

and never seek salvation by the works of the law, but solely in the Person, and by the righteousness of CHRIST. And, oh! for a portion of the same SPIRIT, which actuated *Paul*, when he determined to glory only in the cross of CHRIST; convinced, that nothing short of a new creature, can give confidence before GOD.

After having blessed the LORD the SPIRIT for this sweet Scripture, we would look with affection to *Paul*, as the highly favored servant of it. Surely, it is profitable to bless GOD, in, and for, the ministry of his servants; and, therefore, we love the Apostle, for his love to his Master, and zeal in his service. Farewell for the present, *Paul*! Who but must love thee, and desire to follow thee, as thou hast followed CHRIST? Shall we not by and by, meet thee before the throne, and bless our Covenant GOD together? Even so, Amen. Reader! the grace of our LORD JESUS be with the whole Israel of GOD! Amen.

THE

EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE

TO THE

EPHESIANS.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS.

WE here enter upon a portion of the Inspired Writings, in which GOD the HOLY GHOST, by his penman the Apostle, hath brought the Church into an acquaintance with the deep things of GOD. Every chapter, more or less, brings with it such sublime discoveries, as none but GOD the HOLY SPIRIT could have indited, and none but his blessed teaching can give the ability to apprehend. Every child of GOD, under the LORD's instruction, cannot but be constrained, as he passeth through the several chapters, to remark these things, and to be convinced that the mind of the Apostle must have been carried out in a most eminent manner, in spiritual enjoyment, at the time GOD the HOLY GHOST put the pen into his hand, and such a fulness of grace into his heart, when he caused him to write his Epistle to the church at *Ephesus*.

The Reader for the better apprehension of the distinguishing mercy manifested by the LORD's people among the *Ephesians*, should connect with this Epistle, the history in the for-

mation of the Church at *Ephesus*, as related in the Acts of the Apostles. The establishment of the Gospel, among a people like the *Ephesians*, is among the world's wonder. Here was erected the magnificent building dedicated to the dunghill idol *Diana*. The city itself, like another *Athens*, appears to have been wholly given to idolatry. It was a place of much pomp, luxury, and pride in human learning, if we may judge by the destruction of the books of curious arts, which were destroyed when some were converted to the faith in JESUS. See Acts xix. throughout. But here also CHRIST had a people. And, hence, according to Covenant Promises, the HOLY GHOST gathers out his redeemed, to shew forth JEHOVAH's praise. Jerem. xxxiii. 37, 38. Ezek. xxxiv. 12, &c. and xxxvi. 24, &c. Hence *Paul* was sent to *Ephesus* to raise a Church. And, hence, for the confirmation of the Church in the faith, he was afterwards directed to send this Epistle.

But we must not stop here. It was not for the Church at *Ephesus* only that this most precious portion of the divine word was sent, but for the church of GOD in all ages. Thousands and ten of thousands, who never have seen, or will see *Ephesus*, have found cause to bless GOD the HOLY GHOST for *Paul's* ministry and writings to that people. Yea, ages yet unborn, will find motives of praise for the same!

Concerning the date of this Epistle, writers are divided. Some place it so late as the year 59, corresponding to the 5th year of *Nero*.

I do not think it necessary in this place, to give an account, however briefly, of the great and essential doctrine of which this Epistle treats. These will meet us in their proper place. The chief features of GOD the FATHER's eternal love, in the choice of the Church in CHRIST, and to unspotted holiness in him, the full, free, and complete redemption by CHRIST, in the time-state of the Church, and the regenerating grace of GOD the HOLY GHOST, with his several offices and characters; these are opened to us in all their glory, as we pass through the several chapters, and which supersede the necessity of enlarging upon them here.

It may serve, indeed, a good purpose, under GOD's grace, to endear this Epistle to us still more, and to induce us to receive it with the greater reverence and godly fear, if it be just remarked, that the Church of *Ephesus* is now no more. The LORD hath fulfilled what he threatened, and long, long since, removed her candlestick out of its place, Rev. ii. 5. And it becomes a loud admonition to our British *Ephesus*, in the present awful hour! If GOD spared not a city so once blessed, take heed lest he spare not thee! The Church of GOD must stand, and will stand, till time shall be no more. But the Candlestick is a moveable part of the furniture in the

house. The LORD may remove this to other nations, as he did by *Ephesus*, while his Church is the same upon earth, till time shall be no more.

Reader! pause at the threshold of this most blessed scripture, and let us both beg the Almighty Giver of it, to unfold to our spiritual apprehension; the gracious contents of it; that CHRIST, who is the great *object* of all contained in it, and the *subject* of all treated of in it, may appear to us in all his fullness, suitableness, and all-sufficiency; that *in* him, and *by* him, and *through* him, we may find cause continually, through every part of it, to bless JEHOVAH in his threefold character of Person, for all our blessings in JESUS CHRIST. Amen!

CHAPTER I.

CONTENTS.

The Apostle opens the Epistle with his usual Salutation. He then at once enters upon the great Subject he had in View, and traces all the Mercies of the Church, to God's eternal Purpose in CHRIST, before the Foundation of the World.

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 :

I admire the very opening of this blessed Scripture. *Paul* gives his name and Apostolic authority, by way of confirming its authenticity, and shews at once to whom the Epistle is sent, namely, not to the world at large, *but to the saints at Ephesus*, and to the faithful in CHRIST JESUS. Observe the expression. *Saints* by the original and eternal choice of GOD in CHRIST, and made so by regenerating grace. But that this most blessed title, might not be supposed as limited to the saints at *Ephesus*, *Paul* adds, and *to the faithful in CHRIST JESUS*, that is, wherever they are found throughout the earth. Reader! do not overlook this. For, hereby, every child of God, when regenerated, finds himself as much interested in this Epistle, as the saints of that city to whom *Paul* first sent it. See 1 Cor. i. 3. and note.

2 Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

I detain the Reader at this verse only to remark, that when the Apostle pronounceth this blessing of grace and peace, it will be proper for us to consider, that the *latter* is the fruit of the *former*. Grace is the source and cause of all our blessings, because this is the free, unpurchased, everlasting love and favor of JEHOVAH, in his threefold character of Persons, towards the Church in CHRIST, and

from whence all the effects in pardon, mercy, and peace, result. And when the Apostle adds, from GOD our FATHER, and from the LORD JESUS CHRIST, the HOLY GHOST is included, because neither of those mercies could be known by us, much less enjoyed by us, but from the manifestation of them by the LORD the SPIRIT. It is blessed, indeed, to observe, how each glorious Person graciously co-operate in this, and every act, as it concerns the Church's welfare. GOD the FATHER manifests grace in the original choice of the Church in CHRIST before all worlds: GOD the SON manifests grace in the betrothing the Church to himself from everlasting, and in the time-state of the Church, makes her peace in the blood of his cross. And GOD the SPIRIT manifests grace in regeneration from the *Adam-nature* of the fall, and revealing all that we are brought into acquaintance with, of the love and favor of each glorious Person, for our joy here, and our happiness hereafter. Hence, *Paul*, upon another occasion prays, that *the LORD*, (that is, the HOLY GHOST,) *may direct the hearts of the redeemed into the love of GOD; and into the patient waiting for CHRIST.* 2 Thess. iii. 5.

3 Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ :

4 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.

5 Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.

6 To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Reader! pause over those verses. The Apostle proposeth to write an Epistle to the Church, but he hath no sooner opened it with a salutation, than he leaves the consideration of the Church, and breaks out into an holy flame of praises to GOD. His heart was so full, in the contemplation of the divine love, that, like bottles ready to burst, he could no longer contain. Job xxxii. 19. Oh! how doth this man's fervor reproach my coldness. LORD! take away this heart of stone of mine, and give me an heart of flesh! Ezek. xxxvi. 26.

But what was it which inflamed the Apostle's mind so highly on this occasion? Perhaps, in part, the recollection that the LORD had blessed his ministry to the *Ephesians*. His farewell discourse, as recorded Acts xx. 17, &c. affords a very high proof how dear this Church was to *Paul*. But though this might affect the Apostle, in the pleasing recollection, and for which he found cause to bless GOD; yet higher views were certainly opened to *Paul's* mind. GOD the SPIRIT intended this Epistle for a blessing to the Church in all ages; and whoever reads it, under the influence of the same Almighty Teacher, must be led to see, that the Apostle was led out

beyond himself, when the LORD directed his heart and pen, in this vast train of thought, here brought before the Church. Oh! that the LORD who caused *Paul* to write, may be with me to hear what the SPIRIT here saith to the Churches.

If the Reader will carefully observe what is contained in the opening of this most blessed Epistle, he will find, that the Apostle is celebrating the praises of the HOLY undivided Persons of the GOD-HEAD, in their several distinct acts of grace, as manifested to the Church, and in giving to each, and to all, the glory due to the LORD JEHOVAH.

In those verses he begins with ascribing to GOD the FATHER, his personal acts of grace and love in *choosing* the Church in CHRIST, *predestinating* the persons of the Church to the adoption of children by CHRIST, and *accepting* the Church in CHRIST to the praise of the glory of his grace. And, as those *three* glorious acts of GOD the FATHER, are all said to be the result of *his own good pleasure and will*, so are they declared to be *before the foundation of the world*. As these sovereign acts of GOD the FATHER, though here compressed within a little compass, contain in their bosom immense designs, and are, indeed, the very charter of grace, I beg the Reader to pause over them a few moments, and consider each of them a little more particularly, as calling up the most awakened feelings of the soul, in love and praise.

The first which is spoken of is, that God *hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love*. Hence, it must undeniably follow, that when CHRIST, as CHRIST, that is, God and man in one Person, had, at the call of JEHOVAH, come up to the divine view, as the Head and Husband of his Church from everlasting. Psm. cx. 4. Heb. v. 4, 5. Psm. lxxxix. 19. this help-meet for him was chosen in him. It was not good in JEHOVAH's sight, that the God-man should be alone. Gen. ii. 18. The LORD, therefore, chose the Church as a Bride for him, to be his companion, unto whom he might impart all communicable grace here, in the time-state of her nature, and all communicable glory, in the eternal state hereafter; and all to CHRIST's glory, that He might be *the head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all*.

And I beg the Reader to remark with me, the blessedness of what the Apostle saith, concerning this choice; that *we should be holy, and without blame before him in love*. This is the first and original view God had of the Church when chosen, holy, and without blame in CHRIST. This is the first and last view God hath always of the Church in CHRIST. In CHRIST there can be no change. For, though in the after-state which took place at the fall in the *Adam-transgression*, the Church became polluted in herself and her fallen nature; yet, the time-state of sin cannot do away the LORD's purposes of eternity. No sin in *Adam* can destroy the holiness in CHRIST. It is *in CHRIST* the Church is chosen, and *in him* chosen to be holy, and without blame before God in love. And by the undertaking which CHRIST hath accomplished in himself, and by his one offering of himself, once offered, he hath redeemed his Church from all iniquity, and perfected for ever them that are sanctified. And, as this was all along among the *first* designs of GOD, however *last* to

be executed; so, the Church, when finally brought home by CHRIST, will still be found in CHRIST, holy and without blame, before GOD in love; and JESUS will *present her to himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but holy, and without blemish.* Ephes. v. 27.

When the Reader hath duly pondered this unspeakable mercy, let him pass on to the *second* manifestation of GOD the FATHER's love, which the Apostle hath recorded in this chapter, when he saith, *having predestinated us to the adoption of children by JESUS CHRIST to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will.* Here is another distinguishing blessing hanging in one rich cluster of GOD's love, upon the same divine branch. Predestination differs somewhat from choosing, because, while the *former* act of choosing determines the Person, the *latter* of predestinating appoints the means. And the determination here spoken of, to Sonship in CHRIST, makes the means everlastingly certain and sure. For, saith the same Apostle elsewhere, *if children then heirs, heirs of GOD, and joint heirs with CHRIST.* Rom. viii. 17. The beloved Apostle was so struck with the contemplation of this view, that, unable to contain himself, he cried out, *Behold what manner of love the FATHER hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of GOD!* 1 John iii. 1.

And I beg the Reader yet further to observe, that this predestination to the adoption of children by JESUS CHRIST, is blessedly said to be *to himself.* But who shall explain the full extent of this meaning? To himself! Is it, (I humbly ask the question, but presume not to answer,) is it to JEHOVAH, in his threefold character of Person, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, as in reference to each and to all, similar to that mysterious, but soul-comforting truth, where it is said, *GOD was in CHRIST, reconciling the world to himself!* 2 Cor. v. 19. Or is it in a personal way, specially spoken, as by the FATHER? Reader! ponder the weighty words, for they are most blessed. To himself! Not to happiness only, simply in itself. Not to blessings only in time, or blessings in eternity. Not to all the creation of GOD, with all that an eternal world can furnish. Not to these, but to GOD himself. Oh! the wonderful grace contained in the expression; *Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by JESUS CHRIST unto himself, according to the good pleasure of his will!* Sweetly the LORD speaks on this ground in several Scriptures: *This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise.* Isaiah xliii. 21. So again: *Know that JEHOVAH hath set apart him that is godly for himself.* Psm. iv. 3. So once more: *For JEHOVAH hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar pleasure.* Psm. cxxxv. 4. Reader! I do but glance at those rich things. To unfold them to the full is impossible!

The *third* gracious act of GOD the FATHER's love to the Church, which the Apostle hath noticed in this blessed Scripture, is, the acceptance of the Church in CHRIST, *to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.* Here again, who shall unfold all the vast things contained in the bosom of this wonderful verse? And when considered as the close of the former, what a climax the whole riseth up into, of unspeakable blessedness. *First*, chosen in CHRIST. *Secondly*, predestinated to glory in

CHRIST. And, *thirdly*, accepted in CHRIST, as everlastingly united to him, and considered one with him for ever!

And what endears this still more, and which I pray the Reader never to forget, of this acceptance of the persons of God's children in CHRIST is, that it is from everlasting, as well as the act of choosing and predestinating. The Apostle hath not yet in this chapter noticed any act of God the SON, or God the HOLY GHOST, in their personal office character. Redemption by CHRIST, which is next to be spoken of, is not as yet brought forward. The accepting in the Beloved, is spoken of as a thing done before redemption became necessary. Indeed, what is said of *choosing*, and *predestinating*, and *accepting*, is said to be before the foundation of the world, and, consequently, before sin was known upon earth, or redemption from sin needful. The expression is strong, he *hath* made us accepted in the Beloved. The Apostle speaks of it as of *a thing past*; Whereas, in the following verse, when he comes to speak of redemption, he speaks of it as of *a thing now*, we *have* redemption in his blood. I beg the Reader not to overlook these things. In the vast subject we are now upon, every minute point is full of importance.

Here then let the Reader for the moment pause. Let him contemplate those *three* immense blessings, as the special personal acts and gifts of God the FATHER, and resulting from his fatherly love to CHRIST, as the Head of the Church, and to the Church, as in Him, First, the *choice*. Let the Reader observe, moreover, that this original and eternal choice of the persons of the Church, in all the individuals of the whole body, is said to be solely from himself, and according to the good pleasure of his will. No one cause, but from himself to himself, producing such gracious effects. Let the Reader duly ponder this. Then let him proceed to the further consideration, that this choice in God the FATHER was, that the Church should be holy, and without blame before him in love, most plainly shewing, that as the Church is chosen in CHRIST, and CHRIST is the HOLY ONE; the Church is holy in his holiness, and everlastingly considered in him, without blame before God in love. All the after circumstances of the fall, in the present time-state of the Church, (and for which, as we shall shortly see, all provision was made,) cannot do away, neither counteract, those eternal purposes of God, which he purposed in himself. The Church was chosen to holiness in CHRIST, and in his holiness is beheld. *Secondly*, as chosen in CHRIST, and to holiness in CHRIST, so *predestinated* to sonship in CHRIST. And, *thirdly*, the full acceptance of our persons in CHRIST, is to the praise of the glory of his grace. Not only to the praise of his grace, but to the glory of his grace. As if God's glory was made more glorious in the manifestation of such riches of his grace. And to crown the whole, all these unspeakable gifts of God the FATHER are the result of his own free and sovereign grace, before the foundation of the world, and, consequently, before the Church had being, and sin in Adam, to make the redemption by CHRIST necessary.

7 In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace;

In this verse we now come to the subject of redemption. Redemption! A word, taken in all its vast dimensions, bigger than a thousand such worlds as ours. Let us, however, proceed regularly into this mysterious subject. We have noticed, (though briefly,) in the former verses, the gracious personal acts of God the FATHER, in relation to the Church. Here we enter upon the gracious personal acts of God the SON, resulting, as this verse expresseth it, and as the former had done, *from the riches of his grace*. This is a precious point always to be kept in view. For, as it was said of the FATHER, his sovereign acts of grace flowed from *the good pleasure of his will*; so the SON's from *the riches of his grace*; and so the HOLY GHOST's, as we shall hereafter (when we come to that part of the subject) discover, *from his good pleasure, which he purposed in himself*, verse 9.

I begin the subject contained in this verse, with observing, that when the Apostle, in reference to CHRIST, saith, that *we have redemption in his blood*, there is included in it the cause of this redemption, in the Church's union with her LORD, as her Head and Husband. This is of course implied. CHRIST's redemption of his Church presupposes his interest in his Church, and, of consequence, in all that belongs to her. It is a comprehensive way of speaking. Redemption includes every thing, in relation to the Person, work, offices, and characters, in which the SON of God engaged, when assuming our nature, and when he came into this our world, in this time-state of the Church, and accomplished redemption by his blood and righteousness.

But though the vast subject of redemption compriseth every thing that is blessed for the Church to meditate upon, night and day, during the whole of her present time-state upon earth, as it will call up her intellectual faculties, when full ripened hereafter in heaven, to dwell upon for ever; yet, I must not in this place enter at large upon it. In several parts of this *Poor Man's Commentary*, as the scriptures led to it, I have glanced at it, and, therefore, would there refer the Reader. See all the Gospels upon it. See also Rom. iii. 25. Gal. iii. 13. and Commentary on both. A few of the outlines only can I here detain the Reader with.

And first. The Apostle speaks of this vast work of redemption, as a thing possessed. *We have redemption*. Yes! CHRIST on the cross declared it to be finished. John xix. 30. But for the matter itself, who shall speak its value? Its dimensions are infinite, for it reacheth through all time, and through all eternity. And the nature of it, as well as its duration and extension, is attended with such difficulty to explain, that unless we could determine the nature of sin, we can never determine the vastness of redemption. But so infinitely important is it in itself, that without an interest in it, notwithstanding the Church being *chosen* in CHRIST, *predestinated* to the adoption of children in CHRIST, and *accepted* in CHRIST; yet, having forfeited all right to these blessings by the *Adam-fall*, and our whole nature being thereby degraded and sunk, but for redemption we must have remained in the captivity of sin, and under the heavy penalty to the breaches of it, as well as also been totally unqualified to enjoy the privilege of children to all eternity. Oh! the unspeakable blessings included in redemption!

Secondly. The greatness of redemption is enhanced by the greatness of the Redeemer. We may in some measure form an idea, however imperfectly to what it really is, of the immensity of the blessings, by the immensity of his nature, who alone could accomplish it. God and man in one Person. *In whom,* (saith the Apostle,) *we have redemption.* How blessedly Scripture speaks of CHRIST in numberless places. *For thy Maker is thine Husband; the LORD of Hosts is his Name; and thy Redeemer, the HOLY ONE of Israel, The GOD of the whole earth shall he be called!* Isaiah liv. 5. See also Isaiah xliii. 1—7.

Thirdly. How redemption hath been wrought. *Through his blood.* Here again, all created wisdom is incompetent to enter into any adequate apprehension of the mysterious work. The Scriptures declare the fact itself. But no created powers, either angels or men, are able to conceive of it, with any clearness of knowledge. We are told, indeed, that the angels do not understand, *but desire to look into.* 1 Pet. i. 12.

Fourthly. As the Person who alone could bring salvation, and the work he wrought in the accomplishment, exceed our utmost faculties to describe; so the effect baffles all conception also, to form equal ideas. We are told, that we have by it *the forgiveness of all our sins*; yea, in Him himself we have this vast mercy. But who shall calculate the greatness, or the number; the nature, or the quality of sins. It takes in, and includes our whole lives, past, present, and future. And, therefore, so infinitely extensive in its efficacy is redemption, from sin in all its consequences, that it reacheth through all time, and through all eternity. And so infinitely great in its power, that *it cleanseth from all sin.* 1 John i. 7.

And, *fifthly*, to sum up all, as if to silence for ever all the pretensions of the proud, and all the fears of the humble, the whole is said to be the sole result *of the riches of his grace*. So that grace, and the riches of that grace, provides the remedy, and grace accepts its own providing. And all, from beginning to end, is the sole effect of grace.

Some have stumbled at this account of the HOLY GHOST, and in the pride of their unhumbled heart, have boldly questioned, how free grace can be said to do all, and yet CHRIST hath purchased the redemption of his people by his blood? But such men have not been taught of God, *and, therefore, err, because they know not the Scriptures, nor the power of God.* Matt. xxii. 29. It was free grace to admit a Surety for the Church, when in the *Adam*-nature she had sinned, and come short of the glory of God. And it was not only free grace, but the riches of that grace, not only to admit a Surety, but to provide One. And this GOD the FATHER did, when he gave his dear SON as the Head, Husband, and Surety of his Church. For JESUS was *made* a Surety. Heb. vii. 22. Now the LORD JEHOVAH magnified the riches of his grace, in this very way and manner. He had *chosen* the Church *in* CHRIST, to be *holy* in CHRIST, to a *sonship* *in* CHRIST, and to an *acceptation* *in* CHRIST, and that from all eternity. But to magnify the riches of this grace, the Church, during the time-state of her being, falls into sin, and forgets her adoption-character, and comes under the curse of a broken law. Here then

opens a way for the fullest display of grace, in causing her recovery, and by such a plan of wisdom, love, and power, as enhanceth every blessing tenfold. Jesus shall redeem her by his blood. So that redemption is the effect of the original grace. And so far is it from militating against the freedom of that grace, that it is in fact, one of the highest fruits of it. God's children in CHRIST, when fallen in sin, shall be redeemed by CHRIST, and redemption, which is the biggest of all blessings, in the time-state of the Church, shall be found to be the result of the first, original, and eternal design of God, in his purposes towards the Church, from all eternity. And God the HOLY GHOST elsewhere beautifully expresseth the precious truth, when he saith, *we are justified freely by his grace*; but he adds, *it is through the redemption that is in CHRIST JESUS*. Rom. iii. 24. Redemption purchaseth not our sonship, for that was from all eternity. But redemption purchaseth our pardon, when as children we had sinned, and come short of God's glory. Hence this blessed Scripture declares the soul refreshing truth; *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace*. Hence, also, the song of heaven. Rev. v. 9.

8 Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;

9 Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself.

In those verses, the Church is brought into the view of the *third* great branch, of this vast subject, namely, the grace of God the HOLY GHOST. The Apostle having gone over the several heads of God the FATHER's love to the Church, in *choosing, adopting, and accepting* the Church in CHRIST; and God the SON's love to the Church, in *redeeming* the Church from her fallen state of sin, by his blood; now brings forward the love of God the HOLY GHOST to the Church, in his great office-work, in the vast concern, in those parts of character, which are peculiarly his to accomplish. The words made use of to express the divine agency of the HOLY GHOST, are comprehensive of the whole grace of the SPIRIT, which he manifesteth towards the Church, from his first Almighty act of grace in regeneration, until grace is finished in glory. *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.*

The first point I beg the Reader to remark with me is, that the same act of free grace and love is here ascribed to God the HOLY GHOST, as was ascribed before, both to the Person of the FATHER, and to the Person of the SON. This is a grand point to observe. For it proves both the Person of God the HOLY GHOST, by such an act of a personal nature. It proves also his eternal power and God-head, in common with the FATHER and the SON. And it proves no less, the equal act of grace towards the Church, in each of the Persons of the GODHEAD, when we are here taught that God the FATHER's *choosing, adopting, and accepting*, was according to the good

pleasure of his will, verse 5. that GOD the SON's *redemption* of the Church, was, *according to the riches of his grace*, verse 7. and GOD the HOLY GHOST's *abounding toward us in all wisdom and prudence*, having made known unto us *the mystery of his will*, was also *according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself*. Reader! pause, I pray you, and admire the beautiful order, as well as the wonderful grace, in this manifestation, of the Personalities of the GODHEAD towards the Church. Behold! here the love of each Person, brought forward in distinct and special acts of favor to the Church. GOD the FATHER choosing and appointing, GOD the SON accomplishing, and GOD the HOLY GHOST making known, and rendering effectual, the blissful mercies! Oh! how are we taught to look up with equal love, and reverence, and praise, to the joint cause of all our blessings, in time, and to all eternity, and with all the heavenly host, sing the song recorded, *of blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, unto him that sitteth upon the throne, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, and unto the LAMB for ever and ever*. Rev. v. 13.

I must not enter into an extensive view of what may be supposed implied, in those *aboundings* of the HOLY GHOST. This *Poor Man's Commentary*, will not admit it. But we may fairly suppose, that by the expressions of *wisdom and prudence*, are intended, the whole of GOD the SPIRIT's work, in the Covenant of Grace. His is the office, to reveal, and, as it is here expressed, *to make known the mystery of his will*. He is the Almighty *Zaph-nath-paaneah*; the *Revealer of hidden things*. Gen. xli. 45. And so essential is the work of GOD the SPIRIT, that to him is reserved, the whole efficient ministry, as it relates to the personal enjoyment of each, and every individual member, of CHRIST's mystical body. His is, *to take of the things of CHRIST*, and reveal to the soul. His is, *to convince of sin, of righteousness, and judgment*. John xvi. 8. And, all that acquaintance we have, with the Person of CHRIST, the work of CHRIST, the glory of CHRIST, are his special work. Until the LORD the SPIRIT hath quickened, and regenerated our fallen nature, every child of God is *dead in trespasses and sins*. See Ephes. ii. 1. and Commentary. So that all the actions of the new-born child of God, leadings to the throne, access to the throne, and acceptance at the throne in CHRIST, are the immediate work of GOD the HOLY GHOST. Hence *Paul* prays for the Church, that the LORD, (that is, the SPIRIT,) might *lead their hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for CHRIST*. 2 Thess. iii. 5.

I will only detain the Reader with a short observation, on the work of GOD the HOLY GHOST, in this blessed office of his, when *abounding toward us in all wisdom and prudence*, and making known to us *the mystery of his will*; and will then pass on to the next verse: namely, how blessedly the LORD accomplisheth those gracious purposes, when he makes known to a child of God, the plague and burden of sin, and causeth him to feel it also; and then opens to his view the *aboundings of grace*, and causeth him to believe the record, that GOD hath done away the whole of sin, in the blood of CHRIST; yea, to feel his personal interest in it also. Reader! Is not this making known to us the mystery of his will? When we behold the vast pile of sin, reaching up, as *Ezra* saith, to heaven; *Ezra* ix. 6. and the blood of CHRIST, washing all away: so that, *when the*

iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found. Jerem. i. 20. This is grace indeed, and the aboundings of grace, which, like the ocean, buries in its bosom the loftiest mountains, if cast into it, and covers them over. This sea of mercy, in CHRIST's blood, riseth above all the highest water-mark of sin, and the aboundings of sin. And is, as the Prophet beautifully expresseth it, *casting all our sins into the depths of the sea.* Micah vii. 18, 19. Rom. v. 20, 21.

10 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*;

I beg to consider this verse alone. There is not perhaps the fellow to it, in relation to the vast subject it treats of, in all the Bible. It opens to us the very heart of God, as it respects his whole designs of grace, toward the Church. It shews us, how, from all eternity, the mind of JEHOVAH hath been occupied on this grand concern. And, what I beg yet more particularly for the Reader to remark with me upon the occasion, is, that it most plainly, and decidedly shews, that the whole designs of JEHOVAH, are to glorify the Lord Jesus. All is said to be decreed *for him*. All things are to centre *in him*. The dispensation of events, and the fulness of times, are all directing their several pursuits to this one termination; and, like the numberless rays of light, converging to one centre, all are to meet *in him*. I admire the repetition, *even in him*. There is a blessed emphasis in it, and so designed to be, in order to intimate the importance of the thing: *even in him*. We have another beautiful example of the same kind, Coloss. i. 20. *By him I say*, saith Paul. As if (and which is in reality the case,) the glory of CHRIST, (which is the only visible manifestation of JEHOVAH,) became the one, and only object, for which the Lord went forth in acts of creation. 2 Cor. iv. 6. John i. 18.

I cannot attempt to enter into the vast subject of this one verse. I would ponder over it with the most profound reverence, and attention. And, I would pray the Reader, to do the same. But it must be God the SPIRIT's province, to unfold, and explain. The very outlines of it are volumes.

First. What a view is here given, of the original, and ultimate design of JEHOVAH, in all his dispensations; namely, *to gather all things in CHRIST*. Think, Reader! What a wonderful Person must this God-man be in himself, independent of every other consideration, in whom all things are finally to be gathered?

Secondly. What a new, and living way, is here opened to our contemplation, for communion, and happiness, with JEHOVAH, in his threefold Personalities, in, and through, this wonderful Person; to whom all things are to be gathered, and in whom, and by whom alone, all access, entrance, and acceptance, can be found?

Thirdly. What grace, and love, and affection, doth the very plan of JEHOVAH's wisdom by this way manifest, towards the Church; since, without this bond of union, formed by that portion of human

nature taken into the GODHEAD by CHRIST, there could have been no gathering *to* God, neither communion *with* God. For so infinite is the distance, between what is created, and the Creator; between what is visible, and invisible; finite, and infinite; comprehensible, and incomprehensible; that, but for the SON of GOD assuming union with our nature, to act as a medium, and bond of union; there could have been no meeting-place between God and his creatures, neither open revelation to all eternity. The Apostle, therefore, appears to have been so sensible of this, that, when speaking of this gathering of all things to CHRIST, he lays the whole emphasis on Him, to whom the gathering is to be. CHRIST is the great *Him*: the only *Him*, by whom, and in whom, it can be accomplished. By virtue of his being the Head of his body the Church, he becomes both the centre of union, and of communication; and is *the fulness of him that filleth all in all*.

Reader! pause over the vast subject! Think of CHRIST's Person! How dear to God! How dear ought He to be to us! What an awful state must they be in, who deny his GODHEAD? Oh! the folly, the vast folly, of such unbelief! How can He be less than God, unto whom all things are to be finally gathered? Think, what an awful gathering that will be, of the infidel, who, when the LORD shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. Luke xii. 46. And think, what a glorious gathering of his redeemed, when he shall *come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all that believe*. 2 Thess. i. 10.

11 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 :

12 That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted 'in Christ.

13 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,

14 Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

I will only detain the Reader with short observations, on what remains to be considered in this Chapter, though full of the most important points, because I have already far exceeded my limits. In those verses, amidst many other blessed things, we have *two* great subjects of doctrine spoken of: the first is, that the Church is predestinated to the LORD's glory, by trusting in CHRIST. And the other is, that after this predestinating act of JEHOVAH, to the belief in CHRIST, the HOLY GHOST is said to seal the persons of believers, as

that HOLY SPIRIT of promise. Reader! do behold the safety, and blessedness of the Church, under those two immense points of security!

In relation to our trust and belief, it should be always carefully remembered, that these acts of ours, are not the *cause* of our safety and blessedness, but the *effect*. CHRIST is the great object of trust and belief. And wherefore? Because, what CHRIST wrought, and accomplished, was the result of God's everlasting love, in CHRIST. Hence, CHRIST is said, *by himself* to have purged our sins. Heb. i. 3. This, then, is the *cause*. Our dependance upon him, and what he hath done, is the *effect*. It is, indeed, always blessed, to live in the comfortable enjoyment of these things by faith. For the promise, in the charter of grace, runs in these words: *Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.* Isaiah xxvi. 3. But then, our faith is not the cause of safety, but the fruit. CHRIST is *all, and in all*.

We rise higher, however, in the *second* great point of doctrine, in relation to the SPIRIT's sealing: for this is not a mere *effect*, but a *cause*. It is true indeed, in one sense, both CHRIST's *redemption*, and the SPIRIT's sealing, may be called, the *fruits*, and *effects*, of the original, and eternal purpose of JEHOVAH, in his threefold character of Persons, towards the Church; because, none are redeemed, or sealed, but what are in the everlasting *choice* of God, the *sonship* in CHRIST, and *acceptation* in the Beloved, and this before the foundation of the world. Nevertheless, our trusting in CHRIST, and our being sealed with that HOLY SPIRIT of promise, differ as much as effects from causes. Reader! pause to admire, what a sweet testimony it is, to the souls of the LORD's people, when they have received the earnest of the SPIRIT? A work, in which they are altogether passive. And, how plainly do they prove, the certainty of their being sealed, when, from the same Almighty Power, they are enabled to trust in CHRIST, for the salvation of their souls? Here they find, what is called in scripture, *a good hope through grace*: And hence they learn to trace their mercies to the fountain-head of mercy, in discovering the whole to flow from the everlasting purposes of God in CHRIST. *For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate, to be conformed to the image of his SON, that he might be the first-born 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.* Romans viii. 29, 30.

15 Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,

16 Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

17 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:

18 The eyes of your understanding being en-

lightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

19 And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

20 Which he brought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly *places*,

21 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.

22 And hath put all *things* under his feet, and gave him *to be* the head over all *things* to the church.

23 Which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all.

The Apostle, having in the former part of this most blessed Chapter, brought forward some of the immense mercies, resulting from JEHOVAH's love, in his Personal manifestations to the Church; now follows the whole with prayer, that the Church might be favored with such apprehensions of the same, as centered in CHRIST; and such as might safely carry her through all her time-state upon earth, until brought home to everlasting glory in heaven. There is somewhat truly blessed, and sublime, in this prayer of the Apostle. It carries with it indeed, the most decided proofs, of the Apostle's having been taught it, by the HOLY GHOST. Neither can the imagination conceive, any thing more highly important, for the LORD's redeemed ones to have a full apprehension concerning, than what *Paul* prays for. How truly blessed, to have the eyes spiritually enlightened, to the consciousness of being redeemed from all the dreadful consequences of the Adam-fall transgression; forgiven all sins, and sealed to everlasting safety and happiness in CHRIST, with that HOLY SPIRIT of promise? And, when these mercies are so incorporated in the mind, in the knowledge of the hope of CHRIST's calling, and the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints; what additional sweetness, in point of testimony, the whole proves, in running up the contemplation to the source of all, in God's everlasting love? We then see, both God's choice, and our adoption-character secured, beyond the possibility of doubt; and all centered in CHRIST for his Church, which is his body, the fullness of him that filleth all in all. The LORD, who gave *Paul* the spirit of prayer for the Church, graciously answers it in mercy; and all blessings must follow, to the LORD's glory, and the Church's happiness in CHRIST!

REFLECTIONS.

My soul! look up for grace, as *Paul* did, to bless God, even the FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, for the wonders of divine love, as set forth in this precious Chapter; from whence flow all the mercies to the Church, in time; and to all eternity. Behold! my soul, what method the LORD was pleased to make use of, among all the stores of his Omnipotency, to make known his love to the Church! In the Person of his dear SON, he caused the whole to center. And the LORD was pleased, to render the whole ten thousand times more blessed, in making all to flow in, and from, and through, a nature like our own, in the Person of the God-Man CHRIST JESUS. Pause, my soul! admire, and adore each glorious Person, in their Office-character, in this vast concern. Bless GOD the FATHER, for his love, in *choosing, predestinating, adopting, and accepting*, the whole body the Church, in CHRIST, before the foundation of the world! Bless GOD the SON, for that love of his, in *marrying* the Church from everlasting; and for *redeeming* her from the ruins of the fall, during her time-state upon earth. And bless GOD the HOLY GHOST, for having *abounded toward the Church in all wisdom and prudence, in making known the mystery of his will*, and in all his *regenerating* grace and mercy. Yea, blessed for ever be JEHOVAH, in his threefold character of Person, for CHRIST, and all blessings in CHRIST, temporal, spiritual, and eternal blessings, for ever!

LORD! enable thy Church, to be looking forward to that glorious day of God, when the fulness of times being come, all things shall be gathered in CHRIST. What a gathering of thy people will this be, in glories unspeakable? What a dispensation of terror to thy foes? Precious, precious JESUS! how sweet is it to my soul, the assurance, of being now gathered unto thee in grace, as the earnest, and pledge of being then gathered unto thee in glory. LORD! fill my poor soul with thy fulness; and manifest daily to my joy, and thy praise, that thou art indeed my Head, and the *fulness, which filleth all in all!*

CHAP. II.

CONTENTS.

The Church is reminded of her original State of Nature, in being quickened in CHRIST. The Apostle extols the Triumphs of Grace. The Chapter closeth, with shewing CHRIST to be the Foundation of his Church.

AND you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins;

2 Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

3 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; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us,

5 Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)

6 And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus:

However humbling, the subject is most blessed, with which the Apostle opens this Chapter, in reminding the Church, of her being quickened, *when dead in trespasses and sins*. There is nothing more profitable, than for a child of GOD, to have always in remembrance, the *Adam*-state of a fallen nature, in which we were all born. In Heaven itself, it must tend to heighten all the felicities of the place. And, sure I am, that to the last moment of life, when going to the throne, it will endear GOD the FATHER'S love, and make precious the Person of JESUS, and his blood, while we keep in remembrance, *the rock whence we were hewn, and the hole of the pit whence we were digged*. Isaiah li. 1.

It will serve perhaps, under GOD the SPIRIT'S teaching, to give the Reader a more quick apprehension, of the importance of the thing itself, in the recovery of our fallen nature by grace, if we take a short view of the awful state, to which the Church of GOD, as well as the whole nature of man, was reduced, by the fall; in order to behold the greatness of divine love, in the redemption by CHRIST. The LORD the SPIRIT bless the review of both, to his glory, and to our happiness.

And *first*. The lost estate of man, and the whole Church of GOD, in that lost estate, by reason of the original sin of *Adam*. It is a blessed thought, that the Church of GOD, as chosen in the eternal act, and will, and pleasure, of GOD; was chosen, and created pure, and holy, in *Adam*, the head, and parent of all mankind in nature. But, it is as sure a truth, that all fell in him, the Church as well as the world, and became sinful before GOD. It pleased GOD, as if to marr the pride of nature, and the higher to extol free sovereign grace in CHRIST, to appoint things so to be. So that, when *Adam* fell, in that fall he spiritually died. And this was the death, the LORD threatened, and fulfilled, in his own Person and all his seed. He did not die in body: For he lived many years after, and had children. But he died in spirit. He lost all spiritual apprehension of divine things. And all his posterity, are literally born the same. Generation from father to son, is only in nature: and *the natural man receiveth not the things of the SPIRIT of GOD*. 1 Cor. ii. 14.

Secondly. I beg the Reader to attend to this Scriptural statement, of this death in spirit. There is a death of the *body*, to which by sin,

the whole race of man is subject, and which all fall under. But this is not the spiritual death, from which *Paul* tells the *Ephesians* they by grace were quickened. And, there is an *eternal* death, to which every unregenerated sinner is exposed. But neither is this the death *Paul* had in contemplation. For, as the *former* consists in the separation of soul and body, *for the body without the spirit is dead*, James ii. 26: so the *latter*, consists in an everlasting separation of soul and body from God in CHRIST to all eternity. And this is the awful death of all Christless souls. For what the soul of a man is to the body, to give life to it; such is CHRIST to the soul. But the *spiritual death* which *Paul* had in view, and from whence he tells the *Ephesians* they were quickened; is a *death in trespasses and sins*. And, it was this which our first parents experienced, and in which their whole posterity are born; a life of enmity and alienation to God. And from which none less than God the HOLY GHOST, can quicken. John i. 13.

Thirdly. From what has been said, it will be in some measure easy to infer, the vast work of regeneration; and what high views the Apostle had, of this act of grace in God the SPIRIT, when he said to the Church: *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins*. I stay not in this place, to enter into the particulars of this gracious act of God. This would lead too far. And, indeed, I have already in this work, somewhat largely considered the subject, to which I refer. See John iii. 8. and Commentary.

I beg, however, to detain the Reader one moment longer, just to call his attention to the expression of the Apostle, when speaking of the former state of the Church, before being quickened by the SPIRIT; he saith, that *they were by nature children of wrath even as others*. By which we may suppose, he could not possibly mean, that they were children of God's wrath, when he had before, in the preceding Chapter, said so many blessed things, of their being *chosen of God, to be holy, and without blame before him in love; being predestinated to the adoption of children, by JESUS CHRIST to himself, and accepted in the Beloved*. See Chap. i. 4—6. It is impossible that such could have ever been the children of God's wrath; though when born in the *Adam-nature* of a fallen state, were justly exposed to God's wrath, and but for their sonship in CHRIST, and acceptance in him, must have suffered the punishment due to sin. But it should seem, that the Apostle's meaning is, they were by nature, children *deserving wrath*, even as others. And, moreover, by the fall, were also of *wrathful tempers, and dispositions*; and, as *Paul* elsewhere said of himself, and all others like himself, while in a state of unregeneracy, were *living in malice and envy; hateful, and hating one another*. Titus iii. 3. I thought it proper to state this to the Reader; for some, for want of attention to this grand feature of our holy faith, in our grace-union with CHRIST, by God's choice from all eternity; have been led away with the too common phrase of calling God's children as if once heirs of hell, and children of the devil. Blessed be God! they never were so, though children *deserving wrath*; yet in CHRIST, saved with an everlasting salvation. And the gift of the SPIRIT is, because *they are sons*, and not to make them so. See Gal. iv. 6. and Commentary.

It will not be necessary, for me to dwell, particularly, on what the Apostle saith in those verses, concerning *Satan*, whom he calleth;

the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. I have at some length, made remarks on his delusions, in the hearts of men: Luke xxii. 46. and Matt. xii. 30. I refer therefore the Reader to those Scriptures. And, in addition to what is there said, concerning the empire of *Satan*, it will only be necessary yet further to observe in this place, that when the Apostle calls him *the prince of the power of the air*, he doth not mean, that *Satan* directs the winds or storms, or hath the least influence over the *natural* air which men breathe. For this would be, to ascribe to him; acts of creation. The sense is, that his principality is over the malignant spirits of the air, devils like himself, for we are told of a legion. Mark v. 9. Those being airy spirits, live in the air: and over these, *Satan* reigns, as he doth in the children of disobedience, whose hearts he calleth *his house*. Luke xi. 24. It is in this sense, I apprehend, *Paul* calls him *the prince of the power of the air*.

Having said thus much by way of preface, and for the better apprehension of the weighty subject the Apostle had in view, when he expressed himself in the opening of this Chapter, on quickening *the dead in trespasses and sins*; I now beg the Reader's attention, to this interesting point, of our most holy faith.

And *first*. When *Paul* tells the *Ephesian* Church, that the LORD had quickened them, who were, by nature, *dead in trespasses and sins*; it is evident, that he ascribed the Almighty agency to God the HOLY GHOST. It is, indeed, his special, and personal office, in the Covenant of Grace. And before we go further, I beg the Reader to pause, and consider with me, the beautiful order, and harmony, in the gracious acts of love, manifested in the Persons of the GODHEAD, towards the Church. To God the FATHER, peculiarly belongs, the sovereign act, of *choosing* the Church, *predestinating* the several persons of the Church, into the *adoption* of children, by JESUS CHRIST, and *accepting* them, in the beloved. To God the SON, his province of love, and favor, manifested to the Church, is ascribed, in *marrying* to himself the Church before all worlds; and *redeeming* the Church, in the time-state of her being, from the ruin into which she had fallen, in the *Adam*-nature of sin and corruption. To God the HOLY GHOST, in an especial manner, from his office engagements in the Covenant of grace, belongs the glorious act of *regeneration*: or, as *Paul* here expresseth it, quickening the dead of CHRIST's people, which by nature, are *dead in trespasses and sins*. Think, Reader! what a beautiful order, and harmony, is here shewn, in those equal acts of grace, by the several Persons of the GODHEAD, as they relate to the Church of CHRIST!

When the Reader hath duly pondered the blessed subject, in this point of view, I would desire to call his attention to another; namely, that those acts of each Person of the GODHEAD, are once done, and done for ever. When God chose the persons of the Church, to make up the whole body of CHRIST, the act, and the will, were instantly together. No alteration could evermore take place, in this purpose, and decree, of an unchangeable God! Hence JESUS, in the days of his flesh, called off his disciples' minds, from being elated with their momentary triumphs over devils, to rejoice at what could never alter, but last for ever. *Rejoice*, said JESUS, *that your names are written*.

in heaven! Luke x. 20. What a precious consideration is this, to a child of God?

In like manner, when JESUS married his Church, before all time; the deed once done, neither death, nor hell, could after disannul. See Hosea ii. 19, 20. Isaiah xxviii. 15—19. And when, during the time-state of the Church, Jesus redeemed his Church; by that *one offering of himself once offered, he perfected for ever them that are sanctified.* Heb. x. 14. There are a multitude of scriptures to the same amount, which I must not stay to write down at large; but the Reader may refer to. Rom. vi. 9, 10, 11. Heb. ix. 25, 26. And, it is in this sense, that sweet Scripture is to be read: 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, 16.

Now let the Reader behold, the sweet and blessed office-work of God the SPIRIT, in regeneration; which like those of the FATHER and the SON, when once done, is done for ever. *You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.* And, being quickened, the spirit can die no more. For it is *made a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.* 2 Pet. i. 4. It is born again, *not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.* 1 Pet. i. 23. Behold, Reader! what a beautiful order, and correspondence, there is here again also, in relation to those gracious acts of the divine Persons; and the everlasting nature of them. As the FATHER's choice, once done, can never be lost; so the SON's marriage, and redemption, is but once done, and is for ever; and the regeneration of the spirit by the HOLY GHOST, is but one act, and which can never be liable to any possibility of dying, or death, for ever. So precious, so very precious, are those great truths of God!

One word more. This quickening of the child of God, who by nature in the Adam-fall, was before *dead in trespasses and sins*, though the *last* in point of order, from the gracious acts of the GOD-HEAD; (the being chosen *in CHRIST*, and redeemed *by CHRIST*, having before taken place,) is nevertheless, the *first* in point of discovery, of our high privileges, either of the FATHER's love, or the SON's grace, towards his Church, and people. Until my soul by regeneration was quickened, into this new, and spiritual life; I had no consciousness of my high birth-right, leading to my high calling, in CHRIST JESUS. But no sooner did the LORD the HOLY GHOST call me out of nature's darkness, and the shadow of death, by breaking my bands asunder; than I discovered, whose I was, and to whom I belonged, in CHRIST JESUS. Reader! think of those mercies; and may both you and I have grace, rightly to value them. If, as an Apostle saith, *he that converts a sinner, from the error of his way, shall save a soul from death*; though in all this, he can only act as an instrument, and not the principal, to do this: what multitudes of souls doth God the SPIRIT save from everlasting death, who is both the principal, and cause, in every instance, where this mercy is wrought, and the great source of spiritual life to every sinner that He quickened? James v. 20. *Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift!*

Reader! let me only add from the whole, how blessed it is, when God's children prove their being chosen by God the FATHER in CHRIST; and their being both married to CHRIST, and redeemed by

CHRIST; when GOD the SPIRIT hath quickened them, to this new and spiritual life, who were before *dead in trespasses and sins!* Peter the Apostle, in allusion to this change, (and a wonderful change it is, the greatest ever made, in time, or in eternity;) saith, that *ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.* And what can be more suited to a truly regenerated soul? *In time past,* (saith the Apostle,) *ye were not a people; but are now the people of GOD. Which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.* 1 Pet. ii. 9, 10. Not that the Apostle means, that before regeneration, they were not a people in CHRIST. For they were always his people: GOD from the beginning having chosen them to salvation through sanctification of the SPIRIT. 2 Thess. ii. 13. But the sense is, that before they were regenerated, they knew it not. So, in like manner, they had always mercy, but had no consciousness of that mercy; nor a consciousness of the want of that mercy, while they remained *dead in trespasses and sins.* But, all these blessings were discovered, and enjoyed by them, after the kindness and love of GOD our SAVIOR toward man appeared: not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the HOLY GHOST. Titus iii. 4, 5. So that, this saving act of GOD the HOLY GHOST, brings the child of GOD into life, and the enjoyment of those vast privileges, which GOD the FATHER appointed, in choosing him, and adopting him in CHRIST; and GOD the SON bestowed upon him, in uniting him to himself, and redeeming him from the ruin of the present time-state of his Church. Of such unspeakable moment it is, in the life of every child of GOD, to be quickened, from the death of sin in Adam, to the life of righteousness in CHRIST. Well may we again exclaim, with the Apostle: *Thanks be unto GOD for his unspeakable gift!*

7 That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in *his* kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

8 For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of GOD:

9 Not of works, lest any man should boast.

10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which GOD hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

I admire what the Apostle saith, in the first of these verses, of GOD's design, in the display of his grace, by the permission of evil. Let men soften the subject as they please; but certainly, the introduction of evil into the creation of GOD, though none will make GOD the author of it, is nevertheless, made subservient to the promotion of GOD's glory. And this is among the highest proofs of GOD's sovereignty. When GOD makes good spring out of evil; and that, which in itself strikes deepest against the LORD's glory, even sin, is ultimately made, by his overruling wisdom, and power, to produce the

very reverse to what is intended by Satan. This manifests a divine hand, and is to the LORD's praise!

The principal feature in the great points of our holy faith, is of this kind; and beautifully illustrates the whole. The Church, during her time-state falling into sin, and, consequently, sorrow; only afforded a better opportunity for the manifestation of CHRIST's love. JESUS had married her from all eternity. And, when he married her, she was presented to him, in all that original glory and holiness in himself, which she had derived from him, and in which she appeared most lovely before him. When, therefore, CHRIST's Church falls, as she did immediately fall, soon after creation, into sin, and sorrow; this afforded a blessed occasion to her Husband to bring her out of both. And which he did, most compleatly and effectually. And this is what *Paul* calls, *the exceeding riches of his grace*; and fully proves, that all salvation is of grace, and the gift of GOD. Not of works indeed; for the very idea, wholly sets aside free grace: but it is wholly of GOD. Yea, saith *Paul*, *we are his workmanship*. Beautiful thought! because the whole Persons of the GODHEAD, concur in the gracious design: and, from the drawings of the FATHER, the manifestations of the SON, in his visits to his people; and the indwelling residence of the HOLY GHOST, the best, yea, the only way, of securing the fruits and effects of the HOLY GHOST, is most effectually provided for!

11 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;

12 That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the common-wealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

13 But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.

14 For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition *between us*;

15 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;

16 And that he might reconcile both unto God

in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:

17 And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh.

18 For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.

I cannot sufficiently admire, neither sufficiently recommend, to myself, and Reader, the blessedness of this sweet advice of the Apostle's. Apostle's, did I say, nay, it is GOD the HOLY GHOST, which so tenderly, and affectionately recommends the Church, to remember her former state, when in unregeneracy, and her present state, when brought nigh, by the blood of CHRIST. And, therefore, blessed SPIRIT of all grace, give me grace, to keep in remembrance this precious teaching of thine?

First: the LORD bids the Church to remember, what they once were, when in a state of unawakened nature, and *dead in trespasses and sins*. The Church at *Ephesus*, *Paul* reminds them, were Gentiles, not as a nation only, for in this sense they were Gentiles still; but when without CHRIST, and strangers to the Covenants of promise. In short, as far remote from any apprehension of the nature and being of GOD, as the brute that perisheth. Reader! pause over this account. Nothing serves more to magnify the riches of GOD's grace, than when the LORD displays it, on such characters. And may not you, and I, take to ourselves, in the recollection of the days of our unregeneracy, what *Paul* once said to the *Corinthian Church*, when speaking of the same things? *And such (said he) were some of you!* And, oh! how blessed, if to us may be said, what followed. *But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the LORD Jesus, and by the SPIRIT of our GOD.* 1 Cor. vi. 11.

Reader! let you and I take to ourselves what is commanded. It will be always profitable, to remember, *the wormwood, and the gall*, of a state of unregenerated nature. To look to *the rock whence we were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence we were digged.* Isaiah li. 1. Oh! what a stranger was I to GOD, and to CHRIST, all the long time of my unregeneracy? Stranger to the word of his grace, to the sweet sound of salvation; yea, a stranger to my own heart; unconscious of the want of CHRIST; ignorant of the love of GOD; and, like this Church of *Ephesus*, when first *Paul* came among them, I had never so much as heard, as to any saving knowledge in the soul, whether there was any HOLY GHOST. Acts xix. 2. Reader! what are your views of these things?

But, *secondly*. *Paul* sweetly adds: *but now in CHRIST JESUS, ye who sometimes were afar off, are made nigh by the blood of CHRIST. For He is our peace!* I pray the Reader to mark, with suitable observation, the whole cause of the Church's recovery. All in CHRIST. All by CHRIST: and wholly for CHRIST's sake. Here *Paul* evidently runs back, to the first, and original thought, with which he opened this Epistle. Chosen in CHRIST: adopted, and predestinated, to a sonship in CHRIST to himself: and accepted in CHRIST: and all to the praise of the glory of his grace. And, what I pray the Reader not

to lose sight of, is the very sweet close of this paragraph: that *through Him*, that is, CHRIST, *we both have access by one SPIRIT unto the FATHER!* There is not, as far as I recollect, a verse in the Bible, so short as this, where the office-characters of the Three glorious Persons of the GODHEAD, are so sweetly joined together, and brought within so narrow a compass. And yet, what can more fully shew, the constant access the children of God have always to the throne, in, and through CHRIST, when God the SPIRIT leads, and *directs the heart into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for CHRIST?*

Reader! do not dismiss this blessed portion of the chapter, before that you have gathered one or two sweet improvements, which, under the LORD's teaching, it brings with it.

First. The remembrance of our former state of unawakened nature, while it tends to keep our souls low in the dust before God, will always at the same time, heighten our views of the divine mercy. The one acts in opposition to the other. That I, who, as *Paul* said of himself, was once a blasphemer, persecutor, injurious, should obtain mercy! Oh! what sweet encouragement to all that hear of it!

Secondly. And, while it acts as a motive to encourage others, what strength it brings with it to all future acts of faith in ourselves? If I found grace, the poor sinner may say, when dead in trespasses and sins, what may I not hope for now, amidst all my own dying frames, and circumstances? It was nothing but grace then; and why not grace now? If when dead I was quickened; now when brought low, will not the LORD help me?

Thirdly. Nothing will more powerfully tend, under the LORD's blessing, to hide all pharisaical pride from the eyes, and to keep open a constant spring of true humbleness and sorrow, than the remembrance of what we once were, and what through grace we now are. Oh! when our mercies, and especially our spiritual mercies, are traced to their source, and the free, unmerited, unlooked-for, yet untaught-of love of God, is seen, in all our path along, from first to last; how low the child of God lays before God; how small his own attainments, and how high he values divine mercies in CHRIST!

And, *lastly*, to mention no more: (though many more might be added;) what views will the child of God have, of the Person, love, grace, blood-shedding, and righteousness, of JESUS CHRIST, who unceasingly remembers his former ruined, and undone state, out of CHRIST; and his present everlastingly blessed, and secure state, in CHRIST? Oh! the preciousness of JESUS, when the daily sense, of a daily need of JESUS, is felt in the soul.

19 Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God;

20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

21 In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord;

22 In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Let the Reader observe, how delightfully the Apostle calls off the attention of the Church, from what they once was, to what they now are. No more strangers, but friends: no more foreigners, but fellow-citizens; made free of that city *whose builder and maker is God*. Oh! what trouble, and vexation, men of this world have, in their freedom as they call it, of the perishing cities of the earth. Here is an inheritance, in the citizenship of heaven, yea, the household of God. And all such are in sweet communion and fellowship with the FATHER, and with his SON JESUS CHRIST. No strangers to the love of God, to the Person, glory, and grace, of CHRIST; nor to the regenerating, renewing influences, of God the HOLY GHOST. Oh! the felicity, even now, of an heir of heaven! Oh! the glory, that soon shall be revealed!

But the Apostle proceeds. *Ye are built* (saith he) *upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, JESUS CHRIST himself being the chief corner stone*. Yes! built upon the same foundation, as the Apostles and Prophets. *For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, JESUS CHRIST*. 1 Cor iii. 11. GOD the FATHER laid this foundation-stone in Zion. Isaiah xxviii. 16. And, both the Prophets of the Old Testament, and the Apostles of the New, acted only as servants in building the Church, on this Rock of Ages. Neither the persons, nor the doctrines, of the Apostles, and Prophets, are the foundation; but CHRIST in their doctrines: and, therefore, said to be their foundation.

I beg the Reader to observe with me, how blessedly *Paul* introduceth the whole Three Persons of the GODHEAD, as concerned, and engaged, in this building. GOD the FATHER layeth the foundation. CHRIST is the foundation, and the Chief Corner Stone, to knit together the whole building. And the building is, for an habitation of God, through the SPIRIT.

It is probable, I think, that while *Paul* makes use of such a beautiful similitude, as that of a Temple, to teach the Church the blessedness, of the LORD's people forming one grand body, of a spiritual nature, as hereafter to be completed in heaven; he had in view the magnificent building the *Ephesians* had erected, to the honor of their dunghill idol, *Diana*: which, we are told, was, in point of splendor, one of the world's wonders. It is, therefore, as if he had said: behold that superb structure! See how it is desecrated, to a mere idol! Then turn your thoughts, and contemplate that temple, which is founded on CHRIST, for an habitation of God, through the SPIRIT! And think, what unknown glories must result, from such an inhabitation, here in grace, and hereafter in glory! 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

If the Reader will indulge me but a few moments longer, on this sweet subject, I will venture, under the hope of divine grace, to touch at the outlines of it, with reverence, and godly fear. More than the outlines, I cannot propose. We must be favored, both Writer and Reader of this *Poor Man's Commentary*, with the vision *John* had, and see what he saw, and hear what he heard, before we can go further into the subject. *He saw* (he tells us) *the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of Heaven, as a bride adorned for her husband*.

And, he heard a great voice out of heaven, saying: *behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them.* Rev. xxi. 2, 3. But, though we neither hear, nor see, in visions, as *John* did; we derive instructions, under God the SPIRIT's teaching, from what he saw, and heard, for he was directed, to make known the revelation to the Churches. And the LORD JESUS, who sent his servant, pronounced a blessedness on those, who read, and hear, the words of his prophecy. Revelation i. 1, 11. and iii.

The first, and great, and ultimate object, which I beg the Reader everlastingly to keep in view, as he ponders this beautiful similitude of the Apostle, is, that the glorious structure is the joint result of the HOLY THREE IN ONE, as hath been before noticed. How blessedly doth JEHOVAH, in his Personalities, endear himself to the hearts of his people, by such united views, of his love, and grace and favor, towards the Church in CHRIST! Surely it is, that his people might have somewhat in their apprehensions, to lean upon, in their drawing nigh to the LORD, for communion in, and with, and by, CHRIST. Without this, in discovering the special acts of grace, from each glorious Person in the GODHEAD, the soul would be overwhelmed, and lost, in the contemplation of the divine essence!

When the Reader hath duly pondered these things, I would beg him to consider also, the proposed object of this spiritual building, which is said to be *for an habitation of God through the SPIRIT.* And, as the whole efficiency of the work, is now with the SPIRIT; we are here plainly taught, that it is to his Almighty agency, the whole structure is committed; and from his sovereignty in the communications of grace, from first to last, the whole building must be formed. If the Church of God, in the present day, was more alive to the apprehension of the Person, and GODHEAD, and work, and offices of God the HOLY GHOST; how would the minds, both of ministers and people, be waiting for his directions, in all the several means of grace, that they might hear, before they entered upon them, and as they passed through them, *what the SPIRIT saith unto the Churches!*

That God the HOLY GHOST is the Almighty Founder and Architect, of the whole spiritual building, is too plain a truth, to require arguments to establish. His is the whole Scripture, for the edification of the Church. His every dispensation in ordinances. His, the whole appointment of sacrifices. For when the High Priest went once in every year with blood, into the holy place, we are told, that the HOLY GHOST hereby signified his intentions by that service. See Heb. ix. 6, 7, 8. And, as the several ordinances, and means of grace, are of his express appointment; so the blessed effects intended from them, in spiritual fruits, are wholly his gift. It is He which lays the foundation of the temple, in the hearts of the LORD's people, by quickening, and regenerating the dead in trespasses and sins. He carries on the work, from grace to grace, in the soul. He it is which forms CHRIST in the heart, *the hope of glory.* In short, the LORD the SPIRIT is the founder, builder, and finisher, of the whole spiritual temple: and He, which enables the *lively stones to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by JESUS CHRIST.* 1 Pet. ii. 5. *All these worketh that one, and the self-same SPIRIT, dividing to every man severally as he will.* 1 Cor. xii. 11. Reader! ponder well the vast subject. It is indeed, too vast, too sublime, for the perfect appre-

hension of our unripe faculties. But, when the LORD shall bring home his glorious Church, from earth, to heaven; and present it to himself, a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, nor any such thing, but to be holy, and without blemish; and the whole building is fully prepared, in body, soul, and spirit, for the everlasting glory of GOD in CHRIST: then will it be, indeed, for an habitation of GOD through the SPIRIT! Oh! GOD the HOLY GHOST! do thou build up thy people, in the LORD our righteousness. Make our bodies thy temple: and direct the hearts of all thy redeemed, *into the love of GOD, and patient waiting for CHRIST!*

REFLECTIONS.

READER! while you, and I, hear what GOD the SPIRIT hath here said, to the Church at *Ephesus*; can we both, from the same divine assurance, say: the LORD hath quickened us, who were by nature, *dead in trespasses and sins*? Can we look back, and remember, *how the prince of the power of the air*, once wrought in our mind, as he doth now, *in the children of disobedience*? Had we our conversation in times past with such, and when we were dead in sins, were we quickened together with CHRIST? Oh! what a melting sense ought we to have, of divine mercies, in calling to mind, what we once were; and what, through grace, we now are? Oh! the blessedness of ascribing all to grace, and giving to GOD all the glory. And, must it not be GOD's workmanship, and not our's? Hath not GOD ordained all our works in us, and made both the preparation, and the performance of them, his own? And shall we seek acceptance in them, when they are not our's; or expect to be saved by them, when we are wholly saved in the LORD?

Precious LORD JESUS! It is thou, and thou alone, which hast brought us nigh by thy blood, when we were afar off, and enemies to GOD, by wicked works! Oh! LORD, keep us ever nigh, by thy power; that through Thee, we may always have access, by One SPIRIT, unto the FATHER!

LORD! bless thy whole building the Church, in heaven, and earth; all founded on CHRIST, and all one in CHRIST. Dwell in thy mystical body thy temple, and make it by grace, a suited habitation for thyself: FATHER, SON, and SPIRIT, both here, and hereafter! Amen.

CHAP. III.

CONTENTS.

The Apostle in this Chapter, makes a particular Address to the Church at Ephesus, as a Gentile Church. He shews the gracious Design of GOD from the Beginning, to the Gentiles, as One with the Jews in CHRIST. He closeth in Prayer.

FOR this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles,

2 (If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward :

It is more than probable, that at the time *Paul* wrote this Epistle, he was literally a prisoner at *Rome*. But the Apostle delighted to consider himself, in one and the same moment, the LORD's prisoner, and the LORD's freeman. The LORD's chains are golden chains. And, it was *Paul's* most fervent desire, that he might lay hold of CHRIST, as CHRIST had laid hold of him. This was his daily striving. Philip. iii. 12. Reader! how different the state, between the prisoner of JESUS, and the prisoner to sin and Satan!

3 How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery, (as I wrote afore, in few words,

4 Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ,)

5 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;

6 That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel :

The Apostle, no doubt, when speaking of having written to them before, alludes to the first Chapter particularly in this Epistle, in which he hath treated of those mysterious doctrines, of election, predestination, the acceptance of the Church in CHRIST, before the foundation of the world; together with redemption by CHRIST, and regeneration by the SPIRIT, during the time-state of the Church. But, what I would yet more particularly desire the Reader to regard, in this statement of *Paul*, is, what he saith in relation to the mystery of these grand things being kept secret in times past, compared to the revelation now made, unto the Apostles, and Prophets, by the SPIRIT. The Jews knew nothing of God's design, in relation to the Gentiles. Though, had they understood their own Scriptures, they would have discovered, that, from the beginning, the Church of God was One, and that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs of the same body. CHRIST's Church could be but one. And CHRIST himself the One Head, and Husband of his body the Church; and JEHOVAH's salvation to the ends of the earth. Isaiah xlix. 6. Song vi. 9. But, until the ascension of CHRIST, and the descension of the HOLY GHOST; these glorious truths, were not so openly revealed, as they were then by the SPIRIT.

7 Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

8 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;

9 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:

10 To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly *places* might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God,

11 According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:

12 In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.

Reader! You and I may pause a moment to admire the grace given to this great Apostle, who, while we behold him as an eminent servant of the LORD, he considered himself as less than the least of all saints; yea, the chief of sinners! 1 Tim. i. 15. Grace always humbles. The higher a child of God is advanced in divine knowledge, the lower he lays before God in humility. The more he knows of CHRIST, the more contemptible he thinks of himself. But profitable as such views are of God's best servants, the subject *Paul* is here upon, is too sublime, to lose a moment in looking at the servant, while we hear of the Person, and unsearchable riches of the Master. *Paul* calls it a mystery, and the fellowship of the mystery. And what a mystery, indeed, the whole forms? Great is the mystery of godliness. God, *manifest in the flesh*, is the first chapter. And what an endless subject, of the unsearchable riches of CHRIST, doth this one open? It contains depths of wisdom, and depths of love, which, like an ocean without bottom or shore, affords infinite scope for all God's intelligent creatures, to exercise their faculties in sailing over, but never fully to explore, for it passeth all knowledge. Nevertheless, the LORD encourageth his people to enter upon the discovery, in that we are told, that though from the beginning of the world it was hid in God, who created all things by JESUS CHRIST; yet, is it now made known to the Church. And, however, still hid *from the wise and prudent*, it is revealed unto the saints. *The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his Covenant.* Psm. xxv. 14. A few of the more prominent parts of this mystery, as here opened by the Apostle, we shall do well to regard, the LORD being our Teacher.

And, *first*. The Apostle tells us, that before God went forth in acts of creation, when he created all things by JESUS CHRIST, the fellowship of this mystery had been hid in his bosom, and, of consequence, it was unknown to angels. It was an eternal purpose, which he purposed in CHRIST JESUS our LORD. So that there was none

privity to it but God himself, in his threefold character of Persons, FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST. And herein became the greatest, if not the first discovery, of the Personalities in the GODHEAD. For, although at Creation we find the Sacred Three in One, speaking on the subject of creation to one another, at the forming man, saying, *Let us make man in our Image, after our Likeness*; Gen. i. 26. yet, it was at the revelation concerning the LORD JESUS, as *the manifold wisdom of God*, that we find the blessed discovery of the HOLY THREE in ONE becoming witnesses in heaven to these great truths. I John v. 7. And I would ask the Reader, (but not speak decidedly,) do we not discover those heavenly witnesses, when, as in this very Epistle to the Church, we read of GOD the FATHER's *choosing* the Church, GOD the SON's *redeeming* the Church, and GOD the SPIRIT's *regenerating* the Church, as so many distinct and personal acts in this mystery? Yea, are not these as so many blessed discoveries afforded us, that we might have somewhat to form to ourselves, suited apprehensions, both of the Personality, and of the love and favor of God, in this threefold character of Being. Chap. i. 4—9.

No doubt, when God went forth in acts of creation, he made a vast display of his divine perfections. In all those works we behold a proof of them. And, although, in respect to his own eternal glory, there needed no such manifestations, resting in his own unchangeable complacency, and being infinitely blessed, had men or angels never been called into being; yet, when the LORD was pleased to raise up such magnificent works of his hands, the contemplation of them called forth his praise, when, as we are told, *the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy*. Job xxxviii. 7. But when CHRIST, as GOD-man, came to be revealed to the Church, and all the great events included in that high administration of his Person, offices, and character, were unfolded to view; here was discovered such unsearchable riches, as proclaimed *the manifold wisdom of God*. The very Person of CHRIST alone, in the union of his double nature, GOD and Man in One, opened such an object of glory to feast our ravished souls upon, as in himself, and independent of any one act of love and grace towards his Church and people, as her SAVIOR and Redeemer, was enough to produce the highest sensations of joy to all eternity. And when to the view of his Person, as GOD-man, we add the gracious offices of the Mediator, when we not only consider Him as He is in himself, but as He is to his people; what he hath done for us, and what he is to us; what he was in his relation to his Church, as her Head and Husband, before all worlds; what he is, as her Surety, Redeemer, High Priest, and Advocate, during the whole of her time-state while on earth; and what he will be, when he will bring home his Church, as her LORD, to be one with him to all eternity: these views leave at an infinite distance every other, and open, even now, though in the present unripe state of our being, we can only behold objects, as through mediums darkly; *a joy unspeakable, and full of glory*.

But, Reader! let You and I seek for grace rightly to value our mercies. *Angels*, we are told, when this eternal purpose, which God purposed in CHRIST, came to be opened were amazed at the vast discovery, and unable to comprehend such depths of the manifold wis-

dom of God, *desired to look into. Holy men, and Prophets*, though taught by the SPIRIT of CHRIST, which was in them, to enquire and search diligently concerning this salvation, were unconscious of what was meant by the sufferings of CHRIST, and the glory that should follow; but it was revealed unto them, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are *now* reported unto us by them. 1 Pet. i. 11, 12. And while we daily behold the truths of God confirmed, that *the world by wisdom knew not* God; the Lord's people are blessed in the saving knowledge of them by the SPIRIT. According to this sweet scripture, it is said, that God's intent now is, that *it might be known by the Church, the manifold wisdom of God. So, that the mystery which hath been hid from ages, and from generations, is now made manifest to the saints.* Coloss. i. 26. Well may every child of God cry out with the Apostle, *Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.* 2 Cor. ix. 15.

13 Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory.

14 For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

15 Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named,

16 That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man;

17 That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love,

18 May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

19 And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.

20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

21 Unto him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

I include all that remains in this Chapter under one view, because the several parts are woven into one piece, and form a beautiful whole. The Apostle begins the paragraph with desiring that the Church would lose sight of every thing which related to his personal state

and circumstances. That he was a prisoner, it was true; but, at the same time, he was the LORD's free man. And though the enemy shut him in, yet no enemy could shut the LORD out. And, as to his afflictions, they were all sanctified. And, as the LORD sweetened them to his soul, they ought to be the subject of real joy to their hearts. Having thus dispatched all consideration as to himself, he now proceeds to shew them the affection he had for them in his heart, and how he was continually employed for them. It forms a lovely representation of the faithful pastor and minister of CHRIST's flock, and serves at least to shew what such *should be*, though, it is to be feared, few *are so*, in the present awful day of a declining ministry.

He *first* tells them, that he *bowed* his knees unto the GOD and FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, as the FATHER of the whole family of CHRIST, in heaven and in earth. There is somewhat very blessed in this. GOD the FATHER is, indeed, in every sense of the word, the GOD and FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. For He is revealed, under this character, in the Scriptures of truth. This is his name, in the essential nature of the GODHEAD, as ONE of the HOLY THREE which bear record in heaven. It is his name also in the œconomy of the Covenant of grace. And it is his name as the GOD and FATHER of the Church, for it is He who hath given the Church to CHRIST *before the foundation of the world*. Ephes. i. 4. JESUS sweetly speaks of this as his particular pleasure and delight. John xvii. 6. Well might *Paul*, therefore, say that of Him, the whole family in heaven and earth is named. And well might he bow the knee before Him. I also would say, LORD! bow the knee of my heart before Him, who is the GOD and FATHER of our LORD JESUS CHRIST! Oh! that I may know thee, the only true GOD, and JESUS CHRIST whom thou hast sent. John xvii. 3.

Secondly. What a blessed prayer this is? *Paul* having mentioned his adorable name, before whom he bent the knee, next seeks strength and grace from GOD the HOLY GHOST, for forming all his prayers aright, and for helping him in his infirmities of prayer, that he might make all his supplications according to the will of GOD. How truly Scriptural this is? *Paul* well knew, that without the influences of the SPIRIT, he could neither know how to pray, nor what to pray for. Neither prayers could he present, nor praises offer, until GOD the SPIRIT taught him. To GOD, therefore, he looks for those influences. And he felt full confidence, that the LORD would grant him, according to his riches in glory, grace to be so strengthened, that his inner man would find the blessed communications of the SPIRIT to this end.

And what was the great subject of his prayer. It was short, but comprehensive. It all centered in CHRIST. All *Paul* prayed for himself, and all he asked for the Church, was CHRIST. CHRIST and his fulness. CHRIST and his all-sufficiency. That CHRIST (said he) *may dwell in your hearts by faith*. Reader! do not overlook the fullness and comprehensiveness of *Paul's* prayer. CHRIST cannot dwell in the heart of the unregenerate. CHRIST cannot dwell in the heart of any whom the FATHER hath not given to his dear SON. So, that in every heart where CHRIST dwells, there the LORD hath given

testimony, that that precious soul is a child of God, given by the FATHER, redeemed by the SON, and regenerated by the HOLY GHOST. Reader! is it not your prayer, as it is mine, that CHRIST may dwell in our hearts by faith?

And where CHRIST dwells in the heart by faith, there all the other blessings follow. Rooted in CHRIST, we are one with CHRIST. Grounded in love, we feel all the sweet influences of love. And, though the love of CHRIST is unsearchable, and past finding out, yet we can in some measure comprehend, that it reacheth from one eternity to another; and though its dimensions are infinite, in breadth and length, and depth, and height, and it is a love which passeth knowledge, yet is it a special, peculiar, free, and gracious love, and runs through all time, and to all eternity, to his people. Oh! the love of CHRIST, which passeth knowledge! Reader! what are your apprehensions of this love? Hath *Paul's* prayer been heard for you? Hath God granted you a token of this love?

The Apostle's prayer in recommendation of the Church to God, and his referring all unto Him, that is alone able to answer it, is very striking and beautiful. The ability of God, not only to answer, but to exceed all beyond thought or expression, is most just and true! Oh! who shall say what God can perform? Who shall limit the HOLY ONE of Israel! Reader! You and I may safely refer all to Him, and leave all with Him. He that hath given the greatest of all possible gifts, what can he, what will he not give? Well might the same Apostle elsewhere say, *For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen, Rom. xi. 36.*

REFLECTIONS.

WHAT cause of thankfulness hath the Church of God to offer, that the gracious purpose of JEHOVAH, hid in his breast from the beginning of the world, unknown to Angels, and principalities, and powers, should be so fully and openly revealed to the LORD's people; yea, while the world knoweth it not, because it knew him not in whom it is hid; is made known to the saints and household of God! Oh! the blessedness of being made acquainted with the love, the everlasting love of God the FATHER, in his counsel, purpose, and will, in his grace to the Church! And, oh! the blessedness, that all the revelations of his love should be made known to us in the Person, and flow to us from the mediation of the LORD JESUS CHRIST, through the SPIRIT! Surely, every mercy becomes a tenfold mercy, coming to the Church, as the whole doth in, and through CHRIST. LORD! give all thy redeemed grace to bend the knee, as *Paul* did before the God and FATHER of the whole family, that we may be able to comprehend with all saints, all the vast dimensions of the love of CHRIST, which passeth knowledge, and be filled with all the fulness of God!

CHAP. IV.

CONTENTS.

In this Chapter the Apostle considereth the Oneness and Unity of the Church in CHRIST. He sweetly sheweth how, as one Body, the Church is supplied with every suited Grace to each Member. He closeth in an Exhortation to Love and Concord.

I Therefore, (the prisoner of the Lord,) beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

2 With all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love;

3 Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,

4 *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;*

5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism,

6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

It is truly blessed always to trace effects to their cause. The Apostle having opened this chapter in a word of exhortation, takes effectual care at the same time, to shew the Church how, and by what means, the blessed properties he recommends are to be accomplished. Not in any strength of our own, but from the gracious influences of the SPIRIT. It is well worthy the Reader's observation, that all the exhortations of the Gospel, are accompanied with this direction, that we may always seek strength in divine help, and trust not to human weakness. There is no possibility of mortifying the deeds of the flesh, but by the SPIRIT's strength. *Paul knew this, and was as highly taught it as any man. And, therefore, he saith, I can do nothing of myself. But I can do all things through CHRIST, who strengtheneth me.* Reader! it is blessed to know our own nothingness, that we may the more highly prize the LORD's all-sufficiency.

I desire the Reader's close attention to the beautiful account the Apostle hath here drawn of the Oneness and Unity of CHRIST and his Church. He takes up the figure of an human body by way of describing the whole, taken collectively as One, and the several parts which make up the individual members of it. And he draws from the whole the just and proper influence, which cannot but arise out of it, to the mutual comfort and welfare of all, when the subject is considered in this oneness of character.

The Church is but One great whole. CHRIST is the glorious Head. Every member is united to him, and to each other. So that they are knit in one, all intimately linked in one common interest, and all alike concerned for the happiness of each other.

But what I more particularly beg the Reader to remark in this place, (because it is what the Apostle is more particularly noting,) is, that while the whole Church of God, in all the variety of the members of it, forms but one, the HOLY GHOST is the great source giving life to all. He who anointed and filled the Head, is the same which anoints and fills the members. And this is one of the most blessed of all thoughts. Though You or I have ever so small portions of grace, yet what we have comes from the same Almighty Giver, and is part of the same nature in grace, as the HOLY GHOST communicated to CHRIST himself. In Him, as a fountain. In us, his members as streams. For the FATHER gave not the SPIRIT *by measure unto him*. John iii. 34. *But unto every one of us is given grace, according unto the measure of the gift of CHRIST*. Reader! do not for a moment lose sight of this! For what can be more blessed? The same SPIRIT which dwelt in CHRIST's heart when on earth; yea, which dwells in CHRIST's heart now in heaven, (for it would be little short of blasphemy to say, that the SPIRIT which JEHOVAH said rested upon him, is departed from him. Isaiah xi. 2.) dwells in ours. When once the LORD the SPIRIT, hath regenerated our spirit, there the LORD dwells for ever. For so CHRIST said, *He shall abide with you for ever*. John xiv. 16. So then the whole Church, when brought into spiritual union by the new-birth, with CHRIST the glorious Head, and with each other as members of his body; is actuated by the same SPIRIT, and made partaker of the same grace, however variously given by that Almighty LORD, *who divideth to every man severally as he will*. I Cor. xii. 11. Reader! pause over the sweet consideration, and ponder it well. How can a child of God do otherwise than well, be his exercises whatever they may, when he considers that while the same SPIRIT which dwells in us, dwells in CHRIST, acts in Him, and from Him in us; and the very prayers the LORD the SPIRIT teaches CHRIST's members to put up before the mercy-seat here on earth, are so many responses and echos to the intercession of CHRIST in heaven! Rom. viii. 26, 27.

I will detain the Reader no longer on this most blessed passage, than just to observe how blessedly the HOLY GHOST is for ever teaching the Church the grand fundamental doctrine of all our faith, the unity of the Divine essence, existing in a threefold character of Person. One GOD, FATHER, SON, and SPIRIT, is manifested by the oneness of design and agency, in all the revelations which JEHOVAH hath been pleased to make of himself. And the LORD makes a yet further display of himself, in the several revelations by which his people shall know him, in being *the God and FATHER of all*; because all acts of his are in a fatherly way. He hath from everlasting chosen the Church in CHRIST, predestinated the Church to a sonship in CHRIST, and brought all the children into their adoption-character in CHRIST. Hence he is known by them under those divine distinctions, as *above all*; being not only great and Almighty in their view, but *above all* in their affections, and praise, and delight. He is *through all*, for whatever blessings they receive of temporals, spirituals, and eternal, they eye Him through all. And he is *in all*, for, from the first call of awakening grace, until grace is finished in glory, they behold Him as the great Author. Pardoning, justifying, sanc-

tifying grace, are given to every one of CHRIST's mystical members, according to the measure of the gift of CHRIST. What a blessed view the whole opens!

*7 But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

8 Wherefore he saith, When he ascended upon high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.

9 (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?)

10 He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

12 For the perfecting of the saints; for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come 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:

Every verse here is a sermon, and full of the most blessed heads of discourse. Oh! that God the HOLY GHOST, the Almighty Preacher of it, may again preach the whole life-giving contents to my soul, and engraft them there. If the Reader hath my *Poor Man's Commentary* by him on the Psalms, he will find some few observations on the same Scripture, from whence the first of the verses here is taken. Psm. lxxviii. 18. In addition, let me beg him to remark, how blessedly CHRIST's triumph in our nature is celebrated, and the blessed effects which followed. In the original Scripture, it is said, that he *received* gifts. Yes! CHRIST had not then accomplished redemption-work. But here the Apostle celebrates the thing done. Now, it is said, he *gave* them. Jesus had now returned to glory, and, therefore, all his ascension-gifts were sent down. And let not the Reader for a moment overlook, that the whole is spoken of Jesus in our nature. For his ascension implied his descension. CHRIST is the same identical Person, who from everlasting, stood up the Covenant-head of his body the Church, *when his delights were with the sons of men*. Prov. viii. 22, 23, &c. Hence descension, therefore,

preceded his ascension, and both proved his identity. But I refer the Reader, on this point, to the *Poor Man's Commentary*. John iii. 13.

One part, connected with this subject, I must not suffer to escape, until that I have first called the Reader's attention to it. I mean the very blessed, and most interesting record here given of CHRIST'S ascension in our nature, that *he might fill all things*. The HOLY GHOST had before recorded in the sixty-eighth Psalm, that what CHRIST received when he led captivity captive, he received in the man, that is, in his human nature, as the man, the God-man CHRIST JESUS.

Now it is the sweetest and most interesting of all subjects, the contemplation of the SON of GOD in our nature. JESUS still wears our nature in heaven. When he ascended, he ascended in our nature. And all he received, he received in our nature, on purpose that he might convey his mercies, gifts, and graces, to a nature like his own. Hence, this was one reason, among others, wherefore he took into union with his divine nature the human nature, that the communication might be natural. Add to these, in the SON of GOD assuming our nature, it qualified him for the office of a Mediator, and High Priest. Not to inform him what we are, for by his GODHEAD he knew this. But by a fellow feeling, that he might enter into all our concerns, and give him a pity that is natural, and which might sympathize with the nature he relieved. How sweet is it thus to view JESUS, in all his offices, and characters, and relations!

I do not think it necessary to offer any observations on the diversity of appointments in the Church, neither of the various qualifications with which the several departments are distinguished. These are all sufficiently obvious to need nothing explanatory. But I venture to make one remark from the whole, which it were to be wished was more seriously regarded. I mean, that in all the appointments, whether Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists, Pastors, or Teachers, all had their appointment and their qualification from the LORD. What would have been thought in the days of the Apostles, and in the forming of the Church, if men uncalled by the LORD, and unordained by the HOLY GHOST, had rushed into the ministry? Who would have dared to have taken upon him either of those offices, so soon after the descent of GOD the HOLY GHOST, without hearing somewhat like the voice, saying, *Separate me Barnabas and Saul, for the work whereunto I have called them!* Acts xiii. 2. Could it ever have entered into the minds of the Apostles of CHRIST, that the days would come in the Church of CHRIST, when men, ignorant of the very Being of GOD the HOLY GHOST, would declare themselves moved with the HOLY GHOST, to take upon them the sacred office for the sake of filthy lucre?

Reader! do not fail to take with you the great and important design, for which the LORD the SPIRIT hath established a standing ministry in his Church. It is for the perfecting of the saints, for establishing the whole mystical body of CHRIST, in CHRIST, their glorious head. Nothing, under the LORD's teaching, can more contribute to this, than the ministry of the word and ordinances. And when the LORD causeth his people to assemble together, and He comes himself in the midst of them, every thing is made blessed

and refreshing. I might appeal to every well organized Church of the LORD JESUS upon earth in confirmation. There is no leanness of soul, no spiritual want, nothing but life and prosperity where CHRIST visits his Churches. The body is, indeed, edified, *when the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush*, dwells in the assembly of his saints. That good will flows from his heart into the hearts of his people, and the fragrantcy and savor of CHRIST's name, is *as ointment poured forth!* Deut. xxxiii. 16. Song i. 3.

14 That we *henceforth* be no more children, 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:

15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even Christ*:

16 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.

By the similitude of children, whose teachable minds are easily led, the Apostle meant to shew, that God's people are exempt from deception, when established in the grace that is in CHRIST JESUS. It is a blessed thing when taught of God. Divine teachings differ wholly from human. What we learn from men may be forgotten, may be contradicted, overruled, denied; so, that like children who are pleased with what they hear to-day, and may be displeased to-morrow; so, what is taken up upon trust, may be put down with the same. But when God is the Teacher, he teacheth powerfully, infallibly, savingly, and abidingly. Hence, one of old said, *I shall never forget thy word, for by it thou hast quickened me.* Psm. cxix. 93. And when from the true saving grace, which is imparted by God the HOLY GHOST at regeneration, the child of God is brought into a life communion, as a member of CHRIST's mystical body, he groweth up into him in all things, and deriving strength from Him which is the head, the whole, and every member become knit together as one compleat whole, unto the general edifying of the body in love.

17 This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind,

18 Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the igno-

rance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart:

19 Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness.

20 But ye have not so learned Christ;

21 If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus:

22 That ye put off, concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts;

23 And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;

24 And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

25 Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour; for we are members one of another.

26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:

27 Neither give place to the devil.

28 Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with *his* hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.

29 Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers.

30 And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.

31 Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:

32 And be ye kind one to another, tender hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

The Apostle hath here drawn a striking contrast between the men of the world and the godly, between *him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not*. The expressions are so plain, and the truth so very obvious, that I do not think it necessary to enlarge upon the subject. The putting off the old man, and the putting on the new, very decidedly shew the wonderful change wrought by regeneration. The old man is a strong phrase, to denote the corruption of our fallen state in *Adam*. And, in like manner, so is the new man in *CHRIST*. But the putting off the one, and putting on the other, is not man's work, but God's. We are altogether passive in the act of regeneration, as in the original generation. And I pray the Reader to remark yet further, what all the scripture of God teacheth, and what all the experience of the Church of God confirms; the old man, though put off, remains; not dead, but dying; not buried, but crucified. There is no change in the old man; he is the same old man of sin, wholly sin, and all sin, as ever. Hence *Paul* himself groaned, under the body of sin as long as he remained in the body. And hence he looked only to *JESUS* for deliverance. Rom. vii. 24, 25. And hence he told the Church: *if CHRIST be in you (said he) the body is dead because of sin: but the Spirit is life, because of righteousness*. Rom. viii. 10. Reader! if this were better understood than it is; and men, professing godliness, were better acquainted than they are with the plague of their own heart, we should not hear so much talking of inherent holiness in the creature, while they themselves daily, hourly, if they were to look more closely to what passeth in the old unrenewed nature of their own bodies, manifest that, *in them, that is in their flesh, dwelleth no good thing!*

On the other hand, putting on the new man, is neither their act, nor their merit. *CHRIST* is the new man, formed in the souls of the regenerate, by the *HOLY GHOST*. And every child of God, at his new birth, is formed in *CHRIST*'s image, and *CHRIST* formed in his heart *the hope of glory*. Hence, united to his person, and having a spiritual union with him, quickened, and brought forth into life, which before was *dead in trespasses and sins*, the regenerated part the spirit, manifests, in all its breathings, desires, and longings after *CHRIST*, that *CHRIST* is its life, its portion, its one unceasing pursuit. The child of God, new born in *CHRIST* lives upon *CHRIST*, and lives to *CHRIST*. And *JESUS* saith: *because I live, ye shall live also*. Hence, while the Spirit is thus holy in *CHRIST*; and the flesh unholy, and nothing but corruption in nature; those opposite principles are perpetually producing those effects the children of God all feel, from such a conflict, and of which they continually complain. Rom. vii. 21, &c. Gal. v. 17. But most evident it is, that such, more or less, will continue through the whole time-state of the Church here below; and that this competition, in every child of God's own person, from the moment of regeneration, never ceaseth; neither can cease, until the body returns to its original dust, and the spirit joins *the spirits of just men made perfect*.

I pause a moment over the verse, in which the Apostle cautions the Church, to an holy weariness against grieving the *HOLY SPIRIT* of God. And what a blessed thing was it in the *LORD*, that his servant should add, *whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption*. How sweetly gracious was it to hold up the sorrowful soul of a

child of God, that would rather die than grieve that Almighty Lord by whose regenerating grace he was first quickened into spiritual life; I say how sweetly gracious was it in the Lord, to assure the timid soul, that amidst all his unworthiness, and backslidings, and departures, the sealing of the HOLY GHOST could not lose its efficacy. Oh! Reader! what shall speak his praise, that though we so often change, our God changeth not. Malachi iii. 6. Though we fail in our love, Jesus faileth not in his. Our interest in the Covenant arose, not from our obedience; but in God's purposes, and CHRIST's merits and blood. The everlasting worth and efficacy of CHRIST's ransom, pleads more for his redeemed than all their sins plead against them. Unworthy as they are in themselves, yet are they everlastingly accepted in the Beloved. And this sweet scripture settles the point: *they are sealed unto the day of redemption.*

Nevertheless, the Child of God knows, to his sorrow, when the body of sin breaks out into some new transgression the awfulness of the offence. And that solemn scripture comes home directed to the heart, by the Lord in great poignancy of affliction. *Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee. Know, therefore, and see, that it is an evil thing, and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of hosts!* See Psm. xxxvi. 1. Reader! if you are a child of God, and renewed by sovereign grace; I need not tell you what these Scriptures mean. You know them, and feel them; and from a conscious sense of the indwelling corruption of nature, you can best say how much you dread the very apprehension of grieving the HOLY SPIRIT! But oh! thou HOLY GOD! when I call to mind what a mass of sin and transgression my whole unrenewed nature is, how am I lost in amazement at thine unchanging love, that while thou makest the bodies of thy people thy temple, so much of evil dwells there. If Lot was vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked from day to day, what must be the feeling of God the HOLY GHOST, at the daily view of in-dwelling corruption, and out-breaking sin, in his redeemed ones? LORD, I pray thee! keep thy servant from presumptuous sins! And do thou, O LORD, (for thou only canst accomplish it,) mortify all the corrupt thoughts and deeds of my body, that I may never grieve thee, by whom I am sealed, *unto the day of redemption!*

The Apostle sweetly closeth the Chapter, in calling upon the Church to the exercise of the fruits of the SPIRIT, instead of grieving Him. And, he adopts the strongest, and most persuasive of all arguments, to a tender-hearted deportment, among the people of God, when holding forth, as a model of every thing that is lovely in mutual forbearance, and charity, he proposeth to their view the LORD JESUS. Oh! what a volume of motives, ariseth from the Person of CHRIST! And how strong the appeal in God's forgiving the Church for CHRIST's sake, doth it come home to the heart, to the brethren, to forgive one another?

REFLECTIONS.

READER! pause over the very blessed things contained in this Chapter, in setting forth the oneness and unity in CHRIST, and his

Church. And then say, what powerful persuasions are continually arising from thence, that there should be one heart, and one affection, in every thing which can contribute to the spiritual union, among the people. If one GOD and FATHER, one LORD JESUS CHRIST, one HOLY GHOST, one Church, one faith, one baptism of the SPIRIT; how can it be otherwise, while under the sweet and gracious influences of those principles, but that a oneness of affection, like a golden chain, must link the whole together; and the whole Church of God, be as *brethren, dwelling together in unity!*

Blessed be the glorious Head of his Church, who hath sent down his ascension-gifts upon his Church, and thereby manifested the fullest assurance, that redemption-work is finished. GOD the FATHER hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand: and sent down, according to his own most sure promise, the HOLY GHOST. And God the HOLY GHOST hath graciously given his gifts, to every man, severally as he will! LORD! let the whole manifestations, whether to Apostles, or Prophets, or Evangelists, or Pastors, or Preachers, be accompanied with thy blessing! Let the work of the ministry, and the perfecting of the saints, and the edifying of the body of CHRIST, be carried on in the earth, until the whole Church be brought home to JESUS our perfection! And do thou, blessed SPIRIT, for to thee the blessed work belongs, do thou put off the *old man*, in all the LORD's redeemed ones, and put on the *new man*, which after GOD, is created in righteousness, and true holiness; for then shall we speak every man truth with his neighbor. Then shall we not grieve the HOLY SPIRIT of GOD, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption; but walk in love, as CHRIST also hath loved us; and forgive one another, as GOD for CHRIST's sake, hath forgiven us.

CHAP. V.

CONTENTS.

The Apostle is still prosecuting the same Subject, as in the former Chapter. He calls upon the Church to follow GOD, under the Character of dear Children. He closeth his Subject, in a most beautiful Representation of CHRIST, as the Head, and Husband, of his Body the Church.

BE ye therefore followers of GOD, as dear children.

2 And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to GOD for a sweet smelling savour.

3 But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints;

4 Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient; but rather giving of thanks.

5 For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

6 Let no man deceive you with vain words: for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.

7 Be not ye therefore partakers with them.

8 For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are ye* light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

9 (For the fruit of the Spirit *is* in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)

10 Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord.

11 And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove *them*.

12 For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret.

13 But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light; for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.

I admire the very sweet, and interesting manner, with which the HOLY GHOST, by his servant the Apostle, opens this Chapter. How affectionately the Church is called upon to follow God; and the way, in which they are to follow him. Not as children only, but as dear children. The expression is similar to the one used by our LORD in the days of his flesh, and upon the same occasion, when recommending his disciples to come to God, as their FATHER: *Shall not God avenge his own elect?* Not simply his elect, but his *own* elect. See Luke xviii. 1—7, and Commentary.

In order that the Reader may enter into the full apprehension of this very beautiful Scripture, of following God, as dear children; it will be proper for him to consider, in what terms, the Apostle entered on this Epistle. For, it should be always kept in remembrance, while reading the Epistles, that though divided into Chapters, they are, nevertheless, but one, and the same Epistle. Now, when the Apostle opened this Epistle to the Church, at *Ephesus*, he began in an hymn of praise to GOD the FATHER, for his fatherly love, in choosing the Church in CHRIST, *predestinating* the Church to the adoption of children in CHRIST, and *accepting* the Church in CHRIST. Hence, now, toward the conclusion of his Epistle, he reminds the

Church of their relationship to GOD the FATHER in CHRIST; and enjoins them to follow GOD as dear children.

And as this is a point of infinite consequence in the life of a child of GOD; and yet, is not, I fear, as much considered by the Church of GOD in CHRIST, as it ought; I shall beg the freedom, to follow up what the Apostle hath here recommended, with a few observations. If I may judge of the general state of the Church by what comes within my own knowledge, I venture to believe, that the best saints alive, have too little actings of faith, upon the Person of GOD our FATHER, under this endeared and endearing character of FATHER. We lose sight of GOD's choice, and of GOD's predestinating us the adoption of children in CHRIST. The sweet *Abba* FATHER doth not dwell, as much as it ought, in our hearts, and upon our lips. Whereas, if we kept in constant remembrance our birth-right, and the privileges arising out of it; should we not follow GOD as dear children; and go in, and out, the house of GOD, as our Father's house; and sit down in our place at his table, as his children; yea, as his *dear* children? Do earthly parents love to hear the voice of their little ones, as soon as they can lisp out father? And will not our heavenly FATHER be pleased with the name, when taught by the SPIRIT to call him *Abba* FATHER? Yea, is it not, as well the duty, as the privilege of his children, his adopted children, in CHRIST JESUS, so to do?

But let us consider the subject a little more closely. When the HOLY GHOST bids the Church be followers of GOD, as dear children; the LORD doth it, we may be sure, upon grounds of the most sure certainty. They are not only children, chosen of GOD before the foundation of the world, but *dear* children in CHRIST. And the scripture gives the most abundant proof of it. For, *first*: what higher proof can we have, than GOD the FATHER's giving them to his dear SON? One, in whom he declared himself well pleased, and his elect, in whom his soul delighteth. Had he not highly prized his children, would he have given them to JESUS, and thereby manifested such a testimony of his love? *Secondly*. He commanded CHRIST, as CHRIST, to love them. Not that CHRIST needed other motives, more than his own personal love to the Church, to love the Church, when he gave himself for her redemption. But GOD the FATHER, in commanding his dear SON to love his brother, Levit. xxv. 25. plainly testified his love of the Church. *Thirdly*, and yet more. GOD *so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten SON, to the end, that all that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.* John iii. 16. And, the ultimate cause of all is, that he might adopt the Church to himself; for so the Apostle declares in the first Chapter, fifth verse. And who shall say, what this adoption of the Church, as children in JESUS CHRIST, in the fullest sense of the word means? Who shall explain the extent of the dedication of the Church to himself; or the extent of the love of GOD to the Church? Are they not then children, yea *dear* children, concerning whom such things are said? Nay, what dearness of affection must they stand in to GOD, when JESUS himself, speaking to the FATHER concerning them, saith: *I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them as thou hast loved me.* John xvii. 23.

And, in what an high sense, God's children, yea, God's *dear* children so loved, may be supposed to be followers of God; every part of Scripture testifies. As chosen, adopted, accepted, redeemed, justified, sanctified, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with CHRIST: *obedient children, not fashioning themselves according to the former lusts, in their ignorance; but as he which hath called them is holy, so are they holy, in all manner of conversation.* They are in CHRIST; yea, one with CHRIST. In Him their holiness, their righteousness is found. I Pet. i. 14, 15, 16. Isaiah xlv. 24. And hence their confidence, their joy, their peace, the assurance of the present, and everlasting portion. Reader! behold the blessedness in being followers of God as dear children!

But, we must not stop here. We are said to *walk in love as CHRIST also hath loved us, and given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet smelling savor!* How gracious was it in the HOLY GHOST, to blend this love of CHRIST with the love of the FATHER, that by both, under the blessed SPIRIT's influence, the Church might find, every thing that is persuasive, to a life of faith, in God the FATHER's love, and CHRIST's redeeming grace, during the whole time-state of the Church. Surely no motives like these can be found to suppress, and keep under, all the idle, unprofitable, and sinful conversation, of our corrupt nature. And, where the SPIRIT's grace reigns in the heart, there will be the surest security to mortify, both the words and deeds of the body, in living by him. But here I need not enlarge.

14 Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.

I pause over this verse. Who is the speaker but God the SPIRIT. And to whom doth the LORD speak but to the Church? The promise with which the verse ends, proves this. For to whom is CHRIST promised but to his Church, both Jew and Gentile? And, in whatever sense we consider the call, either to awaken in the first act of regeneration, or to rouse from a sleepy, drowsy frame, in the after stages of life; the call is most blessed. For CHRIST, in both instances, and in every other, is the sole life, and light of his people. Let us consider it under both.

If we consider the words, as addressed to the unawakened, before the act of regeneration hath taken place; they are the sweet voice of God the SPIRIT, in calling the sinner, dead in trespasses and sins. For I hope the Reader need not be told, that the child of God, though given by the FATHER to the SON before all worlds, and by virtue of that gift preserved in JESUS CHRIST, before he is called; yet, until God the SPIRIT, by his sovereign power, hath called from darkness to light; he is as much in the *Adam*-nature, dead in trespasses and sins, as all the fallen race. He is unconscious of his high interest, neither in a capability of enjoying it. Reader! pause over the subject. And if the LORD in mercy hath wrought this saving change in your heart, will you not feel the blessedness of what *Paul* said to the Church of the *Corinthians*, when reminding them

of their former state of unrenewed nature: *And such (said he) were some of you! But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the LORD JESUS, and by the SPIRIT of our GOD! 1 Cor. vi. 11.*

There is not, perhaps, a subject upon earth equally affecting, as when a child of GOD, escaped the shipwreck of a fallen nature, got on shore, through sovereign grace; looks back, and beholds the dreadful gulph he had been taken from. He sees the multitudes stranded, and sinking, never more to rise. He beholds thousands, not more undeserving than himself, lost for ever. He stands amazed at the wonders of distinguishing mercy. He feels constrained to lift an eye to the GOD of his salvation, and with the astonishment of the Apostle, he exclaims: *LORD! how is it that thou hast manifested thyself to me, and not to the world! John xiv. 22.*

If we consider the words of the HOLY GHOST as addressed to those of the regenerate, which in time past were called out of darkness, but are now fallen into a sleepy frame; the promise is equally the same, for it is CHRIST only that can give light. We have a striking example of the kind, in the instance of the Church, as recorded Song v. 2. The LORD JESUS had just before been regaling his Church at his banquet, and feasting her with his love. But, from the body of sin she carried about with her, she soon after fell into such a cold, and lifeless state, to the love-calls of JESUS, that though she knew his voice, yet she pleaded the most frivolous excuses to keep away. Reader! it is our mercy, that as in the first instance of awakening grace, so in all the after manifestations of it, the revival begins with the LORD. *We love him, because he first loved us.* And it is our mercy also, to learn our nothingness out of CHRIST. One of old, well taught of GOD, thus expressed himself in the view: *hold thou me up, and I shall be safe! Psm. cxix. 117.* If for a moment only, the LORD withdraws the arm of our support, our faith finds no holdfast. It is, I confess, distressing, yea, very distressing, thus to learn, what poor creatures we are. Nevertheless, if nothing short of such humblings, will serve to convince our proud hearts, that it is in CHRIST alone our strength and righteousness are to be found; spiritual poverty, and leanness, are blessed things, which ultimately tend to endear CHRIST.

I must not dismiss the view of this sweet scripture, before that I have added one word more, for the comfort of the LORD's people, under such dead and lifeless frames, which bring on leanness in the soul. Painful, and shameful, as they are, yet let every child of GOD, who hath known, and experienced, the regeneration of the soul, learn to make a right estimate between the sleepy dying frames of a believer, and the dead state of the unregenerate sinner, *dead in trespasses and sins!* There is an immense difference; and the issue must be different. The *one* is the frailty of the saint; the *other*, the hopeless state of the sinner. And let the child of GOD, while mourning over his calamity, recollect, that in that mourning the soul is pinning after CHRIST, though not enjoying CHRIST. CHRIST is still known, still desired. And sure I am, that where these sweet graces are in the soul, there JESUS dwells, however unconscious for the time the soul is of his presence. Holy mourners after CHRIST

are promised to be comforted. Matt. v. 4. And it is blessed, when in a sorrowful frame, JESUS is looked for; though more desirable when we hold him fast, in the *Bethel* visits of his manifestations, or galleries of his grace. Song vii. 5.

15 See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,

16 Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.

17 Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord *is*.

18 And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.

19 Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord;

20 Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ;

21 Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.

I think it important to remark, on what the Apostle saith, concerning *Psalms*, and *Hymns*, and *Spiritual Songs*, that he evidently means, all such, as are in the word of God. It is not to be supposed, that the HOLY GHOST prohibits the use of all others. But it is to be supposed, that the LORD the SPIRIT draws a strong line of distinction, between the Psalms, and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs of the inspired writings of Holy Scripture; and the uninspired songs, or hymns, of the most godly men whatever. We may speak to *ourselves*, and to one another in words, which tend to godly edification. But, when we speak to the LORD, we cannot be too careful to use the LORD's own words. Hosea xiv. 2. By the *Psalms*, are meant those, which go under the general name of *David's Psalms*, though some of them were written by other persons. By *Hymns*, are meant, such as are also scriptural. JESUS sung an hymn, it is said, before he went to the garden. And we have many *spiritual songs* in the word of God. The Song of *Moses*, *Deborah*, *Hannah*, &c. are of this kind.

22 Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.

23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the Church: and he is the saviour of the body.

24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so *let* the wives *be* to their own husbands in every thing.

25 Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;

26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word.

27 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.

28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself.

29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church:

30 For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones.

31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.

32 This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

33 Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife *see* that she reverence *her* husband.

I comprize all that is here said into one view, for it leads but to one and the same subject: and the sweetest of all subjects it forms; namely, CHRIST's marriage with his Church. We cannot be sufficiently thankful to GOD the HOLY GHOST for it, as it so fully explains the soul-comforting subject, and throws such a beautiful light over many parts of Scripture which refer to the same.

Who should have thought, but from what GOD the HOLY GHOST hath said here, that the institution of the marriage in *Eden*, between our first Parents, was a *shadow* of an union, long before formed in *substance*, between CHRIST and his Church? But *Paul* so saith. *This is a great mystery, (saith he,) but I speak concerning CHRIST, and his Church!* Who would have conceived, that when at the creation of the first woman, the LORD said, *it is not good for the man to be alone, I will make him an help meet for him;* Gen. ii. 18. and the

LORD formed the woman from one of his ribs: that this had a much higher, and a far more early allusion, to the GOD-man CHRIST JESUS; concerning whom, it was not good, for the promotion of JEHOVAH's designs in the glory of CHRIST, that he should be alone, but that a Church should be raised up for him, and taken from himself; which might be his Spouse, his Partner, in all communicable grace here, and glory hereafter? Who would have seen CHRIST in that Scripture, when Adam, beholding his wife, called her *bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh*; Gen. ii. 23. had not GOD the HOLY GHOST unfolded its spiritual meaning, when here he tells us, that *we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones*? Precious JESUS! it was thou, and not Adam, for he had no father of the earth to leave, which didst leave thy heavenly FATHER, to cleave to thy wife, the Church; and thy Church is now one flesh with thee, in thy human nature, for ever. Gen. ii. 24.

Paul might well call this a mystery, yea, a *great* mystery, for all the shadows of it sink to nothing, in comparison of the substance. And, indeed, all the affections, and relations of life, between man and man, are less than nothing, when we look to our relationship in CHRIST. I would beg the Reader's indulgence yet a little further, to consider one or two points more, of this great mystery, and seek the teaching of the LORD, that we may have a right understanding on a subject so truly beautiful and interesting.

And here let us take up the matter from the beginning. It appears then, from several parts of the Holy Scripture, that the marriage of CHRIST and his Church, took place from everlasting. For there can be no period, either in time, or in eternity, to which a date can be fixed, so as to say, that *then* it began. When CHRIST was set up, as the Head, and Husband of his Church, the Church must have been set up with him. For there could not have been an head, without a body: neither an husband without a wife. For, on the supposition that CHRIST, as CHRIST, that is, GOD and man in one Person, might have been before all others; yet not in his *relative* characters. He could not have been the everlasting FATHER, before he had children: neither the Head, without a body: neither the Husband, without a wife. So that CHRIST and his Church, as Husband and wife, are from everlasting together. And to this agrees all the Scriptures. JESUS, under the character of wisdom saith, that *he was set up from everlasting*. And that then *his delights were with the sons of men*. Prov. viii. 23. 31. He saith also himself, as the Husband of his people: *I will betroth thee unto me for ever*. Hosea ii. 19. And, the Prophet agrees to the same, when he saith to the Church: *For thy Maker is thine husband, the LORD of Hosts is his name: and thy Redeemer, the HOLY ONE of Israel, the GOD of the whole earth shall he be called*, Isaiah liv. 5.

Secondly. It appears equally plain from the Scriptures of truth, that GOD, when he chose the Church in CHRIST, before the foundation of the world, chose her to be holy and without blame before him in love. Ephes. i. 4. Hence it must follow, that when the Church was presented to CHRIST, she was as the *King's daughter all glorious within*. Psm. xlv. 13. And, though she hath since fallen into poverty and wretchedness by sin; yet, when CHRIST married her, she was *holy, and without blame before him in love*. And such she is

again, when washed from her sins, in his blood. And such will she be, as this Chapter states, when JESUS comes to present her to himself, at the last day, *a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but to be holy, and without blemish.* Oh! who shall conceive the glories of that day, when JESUS shall bring home his Church; and when all the members, being fully prepared, in body, soul, and spirit, for the everlasting enjoyment of her LORD in glory, shall enter with him, into the marriage-supper of the Lamb, and be for ever with the LORD!

REFLECTIONS.

AMIDST numberless blessed things, for raising reflection of a sweet, and spiritual nature, contained in this Chapter; I would beg of GOD the HOLY GHOST, for grace, to fix my mind upon GOD the FATHER'S love, in that, the Church is called by him *dear children!* Oh! for grace to consider the blessedness of such a name, and the proof, that all his redeemed are, indeed, dear children in his Almighty view. For He hath chosen them in his dear SON, given them to his dear SON, and given his dear SON for them, and chosen them to himself, as his adopted children in CHRIST. Oh! who that is enabled by grace, to enter into an apprehension of the unspeakable mercy contained in such a relationship, but must cry out, with the Apostle: *Behold! what manner of love the FATHER hath bestowed on us, that we should be called sons of God!*

In like manner would I beg of GOD the HOLY GHOST, to fix my mind upon GOD the SON'S love, who hath so loved his Church, as to give himself, an offering, and a sacrifice, to GOD, for a sweet smelling savor. Oh! thou dear *Emanuel!* let the rich savor of thy blood, which hath perfumed heaven for ever, sweetly cleanse my soul, from the savor of all uncleanness!

And no less would I beg of GOD the HOLY GHOST, to fix my mind upon his own glorious Person, and GODHEAD; and that, in the fruit of the SPIRIT, in all goodness, and righteousness, and truth, I may be a follower of GOD, as one of his dear children, and walk in love, as CHRIST also hath loved me, and given himself for me! Oh! for grace, to be walking in the light, as children of the light, and as the members of CHRIST'S body, his flesh, and his bones. Shortly, JESUS will bring home his Church; and all the great purposes of his mystery, will be accomplished. His people shall then *see him as he is, and know even as they are known!*

CHAP. VI.

CONTENTS.

In this Chapter the Epistle is closed: and a blessed Close is made. Paul bids the Church to entrench themselves, in the holy Armory of GOD. And he seals up all, with an Apostolic Benediction.

CHILDREN, obey your parents in the Lord,
for this is right.

2 Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise;

3 That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

4 And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

5 Servants, be obedient to them that are *your* masters, according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ;

6 Not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart;

7 With good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men:

8 Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether *he be* bond or free.

9 And, ye masters, do the same things unto them, forbearing threatening: knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him.

The Apostle, according to his usual method in the close of his Epistles, makes a distinct, and separate address, to the several members of the Church, on relative duties; and as an affectionate Apostle, and Father, speaks personally to every class. I need not offer a single observation on either, by way of comment: the whole is abundantly plain. What he saith to children, in relation to the first commandment with promise, it is scarcely necessary to say, is in allusion to the first of the second table of the law; and therefore as such, it stands, as is here said, with a promise, and which is the first. As if the Lord would begin, with the earliest dawns of life, to intimate the graciousness of his promises, running from first to last, through all the departments of the time-state of the Church.

10 Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.

11 Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil.

12 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*.

13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

14 Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of righteousness;

15 And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;

16 Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.

17 And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God;

18 Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.

19 And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel.

20 For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Under the figure of an holy warfare the Apostle views the Church of CHRIST, and recommends to the people a suited Armory in CHRIST, for the combat. The Reader will recollect, that the Apostle never loseth sight, that he is writing to the Church of regenerated persons: and with this conviction upon his mind, he thus shews, how the holy warrior should be clad. I beg the Reader, from these verses to observe, how blessedly he recommends the saint of God, to begin with the LORD, that he may end in the LORD. *Finally*, (saith he,) *my brethren, be strong in the LORD, and in the power of his might.* He that begins in the LORD's strength, will be sure to find strength all the way in his warfare. And, there never was an instance of a child of God being finally defeated, that did so. The armies in heaven *overcame by the blood of the Lamb*. Rev. xii. 11. And the Church upon earth is said to be *more than Conquerors, through Him that loveth them*. Rom. viii. 37.

As the Apostle recommends the LORD's people, to go forth in the LORD's strength; so he bids them follow up all, in prayer, when

clothed in the divine armory. *Praying always*, he saith, *with all prayer, and supplication in the spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance.* Pause, Reader! and behold in imagination, the holy warrior in the LORD's cause, when girded with the divine weapons, here enumerated, always on his knees before the LORD; and conceive, what a lovely sight! And then ask, what fiery darts of Satan, what conflicts of flesh and blood, what persecution from the world, shall bring him down, whom God lifts up? What weapon, formed against God's redeemed ones, shall resist the sword of the SPIRIT, and the word of God? Prayer, is a blessed weapon. For it calls in God to our aid. All the holy heroes of the Church gone before, have found it a sure defence. *Jacob* wrestled in prayer, and prevailed. And one of the Prophets, a thousand years after, recorded the blessed account of it. Compare Gen. xxxii. 24. with Hosea xii. 3, 4, 5. *David* also tells us, in his experience, that this was his chief weapon. *In the day* (said he) *when I cried, thou answeredst me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.* Psm. cxxxviii. 3. Nay, what was CHRIST's strength, in his human nature, but the same? Sweetly we read, for our comfort, and encouragement, that *in the days of his flesh, he offered up prayers, and supplications, with strong cryings, and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard, in that he feared.* Though he were a SON, yet learned he obedience, by the things which he suffered. And being made perfect, he became the Author of eternal salvation, unto all them that obey him. Heb. v. 7, 8, 9. Reader! do not overlook these things. Prayer sweetly crowns the whole preparation, in the day of battle, when we go forth in the LORD's strength, in the LORD's cause. Prayer calls JESUS to our help, and JESUS becomes our strength.

I do not think it necessary, to notice the whole, and every weapon, which the Apostle here enumerates, as to be taken from the LORD's armory. All are blessed, and all essentially necessary. But they are too plain to need any Comment. I would just glance at one of them, because *Paul* commands, that above all, this should be taken; namely, *faith.* Above all (saith he) *taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked.* And it is very plain, that *Satan* flees from nothing so hastily, as when he is opposed by strong, and lively actings of faith, in the blood of the Lamb. When a poor buffeted child of God, against all *Satan's* accusations, and all the alarms of conscience, which the enemy takes care to bring before him, pleads guilty to all, but takes confidence, at the same time, in the Person, blood, and righteousness of JESUS CHRIST; the devil can fight no longer. And this is what the Apostle meant, when he said: *Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you.* James iv. 7, 8. But how shall a self-condemned sinner resist the devil but in CHRIST's strength; or draw nigh to God, but in CHRIST's Person, blood, and righteousness? CHRIST is the alone way, and truth, and life; for none can come to the FATHER, but by him. John xiv. 6.

Reader! do not dismiss the subject hastily. If the LORD the SPIRIT hath regenerated you, you can be no stranger to this holy warfare. You see then, where your strength lies. Not in tears, not in a brokenness of heart, not in repentance; yea, not in any thing of

your own, but in CHRIST. Oh! for grace, with one of old to say, *I will go forth in the strength of the LORD God, and make mention of his righteousness, even of his only.* Psm. lxxi. 16.

21 But that ye also may know my affairs, *and* how I do, Tychicus, a beloved brother, and faithful minister in the Lord, shall make known to you all things:

22 Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose, that ye might know our affairs, and *that* he might comfort your hearts.

Reader! do observe the humbleness of this great Apostle, in seeking the remembrance of the people's prayers. Yes! *Paul*, though so eminently blessed of his Almighty Master, and engaged as he was, in his LORD's service, and keeping up, as no doubt he did, constant communion at the throne; yet earnestly begged of every child of God, to be mentioned by them, whenever they went to the heavenly Court. Think then, if *Paul* was so earnest, that new supplies of strength, and grace, should be fetched for him, by the prayers of the people; how needful it must be now, in these awful times, in which we live, that the faithful, should bear the LORD's poor, and weak servants, on their hearts before the throne, daily, and hourly, for strength and grace from the LORD, to qualify them for the arduous work, in the ministry. *Brethren, pray for us!*

23 Peace *be* to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

24 Grace *be* with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.

Written from Rome unto the Ephesians by
Tychicus.

How sweetly *Paul* begins, and ends his Epistles. So, methinks, should every child of God, when writing to a brother in CHRIST! It is blessed, it is gracious, when, from CHRIST's love in the heart, we send forth love to all CHRIST's little ones. It is a prayer founded in the love of God. And, what begins in prayer, awakened by divine grace, will be sure to be followed, in divine mercy.

REFLECTIONS.

HERE let us pause over the close of this Epistle, and, as we look back, and review the wonderful contents of it, may both the Writer and Reader of this *Poor Man's Commentary*, bow down before the throne of a Covenant God in CHRIST, for so rich a portion of divine revelation of JEHOVAH's love to the Church! Oh! GOD the SPIRIT! grant to us, if it be thy blessed will, *a spirit of wisdom and reve-*

lation, in the apprehension of those divine truths, and that they may be the *engrafted word* for the salvation of the soul.

Blessed LORD JESUS! we praise thy holy name, for thine unceasing mercies over thy Church, that amidst all the ravages of time, and all the revolutions of men and things; thy Church remaineth, and ever must remain, as long as the moon endureth, from one generation to another. And, although *Ephesus* is no more; the Church which was in *Ephesus*, and all the faithful in CHRIST JESUS, are the same, founded in THEE, the glorious Head of thy body; *the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.*

Faithful *Paul*! our love to thee is great, in that the LORD counted thee faithful, putting thee into the ministry. Thou wert, indeed, as thou hast here said, an Ambassador, though in bonds. Blessed for the Church was it, that the LORD sent thee as his Ambassador. And what art thou now, since like an Ambassador returned to his Master's royal Court, thou hast given in thy report to the King, and hast entered into the joy of thy LORD! Almighty Head of thy Church and people! bless all thy redeemed here below, who like *Paul*, love thy appearing in the regenerating of sinners, and comforting of saints, and who are looking forward for thy appearing, when thou shalt come to be glorified in thy saints, and admired in all them that believe! In that great day of GOD! thou wilt give to every one of thine, the crown of righteousness, which fadeeth not away. Then will the whole Church shout for joy, and everlasting praises will be heard, from all the ransomed of Zion, to FATHER, SON, and HOLY GHOST, through endless ages. Amen.

THE END OF VOLUME II. OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

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