1), sanctified by the blood of God the Son (Heb. 13:12), and sanctified by the operations and influences of God the Holy Ghost. Even in its present state, as the Church of Christ upon earth, it is the city of the saints; for none but saints really participate in, or spiritually enjoy, its blessings and privileges. Others may walk about Zion, tell the towers thereof, and mark well her bulwarks; but they are not citizens who have right to the tree of life, and may freely enter in through the gates of the city. But there is a state of glory to come, of which John had a view when he saw in vision "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband." The beauty and glory of this city John describes: "And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." (Rev. 21:23.)

Our space forbids us to enter further into this glorious subject. We must leave to our spiritual readers their own Meditations upon the glory of this heavenly city; and if the Lord is but pleased to shine into their soul and give them a view of the glory which is to be revealed, and a blessed testimony of their interest in it, how it will support and comfort them under all their afflictions and tribulations, and make them admire and adore that free and distinguishing grace which has made them fellow-citizens with the saints, and given them a home with them here in grace, and the blessed anticipation of a home hereafter with them in glory. Are they not at home with them now in the best, warmest, and happiest feelings of their soul? And is not this a proof and evidence that they are fellow-citizens with them? Are they not their choice and only companions now? Are not the saints in their estimation, however the world despises and hates them, "the excellent of the earth, in whom is all their

delight?" Now, to be no more a stranger and a foreigner, a poor, miserable outcast, wandering here and there, without house or home, friendless, and forsaken of God and man, as we might justly have been, on account of our sins,—instead of thus reaping our deserts on earth until we sank under the wrath of God into hell,—to be made and welcomed as a fellow-citizen with the saints of God in their present state of grace and their future state of glory—what wonders of grace are here, and how, as realised by faith and feeling, they melt the heart into admiring love and gratitude. Of such unspeakable blessings both now and for evermore may we not say, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him?" (1 Cor. 2:9.)

2. And as they are "fellow-citizens with the saints," so also they are members of the house and "family of God." The figure is here changed. The Church of God which he had just compared to a city, he now compares to a house or family, terming it "the household of God." It will be observed that both these figures imply much the same thing, and express each of them the idea of community. Thus a city of which all the citizens partake of the same rights and privileges, and a household or family of which all the members stand in the same relationship to its head, agree in this, that the citizens of the city and the members of the family are bound together by certain ties, in which they, and they alone, have a common and mutual interest. Thus as the Church of God is sometimes symbolised by the figure of a city, so it is also in other places represented under the figure of a house. We read, for instance: "But Christ as a Son over his own house, whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." (Heb. 3:6.) And again: "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." (1 Tim. 3:15.) Now as we found that the city represented the Church of Christ in its present militant state of grace, and in its future triumphant state of glory, so it is as regards this house. At present, in this house of God here below, though none are really members of it but those who are brought nigh by the blood of Christ, yet there are many who go in and out of it who do not spiritually and vitally belong to the family. To this there is some allusion in those striking words of the prophet: "In that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts," implying that such is the case now. And to the same effect speaks the Apostle in those warning words: "But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour." (2 Tim. 2:20.)

**One feature of a family is the difference of ages in the children. In the same family, there are often the grown-up son and the babe in arms. In the spiritual family there is a wider reach still, for that contains fathers, young men, little children, and babes. Indeed, we may say that in this house there are children of all ages, and all sizes; and yet all standing in the same relationship to one common Father. The same rich grace which admitted those who once were strangers and foreigners into the city of God, and made them fellow-citizens with the saints, admits them also into his living family. They have listened to the gracious call: "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing;" and they have found and realised the truth of the promise: "And I will receive you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." (2 Cor. 6:17, 18.) All that a Father's heart can feel, a Father's love bestow, and a Father's hand can accomplish, is their happy portion. And what is their happiness, their wisdom, their mercy, and we may add their duty, but to walk in all holy obedience to their heavenly Father, who has received them into his family; and in all love, tenderness, kindness, forbearance, and affection to their brothers and sisters, who have been loved by the same love, redeemed by the same blood, called by the same distinguishing grace, and are journeying onward with them to the same happy and everlasting home?**

## **IX.**

**In resuming our exposition of the chapter before us (Eph. 2.), we would draw the attention of our readers to the wonderful contrast presented to us in it between the natural and original state of a sinner, and especially a Gentile sinner, as sunk in the depths of the fall, and manifesting in his life and conduct its dreadful fruits and effects, and the state of a sinner redeemed, restored, and saved by free and sovereign grace. As sunk in the depths of the fall, and manifesting in his life and conduct its awful fruits and practical effects, he is dead in trespasses and sins, walks according to the course of this world, is under the dominion and influence of Satan, the prince of the power of the air, has his conversation in the lusts of the flesh, fulfils the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and is by nature a child of wrath, exposed to, and deserving the terrible and eternal anger of God as a consuming fire. What a picture is here drawn of the state of man by nature, and especially of those Gentile sinners to whom the Epistle was addressed. But how true a description also of what we ourselves were in days past, when dead in sin, and how we walked, lived, and**

acted before we were arrested in our mad career by sovereign and distinguishing grace. It is good and profitable often to call to mind and ponder over our base original, and what our state by nature was, that we may see in it, as in a glass, the awful depths of sin and ruin in which we were sunk. It is thus that we see, in the light of our own experience, as a confirmation of the word of truth, what death of soul Godward; what reckless, callous insensibility to his will and word; what total want of godly fear; what determined resolution to have our own way and carry out our various plans of pleasure or profit; what wilful rejection and proud scorning of all control, possessed our whole minds, even if we were not abandoned to excess of crime or all manner of open and outward ungodliness. It is thus also that we learn to wonder at and admire the lovingkindness, tender pity, and infinite compassion of a blessed Redeemer who had mercy upon those who had no mercy upon themselves, and who, but for his grace, would have gone on adding sin to sin and iniquity to iniquity until they dropped into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. Israel was bidden to confess, "A Syrian ready to perish was my father" (Deut. 26:5); and when the Lord would, by a most striking and effective figure, specially represent to the Church of old the riches of his grace, he paints her as a helpless, forlorn babe, "cast out in the open field, to the loathing of its person in the day that it was born" (Ezek. 16:5), that by the contrast of this miserable condition with his pity and love to her, and the fruits of it, he might recall to her mind the unparalleled debt of gratitude due to himself, and her base returns for all his favours and lovingkindness bestowed upon her. Shallow professors, and formal, dry, dead preachers may cry out against it as poring over ourselves, brooding over our miseries, making an experience of, or even priding ourselves upon our corruptions; but we are well satisfied that a believing sight and sense, and a feeling, experimental knowledge of the depths of the fall and the state of ruin, misery, and degradation into which it has personally and individually sunk us, must ever precede a spiritual, experimental knowledge of the efficacy of atoning blood as applied to the conscience and the heights, lengths, depths, and breadths of pardoning love as revealed to the soul; and that those who are ignorant of the one are ignorant of the other. It is, indeed, for want of being deeply and thoroughly exercised upon these solemn matters, and because they have known and felt so little of the dreadful evil of sin, of the holiness and justice of God, and of their own utter helplessness to deliver and save themselves, that we have so many self-righteous, presumptuous, light and trifling, vain and empty professors amongst us. Had they really seen and felt what man is by nature and practice, and had their souls been long and deeply exercised with a burden of sin and guilt, and then been blessed with some

manifestation of mercy and love, how it would have cured them both of their self-righteousness and of their presumption, driven out of them, or at least much subdued, their light and trifling spirit, and left such a deep, solemn, and permanent impression on their mind of what they have been and are toward God, and what he has been and is toward them, as would have wrought in them a solidity, humility, contrition, and brokenness of spirit, a tenderness of conscience, separation from the world, and spirituality of mind, of which at present we see so little in the professing Church of God.

But now having looked down into the horrible pit and miry clay into which sin has sunk us, in common with the whole human race, let us, with the Apostle, take a view of the other side of the question, and see to what heights of blessedness sovereign grace has restored and raised the elect of God. How wonderful is the contrast between the depths of the fall and the heights of the recovery; between the misery of man and the mercy of God; between the state and character of sinners dead in sin and saints blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. But as in our exposition of the chapter now before us we have already attempted to unfold the spiritual blessings and exalted privileges described by the Apostle, and to trace out one by one the mercies and favours to which the saints are advanced spoken of in it, we need not go over that ground again, or even briefly recapitulate them, as it would be but a repetition of our previous papers. We shall, therefore, at once address ourselves to the exposition of the remaining verses of the chapter.

Our readers will remember that the point at which we paused in our last paper was to show how the saints of God, and especially the Gentile saints, were "no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with saints, and of the household of God." (Verse 19.)

The point, therefore, to which we are now come, is the way in which they are built up, that they may be a habitation of God through the Spirit.

i. The first thing which we have to unfold is that which lies at the basis of the whole, viz., the *foundation*: "And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner atone." (Eph. 2:20.)

It will be observed that they are here said to be "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." This does not mean that the apostles and prophets form themselves the foundation of the spiritual building, as if it were *actually*

and really built upon them, but that it was laid *ministerially* by them. No man, or order of men, however distinguished by ability, gift, or grace, however called or favoured of God, could be a foundation able to bear up the Church of Christ. Neither Peter, nor Peter's successors, true or false, could be a rock on which Christ has declared he will build his Church. Such a foundation would be sand, not a rock against which the gates of hell should not prevail, and those who trusted in it and built upon it would come under the curse: "Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm." (Jer. 17:5.) Christ, and Christ only, is the foundation. This point is well explained by the Apostle himself in another epistle: "According to the grace of God which is given unto me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon. For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Cor. 3:10, 11.) He here speaks of himself as "a wise master-builder," that is, a skilful architect who knew both the certainty and value of the foundation, and the fit materials for the superstructure. According, then, to the grace of God which was given unto him, instructing him into a spiritual and experimental knowledge of Christ by a revelation of him to his soul (Gal. 1:16), and bestowing upon him the gift of utterance to open his mouth boldly, and make known the mystery of the gospel (Eph. 6:19), he ministerially laid the foundation by preaching Christ and him crucified. He, therefore, plainly tells us that "other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." This foundation God laid *actually*, according to his own words: "Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste" (Isa. 28:16); but Paul laid it *ministerially*. Thus when we read of "the foundation of the apostles and prophets," and being built on that foundation, it does not mean that the apostles and prophets were themselves the foundation, but that they laid it ministerially when they declared, by the word of their testimony, in the language of Peter: "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner." (Acts 4:11.)

This foundation, then, was laid by "the apostles and prophets" when they testified in their ministry of the Person and work of Christ, preaching him as the Son of God (Acts 9:20), and set him forth as the Rock, the only Rock, on which the Church is built. If we carefully read the various sermons and discourses of Peter and Paul recorded in the Acts, we shall clearly see how in them all Christ in his sufferings, death, and resurrection is laid as the foundation of all forgiveness of sin, and of all hope of salvation. (Acts 2:32-39;

3:26; 4:10-12; 13:38, 39.) There is no difficulty, therefore, in ascertaining the meaning of the word "apostles." They were those who were entrusted with a peculiar mission, and an office distinct from all others. Thus among the specially-gifted members of the body of Christ, enumerated by the Apostle, they occupy the first place: "And God hath set some in the church; first, apostles." (1 Cor. 12:28.) Such were the twelve disciples: "And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples; and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles" (Luke 6:13); and such was Paul, who declares of himself that he was "an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and by God the Father, who raised him from the dead." (Gal. 1:1.) The apostles were distinguished from all other teachers and officers in the Church by having their commission and doctrine immediately and directly from Christ himself. The literal meaning of the word apostle is "one who is sent." Thus they were, in a peculiar and especial way, sent by Christ himself, either by express call when he was on earth, or, as in Paul's particular case, by express revelation from him in heaven. To them was also given a power to work miracles as proofs of their divine commission; and they only could, by the laying on of hands ministerially, give the Holy Ghost. (Acts 8:14-17; 19:6.) They also alone had authority to plant churches; nor was their mission confined to any particular church; but they had power and authority in all the churches to preach the word and administer the ordinances, give counsel, advice, reproof, exhortation, and censure, either personally or by letter. None, therefore, but they could write, under divine inspiration, epistles to the churches to form a part of the sacred Scriptures. The foundation, therefore, laid by men so eminent in grace, endowed with such divine authority, and furnished with such extraordinary gifts, must needs be a foundation laid in the power of the Holy Ghost, and worthy of our faith and acceptance.

But the Apostle speaks of this foundation as laid also by "the prophets." By those we understand, not the prophets of the Old Testament, though we would not exclude them, according to Peter's testimony (Acts 10:43), but the prophets of the New; for the Apostle tells us, in a passage already quoted, that they occupied a position in the Church next to the apostles: "And God hath set some in the church, first, apostles; secondarily, prophets." He also speaks in almost similar language in the epistle now before us: "And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets." (Eph. 4:11.) By the word "prophets," however, we are not to understand, in the usual sense of the term, men who predicted future events, though there were such in the primitive Church, as Agabus (Acts 11:28; 21:10), but preachers, as we now term them, who are called "prophets," because they spoke in the name of and from the Lord, being, as it

were, his mouth. This, indeed, is the true and proper meaning of the word "prophet;" his distinguishing character being that he speaks for God, being his mouth (Jer. 15:19), and one to whom the word of the Lord has come. That he predicts future events is but a secondary part of his mission, and connected with his primary office, more as a confirmation than its chief intention. In this point of view, therefore, the prophets of the New Testament resemble the prophets of the Old, who spake such words, whether predictions or not, "as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." (2 Pet. 1:21.) We see this very clearly from the language of the Apostle in another place: "But if all prophesy, and there come in one that believeth not, or one unlearned, he is convinced of all, he is judged of all." (1 Cor. 14:24.) By prophesying is evidently meant here, not predicting future events, but preaching with power to men's consciences; for it is in this way that the unbeliever is convinced of sin, judged as guilty, and the secrets of his heart made manifest. Prophecy, therefore, in the true and proper sense of the word, includes instruction and consolation, reproof, and, indeed, the whole work of the ministry: "Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the other judge. If anything be revealed to another that sitteth by, let the first hold his peace. For ye may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted." (1 Cor. 14:29-31.) For these reasons, therefore, we understand the prophets who are said, in conjunction with the apostles, to have laid the foundation on which the Church is built to be the prophets or preachers, not of the Old Testament, but of the New, and thus to include those servants of the living God who preached the gospel as being divinely commissioned and enabled to do so by the teaching of the Holy Ghost and the authority of God.

But now let us look at the expression, "Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."

The meaning of this expression, which frequently occurs in the New Testament, is, we think, often misunderstood. It is taken in the first instance from the declaration concerning our Lord in the Psalms, which he in the gospels (Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17) specially claimed and appropriated to himself: "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner." (Psa. 118:22.) The "head of the corner," or "the chief corner stone," the meaning of both expressions being one and the same, signifies not the stone which stands at the top of the building, uniting the corners of the two walls just under the roof, but the broad foundation stone, which is firmly fixed at the very bottom; and it is called the "corner stone" or the "head" or "chief of the corner," because being laid as a huge and broad stone for a foundation

of the whole building, each wall meets upon it at the corners, it equally supporting and upholding them all. The two walls which thus meet together represent Jew and Gentile; but each of these walls equally rests upon the broad foundation stone which is common to both, and not only supports them separately but unites them together at the corner, where each meets and rests upon it. It is the expression "head" which has caused the misapprehension of the word "corner stone" to which we have alluded; but the word "head" in Hebrew properly signifies the first or chief; and thus as the foundation is not only the chief stone as supporting the whole, but the first which is laid, so our gracious Lord is not only chief in dignity, but was laid first in place, for the Church was chosen in him. In all things he must have the pre-eminence. Thus he is first in dignity, as the Son of the Father in truth and love; first in choice, God choosing the elect in him; first in suffering, for what sorrows were like his sorrows? first in resurrection, for he is "the first-fruits of them that slept;" first in power, for "all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth;" first in glory, for he is gone before to prepare a place for his people; and we may well add, he is first in their hearts and affections, for he that loveth father or mother, son or daughter, more than him is not worthy of him.

But the chief point of the passage now before us is the way in which the Lord Jesus is the chief corner stone to those who are built upon him; and in it we see the connection between the foundation as laid ministerially by the apostles and prophets, and the actual foundation itself, which is Christ the Lord. And to understand this connection better, take your own case, or that of any other poor guilty sinner quickened into divine life and looking about him on every side for something to support his guilty soul, his troubled mind, his fearful anxious heart, his burdened spirit. If he look up, what does he see but the justice of a holy God? If he look to the law, what is there in it but curse and condemnation, misery, wrath, and bondage? If he look to his past life, what is it but one continued course of wickedness and sin? If he look into his own heart, what does he find it but "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked?" What, then, shall he do? Where shall he go? On what can he build his hope? Now, when Christ the foundation is set before him as laid in the Scriptures of truth by the apostles, or is preached in his hearing by one of God's prophets, and by the application of the word to his heart, he is enabled to believe for himself in the Son of God, then he comes off himself to rest upon Christ the foundation. It is thus that the very first stone of his hope is laid upon Christ. This is effected by the shining in of divine light into the soul, giving him a knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor. 4:6.) And as he thus beholds, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, he is

delivered from the power of darkness and is translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son. (2 Cor. 3:18; Col. 1:13.) He now finds a foundation, on which his soul can safely and happily rest. Having tasted that the Lord is gracious, by the discoveries of his Person and work, and the manifestations of his mercy, and being drawn by the cords of a man and the bands of love (Hos. 11:4; Jer. 31:3), he comes unto him, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God and precious; and by coming unto him, is lifted up, so to speak, out of sin and self, out of bondage, darkness, and confusion, and is set down upon him as a tried stone, a sure foundation; and thus finds rest and peace. To rest thus upon Christ as a foundation carries with it the sensible approbation of God; for he has laid this foundation in Zion, that it might be "a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation." (Isa. 28:16.) As the child of God, therefore, by faith rests upon Christ, he has the testimony of the blessed Spirit in his heart that it is a sure foundation, and that he that believeth on him shall not be confounded, either in this world, or in the world to come. (1 Pet. 2:6.)

ii. Having thus spoken of the foundation as laid *ministerially*, by the apostles and prophets, and laid *actually* by Jesus Christ being himself the chief cornerstone, the Apostle goes on to show how the living stones are built up upon and in him: "In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord." (Eph. 2:21.)

By "the building," we are to understand the whole Church of Christ as comprehending all the members of his mystical body, chosen in him, and given to him before the foundation of the world. But this building is raised here below, before it is taken up to be eternally in all its completeness above; and thus, though there is an eternal union between the Lord Jesus Christ and his people, which is the foundation of every other, there is also a grace union in time as each successive member is brought forth and is baptized by the Holy Ghost into his mystical body. The union between Christ and his people is represented in the Scripture sometimes by the figure of a vine and its branches, sometimes by that of a body and its head, sometimes by that between a man and his wife, and sometimes, as in the passage before us, by that of a building of which he is the foundation, and they the superstructure. It is with the latter we have now to do.

The union between the foundation and the superstructure is very close and intimate naturally, but in the case of Christ and his people embraces a closeness of communication, of which no earthly material building is capable.

1. First, then, it is one of *support*. Every stone in a building has a virtual union with a foundation on which it rests, for if that foundation were removed from under them, every stone in every part of the building would at once fall to the ground with a crash. So, could the foundation which God has laid in Zion be removed, the gates of hell would prevail and the whole Church sink into eternal perdition. But here is the blessedness of "a sure foundation," that every stone which is built upon it is so supported by it that it cannot fall as long as the foundation stands.

2. But besides the union of support between the foundation and the stones which rest upon it, there is, in this case, what is not and cannot be found in a material building, a union consisting in *mutual life*. This is very clearly and sweetly brought before us by Peter: "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." (1 Pet. 2:4, 5.) In a material building both the foundation stone and those which are built upon it are dead. There is, therefore, between them no other union but the union of support. But in the spiritual building, there is a union between the foundation and the stones built upon it, not only of support, but of life. It is this which makes the union between them so close and intimate. The Lord Jesus is "a living stone," inasmuch as in him is life (John 1:4); and this life is a mediatorial life, given to him, that he may give it to us; "for as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." (John 5:26.) It is as the possessor of this mediatorial life that "the Son quickeneth whom he will" (John 5:21); and by the reception of this life, out of his fulness, our souls are made and maintained alive unto God. (John 1:16; 5:40.) This mediatorial life he now lives and exercises at the right hand of God. He therefore said to John in vision: "I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. 1:18); and to his disciples he gave this promise before his departure from them: "Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also." (John 14:19.) As, then, we are severally quickened into spiritual and eternal life, we come unto him, who is a living stone, ourselves as living\* stones, and being lifted up, and out of the foundation of dead self, to rest upon him, as the foundation which God hath laid in Zion, we become built up a spiritual house. (1 Pet. 2:5.) The life which is in the foundation spreads and diffuses itself through the living stones which are built upon it; and as this life is felt in them and by them, it makes them cling closer and closer to the Rock,

with all the weight of their souls, and all the strength of their affections. And as they find the foundation firm and good, and able to bear them up, amidst all their trials and temptations, for it is "a tried stone," they embrace it more and more in faith and love, and thus give back the life which they receive in prayer, praise, and adoration.

\* The word "lively" (1 Pet. 2:5) should have been rendered "living," it being just the same word in the original as "the living stone," spoken of in the preceding verse.

In the mind of God, in his eternal purposes and determinate decrees, every stone of this spiritual house already has its fixed place. There is an expression in the prophet Ezekiel which may illustrate this. The man of God is shown in vision "the frame of a city." The city was not yet built, but it was to be built, and he saw the frame of it already set up and complete. (Ezek. 40:2.) It was, therefore, to his mind's eye, as if the city were already complete, before a single stone of it was laid. So it is in this spiritual house. The whole frame of it, as complete as it will be when "the head stone is brought forth with shoutings, crying, Grace, grace unto it," was ever before the mind of God; and thus every stone, as it is successively added to the building, occupies in it its fixed and predetermined place in the Church militant and suffering below, as it will in the Church triumphant and glorified above.

3. But we may also observe that the union between the living foundation and the living stones which are built upon it gives the latter *union and communion with each other*, as well as with the foundation itself. This point is beautifully brought out in this epistle by the figure of a body in union with its Head: "But, speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ; from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love." (Eph. 4:15, 16.) The whole body is here spoken of as "fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth." In almost similar terms the Apostle speaks in another place: "And not holding the Head, from which all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." (Col. 2:19.) We here see the union of the different members of the body with each other through their union with their common Head, and that this union with him not only gives them union with one another, but is also a means of inward grace and strength, nourishment being ministered to the body by the joints

and bands of the different members. It is in this way that all the building is "fitly framed together," each living stone being in union both with the foundation and with its fellow living stones, and thus having life and grace diffused through the whole as a means of mutual support and nourishment, they are not loose stones lying about the mouth of the quarry, nor severed members, but compacted together by cement, as stones, and by joints and bands, as members; and thus they mutually strengthen and nourish one another by the life derived from their common Head. What motives to love and union!

What a beautiful representation is this of the Church of Christ! and though it is much hidden from our eyes, and so obscured by sin and unbelief, and the low state of things amongst us, as often to be scarcely visible, yet it is not less real. We never can fully know the blessings and benefits which we owe to our brethren in the Lord, and especially to those of them with whom we are brought into immediate spiritual contact, by church fellowship or other band of union. Their conversation, their example, their prayers, the various ways in which they minister to our natural or spiritual necessities, the secret restraints from sin, the encouragements to believe, the springings up of hope, the drawings forth of love and affection, the sympathy manifested by them in trial and affliction, and the sweet persuasion that we have of the power and reality of their religion—all these helps and aids to the life of God in the soul spring out of the union which there is between the living stones with each other. And were the Church of God more blessed and favoured with life and power, were there in it more sensible union and communion with the Lord, so that there was a larger, fuller, and deeper communication of the life that is in him, the more would the benefit and blessing of the mutual union of his members with each other be known and realised. It was so in those early days when "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul." Then was the body more closely and sensibly knit together, and larger nourishment was therefore ministered to it by the joints and bands. And as union is strength, so this mystical body was then more closely compacted together by that which every joint supplied, and thus they were strengthened by each other's example, sympathy, prayers, counsel, exhortations, and, when needed, by rebukes and reproofs, to suffer persecution and the loss of all things for Christ's sake. But when love waxed cold, then the body declined in strength, and, as it declined in strength, the joints and bands were less firmly compacted together, hanging, as it were, loosely, like a dislocated limb or a paralysed arm; and, for want of their former closeness, nourishment was not

ministered as it had been when the members were in nearer union and communion.

iii. Now, this may prepare us to understand how "all the building groweth unto a holy temple in the Lord." It grows so in two ways: 1, By the constant accession of fresh stones; and 2, By the personal individual growth of the stones themselves.

1. It is in the first way, that every natural and material building is made to increase. As stone after stone is added to it, the building makes progress until at last it is complete. But the larger the structure, the choicer the materials, and the more beautiful the architecture, the longer time it almost necessarily takes to finish. Compare, for instance, the building of the palace at Westminster with the running up of a house in a London suburb; for so it is with this spiritual building. Innumerable are the living stones which compose it, for they will form at last a multitude which no man can number. Slowly also, but surely, invisibly to man, but not less really with God, are the living stones brought out from the quarry, and laid upon and united unto the foundation.

But as we have already sufficiently opened this point, we shall now attempt to show how the building groweth into a holy temple by the spiritual increase of the individual stones in it.

2. Growth is the sure mark of life. We see this in vegetation, in the animal creation, in the growth of our own bodies, and of every other thing in which there is life. Where, then, there is the life of God in the soul, there will be a growth in that life. Paul says to the Thessalonian church: "We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly" (2 Thess. 1:3); and Peter says, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." (2 Pet. 3:18.) There is "an increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col. 1:10), and "a coming in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." (Eph. 4:13.) It was for this increasing knowledge of the Son of God that Paul stretched every desire of his soul when he followed after, if that he might apprehend that for which also he was apprehended of Christ Jesus; and this reaching forth unto those things which were before, he pressed toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (Phil. 3:12-14.) This is not what is called progressive sanctification, as if the flesh got holier and holier, for that is still ever "the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;" but

**this is a growth of that "new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." After this growth in grace, this closer conformity to the image of Christ, should we ever be striving with all the powers of our soul; not satisfied with a low and lean state before God, but with unceasing prayer and supplication, begging of the Lord that we might be "filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, that we might walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God." (Col. 1:9, 10.)**

**It is only as we are thus taught, led, and blessed that we can enter into the meaning of the words with the consideration of which we shall close our present Meditations: "In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit." (Eph. 2:22.)**

**These words will apply both to the whole body of Christ viewed collectively, and to each separate member of that body viewed individually. In this double sense we shall now, therefore, consider them.**

**i. View them first, then, as referring to the whole body of Christ as complete in him. We have shown that the Church of Christ, viewed as a body, is spoken of as "compacted together," and that, viewed as a building, it is "fitly framed together." In this fulness of the whole and the harmony of the parts, as in the human body and as in an architectural building, much of its beauty consists. A body of which a member is deficient or disproportionate, and a building incomplete as a whole or deficient in symmetry in its parts, alike disgust and repel the eye. But who can conceive or describe the beauty and harmony of that body of which Christ is the Head, and of that building of which he is the chief corner-stone? Both are now imperfect, for the body is still wanting some of its members, and the building some of its stones; but each, though, in fact, they are but one, being but figures, not the reality, shadows, not the substance, will one day be complete, for the Church of Christ is gradually growing up into its full proportions.**

**Now, the object of this building, so beautifully and fitly framed together, is that it might be "a holy temple in the Lord." The glory of the tabernacle was the presence of God in it, as dwelling on the ark between the cherubim; and, therefore, when the ark was taken "the glory of the Lord departed from Israel." (1 Sam. 4:21.) So was it also in the temple erected by Solomon. When the Lord came into his temple, we read "that the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; so that the priests could not stand to minister by**

reason of the cloud; for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God." (2 Chron. 5:13, 14.) We thus see a connection between a temple and the habitation of God in it. It is his indwelling presence which makes the temple both holy and glorious. God sought for himself, so to speak, a habitation, a visible dwelling-place, that he who inhabits eternity, who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen, nor can see, might yet present himself visibly to the eyes of men, and not only so, but might have a permanent dwelling-place among them. He therefore said to Moses: "Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." (Exod. 25:8.) This sanctuary typified, in the first instance, the sacred humanity of our blessed Lord, in which dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily; for he in his human nature is "the true tabernacle which God pitched and not man." But in a secondary sense the Church, as being the mystical body of Christ, is also the temple of God, for in it he dwells by his Holy Spirit. It is the place of his habitation upon earth sanctified by his power and glorified by his indwelling presence.

2. But what is true of the Church collectively is true of every individual member separately. Every gospel church here below may be considered as a holy temple in which God lives and dwells. The Apostle, therefore, writing to the church at Corinth "as the Church of God" (2 Cor. 1:1) says to them: "And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people." (2 Cor. 6:16.) It was because the church of God at Corinth was collectively the temple of the living God that he dwelt in them and walked in them.

Now, what the Church of God is in its completeness in Christ, as it will be in heaven above, and what it is in its visible and militant state on earth now, so is every individual member of that Church in this time state; and it is this solemn truth which makes the words before us to have such a forcible application to every individual believer. Not only, then, is a church, that is, a gospel church, builded together by the ordinances of God's house, by a continual accession of living members, and by a growth in grace of each individual member, to be a habitation of God through the Spirit, but every one in it who fears and loves God is builded into it for the same blessed purpose, that God may dwell in him and walk in him, making his body his own temple.

**But, alas! how little is this realised and acted upon. Were pastors, were deacons, were members of gospel churches more deeply and powerfully impressed with the solemn truth that they are builded together, that God himself might dwell in them through the Spirit, how much more careful they would be than they now are to maintain purity of doctrine, truth and reality, life and power in experience, and godliness and holiness in life! What a reverential fear would possess their minds, that they might not defile the Lord's temple, or sin against and before so holy and all-seeing a Guest! As a modest woman guards her chastity, or one who loves cleanliness in person, dress, and house shrinks from and hates dirt and filth, so will a conscience made and kept tender and alive in godly fear dread the defilement of sin and guilt. And as we shall all have to answer for ourselves, "to die," as one said, "alone," and as religion is a personal matter, how careful should it make each individual believer so to walk before God and man that he may have both an inward and outward evidence that his body is the temple of the Holy Ghost (1 Cor. 6:19), and that he is a habitation of God by the Spirit. If he realise this, and live under its solemn weight and influence, how careful he will be not to defile that body which is the temple of the Holy Ghost; how desirous and anxious not to defile his eyes by wandering lusts, nor his ears by listening to worldly and carnal conversation, nor his lips by speaking guile, or indulging in light and frothy talk, nor his hands by putting them to anything that is evil, nor his feet by running on errands of vanity and folly; but to view his body as a member of Christ (1 Cor. 6:15), and therefore sanctified to his service and to his glory.**

**We would gladly and willingly pursue this sacred and holy theme, as it is one of daily, hourly application; one which deeply concerns our state before God and the peace of our own consciences; but we forbear, as we think we must have sufficiently drawn upon the kindness and attention of our readers. Yet we cannot bring our task, though we hardly like to call it by such a term, to a close, without remarking that if we have rightly opened the mind of the Holy Ghost in our Meditations upon these two chapters, it will be seen how every doctrine which we have endeavoured to open, every truth to unfold, every branch of experience to dwell upon and enforce, have each and all a sanctifying power and influence upon the believing soul; and thus we would fain hope that, through the blessing of God on what we have written, it may leave its sanctifying influence upon every heart that truly desires to know, experience, and live "THE TRUTH AS IT IS IN JESUS."**