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Barnes' Notes on the Bible
Volume 15 -
Ephesians
By A. Barnes

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EPHESIANS

INTRODUCTION TO EPHESIANS

SECTION 1. THE SITUATION OF EPHESUS, AND THE CHARACTER OF ITS PEOPLE

This Epistle purports to have been written to the “Saints in Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus,” though, as we shall see, the fact of its having been directed to the church at Ephesus has been called in question.

Assuming now that it was sent to Ephesus, it is of importance to have a general view of the situation of that city, of the character of its people, and of the time and manner in which the gospel was introduced there, in order to a correct understanding of the Epistle. Ephesus was a celebrated city of Ionia in Asia Minor, and was about 40 miles south of Smyrna, and near the mouth of the river Cayster. The river, though inferior in beauty to the Meander which flows south of it, waters a fertile valley of the ancient Ionia. Ionia was the most beautiful and fertile part of Asia Minor; was settled almost wholly by Greek colonies; and it embosomed Pergamos, Smyrna, Ephesus, and Miletus; see “Travels” of Anacharsis, i. 91,208; vi. 192,97,98. The climate of Ionia is represented as remarkably mild, and the air as pure and sweet, and this region became early celebrated for everything that constitutes softness and effeminacy in life. Its people were distinguished for amiableness and refinement of manners, and also for luxury, for music and dancing, and for the seductive arts festivals occupied them at home, or attracted them to neighboring cities, where the men appeared in magnificent habits, and the women in all the elegance of female ornament, and with all the desire of pleasure (Anachar).

Ephesus was not, like Smyrna, distinguished for commercial advantages. The consequence has been that, not having such advantage, it has fallen into total ruin, while Smyrna has retained some degree of its ancient importance. It was in a rich region of country, and seems to have risen into importance mainly because it became the favorite resort of foreigners in the worship of Diana, and owed its celebrity to its temple more than to anything else. This city was once, however, the most splendid city in Asia

Minor. Stephens, the geographer, gives it the title of “Epiphanestate” (Most Illustrious). Pliny styles it “the Ornament of Asia.” In Roman times it was the metropolis of Asia, and unquestionably rose to a degree of splendor that was surpassed by few, if any, oriental cities.

That for which the city was most celebrated was the Temple of Diana. This temple was 425 feet in length, and 220 feet in width. It was encompassed by 127 pillars, each 60 feet in height, which were presented by as many kings. Some of those pillars, it is said, are yet to be seen in the mosque of Sophia at Constantinople, having been removed there when the Church of Sophia was erected. These, however, were the pillars that constituted a part of the temple AFTER it had been burned and was repaired, though it is probable that the same pillars were retained in the second temple which had constituted the glory of the first. All the provinces of Asia Minor contributed to the erection of this splendid temple, and 200 years were consumed in building it. This temple was set on fire by a man named Herostratus, who, when put to the torture, confessed that his only motive was to immortalize his name. The general assembly of the states of Ionia passed a decree to devote his name to oblivion; but the fact of the decree has only served to perpetuate it; Cicero, *De Nat. Deor.* 2. 27; Plutarch, *Life of Alexander*; compare *Anachar.* vi. 189. The whole of the edifice was consumed except the four walls and some of the columns. It was, however, rebuilt with the same magnificence as before, and was regarded as one of the wonders of the world. It is now in utter ruin. After the temple had been repeatedly pillaged by the barbarians, Justinian removed the columns to adorn the Church of Sophia at Constantinople. The place where it stood can now be identified certainly, if at all, only by the marshy spot on which it was erected, and by the prodigious arches raised above as a foundation. The vaults formed by them compose a sort of labyrinth, and the water is knee-deep beneath. There is not an apartment entire; but thick walls, shafts of columns, and fragments of every kind are scattered around in confusion (*Encyclopedia Geog.* ii. 273,274).

During the reign of Tiberius, Ephesus was greatly damaged by an earthquake, but it was repaired and embellished by the emperor. In the war between Mithridates and the Romans, Ephesus took part with the former, and massacred the Romans who dwelt in it. Sylla severely punished this cruelty; but Ephesus was afterward treated with leniency, and enjoyed its own laws, along with other privileges. About the end of the 11th century it was seized by a pirate named Tangripermes, but he was routed by John

Ducas (the Greek admiral) in a bloody battle. Theodorus Lascarus, a Greek, made himself master of it in 1206 A.D. The Muslims recovered it in 1283. In the year 1401 Tamerlane employed a whole month in plundering the city and the neighboring country. Shortly afterward, the city was set on fire, and was mostly burnt in a combat between the Turkish governor and the Tartars. In 1405 it was taken by Muhammed I, and has continued since that time in the possession of the Turks (Calmet).

There is now (circa 1880's) a small, ordinary village, named Ayasaluk, near the site of the ancient town, consisting of a few cottages, which is all that now represents this city of ancient splendor. Dr. Chavolla says,

“The inhabitants are a few Greek peasants, living in extreme wretchedness, dependence, and insensibility; the representatives of an illustrious people, and inhabiting the wreck of their greatness — some in the substructions of the glorious edifices which they raised — some beneath the vaults of the stadium, once the crowded scene of their diversions — and some by the abrupt precipice in the sepulchres which received their ashes. Its streets are obscured and overgrown. A herd of goats was driven to it for shelter from the sun at noon, and a noisy flight of crows from the quarries seemed to insult its silence. We heard the partridge call in the area of the theater and the stadium. The glorious pomp of its pagan worship is no longer numbered; and Christianity, which was here nursed by apostles, and fostered by general councils, until it increased to fullness of stature, barely lingers on in an existence hardly visible” (Travels, p. 131, Oxford, 1775).

A very full and interesting description of Ephesus, as it appeared in 1739, may be seen in Poccocke's Travels, vol. ii. part ii. pp. 45-53, ed. Lend. 1745. Several ruins are described by him, but they have mostly now disappeared. The Temple of Diana was on the western side of the plain on which the city was built, and the site is now in the midst of a morass which renders access difficult. The ruins of several theaters and other buildings are described by Poccocke.



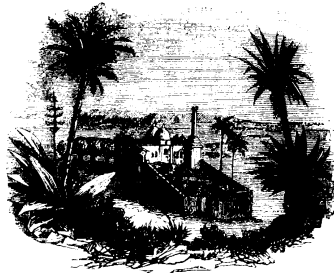
RUINS OF EPHESUS

In the year 1821 Mr. Fisk, the American missionary, visited the city of Ephesus, of which he has given the following account:

“We sent back our horses to Aisaluck, and set out on foot to survey the ruins of Ephesus. The ground was covered with high grass or grain, and a very heavy dew rendered the walking rather unpleasant. On the east side of the hill we found nothing worthy of notice; no appearance of having been occupied for buildings. On the north side was the circus or stadium. Its length from east to west is forty rods (one stadium). The north or lower side was supported by arches which still remain. The area where the races used to be performed is now a field of wheat. At the west end was the gate. The walls adjoining it are still standing, and are of considerable height and strength. North of the stadium, and separated only by a street, is a large square, inclined with fallen walls, and filled with the ruins of various edifices. A street running north and south divides this square in the center. West of the stadium is an elevation of ground, level at the top, with an immense pedestal in the center of it. What building stood there it is not easy to say. Between this and the stadium was a street passing from the great plain north of Ephesus, into the midst of the city.

“I found on the plains of Ephesus some Greek peasants, men and women, employed in pulling up tares and weeds from the wheat. I ascertained, however, that they all belonged to villages at a distance, and came there to labor. Tournefort says that, when he was at Ephesus, there were 30 or 40 Greek families there. Chandler found only 10 or 12 individuals. Now no human being lives in Ephesus; and in Aisaluck, which may be considered as Ephesus under another name, though not on precisely the same spot of ground, there are merely a few miserable Turkish huts.

“The plain of Ephesus is now very unhealthy, owing to the fogs and mists which almost continually rest upon it. The land, however, is rich, and the surrounding country is both fertile and healthy. The adjacent hills would furnish many delightful situations for villages if the difficulties were removed, which are thrown in the way by a despotic government, oppressive agas, and wandering banditti” (Missionary Herald for 1821, p. 319).



EPHESUS, (FROM THE PICTORIAL BIBLE.)

SECTION 2. THE INTRODUCTION OF THE GOSPEL AT EPHESUS

It is admitted by all that the gospel was introduced into Ephesus by the apostle Paul. He first preached there when on his way from Corinth to Jerusalem, about the year 54 A.D. (~~4182~~Acts 18:19). On this visit Paul went into the synagogue, as was his usual custom, and preached to his own countrymen, but he does not appear to have preached publicly to the pagan. He was requested to remain longer with them, but he said he must, by all means, be in Jerusalem at the approaching feast — probably the Passover, ~~4182~~Acts 18:21. He promised, however, to visit them again if possible, and sailed from Ephesus to Jerusalem. Two persons had gone with Paul from Corinth — Priscilla and Aquila — whom he appears to have left at Ephesus, or who, at any rate, soon returned there, ~~4182~~Acts 18:18,26. During the absence of Paul there came to Ephesus a certain Jew, born in Alexandria, named Apollos, an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, who had received the baptism of John, and who taught the doctrine that John had taught, ~~4182~~Acts 18:24,25. What was the precise nature of that doctrine it is now difficult to understand. It seems to have been in substance:

- (1) that repentance was necessary,
- (2) that baptism was to be performed, and
- (3) that the Messiah was about to appear.

Apollos, who had embraced this doctrine with zeal, was ready to defend it, and was in just the state of mind to welcome the news that the Messiah had come. Priscilla and Aquila instructed this zealous and talented man more fully in the doctrines of the Christian religion, and communicated to him the views which they had received from Paul, ~~4182b~~ Acts 18:26. Paul, having gone to Jerusalem as he planned, returned again to Asia Minor, and taking in Phrygia and Galatia in his way, he revisited Ephesus, and remained there for about three years (~~4182b~~ Acts 18:23; 19:1ff). It was during this time that the church was founded, which afterward became so prominent, and to which this Epistle was written. The principal events in the life of Paul there were:

- (1) His baptizing the twelve persons whom he found there, who were disciples of John; see notes at ~~4191c~~ Acts 19:1-7.
- (2) Paul went into the synagogue there and engaged in an earnest discussion with the Jews respecting the Messiah for about three months (~~4193b~~ Acts 19:8-10).
- (3) When many of the Jews opposed him, he left the synagogue and obtained a place to preach in, in the schoolroom of a man by the name of Tyrannus. In this place he continued to preach without molestation for two years and proclaimed the gospel, so that a large portion of the inhabitants had an opportunity to hear it.
- (4) The cause of religion was greatly promoted by the miracles which Paul performed (~~4191c~~ Acts 19:11-17).
- (5) Paul remained there until his preaching excited great commotion, and he was finally driven away by the tumult which was excited by Demetrius, ~~4192b~~ Acts 19:23-41.

At this time the gospel had secured such a hold on the people that there was danger that the Temple of Diana would be forsaken, and that all who were dependent upon the worship of Diana for a livelihood would be thrown out of employment. It is not probable that Paul visited Ephesus after this, unless it was after his first imprisonment at Rome; see the introduction to 2 Timothy. On his way from Macedonia to Jerusalem he

came to Miletus, and sent for the elders of Ephesus and gave them his deeply-affecting, parting address, expecting to see them no more (~~4016~~ Acts 20:16ff).

Paul remained longer at Ephesus than he did at any other one place, preaching the gospel. He seems to have set himself deliberately to work to establish a congregation there, which would ultimately overthrow idolatry. Several reasons may have led him to depart so far from his usual plan by laboring so long in one place. One may have been that this was the principal seat of idolatry in the world at that time. The evident aim of Paul in his ministry was to reach the centers of influence and power. Hence, he mainly sought to preach the gospel in large cities, and thus it was that Antioch, and Ephesus, and Corinth, and Athens, and Philippi, and Rome, shared so largely in his labors. Not ashamed of the gospel anywhere, Paul still sought mainly that its power should be felt where wealth, and learning, and genius, and talent were concentrated. The very places, therefore, where the most magnificent temples were erected to the gods, and where the worship of idols was celebrated with the most splendor and pomp, and where that worship was defended most strongly by the civil arm, were those in which the apostle sought first to preach the gospel. Ephesus, therefore, as the most splendid seat of idolatry at that time in the whole pagan world, particularly attracted the attention of the apostle, and hence it was that he was willing to spend so large a part of his public life in that place. It may have been for this reason that John afterward made it his permanent home, and spent so many years there as the minister of the congregation which had been founded by Paul; see section 3. Another reason why Paul sought Ephesus as a field of labor may have been that it was at that time not only the principal seat of idolatry, but was a place of great importance in the civil affairs of the Roman empire. It was the residence of the Roman proconsul, and the seat of the courts of justice in Asia Minor, and, consequently, was a place to which there would be attracted a great amount of learning and talent (Macknight). The apostle, therefore, seems to have been anxious that the full power of the gospel should be tried there, and that Ephesus should become as important as a center of influence in the Christian world as it had been in paganism and in civil affairs.

SECTION 3. NOTICES OF THE HISTORY OF THE CHURCH AT EPHESUS

The church at Ephesus was one of the seven churches of Asia, and the first one mentioned to which John was directed to address an epistle from Patmos (~~611~~ Revelation 2:1-7). Little is said of it in the New Testament from the time when Paul left it until the Book of Revelation was written. The tradition is, that Timothy was a minister at Ephesus, and was succeeded by the apostle John; but whether John came there while Timothy was living, or not until his removal or death, even “tradition” does not inform us. In the subscription to the Second Epistle to Timothy, it is said of Timothy that he was “ordained the first bishop of the church of the Ephesians;” but this is of no authority whatever. All that can be learned with certainty about the residence of Timothy at Ephesus is what the apostle Paul says of him in his First Epistle to Timothy (~~500~~ 1 Timothy 1:3),

“As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine.”

From this it would appear that the residence of Timothy at Ephesus was a temporary arrangement, designed to secure a result which Paul wished particularly to secure, and to avoid an evil which he had reason to dread would follow from his own absence. That it was only a temporary arrangement, is apparent from the fact that Paul soon after desired him to come to Rome, ~~509~~ 2 Timothy 4:9,11. The Second Epistle of Paul to Timothy was written but a few years after the first letter. According to Lardner, the first letter was written in the year 56 A.D., and the second letter in the year 62 A.D.; according to Hug, the first letter was written in the year 59 A.D., and the second letter in the year 61 A.D.; according to the editor of the Polyglott Bible, the first letter was written 65 A.D., and the second letter in 66 A.D. According to either calculation, the time of the residence of Timothy in Ephesus was brief. There is not the slightest evidence from the New Testament that he was a permanent Bishop of Ephesus, or indeed that he was a “bishop” at all, in the modern sense of the term. Those who may be disposed to look further into this matter, and to examine the relation which Timothy sustained to the church of Ephesus, and the claim which is sometimes set up for his having sustained the office of “a bishop,” may find an examination in the Review of Bishop Onderdonk’s Tract on Episcopacy, published in the Quarterly Christian

Spectator in March, 1834, and March, 1835, and republished in 1843 under the title of “The Organization and Government of the Apostolic Church,” pp. 99-107.

Whatever was the relation which Timothy sustained to the church in Ephesus, it is agreed on all hands that John the apostle spent a considerable portion of his life there. At what time John went to Ephesus, or why he did it, is not known now. The common opinion is, that he remained at or near Jerusalem for some 15 years after the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus, during which time he had the special charge of Mary, the mother of the Saviour; that he then preached the gospel to the Parthians and the Indians, and that he then returned and went to Ephesus, in or near which he spent his latter days, and in which, at a very advanced age, he died. It was from Ephesus that, under the Emperor Domitian, 95 A.D., he was banished to the island of Patmos, from which he returned in 97 A.D., on the accession of Nerva to the crown, who recalled all who had been banished. At that time, John is supposed to have been about 90 years of age. He is said to have died at Ephesus in the third year of Trajan (in 100 A.D.), at about 94 years of age. For a full and interesting biography of the apostle John, the reader may consult the “Lives of the Apostles,” by David Francis Bacon, pp. 307-376.

Of the subsequent history of the church at Ephesus, little is known, and it would not be necessary to dwell upon it in order to an exposition of the Epistle before us. It is sufficient to remark, that the “candlestick is removed out of its place” (Ⓜ Revelation 2:5), and that all the splendor of the Temple of Diana, all the pomp of her worship, and all the glory of the Christian church there, have faded away alike.

SECTION 4. THE TIME AND PLACE OF WRITING THE EPISTLE

It has never been denied that the apostle Paul was the author of this Epistle, though it has been made a question whether it were written to the Ephesians or to the Laodiceans; see Section 5. Dr. Paley (*Horae Paulinae*) has shown that there is conclusive internal proof that this Epistle was written by Paul. This argument is derived from the style, and is carried out by a comparison of this Epistle with the other undoubted writings of the apostle. The historical evidence on this point also is undisputed.

It is generally supposed, and, indeed, the evidence seems to be clear, that this Epistle was written during the imprisonment of the apostle at Rome;

but whether it was during his first or his second imprisonment is not certain. Paul was held in custody for approximately two years in Caesarea (^{<407>}Acts 24:27), but there is no evidence that during that time he addressed any epistle to the churches which he had planted. That this was written when he was a prisoner is apparent from the Epistle itself. “The two years in which Paul was imprisoned at Caesarea,” says Wall, as quoted by Lardner, “seem to have been the most inactive part of Paul’s life. There is no account of any proceedings or disputations, or of any epistles written in this space.” This may have arisen, Lardner supposes, from the fact that the Jews made such an opposition that the Roman governor would not allow him to have any contact with the people at large, or procure any intelligence from the churches abroad. But when he was at Rome he had more liberty. He was allowed to dwell in his own hired house (^{<480>}Acts 28:30), and had permission to address all who came to him, and to communicate freely with his friends abroad. It was during this period that he wrote at least four of his letters — the Epistle to the Ephesians, the Epistle to the Philippians, the Epistle to the Colossians, and the Epistle to Philemon. Grotius, as quoted by Lardner, says of these Epistles, that though all Paul’s Epistles are excellent, yet he most admires those written by him when a prisoner at Rome. Concerning the Epistle to the Ephesians, he says it surpasses all human eloquence — *rerum sublimitatem adaequans verbis sublimioribus, quam ulla unquam habuit lingua humana* — describing the sublimity of the things by corresponding words more sublime than are found elsewhere in human language. The evidence that it was written when Paul was a prisoner is found in the Epistle itself. Thus, in ^{<401>}Ephesians 3:1, he says, “I, Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ — ^{<3588>}ὁ ^{<1198>}δεσμιος ^{<3588>}του ^{<5547>}Χριστου — for you Gentiles.” So he alludes to his afflictions in ^{<401>}Ephesians 3:13, “I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you.” In ^{<401>}Ephesians 4:1, he calls himself the “prisoner of the Lord,” or in the margin, “in the Lord “ — ^{<3588>}ὁ ^{<3588>}δεσμιος ^{<1198>}εν ^{<1722>}Κυριω ^{<2962>}. And in ^{<401>}Ephesians 6:19,20, there is an allusion which seems to settle the inquiry beyond dispute, and to prove that it was written while he was at Rome. He there says that he was an “ambassador in bonds” — ^{<1722>}εν ^{<1722>}ἀλυσε ^{<000>} — “in chains, manacles,” or “shackles;” and yet he desires (^{<401>}Ephesians 6:19,20) that they would pray for him, that utterance might be given him to open his mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, that he might speak boldly as he ought to speak. Now this is a remarkable circumstance. A man in custody, in bonds or chains, and that too for being an “ambassador,” and yet asking the aid of their prayers, that

in these circumstances he might have grace to be a bold preacher of the gospel. If he was in prison this could not well be. If he was under a strict prohibition it could not well be. The circumstances of the case tally exactly with the statement in the last chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, that Paul was in custody in Rome; that he was permitted to “dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him” (~~4036~~ Acts 28:16); that he was permitted to call the Jews together and to debate with them freely (~~4037~~ Acts 28:17-28); and that Paul dwelt in his own hired house for two years, and “received all that came in with him, preaching the kingdom of God,” etc. (~~4038~~ Acts 28:30,31). So exactly do these circumstances correspond that I have no doubt that that was the time when the Epistle was written. And so unusual is such a train of circumstances — so unlikely would it be to occur to a man to forge such a coincidence, that it furnishes a striking proof that the Epistle was written, as it purports to be, by Paul. An impostor would not have thought of inventing such a coincidence. If it had occurred to him to make any such allusion, the place and time would have been more distinctly mentioned, and not have been left as a mere incidental allusion. The apostle Paul is supposed to have been at Rome as a prisoner twice (compare the introduction to Second Timothy), and to have suffered martyrdom there about 65 or 66 A.D. If the Epistle to the Ephesians was written during his second imprisonment at Rome, as is commonly supposed, then it must have been somewhere between the years 63 and 65 A.D. Lardner and Hug suppose that it was written April, 61 A.D.; Macknight supposes it was in 60 or 61 A.D.; the editor of the Polyglott Bible places it at 64 A.D. The exact time when it was written cannot now be ascertained, and is not material.

SECTION 5. TO WHOM WAS THE EPISTLE WRITTEN?

The Epistle purports to have been written to the Ephesians — “to the saints which are at Ephesus,” — ~~4001~~ Ephesians 1:1. But the opinion that it was written to the Ephesians has been called in question by many expositors. Dr. Pales (*Horae Paulinae*) supposes that it was written to the Laodiceans. Wetstein also maintained the same opinion. This opinion was expressly stated also by Marcion, a heretic of the second century. Michaelis (*Introduction*) supposes that it was a “circular epistle,” addressed not to any congregation in particular, but that it was intended for the Ephesians, Laodiceans, and some other churches of Asia Minor. He supposes that the apostle had several copies taken; that he made it intentionally of a very

GENERAL character so as to suit all; that he affixed with his own hand the subscription, ~~☞~~ Ephesians 6:24, to each copy —

“Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity;”

that at the beginning of the Epistle the name was inserted of the particular church to which it was to be sent — as “to the church in Ephesus” — “in Laodicea,” etc. When the several works composing the New Testament were collected into a volume he supposes that it so happened that the copy of this Epistle which was used was one obtained from Ephesus, containing a direction to the saints there. This is also the opinion of Archbishop Usher and Koppe. It does not comport with the design of these notes to go into an extended examination of this question; and after all that has been written on it, and the different opinions which have been entertained, it certainly does NOT become any one to be very confident. It is NOT a question of great importance, since it involves NO point of doctrine or duty; but those who wish to see it discussed at length can be satisfied by referring to Paley’s “Horae Paulinae;” to Michaelis’ “Introduction,” vol. iv. chapter xx., and to the “Prolegomena” of Koppe. The arguments which are alleged to prove that it was addressed to the church at Laodicea, or at least not to the church at Ephesus, are summarily the following:

(1) The testimony of Marcion, a heretic of the second century, who affirms that it was sent to the church in Laodicea, and that instead of the reading (~~☞~~ Ephesians 1:1), “in Ephesus,” in the copy which he had it was “in Laodicea” But the opinion of Marcion is now regarded as of little weight. It IS admitted that Marcion was in the habit of altering the Greek text to suit his own views.

(2) The principal objection to the opinion that it was written to the church at Ephesus is found in certain internal marks, and particularly with the lack of any allusion to the fact that Paul had ever been there, or to anything that particularly related to the church there. This difficulty comprises several particulars.

(a) Paul spent nearly three years in Ephesus, and was engaged there in deeply interesting transactions and occurrences. He had founded the church, ordained its elders, taught them the doctrines which they held, and had at last been persecuted there and driven away. If the Epistle was written to them it is remarkable that there is in the Epistle no allusion to

any one of these facts or circumstances. This is the more remarkable, since it was his usual custom to allude to the events which had occurred in the churches which he had founded (see the Epistles to the Corinthians and Philippians), and, since on two other occasions, he at least makes direct allusion to these transactions at Ephesus; see ~~4018~~ Acts 20:18-35; ~~4152~~ 1 Corinthians 15:32.

(b) In the other epistles which Paul wrote, it was his custom to salute a large number of persons by name. However, in this Epistle, there is no salutation of any kind. There is a general invocation of “peace to the brethren” (~~4023~~ Ephesians 6:23), but no specific mention of an individual by name. There is not even an allusion to the “elders” whom, with so much affection, he had addressed at Miletus (Acts 20), and to whom he had given so solemn a charge. This is the more remarkable, as in this place he had spent three years in preaching the gospel, and must have been acquainted with all the leading members in the congregation. To the church at Rome, which he had never visited when he wrote his Epistle to the Romans, he sends a large number of salutations (1 Corinthians 16); to the church at Ephesus, where he had spent a longer time than in any other place, he sends none.

(c) The name of Timothy does not occur in the Epistle. This is remarkable, because Paul had left him there with a special charge (~~5003~~ 1 Timothy 1:3), and, if he were still there, it is singular that no allusion is made to him, and no salutation sent to him. If he had left Ephesus, and had gone to Rome to meet Paul as he requested (~~5009~~ 2 Timothy 4:9), it is remarkable that Paul did not join his name with his own in sending the Epistle to the church, or at least allude to the fact that he had arrived. This is the more remarkable, because in the Epistles to the Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, and 2 Thessalonians, the name of Timothy is joined with that of Paul at the commencement of the Epistle.

(d) Paul speaks of the persons to whom this Epistle was sent as if he had not been with them, or at least in a manner which is hardly conceivable, on the supposition that he had been the founder of the church. Thus, in ~~4015~~ Ephesians 1:15,16, he says,

“Wherefore also after I heard of your faith in Christ Jesus,” etc.

But this circumstance is not conclusive. Paul may have been told of the continuance of their faith and of their growing love and zeal, and he may have alluded to that in this passage.

(e) Another circumstance on which some reliance has been placed is the statement in ~~400~~Ephesians 3:1,2, “For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given to you-ward,” etc. It is argued (see Michaelis) that this is not language which would have been employed by one who had founded the church, and with whom they were all acquainted. He would not have spoken in a manner implying any doubt whether they had ever heard of him and his labors in the ministry on account of the Gentiles. Such are the considerations relied upon to show that the Epistle could NOT have been written to the Ephesians.

On the other hand, there is proof of a very strong character that it was written to them. That proof is the following:

1. The common reading in ~~400~~Ephesians 1:1, “To the saints which are in Ephesus.” It is true, as we have seen, that this reading has been called in question. Mill says that it is omitted by Basil (lib. 2, Adversus Eunomium), as he says, “on the testimony of the fathers and of ancient copies.” Griesbach marks it with the sign “om.,” denoting that it was omitted by some, but that, in his judgment, it is to be retained. It is found in the Vulgate, the Syriac, the Arabic, and the Ethiopic in Walton’s Polyglott. Rosenmuller remarks that “most of the ancient codices, and all the ancient versions, retain the word.” To my mind this fact is conclusive. The testimony of Marcion is admitted to be of almost NO authority; and as to the testimony of Basil, it is only one against the testimony of all the ancients, and is at best negative in its character; see the passage from Basil, quoted in Hug’s Introduction.

2. A slight circumstance may be adverted to as throwing light incidentally upon this question. This Epistle was sent by Tychicus (~~402~~Ephesians 6:21). The Epistle to the Colossians was also sent from Rome by the same messenger (~~500~~Colossians 4:7). Now there is a strong improbability in the opinion held by Michaelis, Koppe, and others, that this was a “circular” letter, sent to the churches at large, or that different copies were prepared, and the name “Ephesus” inserted in one, and “Laodicea” in another, etc. The improbability is this, that the apostle would at the same time send such a circular letter to several of the churches, and a special letter to the church

at Colossae. What claim had THAT church to special notice? What pre-eminence had it over the church at Ephesus? And why should he send them a letter bearing so strong a resemblance to that addressed to the other churches, when the same letter would have suited the church at Colossae as well as the one which was actually sent to them; for there is a nearer resemblance between these two epistles, than any other two portions of the Bible. Besides, in ~~3012~~2 Timothy 4:12, Paul says that he had sent “Tychicus to Ephesus;” and what is more natural than that, at that time, he sent this Epistle by him?

3. There is the utter lack of evidence from manuscripts or versions, that this Epistle was sent to Laodicea, or to any other church, except Ephesus. Not a manuscript has been found (circa 1880's) having the name “Laodicea” in ~~4000~~Ephesians 1:1; nor any manuscript which omits the words “in Ephesus.” If it had been sent to another congregation, or if it had been a circular letter addressed to no particular congregation, it is scarcely credible that this could have occurred.

These considerations make it plain to me that this Epistle was addressed, as it purports to have been, to the church in Ephesus. I confess myself wholly unable, however, to explain the remarkable circumstances that Paul does not refer to his former residence there; that he alludes to none of his troubles or his triumphs; that he makes no mention of the “elders,” and greets no one by name; and that, throughout, he addresses them as if they were personally unknown to him. In this respect, it is unlike all the other epistles, which he ever wrote, and all which we should have expected from a man in such circumstances. May it not be accounted for from “this very fact,” that an attempt to specify individuals where so many were known, would protract the Epistle to an unreasonable length? There is, indeed, one supposition suggested by Dr. Macknight, which may possibly explain to some extent the remarkable circumstances above referred to. It is, that an instruction may have been given by Paul to Tychicus, by whom he sent the letter, to send a copy of it to the Laodiceans, with an order to them to communicate it to the Colossians. In such a case everything local would be designedly omitted, and the Epistle would be of as general a character as possible. This is, however, mere conjecture, and does not remove the entirety of the difficulty.

SECTION 6. THE OBJECT FOR WHICH THE EPISTLE WAS WRITTEN.

Very various opinions have been formed in regard to the design for which this Epistle was written. Macknight supposes that it was with reference to the Eleusinian mysteries, and to various religious rites in the Temple of Diana, and that Paul intended particularly to state the “mysteries” of the gospel in contradistinction from them. But there is no clear evidence that the apostle had any such object, and it is not necessary to go into an explanation of those mysteries in order to an understanding of the Epistle. The Epistle is such as might be addressed to any Christians, though there are allusions to customs which then prevailed, and to opinions then held, which it is desirable to understand in order to a just view of it. That there were Jews and Judaizing Christians in Ephesus, may be learned from the Epistle itself. That there were those there who supposed that the Jews were to have a more elevated rank than the Gentiles, may also be learned from the Epistle; and one object was to show that all true Christians, whether of Jewish or pagan origin, were on a level, and were entitled to the same privileges. That there was the prevalence of a false and dangerous philosophy there, may also be learned from the Epistle; and that there were those who attempted to cause divisions, and who had violated the unity of the faith, may also be learned from it.

The Epistle is divided into two parts —

- I. The doctrinal part (Ephesians 1—3); and
- II. The practical part, or the application (Ephesians 4—6).

I. The doctrinal part comprises the following topics:

- (1) Praise to God for the Revelation of his eternal counsels of recovering mercy, ~~4003~~ Ephesians 1:3-14.
- (2) A prayer of the apostle, expressing his earnest desire that the Ephesians might avail themselves fully of all the advantages of this eternal purpose of mercy, ~~4015~~ Ephesians 1:15-23.
- (3) The doctrine of the native character of man, as being dead in sins, illustrated by the past lives of the Ephesians, ~~4004~~ Ephesians 2:1-3.
- (4) The doctrine of regeneration by the grace of God, and the advantages of it, ~~4016~~ Ephesians 2:5-7.

- (5) The doctrine of salvation by grace alone without respect to our own works, ^{<408>}Ephesians 2:8,9.
- (6) The privilege of being thus admitted to the fellowship of the saints, ^{<409>}Ephesians 2:11-22.
- (7) A full statement of the doctrine that God meant to admit the Gentiles to the privileges of his people, and to break down the barriers between the Gentiles and the Jews, ^{<410>}Ephesians 3:1-12.
- (8) The apostle prays earnestly that they might avail themselves fully of this doctrine, and be able to appreciate fully the advantages which it was intended to confer; and with this prayer he closes the doctrinal part of the Epistle, ^{<411>}Ephesians 3:13-21.

II. The practical part of the Epistle embraces the following topics, namely:

- (1) Exhortation to unity, drawn from the consideration that there was one God, one faith, etc., ^{<402>}Ephesians 4:1-16.
- (2) An exhortation to a holy life “in general,” from the fact that they differed from other Gentiles, ^{<407>}Ephesians 4:17-24.
- (3) Exhortation to exhibit “particular” virtues — “specifying” what was required by their religion, and what they should avoid — particularly to avoid the vices of anger, lying, licentiousness, and intemperance, ^{<405>}Ephesians 4:25-32; ^{<406>}Ephesians 5:1-20.
- (4) The duties of husbands and wives, ^{<403>}Ephesians 5:21-33.
- (5) The duties of parents and children, ^{<404>}Ephesians 6:1-3.
- (6) The duties of masters and servants, ^{<404>}Ephesians 6:4-9.
- (7) An exhortation to fidelity in the Christian warfare, ^{<406>}Ephesians 6:10-20.
- (8) Conclusion, ^{<403>}Ephesians 6:21-24.

The style of this Epistle is exceedingly animated. The apostle is cheered by the intelligence which he had received of their deportment in the gospel, and is warmed by the grandeur of his principal theme — the eternal purposes of divine mercy. Into the discussion of that subject he throws his whole soul, and there is probably no part of Paul’s writings where there is

more ardor, elevation, and soul evinced, than in this Epistle. He approaches the great doctrine of predestination as a most important and vital doctrine; he states it freely and fully, and urges it as the basis of the Christian's hope, and the foundation of eternal gratitude and praise. Perhaps nowhere is there a better illustration of the power of that doctrine to elevate the soul and fill it with grand conceptions of the character of God, and to excite grateful emotions, than in this Epistle; and the Christian, therefore, may study it as a portion of the sacred writings eminently suited to excite his gratitude, and to fill him with adoring views of God.

THE EPISTLE OF PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

NOTES ON EPHESIANS 1

- (1) The salutation, <4001> Ephesians 1:1,2.
- (2) The doctrine of predestination, and its hearing and design, <4003> Ephesians 1:3-14.
 - (a) It is the foundation of praise to God, and is a source of gratitude, <4003> Ephesians 1:3.
 - (b) Christians have been chosen before the foundation of the world, <4004> Ephesians 1:4.
 - (c) The object was that they should be holy and blameless, <4004> Ephesians 1:4.
 - (d) They were predestinated to be the children of God, <4005> Ephesians 1:5.
 - (e) The cause of this was the good pleasure of God, or he did it according to the purpose of his will, <4005> Ephesians 1:5.
 - (f) The object of this was his own glory, <4006> Ephesians 1:6.
- (3) The benefits of the plan of predestination to those who are thus chosen, <4007> Ephesians 1:7-14.
 - (a) They have redemption and the forgiveness of sins, <4007> Ephesians 1:7,8.
 - (b) They are made acquainted with the mystery of the divine will, <4009> Ephesians 1:9,10.
 - (c) They have obtained an inheritance in Christ, <4011> Ephesians 1:11.
 - (d) The object of this was the praise of the glory of God, <4012> Ephesians 1:12.

(e) As the result of this, or in the execution of this purpose, they were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, ^{<4013>}Ephesians 1:13,14.

(4) An earnest prayer that they might have a full understanding of the great and glorious plan of redemption, ^{<4015>}Ephesians 1:15-23.

(a) Paul says that he had been informed of their faith, ^{<4015>}Ephesians 1:15.

(b) He always remembered them in his prayers, ^{<4016>}Ephesians 1:16.

(c) His special desire was that they might see the glory of the Lord Jesus, whom God had exalted to his own right hand in heaven, ^{<4017>}Ephesians 1:17-23.

^{<4000>}**Ephesians 1:1.** *Paul, an apostle;* see the notes at ^{<4000>}Romans 1:1.

By the will of God see the notes at ^{<4000>}1 Corinthians 1:1.

To the saints A name often given to Christians because they are holy; see the notes at ^{<4000>}1 Corinthians 1:2.

In Ephesus see the introduction, sections 1 and 5.

And to the faithful in Christ Jesus This evidently refers to others than to those who were in Ephesus, and it is clear that Paul expected that this Epistle would be read by others. He gives it a GENERAL character, as if he supposed that it might be transcribed, and become the property of the church at large. It was not uncommon for him thus to give a general character to the epistles which he addressed to particular churches, and so to write that others than those to whom they were particularly directed, might feel that they were addressed to them. Thus, the First Epistle to the Corinthians was addressed to “the church of God in Corinth — with all that in every place call upon the name of Christ Jesus our Lord.” The Second Epistle to the Corinthians in like manner was addressed to “the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia.” Perhaps, in the Epistle before us, the apostle referred particularly to the churches of Asia Minor which he had not visited, but there is no reason for confining the address to them. All who are “faithful in Christ Jesus” may regard the Epistle as addressed by the Holy Spirit to them, and may feel that they are as much interested in the doctrines, promises, and duties set forth in this Epistle, as were the ancient Christians of Ephesus. The word “faithful” here is not used in the sense of “trustworthy,” or in the sense of “fidelity,” as it is often employed, but in the sense of “believing,”

or “having faith” in the Lord Jesus. The apostle addresses those who were firm in the faith — another name for true Christians. The Epistle contains great doctrines about the divine purposes and decrees in which they, as Christians, were particularly concerned; important “mysteries” (<BOOK>Ephesians 1:9), of importance for them to understand, and which the apostle proceeds to communicate to them as such. The fact that the letter was designed to be published, shows that he was not unwilling that those high doctrines should be made known to the world at large; still they pertained particularly to the church, and they are doctrines which should be particularly addressed to the church. They are rather suited to comfort the hearts of “Christians,” than to bring “sinners” to repentance. These doctrines may be addressed to the church with more prospect of securing a happy effect than to the world. In the church they will excite gratitude, and produce the hope which results from assured promises and eternal purposes; in the minds of sinners they may arouse envy, and hatred, and opposition to God.

<BOOK>**Ephesians 1:2.** *Grace to you, ...* see the notes, <BOOK>Romans 1:7.

<BOOK>**Ephesians 1:3.** *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ* This commences a sentence which continues to the close of <BOOK>Ephesians 1:12. The length of the periods in the writings of Paul, is one cause of the obscurity of his style, and renders an explanation often difficult. The meaning of this phrase is, that God has laid a foundation for gratitude for what he has done. The ground or reason of the praise here referred to, is that which is stated in the following verses. The leading thing on which the apostle dwells is God’s eternal purpose — his everlasting counsel in regard to the salvation of man. Paul breaks out into the exclamation that God is worthy of praise for such a plan, and that his eternal purposes, now manifest to people, give exalted views of the character and glory of God. Most persons suppose the contrary. They feel that the plans of God are dark, and stern, and forbidding, and such as to render his character anything but amiable. They speak of him, when he is referred to as a sovereign, as if he were tyrannical and unjust, and they never connect the idea of that which is amiable and lovely with the doctrine of eternal purposes. There is no doctrine that is usually so unpopular; none that is so much reproached; none that is so much abused. There is none that people desire so much to disbelieve or avoid; none that they are so unwilling to have preached; and none that they are so reluctant to find in

the Scriptures. Even many Christians turn away from it with dread; or if they “tolerate” it, they yet feel that there is something about it that is especially dark and forbidding. Not so felt Paul. He felt that it laid the foundation for eternal praise; that it presented glorious views of God; that it was the ground of confidence and hope; and that it was desirable that Christians should dwell upon it and praise God for it. Let us feel, therefore, as we enter upon the exposition of this chapter, that God is to be praised for ALL his plans, and that it is “possible” for Christians to have such views of the doctrine of “eternal predestination” as to give them most elevated conceptions of the glory of the divine character. And let us also be “willing” to know the truth. Let us approach word after word, and phrase after phrase, and verse after verse, in this chapter, willing to know all that God teaches; to believe all that he has revealed; and ready to say, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ for all that he has done.”

Who hath blessed us Who does Paul mean here by “us?” Does he mean all the world? This cannot be, for all the world are not thus blessed with “all” spiritual blessings. Does he mean “nations?” For the same reason this cannot be. Does he mean the Gentiles in contradistinction from the Jews? Why then does he use the word “us,” including himself, who was a Jew? Does he mean to say that they were blessed with external privileges, and that this was the only object of the eternal purposes of God? This cannot be, for he speaks of “spiritual blessings;” he speaks of the persons referred to as having “redemption” and “the forgiveness of sins;” as having “obtained an inheritance,” and as being sealed with the “Holy Spirit of promise.” These appertain not to nations, or to external privileges, or the mere offers of the gospel, but to true Christians; to persons who have been redeemed. The persons referred to by the word “us,” are those who are mentioned in ^{<400>}Ephesians 1:1, as “saints,” — ἁγίους ^{<40>} — “holy;” and “faithful” — πιστοίς ^{<405>} — “believing,” or “believers.” This observation is important, because it shows that the plan or decree of God had reference to individuals, and not merely to nations. Many have supposed (see Whitby, Dr. A. Clarke, Bloomfield, and others) that the apostle here refers to the “Gentiles,” and that his object is to show that they were now admitted to the same privileges as the ancient Jews, and that the whole doctrine of predestination here referred to, has relation to that fact. But, I would ask, were there no Jews in the church at Ephesus? See ^{<415>}Acts 18:20,24; 19:1-8. The matter of fact seems to have been, that Paul was uncommonly successful there among his own countrymen, and that his

chief difficulty there arose, not from the Jews, but from the influence of the heathen; ^{<4192>}Acts 19:24. Besides what evidence is there that the apostle speaks in this chapter especially of the Gentiles, or that he was writing to that portion of the church at Ephesus which was of Gentile origin? And if he was, why did he name himself among them as one on whom this blessing had been bestowed? The fact is, that this is a mere supposition, resorted to without evidence, and in the face of every fair principle of interpretation, to avoid an unpleasant doctrine. Nothing can be clearer than that Paul meant to write to “Christians as such;” to speak of privileges which they enjoyed as special to themselves; and that he had no particular reference to “nations,” and did not design merely to refer to external privileges.

With all spiritual blessings Pardon, peace, redemption, adoption, the earnest of the Spirit, etc., referred to in the following verses — blessings which “individual Christians” enjoy, and not external privileges conferred on nations.

In heavenly places in Christ The word “places” is here understood, and is not in the original. It may mean heavenly “places,” or heavenly “things.” The word “places” does not express the best sense. The idea seems to be, that God has blessed us in Christ in regard to heavenly subjects or matters. In ^{<4011>}Ephesians 1:20, the word “places” seems to be inserted with more propriety. The same phrase occurs again in ^{<4116>}Ephesians 2:6; 3:10; and it is remarkable that it should occur in the same elliptical form four times in this one epistle, and, I believe, in no other part of the writings of Paul. Our translators have in each instance supplied the word “places,” as denoting the rank or station of Christians, of the angels, and of the Saviour, to each of whom it is applied. The phrase probably means, in things pertaining to heaven; suited to prepare us for heaven; and tending toward heaven. It probably refers here to every thing that was heavenly in its nature, or that had relation to heaven, whether gifts or graces. As the apostle is speaking, however, of the mass of Christians on whom these things had been bestowed, I rather suppose that he refers to what are called Christian graces, than to the extraordinary endowments bestowed on the few. The sense is, that in Christ, i.e. through Christ, or by means of him, God had bestowed all spiritual blessings that were suited to prepare for heaven — such as pardon, adoption, the illumination of the Spirit, etc.

Ephesians 1:4. *According as* The importance of this verse will render proper a somewhat minute examination of the words and phrases of which it is composed. The general sense of the passage is, that these blessings pertaining to heaven were bestowed upon Christians in accordance with an eternal purpose. They were not conferred by chance or hap-hazard. They were the result of intention and design on the part of God. Their value was greatly enhanced from the fact that God had designed from all eternity to bestow them, and that they come to us as the result of his everlasting plan. It was not a recent plan; it was not an afterthought; it was not by mere chance; it was not by caprice; it was the fruit of an eternal counsel. Those blessings had all the value, and all the assurance of “permanency,” which must result from that fact. The phrase “according as” — **καθως** ^{<2531>} — implies that these blessings were in conformity with that eternal plan, and have flowed to us as the expression of that plan. They are limited by that purpose, for it marks and measures all. It was as God had chosen that it should be, and had appointed in his eternal purpose.

He hath chosen us The word “us” here shows that the apostle had reference to individuals, and not to communities. It includes Paul himself as one of the “chosen,” and those whom he addressed — the mingled Gentile and Jewish converts in Ephesus. That it must refer to individuals is clear. Of no “community” as such can it be said that it was “chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy.” It is not true of the Gentile world as such, nor of anyone of the nations making up the Gentile world. The word rendered here “hath chosen” — **εξελεξατο** ^{<1586>} — is from a word meaning “to lay out together,” (Passow,) to choose out, to select. It has the idea of making a choice or selection among different objects or things. It is applied to things, as in ^{<2102>}Luke 10:42, Mary “hath chosen that good part;” — she has made a choice, or selection of it, or has shown a “preference” for it. ^{<4127>}1 Corinthians 1:27, “God hath chosen the foolish things of the world;” he has preferred to make use of them among all the conceivable things which might have been employed” to confound the wise;” compare ^{<4102>}Acts 1:2,24; 6:5; 15:22,25. It denotes “to choose out,” with the accessory idea of kindness or favor. ^{<4133>}Mark 13:20, “For the elect’s sake whom “he hath chosen,” he hath shortened the days.” ^{<4338>}John 13:18, “I know whom I have chosen.” ^{<4137>}Acts 13:17, “The God of this people of Israel “chose” our fathers;” that is, selected them from the nations to accomplish important purposes. This is evidently the sense of the

word in the passage before us. It means to make a selection or choice with the idea of favor or love, and with a view to impart important benefits on those whom he chose. The idea of making some “distinction” between them and others, is essential to a correct understanding of the passage — since there can be no choice where no such distinction is made. He who chooses one out of many things makes a difference, or evinces a preference — no matter what the ground or reason of his doing it may be. Whether this refers to communities and nations, or to individuals, still it is true that a distinction is made or a preference given of one over another. It may be added, that so far as “justice” is concerned, it makes no difference whether it refers to nations or to individuals. If there is injustice in choosing an “individual” to favor, there cannot be less in choosing a “nation” — for a nation is nothing but a collection of individuals. Every objection which has ever been made to the doctrine of election as it relates to individuals, will apply with equal force to the choice of a nation to unique privileges. If a distinction is made, it may be made with as much propriety in respect to individuals as to nations.

In him In Christ. The choice was not without reference to any means of saving them; it was not a mere purpose to bring a certain number to heaven; it was with reference to the mediation of the Redeemer, and his work. It was a purpose that they should be saved “by” him, and share the benefits of the atonement. The whole choice and purpose of salvation had reference to him, and “out” of him no one was chosen to life, and no one out of him will be saved.

Before the foundation of the world This is a very important phrase in determining the time when the choice was made. It was not an “afterthought.” It was not commenced in time. The purpose was far back in the ages of eternity. But what is the meaning of the phrase “before the foundation of the world?” Dr. Clarke supposes that it means “from the commencement “of the religious system of the Jews,” which,” says he, “the phrase sometimes means.” Such principles of interpretation are they compelled to resort to who endeavor to show that this refers to a national election to privileges, and who deny that it refers to individuals. On such principles the Bible may be made to signify anything and everything. Dr. Chandler, who also supposes that it refers to nations, admits, however, that the word “foundation” means the beginning of anything; and that the phrase here means, “before the world began” There is scarcely any phrase in the New Testament which is more clear in its signification than this. The

word rendered “foundation” — **καταβολη** ^{<2602>} — means properly a laying down, a founding, a foundation — as where the foundation of a building is laid — and the phrase “before the foundation of the world” clearly means before the world was made, or before the work of creation; see ^{<4035>}Matthew 13:35; 25:34; ^{<4215>}Luke 11:50; ^{<3825>}Hebrews 9:26; ^{<6018>}Revelation 13:8, in all which places the phrase “the foundation of the world” means the beginning of human affairs; the beginning of the world; the beginning of history, etc. Thus, in ^{<6174>}John 17:24, the Lord Jesus says, “thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world,” i.e., from eternity, or before the work of creation commenced. Thus, Peter says (^{<6012>}1 Peter 1:20) of the Saviour, “who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world.” It was the purpose of God before the worlds were made, to send him to save lost men; compare ^{<6678>}Revelation 17:8. Nothing can be clearer than that the phrase before us must refer to a purpose that was formed before the world was made. it is not a temporary arrangement; it has not grown up under the influence of vacillating purposes; it is not a plan newly formed, or changed with each coming generation, or variable like the plans of people. It has all the importance, dignity, and assurances of stability which necessarily result from a purpose that has been eternal in the mind of God. It may be observed here,

(1) that if the plan was formed “before the foundation of the world,” all objections to the doctrine of an “eternal” plan are removed. If the plan was formed “before” the world, no matter whether a moment, an hour, a year, or millions of years, the plan is equally fixed, and the event equally necessary. All the objections which will lie against an “eternal” plan, will lie against a plan formed a day or an hour before the event. The one interferes with our freedom of action as much as the other.

(2) If the plan was formed “before the foundation of the world,” it “was eternal.” God has no new plan, He forms no new schemes. He is not changing and vacillating. If we can ascertain what is the plan of God at any time, we can ascertain what his eternal plan was with reference to the event. It has always been the same — for “he is of ONE MIND, and who can turn him?” ^{<48213>}Job 23:13. In reference to the plans and purposes of the Most High, there is nothing better settled than that **WHAT HE ACTUALLY DOES, HE ALWAYS MEANT TO DO** — which is the doctrine of eternal decrees — “and the whole of it.

That we should be holy Paul proceeds to state the “object” for which God had chosen his people. It is not merely that they should enter into heaven. It is not that they may live in sin. It is not that they may flatter themselves that they are safe, and then live as they please. The tendency among people has always been to abuse the doctrine of predestination and election; to lead people to say that if all things are fixed there is no need of effort; that if God has an eternal plan, no matter how people live, they will be saved if he has elected them, and that at all events they cannot change that plan, and they may as well enjoy life by indulgence in sin. The apostle Paul held no such view of the doctrine of predestination. In his apprehension it is a doctrine suited to excite the gratitude of Christians, and the whole tendency and design of the doctrine, according to him, is to make people holy, and without blame before God in love.

And without blame before him in love The expression “in love,” is probably to be taken in connection with the following verse, and should be rendered “In love,” having predestinated us unto the adoption of children.” It is all to be traced to the love of God.

(1) It was love for us which prompted to it.

(2) It is the highest expression of love to be ordained to eternal life — for what higher love could God show us?

(3) It is love on his part, because we had no claim to it, and had not deserved it. If this be the correct view, then the doctrine of predestination is not inconsistent with the highest moral excellence in the divine character, and should never be represented as the offspring of partiality and injustice. Then too we should give thanks that” God “has, in love,” predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will.”

Ephesians 1:5. *Having predestinated us* On the meaning of the word here used, see the notes at ^{<400>}Romans 1:4; 8:29. The word used ($\pi\rho\omega\rho\iota\zeta\omega$) ^{<430>} means properly “to set bounds before;” and then to “pre-determine.” There is the essential idea of setting bounds or limits, and of doing this beforehand. It is not that God determined to do it when it was actually done, but that he intended to do it beforehand. No language could express this more clearly, and I suppose this interpretation is generally admitted. Even by those who deny the doctrine of particular election, it is not denied that the word here used means to “pre-determine;” and they

maintain that the sense is, that God had pre-determined to admit the Gentiles to the privileges of his people. Admitting then that the meaning is to predestinate in the proper sense, the only question is, “who” are predestinated? To whom does the expression apply? Is it to nations or to individuals? In reply to this, in addition to the remarks already made, I would observe,

- (1) that there is no specification of “nations” here as such, no mention of the Gentiles in contradistinction from the Jews.
- (2) Those referred to were those included in the word “us,” among whom Paul was one — but Paul was not a heathen.
- (3) The same objection will lie against the doctrine of predestinating “nations” which will lie against predestinating “individuals.”
- (4) Nations are made up of individuals, and the pre-determination must have had some reference to individuals.

What is a nation but a collection of individuals? There is no such abstract being or thing as a nation; and if there was any purpose in regard to a nation, it must have had some reference to the individuals composing it. He that would act on the ocean, must act on the drops of water that make up the ocean; for besides the collection of drops of water there is no ocean. He that would remove a mountain, must act on the particles of matter that compose that mountain; for there is no such thing as an abstract mountain. Perhaps there was never a greater illusion than to suppose that all difficulty is removed in regard to the doctrine of election and predestination, by saying that it refers to “nations.” What difficulty is lessened? What is gained by it? How does it make God appear more amiable and good? Does it render him less “partial” to suppose that he has made a difference among nations, than to suppose that he has made a difference among individuals? Does it remove any difficulty about the offer of salvation, to suppose that he has granted the knowledge of his truth to some “nations,” and withheld it from others? The truth is, that all the reasoning which has been founded on this supposition, has been merely throwing dust in the eyes. If there is “any” well-founded objection to the doctrine of decrees or predestination, it is to the doctrine “at all,” alike in regard to nations and individuals, and there are just the same difficulties in the one case as in the other. But there is no real difficulty in either. Who could worship or honor a God who had no plan, or purpose, or intention in what he did? Who can believe that the

universe was formed and is governed without design? Who can doubt that what God “does” he always meant to do? When, therefore, he converts and saves a soul, it is clear that he always intended to do it. He has no new plan. It is not an afterthought. It is not the work of chance. If I can find out anything that God has “done,” I have the most certain conviction that he “always meant” to do it — and this is all that is intended by the doctrine of election or predestination. What God does, he always meant to do. What he permits, he always meant to permit. I may add further, that if it is right to “do” it, it was right to “intend” to do it. If there is no injustice or partiality in the act itself, there is no injustice or partiality in the intention to perform it. If it is right to save a soul, it was also right to intend to save it. If it is right to condemn a sinner to we, it was right to intend to do it. Let us then look “at the thing itself,” and if that is not wrong, we should not blame the purpose to do it, however long it has been cherished.

Unto the adoption ... see notes, ^{<4012>}John 1:12. ^{<4815>}Romans 8:15.

According to the good pleasure of his will The word rendered “good pleasure” — (εὐδοκία ^{<2107>}) — means “a being well pleased;” delight in anything, favor, good-will, ^{<4014>}Luke 2:14; ^{<3015>}Philippians 1:15; compare ^{<2132>}Luke 12:32. Then it denotes purpose, or will, the idea of benevolence being included — Robinson. Rosenmuller renders the phrase, “from his most benignant decree.” The evident object of the apostle is to state why God chose the heirs of salvation. It was done as it seemed good to him in the circumstances of the case. It was not that man had any control over him, or that man was consulted in the determination, or that it was based on the good works of man, real or foreseen. But we are not to suppose that there were no good reasons for what he has thus done. Convicts are frequently pardoned by an executive. He does it according to his own will, or as seems good in his sight. He is to be the judge, and no one has a right to control him in doing it. It may SEEM to be entirely arbitrary. The executive may not have communicated the reasons why he did it, either to those who are pardoned, or to the other prisoners, or to anyone else. But we are not to infer that there was no “reason” for doing it. If he is a wise magistrate, and worthy of his station, it is to be presumed that there were reasons which, if known, would be satisfactory to all. But those reasons he is under no obligations to make known. Indeed, it might be improper that they should be known. Of that he is the best judge. Meantime, however, we may see what would be the effect in those who were not forgiven. It would excite, very likely, their hatred, and they would charge him with

partiality or with tyranny. But they should remember that whoever might be pardoned, and on whatever ground it might be done, they could not complain. They would suffer no more than they deserve. But what if, when the act of pardon was made known to one part, it was offered to the others also on certain plain and easy conditions? Suppose it should appear that while the executive meant, for wise but concealed reasons, to forgive a part, he had also determined to offer forgiveness to all. And suppose that they were in fact disposed in the highest degree to neglect it, and that no inducements or arguments could prevail on them to accept of it. Who then could blame the executive? Now this is about the case in regard to God, and the doctrine of election. All people were guilty and condemned. For wise reasons, which God has not communicated to us, he determined to bring a portion at least of the human race to salvation. This he did not intend to leave to chance and hap-hazard. He saw that all would of themselves reject the offer, and that unless some efficient means were used, the blood of the atonement would be shed in vain. He did not make known to people who they were that he meant to save, nor the reason why they particularly were to be brought to heaven. Meantime he meant to make the offer universal; to make the terms as easy as possible, and thus to take away every ground of complaint. If people will NOT accept of pardon; if they prefer their sins; if nothing can induce them to come and be saved, why should they complain? If the doors of a prison are open, and the chains of the prisoners are knocked off, and they will NOT come out, why should they complain that others are in fact WILLING to come out and be saved? Let it be borne in mind that the purposes of God correspond exactly to FACTS as they actually occur, and much of the difficulty is taken away. If in the facts there is no just ground of complaint, there can be none, because it was the “intention of God that the facts should be so.”

~~4006~~ Ephesians 1:6. *To the praise of the glory of his grace* This is a Hebraism, and means the same as “to his glorious grace.” The object was to excite thanksgiving for his glorious grace manifested in electing love. The real tendency of the doctrine in minds that are properly affected, is not to excite opposition to God, or to lead to the charge of partiality, tyranny, or severity; it is to excite thankfulness and praise. In accordance with this, Paul introduced the statement (~~4006~~ Ephesians 1:3) by saying that God was to be regarded as “blessed” for forming and executing this plan. The meaning is, that the doctrine of predestination and election lays the

foundation of adoring gratitude and praise. This will appear plain by a few considerations.

(1) It is the only foundation of hope for man. If he were left to himself, all the race would reject, the offers of mercy and would perish. History, experience, and the Bible alike demonstrate this.

(2) All the joys which any of the human race have, are to be traced to the purpose of God to bestow them. Man has no power of originating any of them, and if God had not intended to confer them, none of them would have been possessed.

(3) All these favors are conferred on those who had no claim on God. The Christian who is pardoned had no claim on God for pardon; he who is admitted to heaven could urge no claim for such a privilege and honor; he who enjoys comfort and peace in the hour of death, enjoys it only through the glorious grace of God.

(4) “All” that is done by election is suited to excite praise. Election is to life, and pardon, and holiness, and heaven. But why should not a man praise God for these things? God chooses people to be holy, not sinful; to be happy, not miserable; to be pure, not impure; to be saved, not to be lost. For these things he should be praised. He should be praised that he has not left the whole race to wander away and die. Had he chosen but one to eternal life, that one should praise him, and all the holy universe should join in the praise. Should he now see it to be consistent to choose but one of the fallen spirits, and to make him pure, and to readmit him to heaven, that one spirit would have occasion for eternal thanks, and all heaven might join in his praises. How much more is praise due to him, when the number chosen is not one, or a few, but when millions which no man can number, shall be found to be chosen to life; ~~Rev~~ Revelation 7:9.

(5) The doctrine of predestination to life has added no pang of sorrow to anyone of the human race. It has made millions happy who would not otherwise have been, but not one miserable. It is not a choice to sorrow, it is a choice to joy and peace.

(6) No one has a right to complain of it. Those who are chosen assuredly should not complain of the grace which has made them what they are, and which is the foundation of all their hopes. And they who are “not” chosen, have no right to complain; for

(a) they have no claim to life.

(b) They are “in fact” unwilling to come. They have no desire to be Christians and to be saved. Nothing can induce them to forsake their sins and come to the Saviour. Why then should they complain if others are “in fact” willing to be saved? Why should a man complain for being left to take his own course, and to walk in his own way? Mysterious, therefore, as is the doctrine of predestination; and fearful and inscrutable as it is in some of its aspects, yet, in a just view of it, it is suited to excite the highest expressions of thanksgiving, and to exalt God in the apprehension of man. He who has been redeemed and saved by the love of God; who has been pardoned and made pure by mercy; on whom the eye of compassion has been tenderly fixed, and for whom the Son of God has died, has abundant cause for thanksgiving and praise.

Wherein he hath made us accepted Has regarded us as the objects of favor and complacency.

In the Beloved In the Lord Jesus Christ, the well-beloved Son of God; notes, ^{<4187>}Matthew 3:17. He has chosen us in him, and it is through him that these mercies have been conferred on us.

^{<4007>}**Ephesians 1:7.** *In whom we have redemption* On the meaning of the word here rendered “redemption” — (απολυτρωσις ^{<629>}) — see the notes at ^{<4184>}Romans 3:24. The word here, as there, denotes that deliverance from sin and from the evil consequences of sin, which has been procured by the atonement made by the Lord Jesus Christ. This verse is one of the passages which prove conclusively that the apostle here does not refer to “nations” and to “national privileges.” Of what “nation” could it be said that it had “redemption through the blood of Jesus, even the forgiveness of sins?”

Through his blood By means of the atonement which he has made; see this phrase fully explained in the notes at ^{<4185>}Romans 3:25.

The forgiveness of sins We obtain through his blood, or through the atonement which he has made, the forgiveness of sins. We are not to suppose that this is ALL the benefit which we receive from his death, or that this is all that constitutes redemption. It is the main, and perhaps the most important thing. But we also obtain the hope of heaven, the influences of the Holy Spirit, grace to guide us and to support us in trial, peace in death, and perhaps many more benefits. Still “forgiveness” is so

prominent and important, that the apostle has mentioned that as if it were all.

According to the riches of his grace According to his rich grace; see a similar phrase explained in the notes at ^{<8114>}Romans 2:4. The word “riches,” in the form in which it is used here, occurs also in several other places in this Epistle; ^{<8018>}Ephesians 1:18; 2:7; 3:8,16. It is what Paley (Horae Paul) calls “a cant phrase,” and occurs often in the writings of Paul; see ^{<8114>}Romans 2:4; 9:23; 11:12,33; ^{<5049>}Philippians 4:19; ^{<5027>}Colossians 1:27; 2:2. It is not found in any of the other writings of the New Testament, except once in a sense somewhat similar, in James (^{<5115>}James 2:5), “Hath not God chosen the poor of this world “rich” in faith,” and Dr. Paley from this fact has constructed an argument to prove that this Epistle was written by Paul. It is unique to him, and marks his style in a manner which cannot be mistaken. An impostor, or a forger of the Epistle, would not have thought of introducing it, and yet it is just such a phrase as would naturally be used by Paul.

^{<8008>}**Ephesians 1:8.** *Wherein he hath abounded* Which he has liberally manifested to us This grace has not been stinted and confined, but has been liberal and abundant.

In all wisdom That is, he has evinced great wisdom in the plan of salvation; wisdom in so saving people as to secure the honor of his own law, and in devising a scheme that was eminently adapted to save people; see the notes at ^{<8121>}1 Corinthians 1:24.

And prudence The word used here (^{<5428>}φρονησις) means understanding, thinking, prudence. The meaning here is, that, so to speak, God had evinced great “intelligence” in the plan of salvation. There was ample proof of “mind” and of “thought.” It was adapted to the end in view. It was far-seeing; skillfully arranged; and carefully formed. The sense of the whole is, that there was a wise design running through the whole plan, and abounding in it in an eminent degree.

^{<8009>}**Ephesians 1:9.** *Having made known to us the mystery of his will* The word “mystery” (^{<3466>}μυστηριον) means literally something into which one must be “initiated” before it is fully known (from ^{<3466>}μυεω, to initiate, to instruct); and then anything which is concealed or hidden. We commonly use the word to denote that which is above our comprehension or unintelligible. But this is never the meaning of the word in the New

Testament. It means there some doctrine or fact which has been concealed, or which has not before been fully revealed, or which has been set forth only by figures and symbols. When the doctrine is made known, it may be as clear and plain as any other. Such was the doctrine that God meant to call the Gentiles, which was long concealed, at least in part, and which was not fully made known until the Saviour came, and which had been until that time “a mystery — a concealed truth” — though when it was revealed, there was nothing incomprehensible in it. Thus, in ^{<5026>}Colossians 1:26, “The mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints.” So it was in regard to the doctrine of election. It was a mystery until it was made known by the actual conversion of those whom God had chosen. So in regard to the incarnation of the Redeemer; the atonement; the whole plan of salvation. Over all these great points there was a veil thrown, and people did not understand them until God revealed them. When they were revealed, the mystery was removed, and men were able to see clearly the manifestation of the will of God.

Which he hath purposed in himself Without foreign aid or counsel. His purposes originated in his own mind, and were concealed until he chose to make them known; see ^{<5009>}2 Timothy 1:9.

^{<4010>}**Ephesians 1:10.** *That in the dispensation* The word rendered here as “dispensation,” οἰκονομία ^{<3622>}, means properly “the management of household affairs.” Then it means stewardship or administration; a dispensation or arrangement of things: a scheme or plan. The meaning here is, that this plan was formed in order (εἰς ^{<1519>}) or “unto” this end, that in the full arrangement of times, or in the arrangements completing the filling up of the times, God might gather together in one all things. Tyndale renders it: “to have it declared when the time was full come,” etc.

The fulness of times When the times were fully completed; when all the periods should have passed by which he had prescribed, or judged necessary to the completion of the object. The period referred to here is that when all things shall be gathered together in the Redeemer at the winding up of human affairs, or the consummation of all things. The arrangement was made with reference to that, and embraced all things which conduced to that. The plan stretched from before “the foundation of the world” to the period when all times should be completed; and of course

all the events occurring in that intermediate period were embraced in the plan.

He might gather together in one The word used here — **ανακεφαλαιω** ^{<346>} — means literally, to sum up, to recapitulate, as an orator does at the close of his discourse. It is from **κεφαλη** ^{<276>}, the head; or **κεφαλαιον** ^{<274>}, the sum, the chief thing, the main point. In the New Testament, the word means to collect under one head, or to comprehend several things under one; ^{<513>}Romans 13:9. “It is briefly comprehended,” i.e., summed up under this one precept,” sc., “love.” In the passage before us, it means that God would sum up, or comprehend all things in heaven and earth through the Christian dispensation; he would make one empire, under one head, with common feelings, and under the same laws. The reference is to the unity which will hereafter exist in the kingdom of God, when all his friends on earth and in heaven shall be united, and all shall have a common head. Now there is alienation. The earth has been separated from other worlds by rebellion. It has gone off into apostasy and sin. It refuses to acknowledge the Great Head to which other worlds are subject, and the object is to restore it to its proper place, so that there shall be one great and united kingdom.

All things **τα** ^{<358>} **παντα** ^{<356>}. It is remarkable that Paul has used here a word which is in the neuter gender. It is not all “persons,” all angels, or all human beings, or all the elect, but all “things.” Bloomfield and others suppose that “persons” are meant, and that the phrase is used for **τους** ^{<358>} **παντας** ^{<356>}. But it seems to me that Paul did not use this word without design. All “things” are placed under Christ, (^{<402>}Ephesians 1:22; ^{<408>}Matthew 28:18,) and the design of God is to restore harmony in the universe. Sin has produced disorder not only in “mind,” but in “matter.” The world is disarranged. The effects of transgression are seen everywhere; and the object of the plan of redemption is to put things on their pristine footing, and restore them as they were at first. Everything is, therefore, put under the Lord Jesus, and all things are to be brought under his control, so as to constitute one vast harmonious empire. The amount of the declaration here is, that there is hereafter to be one kingdom, in which there shall be no jar or alienation; that the now separated kingdoms of heaven and earth shall be united under one head, and that henceforward all shall be harmony and love. The things which are to be united in Christ, are those which are “in heaven and which are on earth.” Nothing is said of “hell.” Of course this passage cannot teach the doctrine of universal

salvation, since there is one world which is not to have a part in this ultimate union.

In Christ By means of Christ, or under him, as the great head and king. He is to be the great agent in effecting this, and he is to preside over this united kingdom. In accordance with this view the heavenly inhabitants, the angels as well as the redeemed, are uniformly represented as uniting in the same worship, and as acknowledging the Redeemer as their common head and king; ~~(188)~~ Revelation 5:9,10,11,12.

Both which are in heaven Margin, as in Greek, “in the heavens.” Many different opinions have been formed of the meaning of this expression. Some suppose it to mean the saints in heaven, who died before the coming of the Saviour; and some that it refers to the Jews, designated as “the heavenly people,” in contradistinction from the Gentiles, as having nothing divine and heavenly in them, and as being of the “earth.” The more simple and obvious interpretation is, however, without doubt, the correct one, and this is to suppose that it refers to the holy inhabitants of other worlds. The object of the plan of salvation is to produce a harmony between them and the redeemed on earth, or to produce out of all, one great and united kingdom. In doing this, it is not necessary to suppose that any change is to be produced in the inhabitants of heaven. All the change is to occur among those on earth, and the object is to make out of all, one harmonious and glorious empire.

And which are on earth The redeemed on earth. The object is to bring them into harmony with the inhabitants of heaven. This is the great object proposed by the plan of salvation. It is to found one glorious and eternal kingdom, that shall comprehend all holy beings on earth and all in heaven. There is now discord and disunion. Man is separated from God, and from all holy beings. Between him and every holy being there is by nature discord and alienation. Unrenewed man has no sympathy with the feelings and work of the angels; no love for their employment; no desire to be associated with them. Nothing can be more unlike than the customs, feelings, laws, and habits which prevail on earth, from those which prevail in heaven. But the object of the plan of salvation is to restore harmony to those alienated communities, and produce eternal concord and love. Hence, learn:

- (1) The greatness and glory of the plan of salvation. It is no trifling undertaking to “reconcile worlds,” and of such discordant materials to found one great and glorious and eternal empire.
- (2) The reason of the interest which angels feel in the plan of redemption; ~~4012~~ 1 Peter 1:12. They are deeply concerned in the redemption of those who, with them, are to constitute that great kingdom which is to be eternal. Without envy at the happiness of others; without any feeling that the accession of others will diminish “their” felicity or glory, they wait to hail the coming of others, and rejoice to receive even one who comes to be united to their number.
- (3) This plan was worthy of the efforts of the Son of God. To restore harmony in heaven and earth; to prevent the evils of alienation and discord; to rear one immense and glorious kingdom, was an object worthy the incarnation of the Son of God.
- (4) The glory of the Redeemer. He is to be exalted as the Head of this united and ever-glorious kingdom, and all the redeemed on earth and the angelic hosts shall acknowledge him as their common Sovereign and Head.
- (5) This is the greatest and most important enterprise on earth. It should engage every heart, and enlist the powers of every soul. It should be the earnest desire of all to swell the numbers of those who shall constitute this united and ever-glorious kingdom, and to bring as many as possible of the human race into union with the holy inhabitants of the other world.

~~4011~~ **Ephesians 1:11.** *In whom also we have obtained an inheritance* We who are Christians. Most commentators suppose that by the word “we” the Jews particularly are intended, and that it stands in contradistinction from “ye,” as referring to the Gentiles, in ~~4013~~ Ephesians 1:13. This construction, they suppose is demanded by the nature of the passage. The meaning may then be, that the Jews who were believers had “first” obtained a part in the plan of redemption, as the offer was first made to them, and then that the same favor was conferred also on the Gentiles. Or it may refer to those who had been first converted, without particular reference to the fact that they were Jews; and the reference may be to the apostle and his fellow-laborers. This seems to me to be the correct interpretation.

“We the ministers of religion first believed, and have obtained an inheritance in the hopes of Christians, that we should be to the

praise of God’s glory; and you also, after hearing the word of truth, believed;” ^{<4013>}Ephesians 1:13.

The word which is rendered “obtained our inheritance” — κληρωο ^{<280>} — means literally “to acquire by lot,” and then to obtain, to receive. Here it means that they had received the favor of being to the praise of his glory for having first trusted in the Lord Jesus.

Being predestinated;” ^{<4015>}Ephesians 1:5.

According to the purpose On the meaning of the word “purpose,” see the notes, ^{<4133>}Romans 8:28.

Of him who worketh all things Of God, the universal agent. The affirmation here is not merely that God accomplishes the designs of salvation according to the counsel of his own will, but that “he does everything.” His agency is not confined to one thing, or to one class of objects. Every object and event is under his control, and is in accordance with his eternal plan. The word rendered “worketh” — ενεργεω ^{<1754>} — means to work, to be active, to produce; ^{<4010>}Ephesians 1:20; ^{<4018>}Galatians 2:8; ^{<1813>}Philippians 2:13. A universal agency is ascribed to him. “The same God which “worketh” all in all;” ^{<4126>}1 Corinthians 12:6. He has an agency in causing the emotions of our hearts. “God, who worketh in you both to Will and to do of his good pleasure;” ^{<1813>}Philippians 2:13. He has an agency in distributing to people their various allotments and endowments. “All these worketh that one and the self-same Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will;” ^{<4121>}1 Corinthians 12:11. The agency of God is seen everywhere. Every leaf, flower, rose-bud, spire of grass; every sun-beam, and every flash of lightning; every cataract and every torrent, all declare his agency; and there is not an object that we see that does not bespeak the control of an All-present God. It would be impossible to affirm more explicitly that God’s agency is universal, than Paul does in the passage before us. He does not attempt to prove it. It is one of those points on which he does not deem it necessary to pause and reason, but which may be regarded as a conceded point in the discussion of other topics, and which may be employed without hesitation in their illustration. Paul does not state the “mode” in which this is done. He affirms merely the fact. He does not say that he “compels” men, or that he overbears them by mere physical force. His agency he affirms to be universal; but it is undoubtedly in accordance with the nature of the object, and with the laws which he has impressed on them. His agency in the work of creation was absolute and

entire; for there was nothing to act on, and no established laws to be observed. Over the mineral kingdom his control must also be entire, yet in accordance with the laws which he has impressed on matter. The crystal and the snow are formed by his agency; but it is in accordance with the laws which he has been pleased to appoint. So in the vegetable world his agency is everywhere seen; but the lily and the rose blossom in accordance with uniform laws, and not in an arbitrary manner. So in the animal kingdom. God gives sensibility to the nerve, and excitability and power to the muscle. He causes the lungs to heave, and the arteries and veins to bear the blood along the channels of life; but it is not in an arbitrary manner. It is in accordance with the laws which he has ordained and he never disregards in his agency over these kingdoms. So in his government of mind. He WORKS everywhere. But he does it in accordance with the laws of mind. His agency is not exactly of the same kind on the rose-bud that it is on the diamond nor on the nerve that it is on the rose-bud, nor on the heart and will that it is on the nerve. In all these things he consults the laws which he has impressed on them; and as he chooses that the nerve should be affected in accordance with its laws and properties, so it is with mind. God does not violate its laws. Mind is free. It is influenced by truth and motives. It has a sense of right and wrong. And there is no more reason to suppose that God disregards these laws of mind in controlling the intellect and the heart, than there is that he disregards the laws of crystalization in the formation of the ice, or of gravitation in the movements of the heavenly bodies. The general doctrine is, that God works in all things, and controls all; but that “his agency everywhere is in accordance with the laws and nature of that part of his kingdom where it is exerted.” By this simple principle we may secure the two great points which it is desirable to secure on this subject:

- (1) the doctrine of the universal agency of God; and
- (2) the doctrine of the freedom and responsibility of man.

After the counsel of his own will Not by consulting his creatures, or conforming to their views, but by his own views of what is proper and right. We are not to suppose that this is by “mere” will, as if it were arbitrary, or that he determines anything without good reason. The meaning is, that his purpose is determined by what “he” views to be right, and without consulting his creatures or conforming to their views. His dealings often seem to us to be arbitrary. We are incapable of perceiving the reasons of what he does. He makes those his friends who we should

have supposed would have been the last to have become Christians. He leaves those who seem to us to be on the borders of the kingdom, and they remain unmoved and unaffected. But we are not thence to suppose that he is arbitrary. In every instance, we are to believe that there is a good reason for what he does, and one which we may be permitted yet to see, and in which we shall wholly acquiesce. The phrase “counsel of his own will” is remarkable. It is designed to express in the strongest manner the fact that it is not by human counsel or advice. The word “counsel” — βουλη ^{<1012>} — means “a council” or “senate;” then a determination, purpose, or decree; see Robinson’s Lexicon. Here it means that his determination was formed by his own will, and not by human reasoning. Still, his will in the case may not have been arbitrary. When it is said of man that he forms his own purposes, and acts according to his own will, we are not to infer that he acts without reason. He may have the highest and best reasons for what he does, but he does not choose to make them known to others, or to consult others. So it may be of God, and so we should presume it to be. It may be added, that we ought to have such confidence in him as to believe that he will do all things well. The best possible evidence that anything is done in perfect wisdom and goodness, is the fact that God does it. When we have ascertained that, we should be satisfied that all is right.

^{<4012>}**Ephesians 1:12.** *That we should be to the praise of his glory* Should be the occasion or the means of celebrating his glory; or that praise should be ascribed to him as the result of our salvation.

Who first trusted in Christ Margin, “hoped.” This is in accordance with the original. The foundation of their “hope” was the Saviour. Some suppose that the apostle here refers to the Jews who were converted before the gospel was preached extensively to the Gentiles. The reason for this opinion is, that in the following verse he contrasts those to whom he here refers with others whom he was addressing. But it may be that by the word “we” in ^{<4011>}Ephesians 1:11,12, he refers to himself and to his fellow-laborers who had “first” hoped in the Saviour, and had then gone and proclaimed the message to others; see the notes on ^{<4011>}Ephesians 1:11. They “first” believed, and then preached to others; and they also believed, and became partakers of the same privileges.

^{<4013>}**Ephesians 1:13.** *In whom ye also trusted* This stands in contrast with those who had “first” embraced the gospel.

Heard the word of truth The gospel; called the “word” or message of truth, the word of God, etc. See [6107](#)Romans 10:17. The phrase “the word of truth” means “the true word or message.” It was a message unmixed with Jewish traditions or Gentile philosophy.

The gospel of your salvation The gospel bringing salvation to you.

In whom also In the Lord Jesus. A little different translation of this verse will convey more clearly its meaning. “In whom also, ye, having heard the word of truth, (the gospel of your salvation,) in whom having also believed, ye were sealed,” etc. The sealing was the result of believing, and that was the result of hearing the gospel; compare [6104](#)Romans 10:14,15.

Ye were sealed On the meaning of the word “seal,” see the notes at [6103](#)John 3:33; 6:27. On the phrase “ye were sealed,” see the notes on [6102](#)2 Corinthians 1:22.

With that Holy Spirit of promise With the Holy Spirit that was promised; see [6105](#)John 16:7-11,13; 15:26; 14:16,17. It is not improbable, I think, that the apostle here refers particularly to the occurrence of which we have a record in [4100](#)Acts 19:1-6. Paul, it is there said, having passed through the upper provinces of Asia Minor, came to Ephesus. He found certain persons who were the disciples of John, and he asked them if they had received the Holy Spirit since they “believed,” [6100](#)Ephesians 1:2. They replied that they had not heard whether there was any Holy Spirit, and that they had been baptized unto John’s baptism. Paul taught them the true nature of the baptism of John; explained to them the Christian system; and they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus, and “the Holy Spirit came upon them, and they spake with tongues, and prophesied.” They were thus sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, “after they had believed” ([6103](#)Ephesians 1:13); they had the full evidence of the favor of God in the descent of the promised Holy Spirit, and in his miraculous influences. If this be the true interpretation, it constitutes a striking coincidence between the Epistle and the Acts, of such a nature as constitute the arguments in Paley’s “Horae Paulinae” (though he has not referred to this), which shows that the Epistle was not forged. The circumstance is such that it would not have been alluded to in this manner by one who should forge the Epistle; and the mention of it in the Epistle is so slight, that no one, from the account there, would think of forging the account in the Acts. The coincidence is just such as would occur on the supposition that the transaction actually occurred, and that both the Acts and the Epistle are

genuine. At the same time, there is a sealing of the Holy Spirit which is common to all Christians; see the notes referred to on ^{<4012>}2 Corinthians 1:22.

^{<4014>}**Ephesians 1:14.** *Which is the earnest of our inheritance* On the meaning of this, see the notes at ^{<4012>}2 Corinthians 1:22.

Until the redemption see the notes at ^{<4023>}Romans 8:23. The meaning here is, we have the Holy Spirit as the pledge that that shall be ours, and the Holy Spirit will be imparted to us until we enter on that inheritance.

Of the purchased possession Heaven, purchased for us by the death of the Redeemer. The word used here — **περιποίησις** ^{<4047>} — occurs in the following places in the New Testament: ^{<5189>}1 Thessalonians 5:9, rendered “to obtain salvation;” ^{<5124>}2 Thessalonians 2:14, “to the obtaining of the glory of the Lord;” ^{<5109>}Hebrews 10:39, “to the saving of the soul;” ^{<4019>}1 Peter 2:9, “a peculiar people;” literally, a people of “acquirement” to himself; and in the passage before us. It properly means, an acquisition, an obtaining, a laying up. Here it means, the complete deliverance from sin, and the eternal salvation “acquired” for us by Christ. The influence of the Holy Spirit, renewing and sanctifying us, comforting us in trials, and sustaining us in afflictions, is the pledge that the redemption is yet to be wholly ours.

Unto the praise of his glory see ^{<4005>}Ephesians 1:6.

^{<4015>}**Ephesians 1:15.** *Wherefore, I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus* This is one of the passages usually relied on by those who suppose that this Epistle was not written to the Ephesians. The argument is, that he writes to them as if they were strangers to him, and that it is not language such as would be used in addressing a people among whom he had spent three years; see the introduction, section 5. But this inference is not conclusive. Paul had been some years absent from Ephesus when this Epistle was written. In the difficult communication in those times between distant places, it is not to be supposed that he would hear often from them. Perhaps he had heard nothing after the time when he bade farewell to the elders of Ephesus at Miletus (Acts 20), until the time here referred to. It would be, therefore, a matter of great interest with him to hear from them; and when in some way intelligence was brought to him at Rome of a very gratifying character about their growth in piety, he says that his anxiety

was relieved, and that he did not cease to give thanks for what he had heard, and to commend them to God in prayer.

<4016> Ephesians 1:16. *Cease not to give thanks for you* In the prosperity of the church at Ephesus he could not but feel the deepest interest, and their welfare he never forgot.

Making mention of you in my prayers Paul was far distant from them, and expected to see them no more. But he had faith in prayer, and he sought that they might advance in knowledge and in grace. What was the particular subject of his prayers, he mentions in the following verses.

<4017> Ephesians 1:17. *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ* The God who has sent the Lord Jesus into the world, and appointed him as the Mediator between himself and man. The particular reason why Paul here speaks of him as “the God of the Lord Jesus” is, that he prays that they might be further acquainted with the Redeemer, and be enlightened in regard to the great work which he came to do.

The Father of glory The glorious Father, that is, the Father who is worthy to be praised and honored.

May give unto you the Spirit of wisdom May make you wise to understand the great doctrines of the religion of the Redeemer.

And revelation That is, revealing to you more and more of the character of the Redeemer, and of the nature and results of his work. It is probable here that by the word “Spirit” the apostle refers to the Holy Spirit as the Author of all wisdom, and the Revealer of all truth. His prayer is, that God would grant to them the Holy Spirit to make them wise, and to reveal his will to them.

In the knowledge of him Margin, “for the acknowledgment.” That is, in order that you may more fully acknowledge him, or know him more intimately and thoroughly. They had already made high attainments (**<4015> Ephesians 1:15**), but Paul felt that they might make still higher; and the idea here is, that however far Christians may have advanced in knowledge and in love, there is an unfathomed depth of knowledge which they may still explore, and which they should be exhorted still to attempt to fathom. How far was Paul from supposing that the Ephesians had attained to perfection!

Ephesians 1:18. *The eyes of your understanding being enlightened*

The construction here in the Greek is, probably, “that he may give you (**δωη** ^{<1325>}, ^{<4017>} Ephesians 1:17) the Spirit of wisdom, etc. — eyes of the understanding enlightened,” etc. Or the phrase, “the eyes of your understanding being enlightened,” may be in the accusative absolute, which Koppe and Bloomfield prefer. The phrase, “the eyes of the understanding,” is a figure that is common in all languages. Thus, Philo says, “What the eye is to the body, that is the mind to the soul;” compare ^{<4022>} Matthew 6:22. The eye is the instrument by which we see; and in like manner the understanding is that by which we perceive truth. The idea here is, that Paul not only wished their “hearts” to be right, but he wished their “understanding” to be right also. Religion has much to do in enlightening the mind. Indeed, its effect there is not less striking and decisive than it is on the heart. The understanding has been blinded by sin. The views which people entertain of themselves and of God are narrow and wrong. The understanding is enfeebled and perverted by the practice of sin. It is limited in its operations by the necessity of the case, and by the impossibility of fully comprehending the great truths which pertain to the divine administration. One of the first effects of true religion is on the understanding. It enlarges its views of truth; gives it more exalted conceptions of God; corrects its errors; raises it up toward the great Fountain of love. And nowhere is the effect of the true religion more apparent than in shedding light on the intellect of the world, and restoring the weak and perverted mind to a just view of the proportion of things, and to the true knowledge of God.

That ye may know what is the hope of his calling What is the full import of that hope to which he has called and invited you by his Spirit and his promises. The meaning here is, that it would be an inestimable privilege to be made fully acquainted with the benefits of the Christian hope, and to be permitted to understand fully what Christians have a right to expect in the world of glory. This is the first thing which the apostle desires they should fully understand.

And what the riches of the glory of his inheritance This is the second thing which Paul wishes them to understand. There is a force in this language which can be found perhaps nowhere else than in the writings of Paul. His mind is full, and language is burdened and borne down under the weight of his thoughts; see the notes at ^{<4047>} 2 Corinthians 4:17. On the word “riches” used here, see the notes at ^{<4007>} Ephesians 1:7. The phrase “riches of glory”

means “glorious wealth;” or, as we would say, “how rich and glorious!” The meaning is, that there is an abundance — an infinitude of wealth. It is not such a possession as man may be heir to in this world, which is always limited from the necessity of the case, and which cannot be enjoyed long; it is infinite and inexhaustible; compare notes, ^{<BIB>}Romans 2:4. The “inheritance” here referred to is eternal life. notes, ^{<BIB>}Romans 8:17.

In the saints Among the saints. note, ^{<BIB>}1 Corinthians 1:2.

^{<BIB>}**Ephesians 1:19.** *And what is the exceeding greatness of his power* On the language used here, compare the notes at ^{<BIB>}2 Corinthians 4:17. There is much emphasis and energy of expression here, as if the apostle were laboring under the greatness of his theme, and wanted words to express the magnitude of his conception. This is the “third” thing which he was particularly desirous they should know — that they should be fully acquainted with the “power” of God in the salvation of people. He refers not merely to the power which he had evinced in their salvation, but also to what the gospel was “able” to accomplish, and which they MIGHT yet experience. The “power” referred to here as exercised toward believers does not refer to one thing merely. It is the whole SERIES of the acts of power toward Christians which results from the work of the Redeemer. There was power exerted in their conversion. There would be power exerted in keeping them. There would be power in raising them up from the dead, and exalting them with Christ to heaven. The religion which they professed was a religion of “power.” In all the forms and stages of it the power of God was manifested toward them, and would be until they reached their final inheritance.

To us-ward Toward us, or in relation to us.

Who believe Who are Christians.

According to the working of his mighty power Margin, The might of his power. This should be taken with the clause in the following verse, “which he wrought in Christ;” and the meaning is, that the power which God has exerted in us is in accordance with the power which was shown in raising up the Lord Jesus. It was the proper result of that, and was power of a similar kind. The same power is requisite to convert a sinner which is demanded in raising the dead. Neither will be accomplished but by omnipotence (see the notes, ^{<BIB>}Ephesians 2:5); and the apostle wished that they should be fully apprised of this fact, and of the vast “power” which

God had put forth in raising them up from the death of sin. To illustrate this sentiment is one of his designs in the following verses; and, hence, he goes on to show that people before their conversion were “dead in trespasses and sins;” that they had no spiritual life; that they were the “children of wrath;” that they were raised up from their death in sin by the same power which raised the Lord Jesus from the grave, and that they were wholly saved by grace; ^{<401>}Ephesians 2:1-10. In order to set this idea of the “power” which God had put forth in their regeneration in the strongest light, he goes into a magnificent description of the resurrection and exaltation of the Lord Jesus, and shows how that was connected with the renewing of Christians. God had set him over all things. He had put all things under his feet, and had made principalities and dominions everywhere subject to him. In this whole passage (^{<401>}Ephesians 1:19-23; 2:1-10), the MAIN THING to be illustrated is the power which God has shown in renewing and saving his people; and the leading sentiment is, that the SAME power is evinced in that which was required to raise up the Lord Jesus from the dead, and to exalt him over the universe.

^{<402>}**Ephesians 1:20.** *Which he wrought in Christ* Which he exerted in relation to the Lord Jesus when he was dead. The “power” which was then exerted was as great as that of creation. It was imparting life to a cold and “mangled” frame. It was to open again the arteries and veins, and teach the heart to beat and the lungs to heave. It was to diffuse vital warmth through the rigid muscles, and to communicate to the body the active functions of life. It is impossible to conceive of a more direct exertion of “power” than in raising up the dead; and there is no more striking illustration of the nature of conversion than in such a resurrection.

And set him at his own right hand The idea is, that great power was displayed by this, and that a similar exhibition is made when man is renewed and exalted to the high honor of being made an heir of God. On the fact that Jesus was received to the right hand of God, see the notes at ^{<416>}Mark 16:19; compare the notes at ^{<413>}Acts 2:33.

In the heavenly places see the notes at ^{<403>}Ephesians 1:3. The phrase here evidently means in heaven itself.

^{<402>}**Ephesians 1:21.** *Far above all principality* The general sense in this verse is, that the Lord Jesus was exalted to the highest conceivable dignity and honor; compare ^{<313>}Philippians 2:9; ^{<5120>}Colossians 2:10. In this

beautiful and most important passage, the apostle labors for words to convey the greatness of his conceptions, and uses those which denote the highest conceivable dignity and glory. The “main” idea is, that God had manifested great “power” in thus exalting the Lord Jesus, and that similar power was exhibited in raising up the sinner from the death of sin to the life and honor of believing. The work of religion throughout was a work of power; a work of exalting and honoring “the dead,” whether dead in sin or in the grave; and Christians ought to know the extent and glory of the power thus put forth in their salvation. The word rendered “far above” — ὑπερανῶ ^{<5231>} — is a compound word, meaning “high above,” or greatly exalted. He was not merely “above” the ranks of the heavenly beings, as the head; he was not one of their own rank, placed by office a little above them, but he was infinitely exalted over them, as of different rank and dignity. How could this be if he were a mere man; or if he were an angel? The word rendered “principality” — αρχῆ ^{<746>} — means properly, “the beginning;” and then the first, the first place, power, dominion, pre-eminence, rulers, magistrates, etc. It may refer here to any rank and power, whether among people or angels, and the sense is, that Christ is exalted above all.

And power It is not easy to distinguish between the exact meaning of the words which the apostle here uses. The general idea is, that Christ is elevated above all ranks of creatures, however exalted, and by whatever name they may be known. As in this he refers to the “world that is to come,” as well as this world, it is clear that there is a reference here to the ranks of the angels, and probably he means to allude to the prevailing opinion among the Jews, that the angels are of different orders. Some of the Jewish rabbies reckon four, others ten orders of angels, and they presume to give them names according to their different ranks and power. But all this is evidently the result of mere fancy. The Scriptures hint in several places at a difference of rank among the angels, but the sacred writers do not go into detail. It may be added that there is no improbability in such a subordination, but it is rather to be presumed to be true. The creatures of God are not made alike; and difference of degree and rank, as far as our observation extends everywhere prevails. On this verse compare the notes at ^{<488>}Romans 8:38.

Dominion Greek “Lordship.”

And every name that is named Every creature of every rank.

Not only in this world Not only above all kings, and princes, and rulers of every grade and rank on earth.

But also in that which is to come This refers undoubtedly to heaven. The meaning is, that he is Supreme over all.

<4002> Ephesians 1:22. *And hath put all things under his feet* See the notes at **<41657>** 1 Corinthians 15:27.

And gave him to be the head over all things Appointed him to be the supreme ruler.

To the church With reference to the church, or for its benefit and welfare: see the notes on, **<4170>** John 17:2. The universe is under his control and direction for the welfare of his people.

(1) All the elements — the physical works of God — the winds and waves — the seas and rivers — all are under him, and all are to be made tributary to the welfare of the church.

(2) Earthly kings and rulers; kingdoms and nations are under his control. Thus far Christ has controlled all the wicked rulers of the earth, and they have not been able to destroy that church which he redeemed with his own blood.

(3) Angels in heaven, with all their ranks and orders, are under his control with reference to the church; see the notes at **<3014>** Hebrews 1:14; compare **<4063>** Matthew 26:53.

(4) Fallen angels are under his control, and shall not be able to injure or destroy the church. See the notes at **<4163>** Matthew 16:18. The church, therefore, is safe. All the great powers of heaven, earth, and hell, are made subject to its Head and King; and no weapon that is formed against it shall prosper.

<4023> Ephesians 1:23. *Which is his body* This comparison of the church with “a person” or body, of which the Lord Jesus is the head, is not uncommon in the New Testament; compare the notes at **<4103>** 1 Corinthians 11:3; 12:27; **<4005>** Ephesians 4:15,16.

The fulness of him The word rendered here as “fulness” — **πληρωμα** **<4138>** — means properly, that with which anything is filled; the filling up; the contents; notes, **<4112>** Romans 11:12. The exact idea here, however, is not

very clear, and interpreters have been by no means united in their opinions of the meaning. It seems probable that the sense is, that the church is the “completion or filling up” of his power and glory. It is that without which his dominion would not be complete. He has control over the angels and over distant worlds, but; his dominion would not be complete without the control over his church, and that is so glorious, that it “fills up” the honor of the universal dominion, and makes his empire complete. According to Rosenmuller, the word “fulness” here means a “great number” or multitude; a multitude, says he, which, not confined to its own territory, spreads afar, and fills various regions. Koppe also regards it as synonymous with “multitude or many,” and supposes it to mean all the dominion of the Redeemer over the body — the church. He proposes to translate the whole verse, “He has made him the Head over his church, that he might rule it as his own body — the whole wide state of his universal kingdom.” “This,” says Calvin (in loc.), “is the highest honor of the church, that the Son of God regards himself as in a certain sense imperfect unless he is joined to us.” The church constitutes the “complete body” of the Redeemer. A body is complete when it has all its members and limbs in proper proportions, and those members might be said to be the “completion,” or the filling-up, or the “fulness” — πληρωμα ^{<4138>} — of the body or the person. This language would not, indeed, be such as would usually be adopted to express the idea now; but this is evidently the sense in which Paul uses it here. The meaning is, that the church sustains the same relation to Christ, which the body does to the head. It helps to form the entire person. There is a close and necessary union. The one is not complete without the other. And one is dependent on the other. When the body has all its members in due proportion, and is in sound and vigorous health, the whole person then is complete and entire. So it is to be in the kingdom of the Redeemer. He is the head; and that redeemed Church is the body, the fulness, the completion, the filling-up of the entire empire over which he presides, and which he rules. On the meaning of the word “fulness” — πληρωμα ^{<4138>} — the reader may consult Storr’s Opuscula, vol. i. pp. 144-187, particularly pp. 160-183. Storr understands the word in the sense of full or abundant mercy, and supposes that it refers to the great benignity which “God” has shown to his people, and renders it, “The great benignity of him who filleth all things with good, as he called Jesus from the dead to life and placed him in heaven, so even you, sprung from the pagan, who were dead in sin on account of your many offences in which you formerly lived, etc. — hath he called to life by Christ.” This verse,

therefore, he would connect with the following chapter, and he regards it all as designed to illustrate the great power and goodness of God. Mr. Locke renders it, “Which is his body, which is completed by him alone,” and supposes it means, that Christ is the head, who perfects the church by supplying all things to all its members which they need. Chandler gives an interpretation in accordance with that which I have first suggested, as meaning that the church is the full “complement” of the body of Christ; and refers to Aelian and Dionysius Halicarnassus, who use the word “fulness” or *πληρωμα* ^{<4138>} as referring to the rowers of a ship. Thus also we say that the ship’s crew is its “complement,” or that a ship or an army has its “complement” of people; that is, the ranks are filled up or complete. In like manner, the church will be the filling-up, or the complement, of the great kingdom of the Redeemer — that which will give “completion” or perfectness to his universal dominion.

Of him Of the Redeemer.

That filleth all in all That fills all things, or who pervades all things; see the notes, ^{<4626>}1 Corinthians 12:6; 15:28; compare ^{<5017>}Colossians 3:11. The idea is, that there is no place where he is not, and which he does not fill; and that he is the source of all the holy and happy influences that are abroad in the works of God. It would not be easy to conceive of an expression more certainly denoting omnipresence and universal agency than this; and if it refers to the Lord Jesus, as seems to be indisputable, the passage teaches not only his supremacy, but demonstrates his universal agency, and his omnipresence — things that pertain only to God. From this passage we may observe:

(1) That just views of the exaltation of the Redeemer are to be obtained only by the influence of the Spirit of God on the heart; ^{<4017>}Ephesians 1:17-19. Man, by nature, has no just conceptions of the Saviour, and has no desire to have. It is only as the knowledge of that great doctrine is imparted to the mind by the Spirit of God, that we have any practical and saving acquaintance with such an exaltation. The Christian sees him, by faith, exalted to the right hand of God, and cheerfully commits himself and his all to him, and feels that all his interests are safe in his hands.

(2) It is very desirable to have such views of an exalted Saviour. So Paul felt When he earnestly prayed that God would give such views to the Ephesians, ^{<4017>}Ephesians 1:17-20. It was desirable in order that they might have a right understanding of their privileges; in order that they might

know the extent of the power which had been manifested in their redemption; in order that they might commit their souls with confidence to him. In my conscious weakness and helplessness; when I am borne down by the labors and exposed to the temptations of life; when I contemplate approaching sickness and death, I desire to feel that that Saviour to whom I have committed my all is exalted far above principalities and powers, and every name that is named. When the church is persecuted and opposed; when hosts of enemies rise up against it and threaten its peace and safety, I rejoice to feel assured the Redeemer and Head Of the church is over all, and that he has power to subdue all her foes and his.

(3) The church is safe. Her great Head is on the throne of the universe, and no weapon that is formed against her can prosper. He has defended it hitherto in all times of persecution, and the past is a pledge that he will continue to protect it to the end of the world.

(4) Let us commit our souls to this exalted Redeemer. Such a Redeemer we need — one who has all power in heaven and earth. Such a religion we need — that can restore the dead to life. Such hope and confidence we need as he can give — such peace and calmness as shall result from unwavering confidence in him who filleth all in all.

NOTES ON EPHESIANS 2

This chapter (Ephesians 2) is closely connected in sense with the preceding, and should not have been separated from it. The great object is to illustrate the subject which was commenced in the previous chapter (^{<A019>}Ephesians 2:19) — the greatness of the POWER of God, evinced in the salvation of his people. The “great” manifestation of his power had been in raising up the Lord Jesus from the dead. That had been connected with and followed by THEIR resurrection from the death of sin; and the one had involved the exercise of a power similar to the other. In the illustration of this main idea, the apostle observes, (^{<A011>}Ephesians 2:1) that God had quickened those who had been dead in trespasses and sins, and proceeds (^{<A012>}Ephesians 2:2,3) to show the condition in which they were before their conversion. He then observes (^{<A013>}Ephesians 2:4-7), that God of his infinite mercy, when they were dead in sin, had quickened them together with Christ, and had raised them up to sit with him in heavenly places. He then states that this was not by human power, but was the work of divine power, and that they were the workmanship of God, ^{<A014>}Ephesians 2:8-10. The remainder of the chapter (^{<A015>}Ephesians 2:11-22) is occupied with a statement of the PRIVILEGES resulting from the mercy of God in calling them into his kingdom. The apostle endeavors to impress their minds strongly with a sense of the mercy and love and power of God in thus calling them to himself. He reminds them of their former condition when Gentiles, as being without God, and that they were now brought near by the blood of Christ (^{<A016>}Ephesians 2:11-13); he states that this had been done by one great Mediator, who came to break down the wall of partition between the Jews and Gentiles, and who had now made both one (^{<A017>}Ephesians 2:14-18); and he compares them now to a temple raised for God, and to constitute the place of his dwelling on the earth; ^{<A018>}Ephesians 2:19-22. By all these considerations he endeavors to impress their minds with a sense of obligation, and to lead them to devote themselves to that God who had raised them from the dead, and had breathed into them the breath of immortal life.

^{<A019>}**Ephesians 2:1.** *And you hath he quickened* The words “hath he quickened,” or “made to live,” are supplied, but not improperly, by our translators. The object of the apostle is to show the great power which God had evinced toward the people (^{<A019>}Ephesians 1:19); and to show that

this was put forth in connection with the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and his exaltation to the right hand of God in heaven; see the notes at [Romans 6:4-11](#); compare [Colossians 2:12,13](#); [3:1](#). The words “hath he quickened” mean, hath he made alive, or made to live; [John 5:21](#); [Romans 4:17](#); [1 Corinthians 15:36](#).

Who were dead in trespasses and sins On the meaning of the word “dead,” see the notes at [Romans 5:12](#); [6:2](#). It is affirmed here of those to whom Paul wrote at Ephesus, that before they were converted, they were “dead in sins.” There is not anywhere a more explicit proof of depravity than this, and no stronger language can be used. They were “dead” in relation to that to which they afterward became alive — i.e., to holiness. Of course, this does not mean that they were in all respects dead. It does not mean that they had no animal life, or that they did not breathe, and walk, and act. Nor can it mean that they had no living intellect or mental powers, which would not have been true. Nor does it settle any question as to their ability or power while in that state. It simply affirms a fact — that in relation to real spiritual life they were, in consequence of sin, like a dead man in regard to the objects which are around him. A corpse is insensible. It sees not, and hears not, and feels not. The sound of music, and the voice of friendship and of alarm, do not arouse it. The rose and the lily breathe forth their fragrance around it, but the corpse perceives it not. The world is busy and active around it, but it is unconscious of it all. It sees no beauty in the landscape; hears not the voice of a friend; looks not upon the glorious sun and stars; and is unaffected by the running stream and the rolling ocean. So with the sinner in regard to the spiritual and eternal world. He sees no beauty in religion; he hears not the call of God; he is unaffected by the dying love of the Saviour; and he has no interest in eternal realities. In all these he feels no more concern, and sees no more beauty, than a dead man does in the world around him. Such is, in “fact,” the condition of a sinful world. There is, indeed, life, and energy, and motion. There are vast plans and projects, and the world is intensely active. But in regard to religion, all is dead. The sinner sees no beauty there; and no human power can arouse him to act for God, anymore than human power can rouse the sleeping dead, or open the sightless eyeballs on the light of day. The same power is needed in the conversion of a sinner which is needed in raising the dead; and one and the other alike demonstrate the omnipotence of him who can do it. (See the supplementary note on [Romans 8:7](#) also on [Galatians 5:17](#), where the author’s views on this subject are canvassed.)

ⓂEphesians 2:2. *Wherein* In which sins, or in the practice of which transgressions.

Ye walked You lived, life being often compared to a journey or a race. note, ⓂRomans 6:4.

According to the course of this world In conformity with the customs and manners of the world at large. The word rendered here as “world” — **αἰὼν** ^{<165>} — means properly “age,” but is often used to denote the present world, with its cares, temptations, and desires; and here denotes particularly the people of this world. The meaning is, that they had lived formerly as other people lived, and the idea is strongly conveyed that the course of the people of this world is to walk in trespasses and sins. The sense is, that there was by nature no difference between them and others, and that all the difference which now existed had been made by grace.

According to the prince of the power of the air see ⓂEphesians 6:12; compare the notes at Ⓜ2 Corinthians 4:4. There can be no doubt that Satan is here intended, and that Paul means to say that they were under his control as their leader and prince. The phrase, “the prince of the power,” may mean either “the powerful prince,” or it may mean that this prince had power over the air, and lived and reigned there particularly. The word “prince” — **αρχοντα** ^{<758>} — “Archon,” means one first in authority and power, and is then applied to anyone who has the pre-eminence or rule. It is applied to Satan, or the chief of the fallen angels, as where he is called “the prince — **αρχων** ^{<758>} — of the devils,” ⓂMatthew 9:34; 12:24; ⓂMark 3:22; ⓂLuke 11:15; “the prince of this world,” ⓂJohn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11. But “why” he is here called the prince having power “over the air,” it is not easy to determine. Robinson (Lexicon) supposes it to be because he is lord of the powers of the air; that is, of the demons who dwell and rule in the atmosphere. So Doddridge supposes that it means that he controls the fallen spirits who are permitted to range the regions of the atmosphere. It is generally admitted that the apostle here refers to the prevailing opinions both among the Jews and pagan, that the air was thickly populated with spirits or demons. That this was a current opinion, may be seen fully proved in Wetstein; compare Bloomfield, Grotius, and particularly Koppe. Why the region of the air was supposed to be the dwelling-place of such spirits, is now unknown. The opinion may have been either that such spirits “dwelt” in the air, or that they had control over it, according to the later Jewish belief. Cocceius and some others explain

the word “air” here as meaning the same as “darkness,” as in profane writers. It is evident to my mind that Paul does not speak of this as a mere tradition, opinion, or vagary of the fancy, or as a superstitious belief: but that he refers to it as a thing which he regarded as true. In this opinion I see no absurdity that should make it impossible to believe it. For:

(1) the Scriptures abundantly teach that there are fallen, wicked spirits; and the existence of fallen angels is no more improbable than the existence of fallen people.

(2) The Bible teaches that they have much to do with this world. They tempted man; they inflicted disease in the time of the Saviour; they are represented as alluring and deceiving the race.

(3) They must have “some” locality — some part of the universe where they dwell. That they were not confined down to hell in the time of the Redeemer, is clear from the New Testament; for they are often represented as having afflicted and tortured people.

(4) Why is there any improbability in the belief that their residence should have been in the regions of the air? That while they were suffered to be on earth to tempt and afflict people, they should have been permitted especially to occupy these! regions? Who can tell what may be in the invisible world, and what spirits may be permitted to fill up the vast space that now composes the universe? And who can tell what control may have been given to such fallen spirits over the regions of the atmosphere — over clouds, and storms, and pestilential air? People have control over the earth, and pervert and abuse the powers of nature to their own ruin and the ruin of each other. The elements they employ for the purposes of ruin and of temptation. Fruit and grain they convert to poison; minerals, to the destruction caused by war. In itself considered, there is nothing more improbable that spirits of darkness may have had control over the regions of the air, than that fallen man has over the earth; and no more improbability that that power has been abused to ruin people, than that the power of people is abused to destroy each other. No one can “prove” that the sentiment here referred to by Paul is “not” true; and no one can show how the doctrine that fallen spirits may do mischief in any part of the works of God, is anymore improbable than that wicked “men” should do the same thing. The word “power” here — “power of the air” — I regard as synonymous with “dominion or rule;” “a prince having dominion or rule over the air.”

The spirit that now worketh That still lives, and whose energy for evil is still seen and felt among the wicked. Paul here means undoubtedly to teach that there was such a spirit, and that he was still active in controlling people.

The children of disobedience The wicked; ^{<5006>}Colossians 3:6.

^{<4018>}**Ephesians 2:3.** *We all had our conversation* see the notes at ^{<4012>}2 Corinthians 1:12; compare ^{<4048>}1 Peter 4:3.

In the lusts of our flesh Living to gratify the flesh, or the propensities of a corrupt nature. It is observable here that the apostle changes the form of the address from “ye” to “we,” thus including himself with others, and saying that this was true of “all” before their conversion. He means undoubtedly to say, that whatever might have been the place of their birth, or the differences of religion under which they had been trained, they were substantially alike by nature. It was a characteristic of all that they lived to fulfil the desires of the flesh and of the mind. The “design” of the apostle in thus grouping himself with them was, to show that he did not claim to be any better by nature than they were, and that all which any of them had of value was to be traced to the grace of God. There is much delicacy here on the part of the apostle. His object was to remind them of the former grossness of their life, and their exposure to the wrath of God. Yet he does not do it harshly. He includes himself in their number. He says that what he affirms of them was substantially true of himself — of all — that they were under condemnation, and exposed to the divine wrath.

Fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind Margin, as in Greek, “wills.” Complying with the wishes of a depraved nature. The “will of the flesh” is that to which the flesh, or the unrenewed nature of man, prompts; and Paul says that all had been engaged in fulfilling those fleshly propensities. This was clearly true of the pagan, and it was no less true of the unconverted Jew that he lived for himself, and sought to gratify the purposes of a depraved nature, though it might manifest itself in a way different from the pagan. The “will of the mind” referred to here relates to the wicked “thoughts and purposes” of the unrenewed nature — the sins which relate rather to the “intellect” than to the gross passions. Such, for instance, are the sins of pride, envy, ambition, covetousness, etc.; and Paul means to say, that before conversion they lived to gratify these propensities, and to accomplish these desires of the soul.

And were by nature Φυσει ^{<549>}. By birth, or before we were converted By conversion and adoption they became the children of God; before that, they were all the children of wrath. This is, I think, the fair meaning of this important declaration. It does not affirm “when” they began to be such, or that they were such as soon as they were born, or that they were such before they became moral agents, or that they became such in virtue of their connection with Adam — whatever may be the truth on these points; but it affirms that before they were renewed, they were the children of wrath. So far as THIS text is concerned, this might have been true at their very birth; but it does not directly and certainly prove that. It proves that at no time before their conversion were they the children of God, but that their whole condition before that was one of exposure to wrath; compare ^{<824>}Romans 2:14,27; ^{<814>}1 Corinthians 11:14; ^{<825>}Galatians 2:15. Some people are born Jews, and some pagan; some free, and some slaves; some white, and some black; some are born to poverty, and some to wealth; some are the children of kings, and some of beggars; but, whatever their rank or condition, they are born exposed to wrath, or in a situation which would render them liable to wrath. But why this is, the apostle does not say. Whether for their own sins or for the sins of another; whether by a corrupted soul, or by imputed guilt; whether they act as moral agents as soon as born, or at a certain period of childhood, Paul does not say.¹

The children of wrath Exposed to wrath, or liable to wrath. They did not by nature inherit holiness; they inherited that which would subject; them to wrath. The meaning has been well expressed by Doddridge, who refers it “to the original apostasy and corruption, in consequence of which people do, according to the course of nature, fall early into personal guilt, and so become obnoxious to the divine displeasure.” Many modern expositors have supposed that this has no reference to any original tendency of our fallen nature to sin, or to native corruption, but that it refers to the “habit” of sin, or to the fact of their having been the slaves of appetite and passion. I admit that the direct and immediate sense of the passage is that they were, when without the gospel, and before they were renewed, the children of wrath; but still the fair interpretation is, that they were born to that state, and that that condition was the regular result of their native depravity; and I do not know a more strong or positive declaration that can be made to show that people are by nature destitute of holiness, and exposed to perdition.

Even as others That is, “do not suppose that you stand alone, or that you are the worst of the species. You are indeed, by nature, the children of wrath; but not you alone. All others were the same. You have a common inheritance with them. I do not mean to charge you with being the worst of sinners, or as being alone transgressors. It is the common lot of man — the sad, gloomy inheritance to which we all are born.” The Greek is, ὁ ἄλλοιοι <306> “the remainder, or the others,” — including all; compare the notes at ῥωμ Romans 5:19. This doctrine that people without the gospel are the children of wrath, Paul had fully defended in Romans 1—3. Perhaps no truth is more frequently stated in the Bible; none is more fearful and awful in its character. What a declaration, that we “are by nature the children of wrath!” Who should not inquire what it means? Who should not make an effort to escape from the wrath to come, and become a child of glory and an heir of life?

ἑφ **Ephesians 2:4.** *But God, who is rich in mercy* On the use of the word “rich” by Paul, see the notes at ἑφ Ephesians 1:7. It is a beautiful expression. “God is ‘rich’ in mercy;” overflowing, abundant. Mercy is the riches or the wealth of God. People are often rich in gold, and silver, and diamonds, and they pride themselves in these possessions; but God is “rich in mercy.” In that he abounds and he is so rich in it that he is willing to impart it to others; so rich that he can make all blessed.

For his great love That is, his great love was the reason why he had compassion upon us. It is not that we had any claim or deserved his favor; but it is, that God had for man original and eternal love, and that love led to the gift of a Saviour, and to the bestowment of salvation.

ἑφ **Ephesians 2:5.** *Even when we were dead in sins* notes, ἑφ Ephesians 2:1; compare ῥωμ Romans 5:8. The construction here is, “God, who is rich in mercy, on account of the great love which he bare unto us, even being dead in sin, hath quickened us,” etc. It does not mean that he quickened us when we were dead in sin, but that he loved us then, and made provision for our salvation. It was love to the children of wrath; love to those who had no love to return to him; love to the alienated and the lost. That is true love — the sincerest and the purest benevolence — love, not like that of people, but such only as God bestows. Man loves his friend, his benefactor, his kindred — God loves his foes, and seeks to do them good.

Hath quickened us Hath made us alive see ἑφ Ephesians 2:1.

Together with Christ In connection with him; or in virtue of his being raised up from the grave. The meaning is, that there was such a connection between Christ and those whom the Father hath given to him, that his resurrection from the grave involved their resurrection to spiritual life. It was like raising up the head and the members — the whole body together; compare the notes at ^{<4015>}Romans 6:5. Everywhere in the New Testament, the close connection of the believer with Christ is affirmed. We are crucified with him. We die with him. We rise with him. We live with him. We reign with him. We are joint heirs with him. We share his sufferings on earth (^{<4013>}1 Peter 4:13), and we share his glory with him on his throne; ^{<4021>}Revelation 3:21.

By grace ye are saved Margin, “by whose;” see the notes at ^{<4004>}Romans 3:42. Paul’s mind was full of the subject of salvation by grace, and he throws it in here, even in an argument, as a point which he would never have them lose sight of. The subject before him was one eminently adapted to bring this truth to mind, and though, in the train of his arguments, he had no time now to dwell on it, yet he would not suffer any opportunity to pass without referring to it.

^{<4016>}**Ephesians 2:6.** *And hath raised us up together* That is, we are raised from the death of sin to the life of religion, in connection with the resurrection of Jesus, and in virtue of that. So close is the connection between him and his people, that his resurrection made theirs certain; compare ^{<5022>}Colossians 2:12; notes, ^{<4015>}Romans 6:5.

And made us sit together Together with him. That is, we share his honors. So close is our connection with him, that we shall partake of his glory, and in some measure do now; compare the notes at ^{<4018>}Matthew 19:28, and ^{<4017>}Romans 8:17.

In heavenly places see the notes at ^{<4003>}Ephesians 1:3. The meaning is, that he has gone to the heavenly world as our Head and Representative. His entrance there is a pledge that we shall also enter there. Even here we have the anticipation of glory, and are admitted to exalted honors, as if we sat in heavenly places, in virtue of our connection with him.

In Christ Jesus It is in connection with him that we are thus exalted, and thus filled with joy and peace. The meaning of the whole is, “We are united to Christ. We die with him, and live with him. We share his sufferings, and we share his joys. We become dead to the world in virtue of his death; we

become alive unto God in virtue of his resurrection. On earth we are exalted to honor, peace, and hope, in virtue of his resurrection; in heaven we shall share his, glory and partake of his triumphs.”

<411> Ephesians 2:7. *That in the ages to come* In all future times. The sense is, that the riches of divine grace, and the divine benignity, would be shown in the conversion of Christians and their salvation, to all future times. Such was his love to those who were lost, that it would be an everlasting monument of his mercy, a perpetual and unchanging proof that he was good. The sense is, we are raised up with Christ, and are made to partake of his honor and glory in order that others may forever be impressed with a sense of the divine goodness and mercy to us.

The exceeding riches of his grace The “abounding, overflowing” riches of grace; compare the notes, **<400> Ephesians 1:7**. This is Paul’s favorite expression — an expression so beautiful and so full of meaning that it will bear often to be repeated. We may learn from this verse:

- (1)** That one object of the conversion and salvation of sinners, is to furnish a “proof” of the mercy and goodness of God.
- (2)** Another object is, that their conversion may be an “encouragement” to others. The fact that such sinners as the Ephesians had been, were pardoned and saved, affords encouragement also to others to come and lay hold on life. And so of all other sinners who are saved. Their conversion is a standing encouragement to all others to come in like manner; and now the history of the church for more than eighteen hundred years furnishes all the encouragement which we could desire.
- (3)** The conversion of “great” sinners is a special proof of the divine benignity. So Paul argues in the case before us; and so he often argued from his own case; compare the notes at **<54116> 1 Timothy 1:16**.
- (4)** Heaven, the home of the redeemed, will exhibit the most impressive proof of the goodness of God that the universe furnishes. There will be a countless host who were once polluted and lost; who were dead in sins; who were under the power of Satan, and who have been saved by the riches of the divine grace — a host now happy and pure, and free from sin, sorrow, and death — the living and eternal monuments of the grace of God.

⚭⚭⚭ Ephesians 2:8. *For by grace are ye saved* By mere favor. It is not by your Own merit; it is not because you have any claim. This is a favorite doctrine with Paul, as it is with all who love the Lord Jesus in sincerity; compare the notes at **⚭⚭⚭ Romans 1:7; 3:24.**

Through faith Grace bestowed through faith, or in connection with believing; see the notes at **⚭⚭⚭ Romans 1:17; 4:16.**

And that not of yourselves That is, salvation does not proceed from yourselves. The word rendered “that” — **τοῦτο** ^{<512>} — is in the neuter gender, and the word “faith” — **πίστις** ^{<410>} — is in the feminine. The word “that,” therefore, does not refer particularly to faith, as being the gift of God, but to “the salvation by grace” of which he had been speaking. This is the interpretation of the passage which is the most obvious, and which is now generally conceded to be the true one; see Bloomfield. Many critics, however, as Doddridge, Beza, Piscator, and Chrysostom, maintain that the word “that” (**τοῦτο** ^{<512>}) refers to “faith” (**πίστις** ^{<410>}); and Doddridge maintains that such a use is common in the New Testament. As a matter of GRAMMAR this opinion is certainly doubtful, if not untenable; but as a matter of THEOLOGY it is a question of very little importance. Whether this passage proves it or not, it is certainly true that faith is the gift of God. It exists in the mind only when the Holy Spirit produces it there, and is, in common with every other Christian excellence, to be traced to his agency on the heart. This opinion, however, does not militate at all with the doctrine that man himself “believes.” It is not God that “believes” for him, for that is impossible. It is his own mind that actually believes, or that exercises faith; see the notes at **⚭⚭⚭ Romans 4:3.** In the same manner “repentance” is to be traced to God. It is one of the fruits of the operation of the Holy Spirit on the soul. But the Holy Spirit does not “repent” for us. It is our “own mind” that repents; our own heart that feels; our own eyes that weep — and without this there can be no true repentance. No one can repent for another; and God neither can nor ought to repent; for us. He has done no wrong, and if repentance is ever exercised, therefore, it must be exercised by our own minds. So of faith. God cannot believe for us. “We” must believe, or “we” shall be damned. Still this does not conflict at all with the opinion, that if we exercise faith, the inclination to do it is to be traced to the agency of God on the heart. I would not contend, therefore, about the grammatical construction of this passage, with respect to the point of the theology contained in it; still it accords better with the obvious grammatical construction, and with the design of the passage to understand

the word “that” as referring not to “faith” only, but to “salvation by grace.” So Calvin understands it, and so it is understood by Storr, Locke, Clarke, Koppe, Grotius, and others.

It is the gift of God Salvation by grace is his gift. It is not of merit; it is wholly by favor.

Ephesians 2:9. *Not of works* see the notes at **Romans 3:20,27.**

Ephesians 2:10. *For we are his workmanship* We are his “making” — **ποίημα**. That is, we are “created or formed” by him, not only in the general sense in which all things are made by him, but in that special sense which is denoted by the new creation; see the notes at **2 Corinthians 5:17**. Whatever of peace, or hope, or purity we have, has been produced by his agency on the soul. There cannot be conceived to be a stronger expression to denote the agency of God in the conversion of people, or the fact that salvation is wholly of grace.

Created in Christ Jesus On the word “created,” see the notes at **2 Corinthians 5:17**.

Unto good works With reference to a holy life; or, the design for which we have been created in Christ is, that we should lead a holy life. The primary object was not to bring us to heaven. It was that we should be “holy.” Paul held perhaps more firmly than any other man, to the position that people are saved by the mere grace of God, and by a divine agency on the soul; but it is certain that no man ever held more firmly that people must lead holy lives, or they could have no evidence that they were the children of God.

Which God hath before ordained Margin, “prepared.” The word here used means to “prepare beforehand,” then to predestinate, or appoint before. The proper meaning of this passage is, “to which (ὅτις) good works God has predestinated us, or appointed us beforehand, that we should walk in them.” The word used here — **προετοιμαζω** — occurs in the New Testament nowhere else except in **Romans 9:23**, where it is rendered “had afore prepared.” It involves the idea of a previous determination, or an arrangement beforehand for securing a certain result. The previous preparation here referred to was, the divine intention; and the meaning is, that God had predetermined that we should lead holy lives. It accords, therefore, with the declaration in **Ephesians 1:4**, that he had chosen his

people before the foundation of the world that they should be holy: see the notes at that verse.

That we should walk in them That we should live holy lives. The word “walk” is often used in the Scriptures to denote the course of life; notes on ~~<810>~~Romans 6:4.

~~<421>~~**Ephesians 2:11.** *Wherefore remember* The design of this evidently is, to excite a sense of gratitude in their bosoms for that mercy which had called them from the errors and sins of their former lives, to the privileges of Christians. It is a good thing for Christians to “remember” what they were. No faculty of the mind can be better employed to produce humility, penitence, gratitude, and love, than the MEMORY. It is well to recall the recollection of our former sins; to dwell upon our hardness of heart, our alienation, and our unbelief; and to remember our wanderings and our guilt, until the heart be affected, and we are made to feel. The converted Ephesians had much guilt to recollect and to mourn over in their former life; and so have all who are converted to the Christian faith.

That ye being in time past Formerly — *πότε* ~~<218>~~

Gentiles in the flesh You were Gentiles “in the flesh,” i.e., under the dominion of the flesh, subject to the control of carnal appetites and pleasures.

Who are called Uncircumcision That is, who are called “the uncircumcised.” This was a term similar to that which we use when we speak of “the unbaptized.” It meant that they were without the pale of the people of God; that they enjoyed none of the ordinances and privileges of the true religion; and was commonly a term of reproach; compare ~~<743>~~Judges 14:3; 15:18; ~~<946>~~1 Samuel 14:6; 17:26; 31:4; ~~<518>~~Ezekiel 31:18.

By that which is called the Circumcision By those who are circumcised, i.e., by the Jews.

In the flesh made by hands In contradistinction from the circumcision of the heart; see the notes at ~~<823>~~Romans 2:28,29. They had externally adopted the rites of the true religion, though it did not follow that they had the circumcision of the heart, or that they were the true children of God.

~~<422>~~**Ephesians 2:12.** *Ye were without Christ* You were without the knowledge of the Messiah. You had not heard of him; of course you had

not embraced him. You were living without any of the hopes and consolations which you now have, from having embraced him. The object of the apostle is to remind them of the deplorable condition in which they were by nature; and nothing would better express it than to say they were “without Christ,” or that they had no knowledge of a Saviour. They knew of no atonement for sin. They had no assurance of pardon. They had no well-founded hope of eternal life. They were in a state of darkness and condemnation, from which nothing but a knowledge of Christ could deliver them. All Christians may in like manner be reminded of the fact that, before their conversion, they were “without Christ.” Though they had heard of him, and were constantly under the instruction which reminded them of him, yet they were without any true knowledge of him, and without any of the hopes which result from having embraced him. Many were infidels. Many were scoffers. Many were profane, sensual, corrupt. Many rejected Christ with scorn; many, by simple neglect. All were without any true knowledge of him; all were destitute of the peace and hope which result from a saving acquaintance with him. We may add, that there is no more affecting description of the state of man by nature than to say, he is without a Saviour. Sad would be the condition of the world without a Redeemer — sad is the state of that portion of mankind who reject him. Reader, are you without Christ?

Being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel This is the second characteristic of their state before their conversion to Christianity. This means more than that they were not Jews. It means that they were strangers to that “polity” — πολιτεία ^{<4174>} — or arrangement by which the worship of the true God had been kept up in the world, and of course were strangers to the true religion. The arrangements for the public worship of Yahweh were made among the Jews. They had his law, his temple, his sabbaths, and the ordinances of his religion; see the notes at ^{<4174>}Romans 3:2. To all these the pagans had been strangers, and of course they were deprived of all the privileges which resulted from having the true religion. The word rendered here as “commonwealth” — πολιτεία ^{<4174>} — means properly citizenship, or the right of citizenship, and then a community, or state. It means here that arrangement or organization by which the worship of the true God was maintained. The word “aliens” — ἀπηλλοτριωμένοι ^{<526>} — here means merely that they were strangers to. It does not denote, of necessity, that they were hostile to it; but that they were ignorant of it,

and were, therefore, deprived of the benefits which they might have derived from it, if they had been acquainted with it.

And strangers This word — ξενος ^{<3581>} — means properly a guest, or a stranger, who is hospitably entertained; then a foreigner, or one from a distant country; and here means that they did not belong to the community where the covenants of promise were enjoyed; that is, they were strangers to the privileges of the people of God.

The covenants of promise see the notes at ^{<4004>}Romans 9:4. The covenants of promise were those various arrangements which God made with his people, by which he promised them future blessings, and especially by which he promised that the Messiah should come. To be in possession of them was regarded as a high honor and privilege; and Paul refers to it here to show that, though the Ephesians had been by nature without these, yet they had now been brought to enjoy all the benefits of them. On the word covenant, see the notes on ^{<4185>}Galatians 3:15. It may be remarked, that Walton (Polyglott) and Rosenmuller unite the word “promise” here with the word “hope” — “having no hope of the promise.” But the more obvious and usual interpretation is that in our common version, meaning that they were not by nature favored with the covenants made with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, etc., by which there was a promise of future blessings under the Messiah.

Having no hope The apostle does not mean to affirm that they did not cherish any hope, for this is scarcely true of any man; but that they were without any proper ground of hope. It is true of perhaps nearly all people that they cherish SOME hope of future happiness. But the ground on which they do this is not well understood by themselves, nor do they in general regard it as a matter worth particular inquiry. Some rely on morality; some on forms of religion; some on the doctrine of universal salvation; all who are impenitent believe that they do not “deserve” eternal death, and expect to be saved by “justice.” Such hopes, however, must be unfounded. No hope of life in a future world can be founded on a proper basis which does not rest on some promise of God, or some assurance that he will save us; and these hopes, therefore, which people take up they know not why, are delusive and vain.

And without God in the world Greek αθεοι ^{<112>} — “atheists;” that is, those who had no knowledge of the true God. This is the last specification of their miserable condition before they were converted; and it is an

appropriate crowning of the climax. What an expression! To be without God — without God in his own world, and where he is all around us! To have no evidence of his favor, no assurance of his love, no hope of dwelling with him! The meaning, as applied to the pagan Ephesians, was, that they had no knowledge of the true God. This was true of the pagan, and in an important sense also it is true of all impenitent sinners, and was once true of all who are now Christians. They had no God. They did not worship him, or love him, or serve him, or seek his favors, or act with reference to him and his glory. Nothing can be a more appropriate and striking description of a sinner now than to say that he is “without God in the world.” He lives, and feels, and acts, as if there were no God. He neither worships him in secret, nor in his family, nor in public. He acts with no reference to his will. He puts no confidence in his promises, and fears not when he threatens; and were it announced to him that there “is no God,” it would produce no change in his plan of life, or in his emotions. The announcement that the emperor of China, or the king of Siam, or the sultan of Constantinople, was dead, would produce SOME emotion, and MIGHT change some of his commercial arrangements; but the announcement that there is no God would interfere with none of his plans, and demand no change of life. And, if so, what is man in this beautiful world without a God? A traveler to eternity without a God! Standing over the grave without a God! An immortal being without a God! A man — fallen, sunk, ruined, with no God to praise, to love, to confide in; with no altar, no sacrifice, no worship, no hope; with no Father in trial, no counselor in perplexity, no support in death! Such is the state of man by nature. Such are the effects of sin.

<4013> Ephesians 2:13. *But now, in Christ Jesus* By the coming and atonement of the Lord Jesus, and by the gospel which he preached.

Ye who sometimes were afar off Who were “formerly” — **ποτε** ^{<4218>} Tyndale translates it, “a while ago.” The phrase “afar off” — **μακρην** ^{<3112>} — means that they were formerly far off from God and his people. The expression is derived from the custom of speaking among the Hebrews. God was supposed to reside in the temple. It was a privilege to be near the temple. Those who were remote from Jerusalem and the temple were regarded as far off from God, and hence as especially irreligious and wicked; see the notes at ^{<25719>} Isaiah 57:19.

Are made nigh Are admitted to the favor of God, and permitted to approach him as his worshippers.

By the blood of Christ The Jews came near to the mercy seat on which the symbol of the divine presence rested (the notes at ^{<4182>}Romans 3:25), by the blood that was offered in sacrifice; that is, the high priest approached that mercy-seat with blood and sprinkled it before God. Now we are permitted to approach him with the blood of the atonement. The shedding of that blood has prepared the way by which Gentiles as well as Jews may approach God, and it is by that offering that we are led to seek God.

^{<4024>}**Ephesians 2:14.** *For he is our peace* There is evident allusion here to ^{<2579>}Isaiah 57:19. See the notes at that verse. The “peace” here referred to is that by which a “union” in worship and in feeling has been produced between the Jews and the Gentiles Formerly they were alienated and separate. They had different objects of worship; different religious rites; different views and feelings. The Jews regarded the Gentiles with hatred, and the Gentiles the Jews with scorn. Now, says the apostle, they are at peace. They worship the same God. They have the same Saviour. They depend on the same atonement. They have the same hope. They look forward to the same heaven. They belong to the same redeemed family. Reconciliation has not only taken place with God, but with each other. “The best way to produce peace between alienated minds is to bring them to the same Saviour.” That will do more to silence contentions, and to heal alienations, than any or all other means. Bring people around the same cross; fill them with love to the same Redeemer, and give them the same hope of heaven, and you put a period to alienation and strife. The love at Christ is so absorbing, and the dependence in his blood so entire, that they will lay aside these alienations, and cease their contentions. The work of the atonement is thus designed not only to produce peace with God, but peace between alienated and contending minds. The feeling that we are redeemed by the same blood, and that we have the same Saviour, will unite the rich and the poor, the bond and the free, the high and the low, in the ties of brotherhood, and make them feel that they are one. This great work of the atonement is thus designed to produce peace in alienated minds every where, and to diffuse abroad the feeling of universal brotherhood.

Who hath made both one Both Gentiles and Jews. He has united them in one society.

And hath broken down the middle wall There is an allusion here undoubtedly to the wall of partition in the temple by which the court of the Gentiles was separated from that of the Jews; see the notes and the plan of the temple, in ^{<4012>}Matthew 21:12. The idea here is, that that was now broken down, and that the Gentiles had the same access to the temple as the Jews. The sense is, that in virtue of the sacrifice of the Redeemer they were admitted to the same privileges and hopes.

^{<4025>}**Ephesians 2:15.** *Having abolished* Having brought to naught, or put an end to it — *καταργησας* ^{<2673>}.

In his flesh By the sacrifice of his body on the cross. It was not by instruction merely; it was not by communicating the knowledge of God; it was not as a teacher; it was not by the mere exertion of power; it was by his flesh — his human nature — and this can mean only that he did it by his sacrifice of himself. It is such language as is appropriate to the doctrine of the atonement — not indeed teaching it directly — but still such as one would use who believed that doctrine, and such as no other one would employ. Who would now say of a moral teacher that he accomplished an important result by “his flesh?” Who would say of a man that was instrumental in reconciling his contending neighbors, that he did it “by his flesh?” Who would say of Dr. Priestley that he established Unitarianism “in his flesh?” No man would have ever used this language who did not believe that Jesus died as a sacrifice for sin.

The enmity Between the Jew and the Gentile. Tyndale renders this, “the cause of hatred, that is to say, the law of commandments contained in the law written.” This is expressive of the true sense. The idea is, that the ceremonial law of the Jews, on which they so much prided themselves, was the cause of the hostility existing between them. That made them different people, and laid the foundation for the alienation which existed between them. They had different laws; different institutions; a different religion. The Jews looked upon themselves as the favorites of heaven, and as in possession of the knowledge of the only way of salvation; the Gentiles regarded their laws with contempt, and looked upon the unique institutions with scorn. When Christ came and abolished by his death their special ceremonial laws, of course the cause of this alienation ceased.

Even the law of commandments The law of positive commandments. This does not refer to the “moral” law, which was not the cause of the alienation, and which was not abolished by the death of Christ, but to the

laws commanding sacrifices, festivals, fasts, etc., which constituted the uniqueness of the Jewish system. These were the occasion of the enmity between the Jews and the Gentiles, and these were abolished by the great sacrifice which the Redeemer made; and of course when that was made, the purpose for which these laws were instituted was accomplished, and they ceased to be of value and to be binding.

Contained in ordinances In the Mosaic commandments. The word “ordinance” means, decree, edict, law; ^{<4101>}Luke 2:1; ^{<4104>}Acts 16:4; 17:7; ^{<5104>}Colossians 2:14.

For to make in himself By virtue of his death, or under him as the head.

Of twain one new man Of the two — Jews and Gentiles — one new spiritual person; that they might be united. The idea is, that as two persons who had been at enmity, might become reconciled and be one in aim and pursuit, so it was in the effect of the work of Christ on the Jews and Gentiles. When they were converted they would be united and harmonious.

^{<4026>}**Ephesians 2:16.** *And that he might reconcile both unto God* This was another of the effects of the work of redemption, and indeed the main effect. It was not merely to make them harmonious, but it was that both, who had been alienated from God, should be reconciled to “him.” This was a different effect from that of producing peace between themselves, though in some sense the one grew out of the other. They who are reconciled to God will be at peace with each other. They will feel that they are of the same family, and are all brethren. On the subject of reconciliation, see the notes on ^{<4058>}2 Corinthians 5:18.

In one body One spiritual personage — the church; see the notes at ^{<4023>}Ephesians 1:23.

By the cross By the atonement which he made on the cross; see ^{<5102>}Colossians 1:20; compare the notes at ^{<6125>}Romans 3:25. It is by the atonement only that men ever become reconciled to God.

Having slain the enmity Not only the enmity between Jews and Gentiles, but the enmity between the sinner and God. He has by that death removed all the obstacles to reconciliation on the part of God and on the part of man. It is made efficacious in removing the enmity of the sinner against God, and producing peace.

Thereby Margin, “in himself.” The meaning is, in his cross, or by means of his cross.

<4027> Ephesians 2:17. *And came and preached peace* That is, the system of religion which he proclaimed, was adapted to produce peace with God. This he preached personally to those who “were nigh,” that is, the Jews; to those who were “afar off” — the Gentiles — he preached it by his apostles. He was the author of the system which proclaimed salvation to both.

The word “peace” here refers to reconciliation with God.

To you which were afar off, ... see the notes at **<4023> Ephesians 2:13**; compare the notes at **<4029> Acts 2:39**.

<4028> Ephesians 2:18. *For through him* That is, he has secured this result that we have access to God. This he did by his death — reconciling us to God by the doctrines which he taught — acquainting us with God; and by his intercession in heaven — by which our “prayers gain acceptance” with him.

We both have access Both Jews and Gentiles; see the notes at **<4010> Romans 5:2**. We are permitted to approach God through him, or in his name. The Greek word here — **προσαγωγή** **<4318>** — relates properly to the introduction to, or audience which we are permitted to have with a prince or other person of high rank. This must be effected through an officer of court to whom the duty is entrusted. “Rosenmuller,” *Alt und neu Morgenland*, in loc.

By one Spirit By the aid of the same Spirit — the Holy Spirit; see notes, **<4024> 1 Corinthians 12:4**.

Unto the Father We are permitted to come and address God as our Father; see the notes at **<4015> Romans 8:15,26**.

<4029> Ephesians 2:19. *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners* You are reckoned with the people of God. You are entitled to their privileges, and are not to be regarded as outcasts and aliens. The meaning is, that they belonged to the same community — the same family — as the people of God. The word rendered “strangers” — **ξένοι** **<3581>** — means “foreigners in state,” as opposed to citizens. The word rendered “foreigners” — **παροικιοι** **<3941>** — means “guests in a private family,” as

opposed to the members of the family. "Rosenmuller." Strangers and such as proposed to reside for a short time in Athens, were permitted to reside in the city, and to pursue their business undisturbed, but they could perform no public duty; they had no voice in the public deliberations, and they had no part in the management of the state. They could only look on as spectators, without mingling in the scenes of state, or interfering in any way in the affairs of the government. They were bound humbly to submit to all the enactments of the citizens, and observe all the laws and usages of the republic. It was not even allowed them to transact any business in their own name, but they were bound to choose from among the citizens one to whose care they committed themselves as a patron, and whose duty it was to guard them against all injustice and wrong Potter's Greek Ant. i. 55. Proselytes, who united themselves to the Jews, were also called in the Jewish writings, "strangers." All foreigners were regarded as "strangers," and Jews only were supposed to have near access to God. But now, says the apostle, this distinction is taken away, and the believing pagan, as well as the Jew, has the right of citizenship in the New Jerusalem, and one, as well as another, is a member of the family of God. "Burder," Ros. Alt. u. neu. Morgertland, in loc. The meaning here is, that they had not come to sojourn merely as guests or foreigners, but were a part of the family itself, and entitled to all the privileges and hopes which others had.

But fellow-citizens with the saints Belonging to the same community with the people of God.

And of the household of God Of the same family. Entitled to the same privileges, and regarded by him as his children; see ^{<40B>}Ephesians 3:15.

^{<40D>}**Ephesians 2:20.** *And are built upon the foundation* The comparison of the church with a building, is common in the Scriptures: compare the notes at ^{<40D>}1 Corinthians 3:9,10. The comparison was probably taken from the temple, and as that was an edifice of great beauty, expense, and sacredness, it was natural to compare the church with it. Besides, the temple was the sacred place where God dwelt on the earth; and as the church was the place where he delighted now to abide, it became natural to speak of his church as the temple, or the residence of God; see the notes at ^{<40D>}Isaiah 54:11,12. That building, says Paul, was permanently founded, and was rising with great beauty of proportion, and with great majesty and splendor.

Of the apostles The doctrines which they taught are the basis on which the church rests. It is “possible” that Paul referred here to a splendid edifice, particularly because the Ephesians were distinguished for their skill in architecture, and because the celebrated temple of Diana was among them. An allusion to a building, however, as an illustration of the church occurs several times in his other epistles, and was an allusion which would be everywhere understood.

And prophets The prophets of the Old Testament, using the word, probably, to denote the Old Testament in general. That is, the doctrines of divine revelation, whether communicated by prophets or apostles, were laid at the foundation of the Christian church. It was not rounded on philosophy, or tradition, or on human laws, or on a venerable antiquity, but on the great truths which God had revealed. Paul does not say that it was founded on “Peter,” as the papists do, but on the prophets and apostles in general. If Peter had been the “vicegerent of Christ,” and the head of the church, it is incredible that his brother Paul should not have given him some honorable notice in this place. Why did he not allude to so important a fact? Would one who believed it have omitted it? Would a papist now omit it? Learn here:

- (1) That no reliance is to be placed on philosophy as a basis of religious doctrine.
- (2) That the traditions of people have no authority in the church, and constitute no part of the foundation.
- (3) That nothing is to be regarded as a fundamental part of the Christian system, or as binding on the conscience, which cannot be found in the “prophets and apostles;” that is, as it means here, in the Holy Scriptures. No decrees of councils; no ordinances of synods; no “standard” of doctrines; no creed or confession, is to be urged as authority in forming the opinions of people. They may be valuable for some purposes, but not for this; they may be referred to as interesting parts of history, but not to form the faith of Christians; they may be used in the church to EXPRESS its belief, but not to FORM it. What is based on the authority of apostles and prophets is true, and always true, and only true; what may be found elsewhere, may be valuable and true, or not, but, at any rate, is not to be used to control the faith of people.

Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone see the notes at ^{<23316>} Isaiah 28:16; ^{<4103>} Romans 9:33. The cornerstone is the most important in the building.

(1) Because the edifice rests mainly on the cornerstones. If they are small, and unstable, and settle down, the whole building is insecure; and hence care is taken to place a large stone firmly at each corner of an edifice.

(2) Because it occupies a conspicuous and honorable place. If documents or valuable articles are deposited at the foundation of a building it is within the cornerstone. The Lord Jesus is called the “cornerstone,” because the whole edifice rests on him, or he occupies a place relatively as important as the cornerstone of an edifice. Were it not for him, the edifice could not be sustained for a moment. Neither prophets nor apostles alone could sustain it; see the notes at ^{<4181>} 1 Corinthians 3:11; compare ^{<4106>} 1 Peter 2:6.

^{<4121>} **Ephesians 2:21.** *In whom* That is, “by” whom, or “upon” whom. It was in connection with him, or by being reared on him as a foundation.

All the building The whole church of Christ.

Fitly framed together The word used here means “to joint together,” as a carpenter does the frame-work of a building. The materials are accurately and carefully united by mortises and tenons. so that the building shall be firm. Different materials may be used, and different kinds of timber may be employed, but one part shall be worked into another, so as to constitute a durable and beautiful edifice. So in the church. The different materials of the Jews and Gentiles; the people of various nations, though heretofore separated and discordant, become now united, and form an harmonious society. They believe the same doctrines; worship the same God; practice the same holiness; and look forward to the same heaven.

Groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord see the notes at ^{<4187>} 1 Corinthians 3:17; ^{<4106>} 2 Corinthians 6:16.

^{<4122>} **Ephesians 2:22.** *In whom* In Christ, or on Christ, as the solid and precious foundation.

Ye also are builded together You are built into that, or constitute a part of it. You are not merely “added” to it, but you constitute a part of the building.

For an habitation of God For the indwelling, or the dwelling-place, of God. Formerly he dwelt in the temple. Now he dwells in the church, and in the hearts of his people; see the notes at ⁴⁰⁶2 Corinthians 6:16.

REMARKS ON EPHESIANS 2

1. We were by nature dead in sin; ⁴⁰⁷Ephesians 2:1. We had no spiritual life. We were insensible to the calls of God, to the beauty of religion, to the claims of the Creator. We were like corpses in the tomb in reference to the frivolous and busy and happy world around them. There we should have remained, had not the grace of God given us life, just as the dead will remain in their graves forever, unless God shall raise them up. How humble should we be at the remembrance of this fact! how grateful that God has not left us to sleep that sleep of death forever!

2. Parents should feel deep solicitude for their children; ⁴⁰⁸Ephesians 2:3. They, in common with all others, are “children of wrath.” They have a nature prone to evil; and that nature will develop itself in evil for ever, unless it is changed — just as the young thornbush will be a thorn-bush, and will put forth thorns and not roses; and the Bohon Upas will be a Bohon Upas, and not an olive or an orange; and as the lion will be a lion, and the panther a panther, and not a lamb, a kid, or a gazelle. They will act out their nature, unless they are changed: and they will not be changed, but by the grace of God. I do not mean that their nature is in every sense like that of the lion or the asp; but I mean that they will be as certainly “wicked,” if unrenewed, as the lion will be ferocious, and the asp poisonous. And if so, what deep anxiety should parents feel for the salvation of their children! How solicitous should they be that, by the grace of God, the evil propensities of their nature may be eradicated, and that they become the adopted children of God!

3. The salvation of sinners involves all the exercise of power that is put forth in the resurrection of the dead; ⁴⁰⁹Ephesians 2:5. It is not a work to be performed by man; it is not a work of angelic might. None can impart spiritual life to the soul but he who gave it life at first. On that great Source of life we are dependent for our resurrection from spiritual death; and to God we must look for the grace by which we are to live. It is true that though we are by nature “dead in sins,” we are not in all respects like the dead. Let not this doctrine be abused to make us secure in sin, or to prevent effort. The dead in the grave are dead in all respects. We by nature

are dead only in sin. We are active in other things; and indeed the powers of man are not less active than they would be if he were holy. But it is a tremendous activity for evil, and for evil only. The dead in their graves hear nothing, see nothing, and feel nothing. Sinners hear, and see, and feel; but they hear not God, and they see not his glory, anymore than if they were dead. To the dead in the grave, no command could with propriety be addressed; on them, no entreaty could be urged to rise to life. But the sinner may be commanded and entreated; for he has power, though it is misdirected; and what is needful is, that he should put forth his power in a proper manner. While, therefore, we admit, with deep humiliation, that we, our children, and friends, are by nature dead in sin, let us not abuse this doctrine as though we could be required to do nothing. It is with us willful death. It is death because we do not choose to live. It is a voluntary closing our eyes, and stopping our ears, as if we were dead; and it is a voluntary remaining in this state, when we have all the requisite power to put forth the energies of life. Let a sinner be as active in the service of God as he is in the service of the devil and the world, and he would be an eminent Christian. Indeed, all that is required is, that the misdirected and abused energy of this world should be employed in the service of the Creator. Then all would be well.²

4. Let us remember our former course of life; ~~☞~~ Ephesians 2:11,12. Nothing is more profitable for a Christian than to sit down and reflect on his former life — on his childhood, with its numerous follies and vanities; on his youth, with its errors, and passions, and sins: and on the ingratitude and faults of riper years. Had God left us in that state, what would be now our condition? Had he cut us off, where had been our abode? Should he now treat us as we deserve, what would be our doom? When the Christian is in danger of becoming proud and self-confident, let him REMEMBER what he was. Let him take some period of his life — some year, some month, or even some one day — and think it all over, and he will find enough to humble him. These are the uses which should be made of the past:

(1) It should make us humble. If a man had before his mind a vivid sense of all the past in his own life, he would never be lifted up with pride.

(2) It should make us grateful. God cut off the companions of my childhood — why did he spare me? He cut down many of the associates of my youth in their sins — why did he preserve me? He has suffered many to

live on in their sins, and they are in the “broad road” — why am I not with them, treading the path to death and hell?

(3) The recollection of the past should lead us to devote ourselves to God. Professing Christian, “remember” how much of thy life is gone to waste. “Remember” thy days of folly and vanity. “Remember” the injury thou hast done by an evil example. “Remember” how many have been corrupted by thy conversation; perverted by thy opinions; led into sin by thy example; perhaps ruined in body and soul forever by the errors and follies of thy past life. And then REMEMBER how much thou dost owe to God, and how solemnly thou art bound to endeavor to repair the evils of thy life, and to save “at least as many as” thou hast ruined.

5. Sinners are by nature without any well-founded hope of salvation; ~~and~~ Ephesians 2:12, They are living without Christ, having no belief in him, and no hope of salvation through him. They are “aliens” from all the privileges of the friends of God. They have no “hope.” They have no wellfounded expectation of happiness beyond the grave. They have a dim and shadowy expectation that “possibly” they may be happy; but it is founded on no evidence of the divine favor, and no promise of God. “They could not tell on what it is founded, if they were asked;” and what is such a hope worth? These false and delusive hopes do not sustain the soul in trial; they flee away in death. And what a description is this! In a world like this, to be without hope! Subject to trial; exposed to death; and yet destitute of any well-founded prospect of happiness beyond the tomb! They are “without God” also. They worship no God: they confide in none. They have no altar in their families; no place of secret prayer. They form their plans with no reference to the will of God; they desire not to please him. There are multitudes who are living just as if there were no God. Their plans, their lives, their conversation, would not be different if they had the assurance that there was no God. All that they have ever asked of God, or that they would now ask of him, is, “that he would let them alone.” There are multitudes whose plans would be in no respect different, if it were announced to them that there was no God in heaven. The only effect might be to produce a more hearty merriment, and a deeper plunge into sin. What a world! How strange that in God’s own world it should thus be! How sad the view of a world of atheists — a race that is endeavoring to feel that the universe is without a Father and a God! How wicked the plans which can be accomplished only by laboring to forget that there is a God; and how melancholy that state of the soul in which happiness can be found only in

proportion as it believes that the universe is without a Creator, and moves on without the superintending care of a God!

6. The gospel produces peace; ^{<4214>}Ephesians 2:14-17.

(1) It produces peace in the heart of the individual, reconciling him to God.

(2) It produces peace and harmony between different ranks and classes and complexions of people, causing them to love each other, and removing their alienations and antipathies. The best way of producing friendship between nations and tribes of people; between those of different complexions, pursuits, and laws, is, to preach to them the gospel. The best way to produce harmony between the oppressor and the oppressed, is to preach to both of them the gospel of peace, and make them feel that they have a common Saviour.

(3) It is suited to produce peace among the nations. Let it spread, and wars will cease; right and justice will universally prevail, and harmony and concord will spread over the world; see the notes at ^{<2314>}Isaiah 2:4.

7. Let us rejoice in the privileges which we now have as Christians. We have access to the Father; ^{<4218>}Ephesians 2:18. None are so poor, so ignorant, so down-trodden that they may not come to God. In all times of affliction, poverty, and oppression, we may approach the father of mercies. Chains may bind the body, but no chain can fetter the soul in its contact with God. We may be thrown into a dungeon, but communion with God may be maintained there. We may be cast out and despised by people, but we may come at once unto God, and he will not cast us away. Further. We are not now strangers and foreigners. We belong to the family of God. We are fellow-citizens with the saints; ^{<4219>}Ephesians 2:19. We are participants of the hope of the redeemed, and we share their honors and their joys. It is right that true Christians should rejoice, and their joy is of such a character that no man can take it from them.

8. Let us make our appeal on all doctrines and duties to the Bible — to the prophets and the apostles; ^{<4220>}Ephesians 2:20. On them and their doctrine we can build. On them the church is reared. It is not on the opinion of philosophers and lawgivers; not on creeds, symbols, traditions, and the decisions of councils; it is on the authority of the inspired book of God. The church is in its most healthy state when it appeals for its doctrines most directly to the Bible. Individual Christians grow most in grace when

they appeal most to this “book of books.” The church is in great danger of error when it goes off from this pure “standard” and makes its appeal to other standards — to creeds and symbols of doctrine. “The Bible is the religion of Protestants;” and the church will be kept pure from error, and will advance in holiness, just as this is made the great principle which shall always govern and control it. If a doctrine is not found in the “apostles and prophets” — in some part of the Bible, it is not to be imposed on the conscience. It may, or may not be true; it may, or may not be suited to edify a people; but it is not to be an article of faith, or imposed on the consciences of men.

9. Let us evince always special regard for the Lord Jesus; ~~(412)~~ Ephesians 2:20. He is the precious cornerstone on which the whole spiritual temple is reared. On him the church rests. How important, then, that the church should have correct views of the Redeemer! How important that the true doctrine respecting his divine nature; his atonement; his incarnation; his resurrection, should be maintained. It is not a matter of indifference whether he be God or man; whether he died as an atoning sacrifice or as a martyr; whether he be the equal of God, or whether he be an archangel. Everything depends on the view which is held of that Redeemer — and as people entertain different opinions about him, they go off into different systems as wide from each other as the poles: Everything in the welfare of the church, and in the individual peace of its members, depends on proper views of the Lord Jesus.

10. The church is designed as the place of the special residence of the Holy Spirit on earth; ~~(412)~~ Ephesians 2:21,22. It is the beautiful temple where he dwells; the edifice which is reared for his abode. How truly should that church be; how pure should be each Christian to be an appropriate habitation for such a guest! Holy should be the heart where that Spirit dwells. With what anxious care should we cherish the presence of such a guest; with what solicitude should we guard our conduct that we may not grieve him away! How anxious we are so to live that we may not grieve away our friends from our dwellings! Should an illustrious guest become an inmate in our abode, how anxious should we be to do all that we can to please him, and to retain him with us! How much more anxious should we be to secure the indwelling of the eternal Spirit! How desirous that he should make our hearts and the church his constant abode!

NOTES ON EPHESIANS 3

This chapter (Ephesians 3) consists properly of three parts:

I. A statement that the Gentiles were to be made partakers of the gospel, and that the work of proclaiming this was especially entrusted to Paul; ~~EBR~~Ephesians 3:1-12. In illustrating this, Paul observes:

(1) That he was the prisoner of Jesus Christ in behalf of the Gentiles; ~~EBR~~Ephesians 3:1. He was in bonds for maintaining that the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles, and for endeavoring to convey it to them.

(2) He reminds them all of the fact that he was called by special revelation to make known this truth, and to convey to the Gentiles this gospel — supposing that they had heard of the manner of his conversion; ~~EBR~~Ephesians 3:2,3.

(3) He refers them to what he had said before in few words on this point as proof of his acquaintance with this great plan of the gospel; ~~EBR~~Ephesians 3:3,4.

(4) He speaks of this great truth as a “mystery” — the “mystery of Christ;” the great and important truth which was concealed until Christ came, and which was fully made known by him; ~~EBR~~Ephesians 3:4,5,6. This had been hidden for ages. But now it had been fully revealed by the Spirit of God to the apostles and prophets in the Christian church that the great wall of partition was to be broken down, and the gospel proclaimed alike to all.

(5) The apostle says, that to him especially was this office committed to proclaim among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches. of Christ; ~~EBR~~Ephesians 3:8,9.

(6) The “design” of this was to illustrate, in view of all worlds, the great wisdom of God in the plan of salvation; ~~EBR~~Ephesians 3:10-12. It was intended to show to other intelligent beings the glory of the divine perfections, and to make manifestations of the divine character which could be perceived nowhere else.

II. Paul expresses an earnest wish that they should comprehend the glory of this plan of salvation; ~~EBR~~Ephesians 3:13-19. Particularly, he desires them not to faint on account of his afflictions in their behalf; declares that

he bows his knees in prayer before the great Father of the redeemed family, that God would be pleased to strengthen them, and enlighten them, and give them clear views of the glorious plan.

III. The chapter concludes with an ascription of praise to God, in view of the great goodness which he had manifested, and of the glory of the plan of salvation; ^{<408>}Ephesians 3:20,21.

^{<408>}**Ephesians 3:1.** *For this cause* On account of preaching this doctrine; that is, the doctrine that the gospel was to be proclaimed to the Gentiles.

I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ A prisoner in the service of the Lord Jesus; or made a prisoner in his cause. Not a prisoner for crime or debt, or as a captive in war, but a captive in the service of the Redeemer. This proves that at the time of writing this, Paul was in bonds, and there can be no question that he was in Rome. This would be more correctly rendered, “For this cause I, Paul, am the prisoner,” etc. So Tyndale renders it, “For this cause I, Paul, the servant of Jesus, am in bonds.” So also Locke, Rosenmuller, Doddridge, Whitby, Koppe, and others understand it. By this construction the abruptness now manifest in our common version is avoided.

For you Gentiles Made a prisoner at Rome on your behalf, because I maintained that the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles; see ^{<422>}Acts 22:21-23. He was taken first to Cesarea, and then to Rome. The cause of his imprisonment and of all his difficulties was, that he maintained that the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles; that when the Jews rejected it God rejected them; and that he was specially called to carry the message of salvation to the pagan world.

^{<408>}**Ephesians 3:2.** *If ye have heard* $\text{E}\iota\text{-}\gamma\epsilon$ ^{<489>} “If at least, if indeed, if so be, spoken of what is taken for granted.” “Robinson;” compare ^{<408>}2 Corinthians 5:3; ^{<408>}Galatians 3:4; ^{<402>}Ephesians 4:21; ^{<502>}Colossians 1:23, for the use of the particle. The particle here is not designed to express a doubt whether they had heard of it or not, for he takes it for granted that they had. Doddridge renders it, “since I well know you have heard,” etc. He had informed them of his being called to be the minister to the Gentiles (^{<408>}Ephesians 3:3), but still there was a possibility that they had not received the letter containing the information, and he goes, therefore, into another statement on the subject, that they might fully comprehend it. Hence, this long parenthetical sentence — one of the longest that occurs in

the writings of Paul, and expressed under the impulse of a mind full of the subject; so full, as we would say, that he did not know what to say first. Hence, it is exceedingly difficult to understand the exact state of mind in which he was. It seems to me that the whole of this long statement grew out of the incidental mention (^{<400>}Ephesians 3:1) of the fact that he was a prisoner for the Gentiles. Instantly he seems to have reflected that they would be grieved at the intelligence that he was suffering on their account. He goes, therefore, into this long account, to show them how it happened; that it was by the appointment of God; that it was in the evolving of a great and glorious mystery; that it was in a cause adapted to promote, in an eminent degree, the glory of God; that it was according to an eternal purpose; and he, therefore (^{<400>}Ephesians 3:13), says, that he desires that they would not “faint” or be unduly distressed on account of his sufferings for them, since his sufferings were designed to promote their “glory.” He was comforted in the belief that he was making known the glorious and eternal plan of God, and in the belief that it was for the welfare of mankind; and he, therefore, entreated them also not to be troubled inordinately at his sufferings.

The dispensation Greek “economy;” rendered “stewardship,” ^{<200>}Luke 16:2,3,4; and “dispensation,” ^{<400>}Ephesians 1:10; 3:2; ^{<500>}Colossians 1:25; see the notes at ^{<400>}Ephesians 1:10. It means here that this arrangement was made that he should be the apostle to the Gentiles. In the assignment of the different parts of the work of preaching the gospel, the office had been committed to him of making it known to the pagan.

Of the grace of God In the arrangements of his grace.

Which is given me to you-ward Toward you who are Gentiles. Not to the Ephesians particularly, but to the nations at large; see the notes at ^{<400>}Galatians 2:7.

^{<400>}**Ephesians 3:3.** *How that by revelation* see the notes at ^{<400>}Galatians 1:12. He refers to the revelation which was made to him when he was called to the apostolic office, that the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles, and that he was converted for the special purpose of carrying it to them; see ^{<400>}Acts 9:15; 22:21.

Unto me the mystery The hitherto concealed truth that the gospel was to be preached to the Gentiles; see the notes, ^{<400>}Ephesians 1:9, on the meaning of the word “mystery.”

As I wrote afore in few words Margin, “a little before.” To what this refers commentators are not agreed. Bloomfield, Doddridge, Rosenmuller, Erasmus, Grotius, Locke, and others, suppose that he refers to what he had written in the two previous chapters respecting the plan of God to call the Gentiles to his kingdom. Calvin supposes that he refers to some former epistle which he had written to them, but which is now lost. He remarks in regard to this, “If the solicitude of Paul be rightly considered; if his vigilance and assiduity; if his zeal and studious habits; if his kindness and promptitude in assisting his brethren, it is easy to suppose that he wrote many epistles publicly and privately to this place and to that place. But those only which the Lord saw necessary to the welfare of his church has he taken care to have preserved.” In this opinion there is nothing in itself improbable (compare introduction to Isaiah, section 5 (1)), but it may be doubted whether Paul here refers to any such epistle. The addition which he makes, “whereby, when ye read,” etc., seems rather to imply that he refers to what he had just written.

~~¶~~ **Ephesians 3:4.** *Whereby, when ye read* By the bare reading of which you may understand the view which I entertain of the plan of salvation, and the knowledge which I have of God’s method of saving people, particularly of his intention in regard to the salvation of the Gentiles.

In the mystery of Christ This does not refer to anything “mysterious” in the person of Christ; or the union of the divine and human nature in him; or to anything difficult of apprehension in the work of the atonement. It means the hitherto concealed doctrine that through the Messiah, the Gentiles were to be received to the same privileges as the Jews, and that the plan of salvation was to be made equally free for all. This great truth had been hitherto concealed, or but partially understood, and Paul says that he was appointed to make it known to the world. His “knowledge” on the subject, he says, could be understood by what he had said, and from that they could judge whether he was qualified to state and defend the doctrines of the gospel. Paul evidently supposed that the knowledge which he had on that subject was of eminent value; that it was possessed by few; that it was important to understand it. Hence he dwells upon it. He speaks of the glory of that truth. He traces it back to the counsels of God. He shows that it entered into his eternal plans; and he evidently felt that the truth which he had communicated in the former part of this Epistle, was among the most important that could come before the mind.

◀HRB▶ **Ephesians 3:5.** *Which in other ages* The great purposes of God in regard to the salvation of mankind were not revealed; see the notes at ▶SIC▶ Romans 16:25.

And prophets Those who exercised the office of a prophet or inspired teacher in the Christian church; see the notes at ▶HRB▶ 1 Corinthians 12:1.

By the Spirit This proves that those who exercised the office of prophet in the Christian church were inspired. They were persons endowed in this manner for the purpose of imparting to the newly formed churches the doctrines of the Christian system. There is no evidence that this was designed to be a permanent order of people in the church. They were necessary for settling the church on a permanent basis, in the absence of a full written revelation, and when the apostles were away. When the volume of revelation was finished, and the doctrines of the gospel were fully understood, the functions of the office ceased.

◀HRB▶ **Ephesians 3:6.** *That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs* Fellow-heirs with the ancient people of God — the Jews — and entitled to the same privileges; see the notes at ▶HRB▶ Romans 8:17 and ▶HRB▶ Ephesians 2:13-18.

◀HRB▶ **Ephesians 3:7.** *Whereof I was made a minister* see the notes at ▶HRB▶ Ephesians 3:2.

According to the gift of the grace of God It was not by my own seeking or merit; it was a free gift.

Of the grace of God The sentiment is, that throughout it was a mere matter of grace that he was called into the ministry, and that so important an office was entrusted to him as that of bearing the gospel to the Gentiles.

By the effectual working of his power Not by any native inclination which I had to the gospel, and not by any power which I have put forth. It is by “the energy of his power;” compare notes, ▶HRB▶ Galatians 2:8. Locke understands this of the energy or power which God put forth in converting the Gentiles under his ministry. But it seems to me that it refers rather to the power which God put forth in the conversion of Paul himself, and putting him into the ministry. This is clear from the following verse. The meaning is, that such was his opposition to the gospel by nature, that nothing but the “energy of God” could overcome it, and that his conversion was to be traced to that alone.


⌘Ephesians 3:8. *Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints*

This is one of the class of expressions unique to Paul. The ordinary terms of language do not express the idea which he wishes to convey, and a word is therefore COINED to convey an idea more emphatically; compare the notes at ⌘2 Corinthians 4:17. The word used here — *ελαχιστοτερος* ⌘1647 — does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It is a comparative made from the superlative. Similar expressions are found, however, in later Greek writers; see Bloomfield and Rosenmuller for examples. The word means here, “who am incomparably the least of all the saints; or who am not worthy to be reckoned among the saints.” It is expressive of the deep sense which he had of the sinfulness of his past life; of his guilt in persecuting the church and the Saviour; and perhaps of his sense of his low attainments in piety; see the notes at ⌘1 Corinthians 15:9. Paul never could forget the guilt of his former life; never forget the time when he was engaged in persecuting the church of God.

The unsearchable riches of Christ On the word “riches,” as used by Paul, see the notes at ⌘Ephesians 1:7. The word rendered “unsearchable,” *ανεξιχνιαστος* ⌘421, occurs but once elsewhere in the New Testament (⌘Romans 11:33), where it is rendered “past finding out;” see the notes at that verse. It means that which cannot be “traced out,” or explored; which is inscrutable, or incomprehensible. The meaning here is, that there was a “sufficiency” in Christ which could not be traced out or explored. It was wholly incomprehensible. The fullness of the riches in him could not be appreciated. There is no more emphatic expression in the New Testament than this. It shows that the heart of the apostle was full of admiration of the sufficiency and glory that was in the Saviour; that he wanted words to express it; and that he considered it the highest honor to be permitted to tell the world that there were such riches in the Redeemer.

⌘Ephesians 3:9. *And to make all men see* In order that the whole human family might see the glory of God in the plan of salvation. Hitherto the revelation of his character and plans had been confined to the Jews. Now it was his design that all the race should be made acquainted with it.

What is the fellowship of the mystery Instead of “fellowship” here — *κοινωνια* ⌘284 — most MSS. and versions read *οικονομια* ⌘362 — “dispensation;” see Mill. This reading is adopted by Griesbach, Tittman, Rosenmuller, Koppe, and is regarded by most critics as being the genuine reading. The mistake might easily have been made by a transcriber. The

meaning then would be, “to enlighten all in respect to rite dispensation of this mystery;” that is, to cause all to understand the manner in which this great truth of the plan of salvation is communicated to people. If the word “fellowship” is to be retained, it means that this doctrine, or secret counsel of God, was now “common” to all believers. It was not to be confined to any class or rank of people. Locke renders it, “and to make all people perceive how this mystery comes now to be communicated to the world.” Dr. Whately (*Errors of Romanism*, chapter ii. section 1) renders it, the common participation of the mystery;” that is, of truths formerly unknown, and which could not be known by man’s unaided powers, but which were now laid open by the gracious dispensation of Divine Providence; no longer concealed, or confined to a few, but to be partaken of by all. The allusion, according to him, is to the mysteries of the ancient pagan religions; and he supposes that the apostle designs to contrast those “mysteries” with Christianity. In those “mysteries” there was a distinction between the initiated and uninitiated. There was a revelation to some of the worshippers, of certain holy secrets from which others were excluded. There were in some of the mysteries, as the Elensinian, “great and lesser” doctrines in which different persons were initiated. In strong contrast with these, the “great mystery” in Christianity was made known to all. It was concealed from none and there was no distinction made among those who were initiated. No truths which God had revealed were held back from any part, but there was a common participation by all. Christianity has no hidden truths for a part only of its friends; it has no “reserved” doctrines; it has no truths to be entrusted only to a sacred priesthood. Its doctrines are to be published to the wide world, and every follower of Christ is to be a partaker of all the benefits of the truths which Christ has revealed. It is difficult to determine which is the true reading, and it is not very important. The general sense is, that Paul felt himself called into the ministry in order that all people might understand now that salvation was free for all — a truth that had been concealed for ages. Bearing this great truth, he felt that he had a message of incalculable value to mankind, and he was desirous to go and proclaim it to the wide world. On the word “mystery,” see the notes on  Ephesians 1:9.

Hath been hid in God With God. It has been concealed in his bosom. The plan was formed, but it had not before been made known.

Who created all things This is plain enough; but it is not quite so plain why the declaration is introduced in this place. Locke and Rosenmuller suppose

that it refers to the new creation, and that the sense is, that God frames and manages this new creation wholly by Jesus Christ. But the expression contains a truth of larger import, and naturally conveys the idea that all things were made by God, and that this was only a part of his great and universal agency. The meaning is, that God formed all things, and that this purpose of extending salvation to the world was a part of his great plan, and was under his control.

By Jesus Christ As this stands in our common Greek text, as well as in our English version, there is a striking resemblance between the passage and that in ^{<5015>}Colossians 1:15,16. But the phrase is missing in the Vulgate, the Syriac, the Coptic, and in several of the ancient MSS. Mill remarks that it was probably inserted here by some transcriber from the parallel passage in ^{<5016>}Colossians 1:16; and it is rejected as an interpolation by Griesbach. It is not “very” material whether it be retained in this place or not, as the same sentiment is elsewhere abundantly taught; see ^{<4003>}John 1:3; ^{<5016>}Colossians 1:16; ^{<5002>}Hebrews 1:2. If it is to be retained, the sentiment is that the Son of God — the second person of the Trinity — was the great and immediate agent in the creation of the universe.

^{<4110>}**Ephesians 3:10.** *To the intent* Greek, “that” ἵνα ^{<2443>}. The sense is, that it was with this design, or that this was the purpose for which all things were made. One grand purpose in the creation of the universe was, that the wisdom of God might be clearly shown by the church. It was not enough to evince it by the formation of the sun, the stars, the earth, the seas, the mountains, the floods. It was not enough to show it by the creation of intelligent beings, the formation of immortal minds on earth, and the various ranks of the angelic world. There were views of the divine character which could be obtained only in connection with the redemption of the world. Hence the universe was created, and man was made upon the earth, not merely to illustrate the divine perfections in the work of creation, but in a still more illustrious manner in the work of redemption. And hence the deep interest which the angelic hosts have ever evinced in the salvation of man.

That now the word “now” — νῦν ^{<3568>} — is missing in the Vulgate, Syriac, and Arabic; and is omitted by many of the fathers; see Koppe. If it is to be retained, it means that this display is to be made under the gospel. “Now, since the Messiah is come; now, under the Christian dispensation, this revelation is to be made to distant worlds.”

Unto the principalities and powers To the angelic hosts — the intelligent beings that surround the throne of God; see the notes at ^{<401>}Ephesians 1:21.

By the church By the incarnation of the Redeemer to save it; by I the mercy shown to it; by the wise arrangement made to recover his people from the fall; and by all the graces and beauties which that redeemed church will evince on earth and in heaven.

The manifold wisdom of God Literally, “much-variegated.” It means the “greatly-diversified wisdom.” It does not mean merely that there was “great” wisdom, but that the wisdom shown was diversified and varied; like changing, Variegated colors. There was a “beautiful and well-ordered variety of dispensations” toward that church, all of which tended to evince the wisdom of God. It is like a landscape, or a panoramic view passing before the mind, with a great variety of phases and aspects, all tending to excite admiration. In the redemption of the church, there is not merely one form or one phase of wisdom. It is wisdom, ever-varying, ever-beautiful. There was wisdom manifested when the plan was formed; wisdom in the selection of the Redeemer; wisdom in the incarnation; wisdom in the atonement; wisdom in the means of renewing the heart, and sanctifying the soul; wisdom in the various dispensations by which the church is sanctified, guided, and brought to glory. The wisdom thus shown is like the ever-varying beauty of changing clouds, when the sun is reflected on them at evening. Each aspect is full of beauty. One bright; cloud differs in appearance from others; yet all tend to fill the mind with elevated views of God.

^{<401>}**Ephesians 3:11.** *According to the eternal purpose* see the note ^{<4004>}Ephesians 1:4. Literally, “the purpose of ages,” or of eternity. Locke, Chandler, and Whitby render this, “according to that disposition or arrangement of the ages which he made in Jesus Christ, or through him.” The object of such an interpretation seems to be to avoid the doctrine that God had a purpose or plan in the salvation of people, and hence such expositors suppose it refers to the arrangement of the “ages” of the world by which the plan of redemption was introduced. On the word rendered here as “purpose” — ^{<4286>}προθεσις — see the notes at ^{<4188>}Romans 8:28; compare ^{<4011>}Ephesians 1:11. It is rendered “showbread” — the bread of setting before,” ^{<4004>}Matthew 12:4; ^{<4025>}Mark 2:26; ^{<4004>}Luke 6:4; ^{<4002>}Hebrews 9:2; “purpose,” ^{<4112>}Acts 11:23; 27:13; ^{<4188>}Romans 8:28; 9:11;

^{<4011>}Ephesians 1:11; 3:11; ^{<5009>}2 Timothy 1:9; 3:10. It does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. In most of these cases it refers to the “purpose or intention” of God; in not a single case does it mean “arrangement or disposition” in any sense like that of making an arrangement of “ages” or periods of the world; and the interpretation proposed by Whitby, Locke, Clarke, and others, is wholly at variance with the settled use of the word. The word rendered “eternal” — **αιωνων** ^{<165>} — may mean “ages;” but it also most usually means eternity; see ^{<4011>}Ephesians 3:9. Here it may mean “the purpose of ages;” i.e., the purpose formed in past ages; but the word is most commonly used in the New Testament in the sense of “ever, and forever;” compare the following places, where it is so rendered in our common version, and beyond a doubt correctly; ^{<4063>}Matthew 6:13; 21:19; ^{<4029>}Mark 3:29; 11:14; ^{<4033>}Luke 1:33,55; ^{<4044>}John 4:14; 6:51,58; 8:35; 14:16; ^{<4025>}Romans 1:25; 9:5; 11:36; 16:27; ^{<4009>}2 Corinthians 9:9; 11:31; ^{<4005>}Galatians 1:5. The fair meaning of the passage here is, that God had formed a plan which was “eternal” in reference to the salvation of people; that that plan had reference to the Lord Jesus; and that it was now executed by the gospel. It is impossible to get away from the idea that God has a “plan.” It is too often affirmed in the Scriptures, and is too consonant with our reason to be disputed. It is as “undesirable” as it is impossible to escape from that idea. Who could respect or honor an intelligent being that had no plan, no purpose, no intention, and that did all things by caprice and hap-hazard? If God has any plan, it must be eternal. He has no new schemes; he has no intentions which he did not always have.

Which he purposed Literally, “which he made.”

In Christ Jesus With reference to him; or which were to be executed through him. The eternal plan had respect to him, and was to be executed by his coming and work.

^{<4012>}**Ephesians 3:12.** *We have boldness* The word used here — **παρρησια** ^{<3954>} — means, properly, boldness of speaking; ^{<4004>}2 Corinthians 7:4; ^{<4026>}John 7:26; ^{<4043>}Acts 4:13,29,31. Here it seems to mean “freedom of utterance;” and the idea is, that we may come to God now in prayer with confidence through the Lord Jesus; see ^{<4046>}Hebrews 4:16.

And access see notes ^{<4018>}Ephesians 2:18.

By the faith of him By faith in him. The sense is, that we may now come confidently and boldly to the throne of grace for mercy in the name of the Redeemer. Boldness is not rashness; and faith is not presumption; but we may come without hesitating, and with an assurance that our prayers will be heard.

Ephesians 3:13. *Wherefore I desire that ye faint not* The connection here is this. Paul was then a prisoner at Rome. He had been made such in consequence of his efforts to diffuse the Christian religion among the Gentiles; see the notes at **Ephesians 3:1**. His zeal in this cause, and the opinions which he held on this subject, had roused the wrath of the Jews, and led to all the calamities which he was now suffering. Of that the Ephesians, he supposes, were aware. It was natural that they should be distressed at his sufferings, for all his privations were endured on their account. But here he tells them not to be troubled and disheartened. He was indeed suffering; but he was reconciled to it, and they should be also, since it was promoting their welfare. The word rendered “faint” — **ενυκακειω** ^{<5681>} — means literally, to turn out “a coward,” or to lose one’s courage; then to be fainthearted, etc.; notes, **2 Corinthians 4:1**. It is rendered “faint” in **Luke 18:1**; **2 Corinthians 4:1,16**; **Ephesians 3:13**, and “weary” in **Galatians 6:9**; **2 Thessalonians 3:13**. It does not elsewhere occur. It is rendered here by Locke “dismayed.” Koppe supposes it means that they should not suppose that the Christian religion was vain and false because he was suffering so much from his countrymen on account of it. But it rather means that they might be in danger of being discouraged by the fact that “he” was enduring so much. They might become disheartened in their attachment to a system of religion which exposed its friends to such calamities. Paul tells them that this ought not to follow. They were to be profited by all his sufferings, and they should, therefore, hold fast to a religion which was attended with so many benefits to them — though he should suffer.

Which is your glory Which tends to your honor and welfare. You have occasion to rejoice that you have a friend who is willing thus to suffer for you; you have occasion to rejoice in all the benefits which will result to you from, his trials in your behalf.

Ephesians 3:14. *For this cause* Some suppose that this is a resumption of what he had commenced saying in **Ephesians 3:1**, but which had been interrupted by a long parenthesis. So Bloomfield explains

it. But it seems to me more probable that he refers to what immediately precedes. “Wherefore, that the great work may be carried on, and that the purposes of these my sufferings may be answered in your benefit and glory, I bow my knees to God, and pray to him.”

I bow my knees I pray. The usual, and the proper posture of prayer is to kneel; Compare ^{<4183>}2 Chronicles 6:13; ^{<2760>}Daniel 6:10; ^{<4222>}Luke 22:21; ^{<4486>}Acts 7:60; 9:40; 20:26; 21:5. It is a posture which indicates reverence, and should, therefore, be assumed when we come before God. It has been an unhappy thing that the custom of kneeling in public worship has ever been departed from in the Christian churches.

Unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ To whom, undoubtedly, prayer should ordinarily be addressed. But this does not make it improper to address the Lord Jesus in prayer; see the notes on ^{<4402>}Acts 1:24; 7:59,60

^{<4985>}**Ephesians 3:15.** *Of whom the whole family* This expression “of whom,” may refer either to “the Father,” or to the Lord Jesus. Commentators have been divided in opinion in regard to it. Bloomfield, Chandler, Erasmus, Koppe, and some others, refer it to the Father. Locke, Doddridge, Calvin, and some others, refer it to the Lord Jesus. This is the more natural interpretation. The whole “family of God,” means all his children; and the idea is, that they all bear the same name, derived from the Redeemer; all are Christians. No matter where they are, in heaven or in earth; no matter from what nation they are converted, whether Jews or Gentiles, they all have one name, and one Redeemer, and all belong to one family; see ^{<4046>}Ephesians 4:4-6.

In heaven Spirits of just people made perfect. It does not properly refer to angels, for he is not speaking of them but of the family of the redeemed. If the phrase “in heaven,” could “ever” be taken to denote the Jews as contradistinguished from the Gentiles, I should think that this was one of the places. Many expositors have supposed that it is frequently so used in this Epistle, but I see no clear evidence of it, and no instance where it seems very probable, unless this should be one. And it is not necessary here, for it may mean “all” the redeemed, whether in heaven or earth, though the connection would seem rather to have suggested a reference to the Jews and the Gentiles. An expression similar to this occurs in ^{<5023>}Colossians 1:20. “To reconcile all things to himself, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.” The passage before us is one that is commonly explained by a reference to Jewish opinions. The Jews were

accustomed to call the angels in heaven God's "upper family," and his people on earth his "lower family." See the passages cited from the rabbinical writers in Wetstein.

Is named This means substantially the same as is. They are all of one family. They all have one father, and are all of one community. The expression is taken from the custom in a family, where all bear the name of the "head" of the family; and the meaning is, that all in heaven and on earth are united under one head, and constitute one community. It does not mean that all are "called" by the same name, or that the name "Christian" is given to the angels, but that they all pertain to the same community, and constitute the same great and glorious brotherhood. Part are in heaven, near his throne; part in distant worlds; part are angels of light; part redeemed and happy spirits; part are in the church on earth; but they are all united as one family, and have one head and Father. This glorious family will yet be gathered together in heaven, and will encompass the throne of their common Father rejoicing.

4186 *Ephesians 3:16.* *According to the riches of his glory* According to the glorious abundance of his mercy; see **3049** *Philippians 4:19*. Out of those stores of rich grace which can never be exhausted. The word "riches," so often used by Paul, denotes "abundance," and the idea here is, that his grace was inexhaustible and ample for all their needs.

To be strengthened with might To be powerfully strengthened. That is, to give you abundant strength to bear trials; to perform your duties; to glorify his name.

In the inner man In the heart, the mind, the soul; see the notes on **4172** *Romans 7:22*. The "body" needs to be strengthened every day. In like manner the soul needs constant supplies of grace. Piety needs to be constantly invigorated, or it withers and decays. Every Christian needs grace given each day to enable him to bear trials, to resist temptation, to discharge his duty, to live a life of faith.

4187 *Ephesians 3:17.* *That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith* see the notes, **4122** *Ephesians 2:22*. Expressions like this often occur in the Scriptures, where God is said to dwell in us, and we are said to be the temples of the Holy Spirit; see the notes on **4143** *John 14:23*; **4169** *1 Corinthians 6:19*.

That ye being rooted Firmly established — as a tree is whose roots strike deep, and extend afar. The meaning is, that his love should be as firm in our hearts, as a tree is in the soil, whose roots strike deep into the earth.

And grounded τεθεμελιωμενοι ^{<231>} — “founded” — as a building is on a foundation. The word is taken from architecture, where a firm foundation is laid, and the meaning is, that he wished them to be as firm in the love of Christ, as a building is that rests on a solid basis.

In love In love to the Redeemer — perhaps also in love to each other — and to all. Love was the great principle of the true religion, and the apostle wished that they might be fully settled in that.

<488> Ephesians 3:18. *May be able to comprehend with all saints* That all others with you may be able to understand this. It was his desire that others, as well as they, might appreciate the wonders of redemption.

What is the breadth, and length, ... It has been doubted to what this refers. Locke says it refers to the mystery of calling the Gentiles as well as the Jews. Chandler supposes there is an allusion in all this to the temple at Ephesus. It was one of the wonders of the world — exciting admiration by its length, and height, and dimensions in every way, as well as by its extraordinary riches and splendor. In allusion to this, the object of so much admiration and pride to the Ephesians, he supposes that Paul desires that they should become fully acquainted with the extent and beauty of the spiritual temple. But I do not see that there is clear evidence that there is allusion here to the temple at Ephesus. It seems rather to be the language of a heart that was full of the subject, and impressed with its greatness; and the words are employed to denote the “dimensions” of that love, and are similar to what would be meant if he had said, “that you may know how “large,” or how “great” is that love.” The apostle evidently meant to express the strongest sense of the greatness of the love of the Redeemer, and to show in the most emphatic manner how much he wished that they should fully understand it. On the phrase “depth and height,” compare notes on **<489> Romans 8:39.**

<489> Ephesians 3:19. *And to know the love of Christ* The love of Christ toward us; the immensity of redeeming love. It is not merely the love which he showed for the Gentiles in calling them into his kingdom, which is here referred to; it is the love which is shown for the lost world in giving himself to die. This love is often referred to in the New Testament, and is declared

to surpass all other which has ever been evinced; see the notes on ^{<487>}Romans 5:7,8; ^{<4513>}John 15:13. To know this; to feel this; to have a lively sense of it, is one of the highest privileges of the Christian. Nothing will so much excite gratitude in our hearts; nothing will prompt us so much to a life of self-denial; nothing will make us so benevolent and so dead to the world; see the notes on ^{<4054>}2 Corinthians 5:14.

Which passeth knowledge There “seems” to be a slight contradiction here in expressing a wish to know what cannot be known, or in a desire that they should understand that which cannot be understood. But it is the language of a man whose heart was full to overflowing. He had a deep sense of the love of Christ, and he expressed a wish that they should understand it. Suddenly he has such an apprehension of it, that he says it is indeed infinite. No one can attain to a full view of it. It had no limit. It was unlike anything which had ever been evinced before. It was love which led the Son of God to become incarnate; to leave the heavens: to be a man of sorrows; to be reviled and persecuted; to be put to death in the most shameful manner — on a cross. Who could understand that? Where else had there been anything like that? What was there with which to compare it? What was there by which it could be illustrated? And how could it be fully understood Yet “something” of it might be seen, known, felt; and the apostle desired that as far as possible they should understand that great love which the Lord Jesus had manifested for a dying world.

That ye might be filled with all the fulness of God What an expression! How rich and glorious Who can comprehend all that it implies? Let us inquire into its meaning. There “may” be here in these verses an allusion to the “temple.” The apostle had spoken of their being founded in love, and of surveying the length, and breadth, and depth, and height of that love, as of a vast and splendid edifice, and he now desires that those whom he addressed might be pervaded or filled with the indwelling of God. The language here is cumulative, and is full of meaning and richness.

(1) They were to be “full of God.” That is, he would dwell in them.

(2) They were to be filled with “the fulness of God” — το ^{<3588>} πληρωμα ^{<4138>} του ^{<3588>} Θεου ^{<2316>}. On the word rendered “fulness,” see the notes on ^{<4010>}Ephesians 1:10,23. It is a favorite word with Paul. Thus, he speaks of the “fulness” of the Gentiles, ^{<45125>}Romans 11:25; the “fulness” of time, ^{<4004>}Galatians 4:4; the fulness of him that filleth all in all, ^{<40123>}Ephesians 1:23; the “fulness” of Christ, ^{<40113>}Ephesians 4:13; the “fulness” of the Godhead in

Christ, ^{<5019>}Colossians 1:19; 2:9. It means here, “that you may have the richest measures of divine consolation and of the divine presence; that you may partake of the entire enjoyment of God in the most ample measure in which he bestows his favors on his people.”

(3) It was to be with “all” the fulness of God; not with partial and stinted measures of his gracious presence, but with “all” which he ever bestows. Religion is not a name. It is not a matter of form. It is not a trifle. It is the richest, best gift of God to man. It ennobles our nature. It more clearly teaches us our true dignity than all the profound discoveries which people can make in science; for none of them will ever fill us with the fulness of God. Religion is spiritual, elevating, pure, Godlike. We dwell with God; walk with God; live with God; commune with God; are like God. We become partakers of the divine nature (^{<6004>}2 Peter 1:4); in rank we are associated with angels; in happiness and purity we are associated with God!

^{<483>}**Ephesians 3:20.** *Now unto him* It is not uncommon for Paul to utter an ascription of praise in the midst of an argument; see ^{<495>}Romans 9:5; 11:36; ^{<505>}Galatians 1:5. Here his mind is full of the subject; and in view of the fact that God communicates to his people such blessings — that they may become filled with all his fulness, he desires that praise should be given to him.

That is able to do see the notes, ^{<5625>}Romans 16:25.

Exceeding abundantly The compound word used here occurs only in this place, and in 1 Thessalonians 3:10; 5:13. It means, to an extent which we cannot express.

Above all that we ask or think More than all that we can desire in our prayers; more than all that we can conceive; see the notes on ^{<411>}1 Corinthians 2:9.

According to the power that worketh in us The exertion of that same power can accomplish for us more than we can now conceive.

^{<482>}**Ephesians 3:21.** *Unto him be glory* see the notes, ^{<5627>}Romans 16:27.

In the church Or, by the church; ^{<480>}Ephesians 3:10. The church was to be the instrument by which the glory of God would be shown; and it was by the church that his praise would be celebrated.

Throughout all ages, world without end There is a richness and amplification of language here which shows that his heart was full of the subject, and that it was difficult to find words to express his conceptions. It means, in the strongest sense, FOREVER. It is one of “the apostle’s self-invented phrases” (Bloomfield); and Blackwall says that no version can fully express the meaning. It is literally, “Unto all generations of the age of ages,” or “unto all the generations of the eternity of eternities, or the eternity of ages.” It is the language of a heart FULL of the love of God, and desiring that he might be praised without ceasing forever and ever.

REMARKS ON EPHESIANS 3

1. It is a great and glorious truth that the offers of the gospel are made to us, who are by nature Gentiles; and that those offers are confined to no class or condition of people — to no nation or tribe; ~~see~~ Ephesians 3:1-6. This truth had been concealed for ages. The Jews regarded themselves as a unique people, and as exclusively the favorites of Heaven. The great effort has been made everywhere to show that there was a favored class of people — a class whom God regarded with special affection, on account of their birth, or rank, or nation, or wealth, or complexion. In one nation, there has been a distinction of “caste” carefully kept up from age to age, and sustained by all the power of the priesthood and the laws; and it has been held that that one class was the favorite of Heaven, and that every other was overlooked or despised. In another nation, it has been held that the services of an illustrious ancestry made a difference among people, and that this fact was to be regarded, even in religion. In another, complexion has made a difference; and the feeling has insensibly grown up that one class were the favorites of Heaven, because they had a skin not colored like others, and that those not thus favored might be doomed to hopeless toil and servitude. In another, the attempt is made to create such a distinction by wealth; and it is felt that the rich are the favorites of Heaven. In all these cases, there is the secret feeling that in virtue of rank, or blood, or property, one class are the objects of divine interest, more than others; and that the same plan of salvation is not needed for them which is required for the poor, for the ignorant, and for the slave. The gospel regards all people as on a level; offers the same salvation to all; and offers it on the same terms. This is one of its glories; and for this we should love it. It meets man as he is — as everywhere a fallen and a ruined being — and provides a plan adapted to raise all to the glories of the same heaven.

2. Humility becomes us (~~CHR~~Ephesians 3:8). Paul felt that he was the least of all saints. He remembered his former life. He recalled the time when he persecuted the church. He felt that he was not worthy to be enrolled in that society which he had so greatly injured. If Paul was humble, who should not be? Who, since his time, has equaled his ardor, his zeal, his attainments in the divine life? Yet the remembrance of his former life served always to keep him humble, and operated as a check on all the tendencies to pride in his bosom. So it should be with us — with all Christians. There has been enough in our past lives to make us humble, if we would recall it, and to make us feel that we are not worthy to be enrolled among the saints. One has been an infidel; one licentious; one intemperate; one rash, revengeful, passionate; one has been proud and ambitious; one has been false, dishonest, faithless; all have had hearts opposed to God, alienated from good, and prone to evil; and there is not a Christian in the world who will not find enough in his past life to make him humble, if he will examine himself — enough to make him feel that he deserves not even the lowest place among the saints. So we shall feel if we look over our lives since we made a profession of religion. The painful conviction will come over our souls, that we have lived so far from God, and done so little in his cause, that we are not worthy of the lowest place among the blessed.

3. It is a privilege to preach the gospel; ~~CHR~~Ephesians 3:8. So Paul felt. It was an honor of which he felt that he was by no means worthy. It was proof of the favor of God toward him that he was permitted to do it. It is a privilege — an honor — to preach the gospel, anywhere and to any class of people. It is an honor to be permitted to preach in Christian lands; it is an honor to preach among the pagan. It is an honor far above that of conquerors; and he who does it will win a brighter and more glorious crown than he who goes forth to obtain glory by dethroning kings, and laying nations waste. The warrior goes with the sword in one hand, and the torch in the other. His path is marked with blood, and with smouldering ruins. He treads among the slain; and the music of his march is made up of dying groans, and the shrieks of widows and orphans. Yet he is honored, and his name is blazoned abroad; he is crowned with the laurel, and triumphal arches are reared, and monuments are erected to perpetuate his fame. The man who carries the gospel goes for a different purpose. He is the minister of peace. He goes to tell of salvation. He fires no city; lays waste no field; robs no one of a home, no wife of a husband, no child of a father, no sister of a brother; — he goes to elevate the intellect, to mould

the heart to virtue, to establish schools and colleges; to promote temperance, industry, and chastity; to wipe away tears, and to tell of heaven. "His" course is marked by intelligence and order; by peace and purity; by the joy of the domestic circle, and the happiness of a virtuous fire-side; by consolation on the bed of pain, and by the hope of heaven that cheers the dying. Who would not rather be a preacher of the gospel than a blood-stained warrior? Who would not rather have the wreath that shall encircle the brows of Paul, and Schwartz, and Martin, and Brainerd, than the laurels of Alexander and Caesar?

4. There is ample fullness in the plan of salvation by the Redeemer; ~~URS~~ Ephesians 3:8. In Christ there is unsearchable riches. None can understand the fulness that there is in him; none can exhaust it. Millions, and hundreds of million, have been saved by the fulness of his merits; and still those merits are as ample as ever. The sun in the heavens has shone for 6,000 years, and has shed light and comfort on countless million; but his beams are not exhausted or diminished in splendor. Today, while I write — this beautiful, calm, sweet day — (June 24, 1840) his beams are as bright, as rich, as full, as they were when they were shed on Eden. So of the Sun of righteousness. Millions have been enlightened by his beams; but today they are as full, and rich, and glorious, as they were when the first ray from that sun reached the benighted mind of a penitent sinner. And that fulness is not to be exhausted. No matter how many partake of his abundance; no matter how many darkened minds are enlightened; no matter though nation after nation comes and partakes of his fulness, yet there is no approach to exhaustion. The sun in the heavens may waste his fires and burn out, and become a dark orb, diffusing horror over a cold and cheerless world; but not so with the Sun of righteousness. That will shine on in glory forever and ever; and the last penitent sinner on earth who comes to partake of the riches of the grace of Christ, shall find it as full and as free as did the first who sought pardon through his blood. Oh, the UNSEARCHABLE RICHES of Christ! Who can understand this? Who can grow weary in its contemplation?

5. There is no good reason why any sinner should be lost; ~~URS~~ Ephesians 3:8. If the merits of the Saviour were limited; if his arm were a feeble human arm; if he died only for a part, and if his merit were already well-nigh exhausted, we might begin to despair. But it is not so. The riches of his grace are unbounded and inexhaustible. And why then does the sinner die? I can answer. He does like the man who expires of thirst while

fountains bubble and streams flow all around him; like him who is starving amidst trees loaded with fruit; like him who is dying of fever in the midst of medicines that would at once restore him; like him who holds his breath and dies while the balmy air of heaven — pure, full, and free — floats all around him. If a man thus dies, who is to blame? If a man goes down to hell from lands where the gospel is preached, whose is the fault? It is not because the merits of Christ are limited; it is not because they are exhausted.

6. The church is designed to accomplish a most important purpose in the manifestation of the divine glory and perfections; ^{<BIB>}Ephesians 3:10. It is by that that his great-wisdom is shown. It is by that entirely that his mercy is displayed; ^{<BIB>}Ephesians 2:7. His power is shown in the creation and support of the worlds; his goodness in the works of creation and Providence; his truth in his promises and threatenings; his greatness and majesty are everywhere displayed in the universe which he has brought into being. His mercy is shown in the church; and there alone. Angels in heaven not having sinned, have had no occasion for its exercise; and angels that are fallen have had no offer of pardon. Throughout the wide universe there has been so far as we know, no exercise of mercy but in the church. Hence, the interest which the angelic beings feel in the work of redemption. Hence, they desire to look into these things, and to see more of the height and depth and length and breadth of the love of God evinced in the work of redemption. Hence the church is to be honored forever as the means of making known to distant worlds the way in which God shows mercy to rebellious creatures. It is honor enough for one world thus to be the sole means of making known to the universe one of the attributes of God; and while other worlds may contain more proofs of his power and greatness, it is enough for ours that it shows to distant worlds how he can exercise compassion.

7. All tribulation and affliction may be intended to do some good, and may benefit others; ^{<BIB>}Ephesians 3:13. Paul felt that his sufferings were for the “glory” — the welfare and honor of the Gentiles, in whose cause he was suffering. He was then a prisoner at Rome. He was permitted no longer to go abroad from land to land to preach the gospel. How natural would it have been for him to be desponding, and to feel that he was leading a useless life. But he did not feel thus. He felt that in some Way he might be doing good. He was suffering in a good cause, and his trials had been brought on him by the appointment of God. He gave himself to writing

letters; he talked with all who would come to him (~~483~~ Acts 28:30,31), and he expected to accomplish something by his example in his sufferings. The sick, the afflicted, and the imprisoned often feel that they are useless. They are laid aside from public and active life, and they feel that they are living in vain. But it is not so. The long imprisonment of John Bunyan — so mysterious to him and to his friends — was the means of producing the Pilgrim's Progress, now translated into more than twenty languages, and already blessed to the salvation of thousands. The meekness, and patience, and kindness of a Christian on a bed of pain, may do more for the honor of religion than he could do in a life of health. It shows the sustaining power of the gospel; and this is much. It is “worth” much suffering to show to a world what the gospel can do in supporting the soul in times of trial; and he who is imprisoned or persecuted; he who lies month after month or year after year on a bed of languishing, may do more for the honor of religion than by many years of active life.

8. There is but one family among the friends of God; ~~485~~ Ephesians 3:15. They all have one Father, and all are brethren. In heaven and on earth they belong to the same family, and worship the same God. Let Christians, therefore, first love one another. Let them lay aside all contention and strife. Let them feel that they are brethren — that though they belong to different denominations, and are called by different names, yet they belong to the same family, and are united under the same glorious head. Let them, secondly, realize how highly they are honored. They belong to the same family as the angels of light and the spirits of just men made perfect. It is an honor to belong to such a family; an honor to be a Christian. Oh, if we saw this in its true light, how much more honorable would it be to belong to this “family” than to belong to the families of the great on earth, and to have our names enrolled with nobles and with kings!

9. Let us seek to know more of the love of Christ in our redemption — to understand more of the extent of that love which he evinced for us; ~~486~~ Ephesians 3:16-19. It is worth our study. It will reward our efforts. There are few Christians — if there are any — who understand the richness and fulness of the gospel of Christ; few who have such elevated views as they might have and should have of the glory of that gospel. It is wonderful that they who profess to love the Lord Jesus do not study that system more, and desire more to know the height, and depth, and length, and breadth of the love of Christ. True, it passes knowledge. We cannot hope fully to fathom it in this world. But we may know more of it than we do.

We may aspire to being filled with all the fullness of God. We may long for it; pant for it; strive for it; pray for it — and we shall not strive in vain. Though we shall not attain all we wish; though there will be an infinity beyond what we can understand in this world, yet there will be enough attained to reward all our efforts, and to fill us with love and joy and peace. The love of God our Saviour is indeed an illimitable ocean; but we may see enough of it in this world to lead us to adore and praise God with overflowing hearts.

NOTES ON EPHESIANS 4

This chapter (Ephesians 4) is the commencement of the “practical” part of the Epistle, and is made up, like the remaining chapters, of various exhortations. It is in accordance with the usual habit of Paul to conduct an “argument” in his epistles, and then to enforce various practical duties, either growing out of the argument which he had maintained, or, more commonly, adapted to some particular state of things in the church to which he wrote. The points of exhortation in this chapter are, in general, the following:

I. An exhortation to unity; ^{<400>}Ephesians 4:1-6. He entreats them to walk worthy of their vocation (^{<400>}Ephesians 4:1): shows them how it could be done, or what he meant; and that, in order to that, they should show meekness and kindness (^{<400>}Ephesians 4:3), and particularly exhorts them to unity (^{<400>}Ephesians 4:3); for they had one God, one Saviour, one baptism, one religion; ^{<400>}Ephesians 4:4-6.

II. He shows them that God had made ample provision for his people, that they might be sound in the faith, and in unity of life and of doctrine, and need not be driven about with every wind of opinion; ^{<400>}Ephesians 4:7-16. He assures them that to every Christian is given grace in the Redeemer adapted to his circumstances (^{<400>}Ephesians 4:7); that the Lord Jesus ascended to heaven to obtain gifts for his people (^{<400>}Ephesians 4:8-10); that he had given apostles prophets and evangelists, for the very purpose of imparting instruction, and confirming them in the faith of the gospel (^{<400>}Ephesians 4:11,12); that this was in order that they might attain to the highest elevation in Christian knowledge and piety (^{<400>}Ephesians 4:13); and particularly that they might not be driven to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine; ^{<400>}Ephesians 4:14-16.

III. Having these arrangements made for their knowledge and piety, he exhorts them not to live as the pagan around them lived; But to show that they were under a better influence; ^{<400>}Ephesians 4:17-24. Their understanding was darkened, and they were alienated from the life of God, or true religion (^{<400>}Ephesians 4:18); they were past feeling, and were given over to every form of sensuality; ^{<400>}Ephesians 4:19. The Ephesians, however, had been taught a different thing (^{<400>}Ephesians 4:20,21), and the

apostle exhorts them to lay aside everything pertaining to their former course of life, and to become wholly conformed to the principles of the new man; ^{<402>}Ephesians 4:22-24.

IV. He exhorts them to perform particular Christian duties, and to put away certain evils, of which they and all others were in danger; ^{<405>}Ephesians 4:25-32. In particular, he entreats them to avoid lying (^{<405>}Ephesians 4:25); anger (^{<405>}Ephesians 4:26); theft (^{<405>}Ephesians 4:28); corrupt and corrupting conversation (^{<402>}Ephesians 4:29); grieving the Holy, Spirit (^{<403>}Ephesians 4:30); bitterness, evil-speaking, and malice (^{<403>}Ephesians 4:31); and entreats them to manifest in their conversation with each other a spirit of kindness and forgiveness; ^{<402>}Ephesians 4:32.

^{<401>}**Ephesians 4:1.** *I, therefore* In view of the great and glorious truths which God has revealed, and of the grace which he has manifested toward you who are Gentiles. See the previous chapters. The sense of the word “therefore” — **οὖν** ^{<376>} — in this place, is, “Such being your exalted privileges; since God has done so much for you; since he has revealed for you such a glorious system; since he has bestowed on you the honor of calling you into his kingdom, and making you partakers of his mercy, I entreat you to live in accordance with these elevated privileges, and to show your sense of his goodness by devoting your all to his service.” The force of the word “I,” they would all feel. It was the appeal and exhortation of the founder of their church — of their spiritual father — of one who had endured much for them, and who was now in bonds on account of his devotion to the welfare of the Gentile world.

The prisoner of the Lord Margin, “in.” It means, that he was now a prisoner, or in confinement “in the cause” of the Lord; and he regarded himself as having been made a prisoner because the Lord had so willed and ordered it. He did not feel particularly that he was the prisoner of Nero; he was bound and kept because the “Lord” willed it, and because it was in his service; see the notes on ^{<401>}Ephesians 3:1.

Beseech you that ye walk worthy That you live as becomes those who have been called in this manner into the kingdom of God. The word “walk” is often used to denote “life, conduct,” etc.; see notes on ^{<4012>}Romans 4:12; 6:4; ^{<4017>}2 Corinthians 5:7.

Of the vocation Of the “calling” — **της** ^{<358>} **κλησεως** ^{<2821>}. This word properly means “a call,” or “an invitation” — as to a banquet. Hence, it

means that divine invitation or calling by which Christians are introduced into the privileges of the gospel. The word is translated “calling” in ~~612~~Romans 11:29; ~~602~~1 Corinthians 1:26; 7:20; ~~408~~Ephesians 1:18; 4:1,4; ~~304~~Philippians 3:14; ~~301~~2 Thessalonians 1:11; ~~500~~2 Timothy 1:9; ~~881~~Hebrews 3:1; ~~600~~2 Peter 1:10. It does not occur elsewhere. The sense of the word, and the agency employed in calling us, are well expressed in the Westminster Shorter Catechism. “Effectual calling is the work of God’s Spirit, whereby convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he doth persuade and enable us to embrace Jesus Christ freely offered to us in the gospel.” This “calling or vocation” is through the agency of the Holy Spirit, and is his appropriate work on the human heart. It consists essentially in influencing the mind to turn to God, or to enter into his kingdom. It is the exertion of “so much” influence on the mind as is necessary to secure the turning of the sinner to God. In this all Christians are agreed, though there have been almost endless disputes about the actual influence exerted, and the mode in which the Spirit acts on the mind. Some suppose it is by “moral persuasion;” some by physical power; some by an act of creation; some by inclining the mind to exert its proper powers in a right way, and to turn to God. What is the precise agency employed perhaps we are not to expect to be able to decide; see ~~488~~John 3:8. The great, the essential point is held, if it be maintained that it is by the agency of the Holy Spirit that the result is secured — and this I suppose to be held by all evangelical Christians. But though it is by the agency of the Holy Spirit, we are not to suppose that it is without the employment of “means.” It is not literally like the act of creation. It is preceded and attended with means adapted to the end; means which are almost as various as the individuals who are “called” into the kingdom of God. Among those means are the following:

(1) “Preaching.” Probably more are called into the kingdom by this means than any other. It is “God’s great ordinance for the salvation of men.” It is eminently suited for it. The “pulpit” has higher advantages for acting on the mind than any other means of affecting people. The truths that are dispensed; the sacredness of the place; the peace and quietness of the sanctuary; and the appeals to the reason, the conscience, and the heart — all are suited to affect people, and to bring them to reflection. The Spirit makes use of the word “preached,” but in a great variety of ways. Sometimes many are impressed simultaneously; sometimes the same truth

affects one mind while others are unmoved; and sometimes truth reaches the heart of a sinner which he has heard a hundred times before, without being interested. The Spirit acts with sovereign power, and by laws which have never yet been traced out.

(2) The events of Providence are used to call people into his kingdom. God appeals to people by laying them on a bed of pain, or by requiring them to follow a friend in the still and mournful procession to the grave. They feel that they must die, and they are led to ask the question whether they are prepared. Much fewer are affected in this way than we should suppose would be the case; but still there are many, in the aggregate, who can trace their hope of heaven to a fit of sickness, or to the death of a friend.

(3) Conversation is one of the means by which sinners are called into the kingdom of God. In some states of mind, where the Spirit has prepared the soul like mellow ground prepared for the seed, a few moments' conversation, or a single remark, will do more to arrest the attention than much preaching.

(4) Reading is often the means of calling people into the kingdom. The Bible is the great means — and if we can get people to read that, we have very cheering indications that they will be converted. The profligate Earl of Rochester was awakened and led to the Saviour by reading a chapter in Isaiah. And who can estimate the number of those who have been converted by reading Baxter's Call to the Unconverted; Alleine's Alarm; the Dairyman's Daughter; or the Shepherd of Salisbury Plain? He does "good" who places a good book in the way of a sinner. That mother or sister is doing good, and making the conversion of a son or brother probable, who puts a Bible in his chest when he goes to sea, or in his trunk when he goes on a journey. Never should a son be allowed to go from home without one. The time will come when, far away from home, he will read it. He will read it when his mind is pensive and tender, and the Spirit may bear the truth to his heart for his conversion.

(5) The Spirit calls people into the kingdom of Christ by presiding over, and directing in some unseen manner their own reflections, or the operations of their own minds.

In some way unknown to us, he turns the thoughts to the past life; recalls forgotten deeds and plans; makes long past sins rise to remembrance; and overwhelms the mind with conscious guilt from the memory of crime. He

holds this power over the soul; and it is among the most mighty and mysterious of all the influences that he has on the heart. “Sometimes” — a man can hardly tell how — the mind will be pensive, sad, melancholy; then conscious of guilt; then alarmed at the future. Often, by sudden transitions, it will be changed from the frivolous to the serious, and from the pleasant to the sad; and often, unexpectedly to himself, and by associations which he cannot trace out, the sinner will find himself reflecting on death, judgment, and eternity. It is the Spirit of God that leads the mind along. It is not by force; not by the violation of its laws, but in accordance with those laws, that the mind is thus led along to the eternal world. In such ways, and by such means, are people “called” into the kingdom of God. To “walk worthy of that calling,” is to live as becomes a Christian, an heir of glory; to live as Christ did. It is:

(1) To bear our religion with us to all places, companies, employments. Not merely to be a Christian on the Sabbath, and at the communion table, and in our own land, but every day, and everywhere, and in any land where we may be placed. We are to live religion, and not merely to profess it. We are to be Christians in the counting-room, as well as in the closet; on the farm as well as at the communion table; among strangers, and in a foreign land, as well as in our own country and in the sanctuary.

(2) It is to do nothing inconsistent with the most elevated Christian character. In temper, feeling, plan, we are to give expression to no emotion, and use no language, and perform no deed, that shall be inconsistent with the most elevated Christian character.

(3) It is to do “right always:” to be just to all; to tell the simple truth; to defraud no one; to maintain a correct standard of morals; to be known to be honest. There is a correct standard of character and conduct; and a Christian should be a man so living, that we may always know “exactly where to find him.” He should so live, that we shall have no doubts that, however others may act, we shall find “him” to be the unflinching advocate of temperance, chastity, honesty, and of every good work — of every plan that is really suited to alleviate human woe, and benefit a dying world.

(4) It is to live as one should who expects soon to be “in heaven.” Such a man will feel that the earth is not his home; that he is a stranger and a pilgrim here; that riches, honors, and pleasures are of comparatively little importance; that he ought to watch and pray, and that he ought to be holy. A man who feels that he may die at any moment, will watch and pray. A

man who realizes that “tomorrow” he may be in heaven, will feel that he ought to be holy. He who begins a day on earth, feeling that at its close he may be among the angels of God, and the spirits of just men made perfect; that before its close he may have seen the Saviour glorified, and the burning throne of God, will feel the importance of living a holy life, and of being wholly devoted to the service of God. Pure should be the eyes that are soon to look on the throne of God; pure the hands that are soon to strike the harps of praise in heaven; pure the feet that are to walk the “golden streets above.”

^{<401>}Ephesians 4:2. *With all lowliness* Humility; see the notes on ^{<401>}Acts 20:19, where the same Greek word is used; compare also the following places, where the same Greek word occurs: ^{<501>}Philippians 2:3, “in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves;” ^{<502>}Colossians 2:18, “in a voluntary humility;” ^{<503>}Colossians 2:23; 3:12; ^{<401>}1 Peter 5:5. The word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. The idea is, that humility of mind becomes those who are “called” (^{<401>}Ephesians 4:1), and that we walk worthy of that calling when we evince it.

And meekness see the notes on ^{<401>}Matthew 5:5. Meekness relates to the manner in which we receive injuries. We are to bear them patiently, and not to retaliate, or seek revenge. The meaning here is, that; we adorn the gospel when we show its power in enabling us to bear injuries without anger or a desire of revenge, or with a mild and forgiving spirit; see ^{<401>}2 Corinthians 10:1; ^{<402>}Galatians 5:23; 6:1; ^{<502>}2 Timothy 2:25; ^{<501>}Titus 3:2; where the same Greek word occurs.

With longsuffering, ... Bearing patiently with the foibles, faults, and infirmities of others; see the notes on ^{<403>}1 Corinthians 13:4. The virtue here required is that which is to be manifested in our manner of receiving the provocations which we meet with from our brethren. No virtue, perhaps, is more frequently demanded in our contact with others. We do not go far with any fellow-traveler on the journey of life, before we find there is great occasion for its exercise. He has a temperament different from our own. He may be sanguine, or choleric, or melancholy; while we may be just the reverse. He has peculiarities of taste, and habits, and disposition, which differ much from ours. He has his own plans and purposes of life, and his own way and time of doing things. He may be naturally irritable, or he may have been so trained that his modes of speech

and conduct differ much from ours. Neighbors have occasion to remark this in their neighbors; friends in their friends; kindred in their kindred; one church-member in another. A husband and wife — such is the imperfection of human nature — can find enough in each other to embitter life, if they choose to magnify imperfections, and to become irritated at trifles; and there is no friendship that may not be marred in this way, if we will allow it. Hence, if we would have life move on smoothly, we must learn to bear and forbear. We must indulge the friend that we love in the little peculiarities of saying and doing things which may be important to him, but which may be of little moment to us. Like children, we must suffer each one to build his play-house in his own way, and not quarrel with him because he does not think our way the best. All usefulness, and all comfort, may be prevented by an unkind, a sour, a crabbed temper of mind — a mind that can bear with no difference of opinion or temperament. A spirit of fault-finding; an unsatisfied temper; a constant irritability; little inequalities in the look, the temper, or the manner; a brow cloudy and dissatisfied — your husband or your wife cannot tell why — will more than neutralize all the good you can do, and render life anything but a blessing. It is in such gentle and quiet virtues as meekness and forbearance, that the happiness and usefulness of life consist, far more than in brilliant eloquence, in splendid talent, or illustrious deeds, that shall send the name to future times. It is the bubbling spring which flows gently; the little rivulet which glides through the meadow, and which runs along day and night by the farmhouse, that is useful, rather than the swollen flood or the roaring cataract. Niagara excites our wonder; and we stand amazed at the power and greatness of God there, as he “pours it from his hollow hand.” But one Niagara is enough for a continent or a world; while that same world needs thousands and tens of thousands of silver fountains, and gently flowing rivulets, that shall water every farm, and every meadow, and every garden, and that shall flow on, every day and every night, with their gentle and quiet beauty. So with the acts of our lives. It is not by great deeds only, like those of Howard — not by great sufferings only, like those of the martyrs — that good is to be done; it is by the daily and quiet virtues of life — the Christian temper, the meek forbearance, the spirit of forgiveness in the husband, the wife, the father, the mother, the brother, the sister, the friend, the neighbor — that good is to be done; and in this all may be useful.

<4018> Ephesians 4:3. *The unity of the Spirit* A united spirit, or oneness of spirit. This does not refer to the fact that there is one Holy Spirit; but it refers to unity of affection, of confidence, of love. It means that Christians should be united in temper and affection, and not be split up into factions and parties. It may be implied here, as is undoubtedly true, that such a unity would be produced only by the Holy Spirit; and that, as there was but one Spirit which had acted on their hearts to renew them, they ought to evince the same feelings and views. There was occasion among the Ephesians for this exhortation; for they were composed of Jews and Gentiles, and there might be danger of divisions and strifes, as there had been in other churches. There is “always” occasion for such an exhortation; for:

(1) “unity” of feeling is eminently desirable to honor the gospel (see the notes on **<4172>** John 17:21); and

(2) there is always danger of discord where people are brought together in one society. There are so many different tastes and habits; there is such a variety of intellect and feeling; the modes of education have been so various, and the temperament may be so different, that there is constant danger of division. Hence, the subject is so often dwelt on in the Scriptures (see the notes on 1 Corinthians 2ff), and hence, there is so much need of caution and of care in the churches.

In the bond of peace This was to be by the cultivation of that peaceful temper which binds all together. The American Indians usually spoke of peace as a “chain of friendship” which was to be kept bright. The meaning here is, that they should be bound or united together in the sentiments and affections of peace. It is not mere “external” unity; it is not a mere unity of creed; it is not a mere unity in the forms of public worship; it is such as the Holy Spirit produces in the hearts of Christians, when it fills them all with the same love, and joy, and peace in believing. The following verses contain the reasons for this.

<4014> Ephesians 4:4. *There is one body* One church — for so the word “body” means here — denoting the body of Christ; see the notes on **<4115>** Romans 12:5; compare notes on **<4013>** Ephesians 1:23. The meaning here is, that as there is really but one church on earth, there ought to be unity. The church is, at present, divided into many denominations. It has different forms of worship, and different rites and ceremonies. It embraces those of

different complexions and ranks in life, and it cannot be denied that there are often unhappy contentions and jealousies in different parts of that church. Still, there is but one — “one holy, catholic (i.e., universal) church;” and that church should feel that it is one. Christ did not come to redeem and save different churches, and to give them a different place in heaven. He did not come to save the Episcopal communion merely or the Presbyterian or the Methodist communions only; nor did he leave the world to fit up for them different mansions in heaven. He did not come to save merely the black man, or the red, or the white man; nor did he leave the world to set up for them separate mansions in the skies. He came that he might collect into one community a multitude of every complexion, and from every land, and unite them in one great brotherhood on earth, and ultimately assemble them in the same heaven. The church is one. Every sincere Christian is a brother in that church, and has an equal right with all others to its privileges. Being one by the design of the Saviour they should be one in feeling; and every Christian, no matter what his rank, should be ready to hail every other Christian as a fellow-heir of heaven.

One Spirit The Holy Spirit. There is one and the self-same Spirit that dwells in the church The same Spirit has awakened all enlightened all; convicted all; converted all. Wherever they may be, and whoever, yet there has been substantially the same work of the Spirit on the heart of every Christian. There are circumstantial differences arising from diversities of temperament, disposition, and education; there may be a difference in the depth and power of his operations on the soul; there may be a difference in the degree of conviction for sin and in the evidence of conversion, but still there are the same operations on the heart essentially produced by the same Spirit; see the notes on ~~417~~1 Corinthians 12:6-11. All the gifts of prayer, and of preaching; all the zeal, the ardor, the love, the self-denial in the church, are produced by the same Spirit. There should be, therefore, unity. The church is united in the agency by which it is saved; it should be united in the feelings which influence its members.

Even as ye are called see ~~400~~Ephesians 4:1. The sense is, “there is one body and one spirit, in like manner as there is one hope resulting from your calling.” The same notion of oneness is found in relation to each of these things.

In one hope of your calling In one hope “resulting from” your being called into his kingdom. On the meaning of the word “hope,” see notes on

◀402▶ Ephesians 2:12. The meaning here is, that Christians have the same hope, and they should therefore be one. They are looking forward to the same heaven; they hope for the same happiness beyond the grave. It is not as on earth among the people of the world, where, there is a variety of hopes — where one hopes for pleasure, and another for honor, and another for gain; but there is the prospect of the same inexhaustible joy. This “hope” is suited to promote union. There is no rivalry — for there is enough for all. “Hope” on earth does not always produce union and harmony. Two men hope to obtain the same office; two students hope to obtain the same honor in college; two rivals hope to obtain the same hand in marriage — and the consequence is jealousy, contention, and strife. The reason is, that but one can obtain the object. Not so with the crown of life — with the rewards of heaven. All may obtain “that” crown; all may share those rewards. How “can” Christians contend in an angry manner with each other, when the hope of dwelling in the same heaven swells their bosoms and animates their hearts?

◀405▶ **Ephesians 4:5.** *One Lord* This evidently refers to the Lord Jesus. The “Spirit” is mentioned in the previous verse; the Father in the verse following. On the application of the word “Lord” to the Saviour, see the notes on ▶402▶ Acts 1:24. The argument here is, that there ought to be unity among Christians, because they have one Lord and Saviour. They have not different Saviours adapted to different classes; not one for the Jew and another for the Greek; not one for the rich and another for the poor; not one for the bond and another for the free. There is but one. He belongs in common to all as their Saviour; and he has a right to rule over one as much as over another. There is no better way of promoting unity among Christians than by reminding them that they have the same Saviour. And when jealousies and heart-burnings arise; or when they are disposed to contend about trifles; when they magnify unimportant matters until they are in danger of rending the church asunder, let them feel that they have one Lord and Saviour, and they will lay aside their contentions and be one again. Let two men who have never seen each other before, meet in a distant land, and feel that they have the same Redeemer, and their hearts will mingle into one. They are not aliens, but friends. A cord of sympathy is struck more tender than that which binds them to country or home and though of different nations, complexions, or habits, they will feel that they are one. Why should contentions ever arise between those who have the same Redeemer?

One faith The same belief. That is, either the belief of the same doctrines, or faith of the same nature in the heart. The word may be taken in either sense. I see no reason why it should not include “both” here, or be used in the widest sense, If so used it means that Christians should be united because they hold the same great doctrines; and also, because they have the same confidence in the Redeemer in their hearts, They hold the same system as distinguished from Judaism, Paganism, Mohammedanism, Deism; and they should, therefore, be one. They have the same trust in Christ, as a living, practical principle — and they should, therefore, be one. They may differ in other attachments; in temperament; in pursuit; in professions in life — but they have a common faith — and they should be one.

One baptism This does not affirm that there is one MODE of baptism, but it refers to “the thing itself.” They are all baptized in the name of the same Father, Saviour, Sanctifier. They have all in this manner been consecrated unto God, and devoted to his service. Whether by immersion, or by pouring, or by sprinkling, they have all been baptized with water; whether it is done in adult years, or in infancy, the same solemn act has been performed on all — the act of consecration to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. This passage cannot be adduced to prove that only one “mode” of baptism is lawful, unless it can be shown that the thing referred to here was the “mode” and not “the thing itself;” and unless it can be proved that Paul meant to build his argument for the “unity” of Christians on the fact that the same “form” was used in their baptism. But this is evidently not the point of his argument. The argument is, that there was really but “one baptism” — not that there was but one “mode” of baptism. I could not use this argument in this form, “Christians should be one because they have been all baptized by `sprinkling;” and yet the argument would be just as forcible as to use it in this form, “Christians should be one because they have all been baptized by `immersion.” There is one baptism, not one “mode” of baptism; and no man has a right to “assume” that there can be but one mode, and then apply this passage to that. The “essential thing” in the argument before us is, that there has been a consecration to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, by the application of water. Thus, understood, the argument is one that will be “felt” by all who have been devoted to God by baptism. They have taken the same vows upon them. They have consecrated themselves to the same God. They have made the same solemn profession of religion. Water has been applied to one and all

as the emblem of the purifying influences of the Holy Spirit; and having been thus initiated in a solemn manner into the same profession of religion, they should be one.

<4016> Ephesians 4:6. One God The same God; therefore there should be unity. Were there MANY gods to be worshipped, there could be no more hope of unity than there is among the worshippers of Mammon and Bacchus, and the various other idols that people set up. People who have different pursuits, and different objects of supreme affection, can be expected to have no union. People who worship many gods, cannot hope to be united. Their affections are directed to different objects, and there is no harmony or sympathy of feeling. But where there is one supreme object of attachment there may be expected to be unity. The children of a family that are devoted to a parent, will be united among themselves; and the fact that all Christians have the same great object of worship, should constitute a strong bond of union among themselves — a chain always kept bright.

And Father of all One God who is the Father of all; that is, who is a common Father to all who believe. That this refers to the Father, in contradistinction from the Son and the Holy Spirit, seems evident. The Spirit and the Son are mentioned in the previous verses. But the fact that the “Father of all” is mentioned as “God,” does not prove that the Spirit and the Son are not also endowed with divine attributes. That question is to be determined by the attributes ascribed to the Son and the Holy Spirit in other places. All sincere Christians worship “one” God, and “but” one. But they suppose that this one God subsists as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, united in a mysterious manner, and constituting THE one God, and that there is no other God. That the Father is divine, they all hold, as Paul affirms here; that the Son and the Holy Spirit are also divine, they also hold; see the notes on John 1; Hebrews 1; *<3076>* Philippians 2:6; *<4005>* Romans 9:5. The meaning here is, that God is the common Father of “all” his people — of the rich and the poor; the bond and the free; the learned and the unlearned. He is no respecter of persons. Nothing would tend more to overcome the prejudices of color, rank, and wealth, than to feel that we all have one Father; and that we are all equally the objects of his favor; compare notes on *<4175>* Acts 17:26.

Who is above all Who is supreme; who presides over all things.

And through all He pervades universal nature, and his agency is seen everywhere.

And in you all There is no one in whose heart he does not dwell. You are his temple, and he abides in you; see [Ephesians 2:22](#); notes, [1 Corinthians 6:19](#). The argument here is, that as the same God dwelt in every heart, they ought to be one. See this argument beautifully expressed in the Saviour's prayer, [John 17:21](#); compare [John 14:23](#).

[Ephesians 4:7](#). *But unto every one of us* Every Christian.

Is given grace The favor of God; meaning here that God had bestowed upon each sincere Christian the means of living as he ought to do, and had in his gospel made ample provision that they might walk worthy of their vocation. What "are" the endowments thus given, the apostle states in the following verses. The "grace" referred to here, most probably means "the gracious influences of the Holy Spirit," or his operations on the heart in connection with the use of the means which God has appointed.

According to the measure of the gift of Christ Grace is bestowed upon all true Christians, and all have enough to enable them to live a life of holiness. Yet we are taught here:

- (1) That it is a "gift." It is "bestowed" on us. It is not what is originated by ourselves.
- (2) It is by a certain "measure." It is not unlimited, and without rule. There is a wise adaptation; an imparting it by a certain rule. The same grace is not given to all, but to all is given enough to enable them to live as they ought to live.
- (3) That measure is the gift of Christ, or what is given in Christ. It comes through him. It is what he has purchased; what he has obtained by his merits. All have enough for the purposes for which God has called them into his kingdom, but there are not the same endowments conferred on all. Some have grace given them to qualify them for the ministry; some to be apostles; some to be martyrs; some to make them eminent as public benefactors. All this has been obtained by Christ; and one Should not complain that another has more distinguished endowments than he has; compare notes on [Romans 12:3](#); [John 1:16](#).

[Ephesians 4:8](#). *Wherefore he saith* The word "he" is not in the original; and it may mean "the Scripture saith," or "God saith." The "point" of the argument here is, that Christ, when he ascended to heaven, obtained certain "gifts" for people, and that those gifts are bestowed upon his

people in accordance with this. To “prove” that, he adduces this passage from ^{<B98B>}Psalm 68:18. Much perplexity has been felt in regard to the “principle” on which Paul quotes this Psalm, and applies it to the ascension of the Redeemer. The Psalm seems to have been composed on the occasion of removing the ark of the covenant from Kirjath-jearim to Mount Zion; ^{<B00E>}2 Samuel 6:1ff it is a song of triumph, celebrating the victories of YAHWEH, and particularly the victories which had been achieved when the ark was at the head of the army. It “appears” to have no relation to the Messiah; nor would it probably occur to anyone upon reading it, that it referred to his ascension, unless it had been so quoted by the apostle. Great difficulty has been felt, therefore, in determining on what principle Paul applied it to the ascension of the Redeemer. Some have supposed that the Psalm had a primary reference to the Messiah; some that it referred to him in only a secondary sense; some that it is applied to him by way of “accommodation;” and some that he merely uses the words as adapted to express his idea, as a man adopts words which are familiar to him, and which will express his thoughts, though not meaning to say that the words had any such reference originally. Storr supposes that the words were used by the Ephesian Christians in their “hymns,” and that Paul quoted them as containing a sentiment which was admitted among them. This is “possible;” but it is mere conjecture. It has been also supposed that the tabernacle was a type of Christ; and that the whole Psalm, therefore, having original reference to the tabernacle, might be applied to Christ as the antitype. But this is both conjectural and fanciful. On the various modes adopted to account for the difficulty, the reader may consult Rosenmuller in loc. To me it seems plain that the Psalm had original reference to the bringing up the ark to Mount Zion, and is a triumphal song. In the song or Psalm, the poet shows why God was to be praised — on account of his greatness and his benignity to people; ^{<B00E>}Ephesians 4:1-6. He then recounts the doings of God in former times — particularly his conducting his people through the wilderness, and the fact that his enemies were discomfited before him; ^{<B00E>}Ephesians 4:7-12. All this refers to the God, the symbols of whose presence were on the tabernacle, and accompanying the ark. He then speaks of the various fortunes that had befallen the ark of the covenant. It had lain among the pots, ^{<B00E>}Ephesians 4:13, yet it had formerly been white as snow when God scattered kings by it; ^{<B00E>}Ephesians 4:14. He then speaks of the hill of God — the Mount Zion to which the ark was about to be removed, and says that it is an “high hill” — “high as the hills of Bashan,” the hill where God desired to dwell forever; ^{<B00E>}Ephesians 4:16.

God is then introduced as ascending that hill, encompassed with thousands of angels, as in Mount Sinai; and the poet says that, in doing it, he had triumphed over his enemies, and had led captivity captive; <4018> Ephesians 4:18. The fact that the ark of God thus ascended the hill of Zion, the place of rest; that it was to remain there as its permanent abode, no more to be carried about at the head of armies; was the proof of its triumph. It had made everything captive. It had subdued every foe; and its ascent there would be the means of obtaining invaluable gifts for people; Mercy and truth would go forth from that mountain; and the true religion would spread abroad, even to the rebellious, as the results of the triumph of God, whose symbol was over the tabernacle and the ark. The placing the ark there was the proof of permanent victory, and would he connected with most important benefits to people. The “ascending on high,” therefore, in the Psalm, refers, as it seems to me, to the ascent of the symbol of the Divine Presence accompanying the ark on Mount Zion, or to the placing it “on high” above all its foes. The remainder of the Psalm corresponds with this view. This ascent of the ark on Mount Zion; this evidence of its triumph over all the foes of God; this permanent residence of the ark there; and this fact, that its being established there would be followed with the bestowment of invaluable gifts to people, might be regarded as a BEAUTIFUL EMBLEM of the ascension of the Redeemer to heaven. There were strong points of resemblance. He also ascended on high. His ascent was the proof Of victory over his foes. He went there for a permanent abode. And his ascension was connected with the bestowment of important blessings to people. It is as such emblematic language, I suppose, that the apostle makes the quotation. It did not originally refer to this; but the events were so similar in many points, that the one would suggest the other, and the same language would describe both. It was language familiar to the apostle; language that would aptly express his thoughts, and language that was not improbably applied to the ascension of the Redeemer by Christians at that time. The phrase, therefore, “he saith “ — λεγει <3004> — or “it saith,” or “the Scripture saith,” means, “it is said;” or, “this language will properly express the fact under consideration, to wit, that there is grace given to each one of us, or that the means are furnished by the Redeemer for us to lead holy lives.”¹³

When he ascended up on high To heaven. The Psalm is, “Thou hast ascended on high;” compare <4012> Ephesians 1:22,23.

He led captivity captive The meaning of this in the Psalm is, that he triumphed over his foes. The margin is, “a multitude of captives.” But this, I think, is not quite the idea. It is language derived from a conqueror, who not only makes captives, but who makes captives of those who were then prisoners, and who conducts them as a part of his triumphal procession. He not only subdues his enemy, but he leads his captives in triumph. The allusion is to the public triumphs of conquerors, especially as celebrated among the Romans, in which captives were led in chains (Tacitus, Ann. xii. 38), and to the custom in such triumphs of distributing presents among the soldiers; compare also ^{<0083>}Judges 5:30, where it appears that this was also an early custom in other nations. Burder, in Res. Alt u. neu Morgenland, in loc. When Christ ascended to heaven, he triumphed over all his foes. It was a complete victory over the malice of the great enemy of God, and over those who had sought his life. But he did more. He rescued those who were the captives of Satan, and led them in triumph. Man was held by Satan as a prisoner. His chains were around him. Christ rescued the captive prisoner, and designed to make him a part of his triumphal procession into heaven, that thus the victory might be complete — triumphing not only over the great foe himself, but swelling his procession with the attending hosts of those who “had been” the captives of Satan, now rescued and redeemed.

And gave gifts unto men Such as he specifies in ^{<0011>}Ephesians 4:11.

^{<0011>}**Ephesians 4:9.** *Now that he ascended* That is, it is affirmed in the Psalm that he “ascended” — “Thou hast ascended on high.” This implies that there must have been a previous “descent;” or, as applicable to the Messiah, “it is a truth that he previously descended.” It is by no means certain that Paul meant to say that the “word” “ascended” demonstrated that there must have been a previous descent; but he probably means that in the case of Christ there was, “in fact,” a descent into the lower parts of the earth first. The language used here will appropriately express his descent to earth.

Into the lower parts of the earth To the lowest state of humiliation. This seems to be the fair meaning of the words. Heaven stands opposed to earth. One is above; the other is beneath. From the one Christ descended to the other; and he came not only to the earth, but he stooped to the most humble condition of humanity here; see ^{<0006>}Philippians 2:6-8; compare notes On ^{<2342>}Isaiah 44:23. Some have understood this of the grave; others

of the region of departed spirits; but these interpretations do not seem to be necessary. It is the “earth itself” that stands in contrast with the heavens; and the idea is, that the Redeemer descended from his lofty eminence in heaven, and became a man of humble rank and condition; compare ^{<439f>}Psalm 139:15.

^{<4040>}**Ephesians 4:10.** *He that descended is the same also that ascended*
The same Redeemer came down from God, and returned to him. It was not a different being, but the same.

Far above all heavens see the notes on ^{<4013>}Ephesians 1:20-23; compare ^{<3076>}Hebrews 7:26. He is gone above the visible heavens, and has ascended into the highest abodes of bliss; see the notes on ^{<4711>}2 Corinthians 12:2,

That he might fill all things Margin, “fulfil.” The meaning is, “that he might fill all things by his influence, and direct and overrule all by his wisdom and power.” Doddridge. See the notes on ^{<4023>}Ephesians 1:23.

^{<4041>}**Ephesians 4:11.** *And he gave some, apostles* He gave some to be apostles. The “object” here is to show that he has made ample provision for the extension and edification of his church On the meaning of the word “apostles,” and on their appointment by the Saviour, see the notes on ^{<4001>}Matthew 10:1.

And some, prophets He appointed some to be prophets; see the notes on ^{<6117>}Romans 12:7; ^{<4928>}1 Corinthians 12:28; 14:1.

And some, evangelists see the notes on ^{<4218>}Acts 21:8; compare ^{<5015>}2 Timothy 4:5. The word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament. What was the precise office of the evangelist in the primitive church, it is now impossible to determine. The evangelist “may” have been one whose main business was “preaching,” and who was not particularly engaged in the “government” of the church. The word properly means “a messenger of good tidings;” and Robinson (Lexicon) supposes that it denotes a minister of the gospel who was not located in any place, but who traveled as a missionary to preach the gospel, and to found churches. The word is so used now by many Christians; but it cannot be proved that it is so used in the New Testament. An explanation of the words which here occur may be found in Neander on the Primitive Church, in the Biblical Repository, vol. iv. pp. 258ff The office was distinct from that of the “pastor,” the teacher,

and the “prophet:” and was manifestly an office in which “preaching” was the main thing.

And some, pastors Literally, “shepherds” — ποιμενας ^{<4166>}; compare ^{<4086>} Matthew 9:36; 25:32; 26:31; ^{<4064>} Mark 6:34; 14:27; ^{<4018>} Luke 2:8,15,18,20; ^{<3002>} John 10:2,11,12,14,16, where it is rendered “shepherd and shepherds;” also ^{<5133>} Hebrews 13:20; ^{<4025>} 1 Peter 2:25; in ^{<4051>} Matthew 26:31; ^{<4147>} Mark 14:27; ^{<5133>} Hebrews 13:20; ^{<4025>} 1 Peter 2:25, it is applied to the Lord Jesus as the great shepherd of the flock — the church. It is rendered “pastors” only in the place before us. The word is given to ministers of the gospel with obvious propriety, and with great beauty. They are to exercise the same watchfulness and care over the people of their charge which a shepherd does over his flock; compare the notes on ^{<4215>} John 21:15,16. The meaning here is, that Christ exercised a special care for his church by appointing “pastors” who would watch over it as a shepherd does over his flock.

And teachers see the notes on ^{<5127>} Romans 12:7.

^{<4042>} **Ephesians 4:12.** *For the perfecting of the saints* On the meaning of the word rendered here as “perfecting” — καταρτισμον ^{<2677>} — see the notes on ^{<4739>} 2 Corinthians 13:9. It properly refers to “the restoring of anything to its place;” then putting in order, making complete, etc. Here it means that these various officers were appointed in order that everything in the church might be well arranged, or put into its proper place; or that the church might be “complete.” It is that Christians may have every possible advantage for becoming complete in love, and knowledge, and order.

For the work of the ministry All these are engaged in the work of the ministry, though in different departments. Together they constituted THE “ministry” by which Christ meant to establish and edify the church. All these offices had an existence at that time, and all were proper; though it is clear that they were not all designed to be permanent. The apostolic office was of course to cease with the death of those who were “the witnesses” of the life and doctrines of Jesus (compare notes on ^{<4691>} 1 Corinthians 9:1); the office of “prophets” was to cease with the cessation of inspiration; and in like manner it is possible that the office of teacher or evangelist might be suspended, as circumstances might demand. But is it not clear from this that Christ did not appoint “merely” three orders of clergy to be permanent in the church? Here are “five” orders enumerated, and in ^{<4128>} 1 Corinthians

12:28, there are “eight” mentioned; and how can it be demonstrated that the Saviour intended that there should be “three” only, and that they should be permanent? The presumption is rather that he meant that there should be but one permanent order of ministers, though the departments of their labor might be varied according to circumstances, and though there might be helpers, as occasion should demand. In founding churches among the pagan, and in instructing and governing them there, there is need of reviving nearly all the offices of teacher, helper, evangelist, etc., which Paul has enumerated as actually existing in his time.

For the edifying For building it up; that is, in the knowledge of the truth and in piety; see the notes on ^{<5419>}Romans 14:19.

The body of Christ The Church; see the notes on ^{<4023>}Ephesians 1:23.

^{<4043>}**Ephesians 4:13.** *Till we all come* Until all Christians arrive at a state of complete unity, and to entire perfection.

In the unity of the faith Margin, into. The meaning is, until we all hold the same truths, and have the same confidence in the Son of God; see the notes on ^{<5172>}John 17:21-23.

And of the knowledge of the Son of God That they might attain to the satire practical acquaintance with the Son of God, and might thus come to the maturity of Christian piety; see the notes on ^{<4189>}Ephesians 3:19.

Unto a perfect man Unto a complete man. This figure is obvious. The apostle compares their condition then to a state of childhood. The perfect man here refers to the man “grown up,” the man of mature life. He says that Christ had appointed pastors and teachers that the infant church might be conducted to “maturity;” or become strong — like a man. He does not refer to the doctrine of “sinless perfection” — but to the state of manhood as compared with that of childhood — a state of strength, vigor, wisdom, when the full growth should be attained; see ^{<4541>}1 Corinthians 14:20.

Unto the measure of the stature Margin, or age. The word “stature” expresses the idea. It refers to the growth of a man. The stature to be attained to was that of Christ. He was the standard — not in size, not in age — but in moral character. The measure to be reached was Christ; or we are to grow until we become like him.

Of the fulness of Christ see the notes on ^{<4012>}Ephesians 1:23. The phrase “the measure of the fulness,” means, probably, the “full measure” — by a form of construction that is common in the Hebrew writings, where two nouns are so used that one is to be rendered as an adjective — “as trees of greatness” — meaning great trees. Here it means, that they should so advance in piety and knowledge as to become wholly like him.

^{<4014>}**Ephesians 4:14.** *That we henceforth be no more children* In some respects Christians “are” to be like children. They are to be docile, gentle, mild, and free from ambition, pride, and haughtiness; see the notes on ^{<4012>}Matthew 18:2,3. But children have other characteristics besides simplicity and docility. They are often changeable (^{<4017>}Matthew 11:17); they are credulous, and are influenced easily by others, and led astray, In these respects, Paul exhorts the Ephesians to be no longer children but urges them to put on the characteristics Of manhood; and especially to put on the firmness in religious opinion which became maturity of life.

Tossed to and fro κλυδωνιζομενοι ^{<2831>}. This word is taken from waves or billows that are constantly tossed about — in all ages art image of instability of character and purpose.

And carried about with every wind of doctrine With no firmness; no settled course; no helm. The idea is that of a vessel on the restless ocean, that is tossed about with every varying wind, and that has no settled line of sailing. So many persons are in regard to religious doctrines. They have no fixed views and principles. They hold no doctrines that are settled in their minds by careful and patient examination, and the consequence is, that they yield to every new opinion, and submit to the guidance of every new teacher. The “doctrine” taught here is, that we should have settled religious opinions. We should carefully examine what is truth, and having found it, should adhere to it, and not yield on the coming of every new teacher. We should not, indeed, close our minds against conviction. We should be open to argument, and be willing to follow “the truth” wherever it will lead us. But this state of mind is not inconsistent with having settled opinions, and with being firm in holding them until we are convinced that we are wrong. No man can be useful who has not settled principles. No one who has not such principles can inspire confidence or be happy, and the first aim of every young convert should be to acquire settled views of the truth, and to become firmly grounded in the doctrines of the gospel.

By the sleight of men The cunning skill “trickery” of people. The word used here — **κυβεια** ^{<2940>} — is from a word (**κυβος**) meaning a cube or die, and properly means a game at dice. Hence, it means game, gambling; and then anything that turns out by mere chance or hap-hazard — as a game at dice does. It “may” possibly also denote the trick or fraud that is sometimes used in such games; but it seems rather to denote a man’s forming his religious opinions by “the throw of a die;” or, in other words, it describes a man whose opinions seem to be the result of mere chance. Anything like casting a die, or like opening the Bible at random to determine a point of duty or doctrine, may come under the description of the apostle here, and would all be opposed to the true mode, that by calm examination of the Bible, and by prayer. A man who forms his religious principles by chance, can un-“form” them in the same way; and he who has determined his faith by one cast of the die, will be likely to throw them into another form by another. The phrase “the sleight of men” therefore I would render “by the mere chance of people, or as you may happen to find people, one holding this opinion, and the next that, and allowing yourself to be influenced by them without any settled principles.”

Cunning craftiness Deceit, trick, art; see ^{<4716>}2 Corinthians 12:16; ^{<4213>}Luke 20:23; ^{<4189>}1 Corinthians 3:19; notes, ^{<4700>}2 Corinthians 4:2; 11:3.

Whereby they lie in wait to deceive Literally, “Unto the method of deceit;” that is, in the usual way of deceit. Doddridge, “In every method of deceit.” This is the true idea. The meaning is, that people would use plausible pretences, and would, if possible, deceive the professed friends of Christ. Against such we should be on our guard; and not by their arts should our opinion be formed, but by the word of God.

^{<4045>}**Ephesians 4:15.** *But speaking the truth in love* Margin, “being sincere.” The translation in the text is correct — literally, “truthing in love” — **αληθευοντες** ^{<226>}. Two things are here to be noted:

(1) The truth is “to be spoken” — the simple, unvarnished truth. This is the way to avoid error, and this is the way to preserve others from error. In opposition to all trick, and art, and cunning, and fraud, and deception, Christians are to speak the simple truth, and nothing but the truth. Every statement which they make should be unvarnished truth; every promise which they make should be true; every representation which they make of the sentiments of others should be simple truth. “Truth is the representation

of things as they are;” and there is no virtue that is more valuable in a Christian than the love of simple truth.

(2) The second thing is, that the truth should be spoken “in love.” There are other ways of speaking truth. It is sometimes spoken in a harsh, crabby, sour manner, which does nothing but disgust and offend. When we state truth to others, it should be with love to their souls, and with a sincere desire to do them good. When we admonish a brother of his faults, it should not be in a harsh and unfeeling manner, but in love. Where a minister pronounces the awful truth of God about depravity, death, the judgment, and future woe, it should be in love. It should not be done in a harsh and repulsive manner; it should not be done as if he rejoiced that people were in danger of hell, or as if he would like to pass the final sentence; it should not be with indifference, or in a tone of superiority. And in like manner, if we go to convince one who is in error, we should approach him in love. We should not dogmatize, or denounce, or deal out anathemas. Such things only repel. “He has done about half his work in convincing another of ERROR who has first convinced him that he LOVES him;” and if he does not do that, he may argue to the hour of his death and make no progress in convincing him.

May grow up into him Into Christ; that is, to the stature of a complete man in him.

Which is the head notes, ^{<402>}Ephesians 1:22; ^{<413>}1 Corinthians 11:3.

^{<406>}**Ephesians 4:16.** *From whom the whole body* The church, compared with the human body. The idea is, that as the head in the human frame conveys vital influence, vigor, motion, etc., to every part of the body; so Christ is the source of life, and vigor, and energy, and increase to the church. The sense is, “The whole human body is admirably arranged for growth and vigor. Every member and joint contribute to its healthful and harmonious action. One part lends vigor and beauty to another, so that the whole is finely proportioned and admirably sustained. All depend on the head with reference to the most important functions of life, and all derive their vigor from that. So it is in the church. It is as well arranged for growth and vigor as the body is. It is as beautifully organized in its various members and officers as the body is. Everything is designed to be in its proper place, and nothing by the divine arrangement is lacking in its organization, to its perfection. Its officers and its members are, in their places, what the various parts of the body are with reference to the human

frame. The church depends on Christ, as the head, to sustain, invigorate, and guide it, as the body is dependent on the head” See this figure carried out to greater length in ^{<412>}1 Corinthians 12:12-26.

Fitly joined together The body, whose members are properly united so as to produce the most beauty and vigor. Each member is in the best place, and is properly united to the other members. Let anyone read Paley’s Natural Theology, or any work on anatomy, and he will find innumerable instances of the truth of this remark; not only in the proper adjustment and placing of the members, but in the manner in which it is united to the other parts of the body. The foot, for instance, is in its proper place. It should not be where the head or the hand is. The eye is in its proper place. It should not be in the knee or the heel. The mouth, the tongue, the teeth, the lungs, the heart, are in their proper places. No other places would answer the purpose so well. The brain is in its proper place. Anywhere else in the body, it would be subject to compressions and injuries which would soon destroy life. And these parts are as admirably united to file other parts of the body, as they are admirably located. Let anyone examine, for instance, the tendons, nerves, muscles, and bones, by which the “foot” is secured to the body, and by which easy and graceful motion is obtained, and he will be satisfied of the wisdom by which the body is “joined together.” How far the “knowledge” of the apostle extended on this point, we have not the means of ascertaining; but all the investigations of anatomists only serve to give increased beauty and force to the general terms which he uses here. All that he says here of the human frame is strictly accurate, and is such language as may be used by an anatomist now, The word which is used here (**συναρμολογεω** ^{<483>}) means properly to sew together; to fit together; to unite, to make one. It is applied often to musicians, who produce “harmony” of various parts of music. “Passow.” The idea of harmony, or appropriate union, is that in the word.

And compacted **συμβιβάζομενον** ^{<482>}. Tyndale renders this, “knit together in every joint.” The word properly means, to make to come together; to join or knit together. It means here that the different parts of the body are “united” and sustained in this manner.

By that which every joint supplieth Literally, “through every joint of supply;” that is, which affords or ministers mutual aid. The word “joint” here — **ἄφῃ** ^{<86>} — (from **ἄπτω** ^{<88>} to fit) — means anything which binds, fastens, secures; find does not refer to the joint in the sense in which we

commonly use it, as denoting “the articulation” of the limbs, or the joining of two or more bones; but rather that which “unites or fastens” together the different parts of the frame — the bloodvessels, cords, tendons, and muscles. The meaning is, that every such “means of connecting one part of the body with another” ministers nourishment, and that thus the body is sustained. One part is dependent on another; one part derives nourishment from another; and thus all become mutually useful as contributing to the support and harmony of the whole. Thus, it furnishes an illustration of the “connection” in the members of the church, and of the aid which one can render to another.

According to the effectual working Greek, “According to the energy in the measure of each one part.” Tyndale, “According to the operation as every part has its measure.” The meaning is, that each part contributes to the production of the whole result, or “labors” for this. This is in proportion to the “measure” of each part; that is, in proportion to its power. Every part labors to produce the great result. No one is idle; none is useless. But, none are overtaxed or overworked. The support demanded and furnished by every part is in exact proportion to its strength. This is a beautiful account of the anatomy of the human frame.

(1) Nothing is useless. Every part contributes to the general result — the health, and beauty, and vigor of the system. Not a muscle is useless; not a nerve, not an artery, not a vein. All are employed, and all have an important place, and all contribute “something” to the health and beauty of the whole. So numerous are the bloodvessels, that you cannot perforate the skin anywhere without piercing one; so numerous are the pores of the skin, that a grain of sand will cover thousands of them; so minute the ramifications of the nerves, that wherever the point of a needle penetrates, we feel it; and so numerous the absorbents, that million of them are employed in taking up the chyme of the food, and conveying it to the veins. And yet all are employed — all are useful — all minister life and strength to the whole.

(2) None are overtaxed. They all work according to the “measure” of their strength. Nothing is required of the minutest nerve or blood-vessel which it is not suited to perform; and it will work on for years without exhaustion or decay. So of the church. There is no member so obscure and feeble that he may not contribute something to the welfare of the whole; and no one is required to labor beyond his strength in order to secure the great object.

Each one in “his place,” and laboring as he should there, will contribute to the general strength and welfare; “out of his place” — like nerves and arteries out of their place, and crossing and recrossing others — he will only embarrass the whole, and disarrange the harmony of the system.

Maketh increase of the body The body grows in this manner.

Unto the edfying of itself To building itself up that is, it grows up to a complete stature.

In love In mutual harmony. This refers to the “body.” The meaning is that it seems to be made on the principle of “love.” There is no jar, no collision, no disturbance of one part with another. A great number of parts, composed of different substances, and with different functions — bones, and nerves, and muscles, and blood-vessels — are united in one, and live together without collision; and so it should be in the church. Learn, hence:

- (1) That no member of the church need be useless, anymore than a minute nerve or blood-vessel in the body need be useless. No matter how obscure the individual may be, he may contribute to the harmony and vigor of the whole,
- (2) Every member of the church should contribute something to the prosperity of the whole. He should no more be idle and unemployed than a nerve or a blood-vessel should be in the human system. What would be the effect if the minutest nerves and arteries of the body should refuse to perform their office?. Langour, disease, and death. So it is in the church. The obscurest member may do “something” to destroy the healthful action of the church, and to make its piety languish and die.
- (3) There should be union in the church. It is made up of materials which differ much from each other, as the body is made up of bones, and nerves, and muscles. Yet, in the body these are united; and so it should be in the church. There need be no more jarring in the church than in the body; and a jar in the church produces the same effect as would be produced in the body if the nerves and muscles should resist the action of each other, or as if one should be out of its place, and impede the healthful functions of the other.
- (4) Every member in the church should keep his place, just as every bone, and nerve, and muscle in the human frame should. Every member of the body should be in its right position; the heart, the lungs, the eye, the

tongue, should occupy their right place; and every nerve in the system should be laid down just where it is designed to be. If so, all is well. If not so, all is deformity, or disorder; just as it, is often in the church.

~~4017~~ **Ephesians 4:17.** *This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord* I bear witness in the name of the Lord Jesus, or ministering by his authority. The object of this is, to exhort them to walk worthy of their high calling, and to adorn the doctrine of the Saviour. With this view, he reminds them of what they were before they were converted, and of the manner in which the pagan around them lived.

That ye henceforth walk not That you do not henceforth live — the Christian life being often in the Scriptures compared to a journey.

As other Gentiles walk This shows that probably the mass of converts in the church at Ephesus were from among the pagan, and Paul regarded them as Gentile converts. Or it may be that he here addressed himself more particularly to that portion of the church, as especially needing his admonition and care.

In the vanity of their mind In the way of folly, or in mental folly. What he means by this he specifies in the following verses. The word “vanity” in the Scriptures means more than mere “emptiness.” It denotes moral wrong, being applied usually to those who worshipped vain idols, and then those who were alienated from the “true” God.

~~4018~~ **Ephesians 4:18.** *Having the understanding darkened* That is, because they were alienated from the true God, and particularly because of “the blindness of their hearts.” The apostle does not say that this was a “judicial” darkening of the understanding; or that they might not have perceived the truth; or that they had no ability to understand it. He speaks of a simple and well-known fact — a fact that is seen now as well as then that the understanding becomes darkened by indulgence in sin. A man who is intemperate, has no just views of the government of the appetites. A man who is unchaste, has no perception of the loveliness of purity. A man who is avaricious or covetous, has no just views of the beauty of benevolence. A man who indulges in low vices, will weaken his mental powers, and render himself incapable of intellectual effort. Indulgence in vice destroys the intellect as well as the body, and unfits a man to appreciate the truth of a proposition in morals, or in mathematics, or the beauty of a poem, as well as the truth and beauty of religion. Nothing is more obvious than that

indulgence in sin weakens the mental powers, and renders them unfit for high intellectual effort. This is seen all over the pagan world now — in the stolid, stupid mind; the perverted moral sense; the incapacity for profound or protracted mental effort, as really as it was among the pagans to whom Paul preached. The missionary who goes among the pagan has almost to create an “intellect” as well as a “conscience,” before the gospel will make an impression. It is seen, too, in all the intellect of the bar, the senate, the pulpit, and the medical profession, that is ruined by intemperance, and in the intellect of multitudes of young men wasted by licentiousness and drunkenness. I know that under the influence of ambition and stimulating drinks, the intellect may seem to put forth unnatural efforts, and to glow with an intensity nowhere else seen. But it “soon burns out” — and the wastes of such an intellect become soon like the hardened scoriae of the volcano, or the cinders of the over-heated furnace. Learn hence, that if a man wishes to be blessed with a clear understanding, he should be a “good man.” He who wishes a mind well balanced and clear, should fear and love God; and had Christianity done no other good on earth than to elevate the “intellect” of mankind, it would have been the richest blessing which has ever been vouchsafed to the race. It follows, too, that as man has debased his “understanding” by sin, it is needful to make an exertion to elevate it again: and hence a large part of the efforts to save people must consist in patient “instruction.” Hence, the necessity of schools at missionary stations.

Being alienated see the notes on ~~402~~Ephesians 2:12.

From the life of God From a life “like” that of God, or a life of which he is the source and author. The meaning is, that they lived a life which was “unlike” God, or which he could not approve. Of the truth of this in regard to the pagan everywhere, there can be no doubt; see the notes on Romans 1.

Through the ignorance that is in them The ignorance of the true God, and of what constituted virtue; compare notes on ~~402~~Romans 1:20-23.

Because of the blindness of their heart Margin, “hardness.” Hardness is a better word. It is a better translation of the Greek; and it better accords with the design of the apostle. Here the reason is stated why they lived and acted as they did, and why the “understanding” was blinded. It is not that God has enfeebled the human intellect by a judicial sentence on account of the sin of Adam, and made it incapable of perceiving the truth. It is not

that there is any I deficiency or incapacity of natural powers. It is not that the truths of religion are so exalted that man has no natural ability to understand them, for they may be as well understood as any other truth; see the notes on <E014>1 Corinthians 1:14. The simple reason is, “the hardness or THE HEART.” That is the solution given by an inspired apostle, and that is enough. A man who has a blind and hard heart sees no beauty in truth, and feels not its force, and is insensible to all its appeals. Learn, then:

(1) That people are to blame for the blindness of their understanding. Whatever proceeds from a “wicked heart” they are responsible for. But for mere “inferiority of intellect” they would not be to blame.

(2) They are under obligation to repent and love God. If it was required of them to enlarge their intellects, or create additional faculties of mind, they could not be bound to do it. But where the whole thing required is to have a “better heart,” they may be held responsible.

(3) The way to elevate the understandings of mankind is to purify the heart. The approach must be made through the affections. Let people “feel” right toward God, and they will soon “think” right; let the heart be pure, and the understanding will be clear.⁶¹

<E019>**Ephesians 4:19.** *Who being past feeling* Wholly hardened in sin. There is a total want of all emotion on moral subjects. This is an accurate description of the state of a sinner. He has no “feeling,” no emotion. He often gives an intellectual assent to the truth, But it is without emotion of any kind. The heart is insensible as the hard rock.

Have given themselves over They have done it voluntarily. In <E024>Romans 1:24, it is said that “God gave them up.” There is no inconsistency. Whatever was the agency of God in it, they preferred it; compare notes on <E021>Romans 1:21.

Unto lasciviousness see the notes on <E024>Romans 1:24-26.

<E020>**Ephesians 4:20.** *But ye have not so learned Christ* You have been taught a different thing by Christ; you have been taught that his religion requires you to abandon such a course of life.

<E021>**Ephesians 4:21.** *If so be that ye have heard him* If you have listened attentively to his instructions, and learned the true nature of his religion. There may be a slight and delicate doubt implied here whether they had

attentively listened to his instructions. Doddridge, however, renders it, “Seeing ye have heard him;” compare notes on ^{<4012>}Ephesians 3:2.

And have been taught by him By his Spirit, or by the ministers whom he had appointed.

As the truth is in Jesus If you have learned the true nature of his religion as he himself taught it. What the truth was which the Lord Jesus taught, or what his principles implied, the apostle proceeds to state in the following verses.

^{<4012>}**Ephesians 4:22.** *That ye put off* That you lay aside, or renounce. The manner in which the apostle states those duties, renders it not improbable that there had been some instruction among them of a contrary character, and that it is possible there had been some teachers there who had not enforced, as they should have done, the duties of practical religion.

Concerning the former conversation The word “conversation” here means conduct — as it commonly does in the Bible; see the notes, ^{<4012>}2 Corinthians 1:12. The meaning here is, “with respect to your former conduct or habits of life, lay aside all that pertained to a corrupt and fallen nature.” You are not to lay “everything” aside that formerly pertained to you. Your dress, and manners, and modes of speech and conversation, might have been in many respects correct. But everything that proceeded from sin; every habit, and custom, and mode of speech and of conduct that was the result of depravity, is to be laid aside. The special characteristics of an unconverted man you are to put off, and are to assume those which are the proper fruits of a renewed heart.

The old man see the notes on ^{<4016>}Romans 6:6:

Which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts The meaning is:

(1) That the unrenewed man is not under the direction of reason and sound sense, but is controlled by his “passions and desires.” The word “lusts,” has a more limited signification with us than the original word. That word we now confine to one class of sensual appetites; but the original word denotes any passion or propensity of the heart. It may include avarice, ambition, the love of pleasure, or of gratification in any way; and the meaning here is, that the heart is by nature under the control of such desires.

(2) Those passions are deceitful. They lead us astray, They plunge us into ruin. All the passions and pleasures of the world are illusive. They promise more than they perform; and they leave their deluded votaries to disappointment and to tears. Nothing is more “deceitful” than the promised pleasures of this world; and all who yield to them find at last that they “flatter but to betray.”

Ephesians 4:23. *And be renewed* That is, it is necessary that a man who has been following these should become a new man; see the notes on **John 3:3ff.**, compare the notes on **2 Corinthians 4:16**. The word used here — **αὐνανέω** — does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament; but it has the same meaning as the word used in **2 Corinthians 4:16**, and **Colossians 3:10**. It means to make new, and is descriptive of the work of regeneration. This was addressed to the church, and to those whom Paul regarded as Christians; and we learn from this:

(1) that it is necessary that man should be “renewed” in order to be saved.

(2) that it is proper to exhort Christians to be renewed. They need renovated strength every day.

(3) that it is a matter of “obligation” to be renewed. People are “bound” thus to be renovated, And

(4) that they have sufficient natural ability to change from the condition of the old to that of the “new” man, or they could not be exhorted to it.

(See the supplementary notes **Romans 8:7**; **Galatians 5:17**.)

In the spirit of your mind In your temper; your heart; your nature.

Ephesians 4:24. *And that ye put on the new man* The new man refers to the renovated nature. This is called in other places, the “new creature, or the new creation” (see the notes on **2 Corinthians 5:17**), and refers to the condition after the heart is changed. The change is so great, that there is no impropriety in speaking of one who has experienced it as “a new man.” He has new feelings, principles, and desires. He has laid aside his old principles and practices, and, in everything that pertains to moral character, he is new. His body is indeed the same; the intellectual structure of his mind the same; but there has been a change in his principles and feelings which make him, in all the great purposes of life, a new being. Learn, that regeneration is not a trifling change. It is not a mere change of

relations, or of the outward condition. It is not merely being brought from the world into the church, and being baptized, though by the most holy hands; it is much more. None of these things would make proper the declaration, “he is a new man.” Regeneration by the Spirit of God does.

After God **κατα** ^{<2596>} **Θεον** ^{<2316>}. In respect to God. The idea is, evidently, that man is so renewed as to become “like” God, or the divine image is restored to the soul. In the parallel passage in Colossians (3:9), the idea is expressed more fully, “renewed in knowledge after “the image” of him that created him.” Man, by regeneration, is restored to the lost image of God; compare ^{<0025>}Genesis 1:26.

Is created A word that is often used to denote the new birth, from its strong resemblance to the first act of creation; see it explained in the notes on ^{<4157>}2 Corinthians 5:17.

In righteousness That is, the renewed man is made to resemble God in righteousness. This proves that man, when he was made, was righteous; or that righteousness constituted a part of the image of God in which he was created. The object of the work of redemption is to restore to man the lost image of God, or to bring him back to the condition in which he was before he fell.

And true holiness Margin, as in Greek, “holiness of truth” — standing in contrast with “lusts of deceit” (Greek), in ^{<4042>}Ephesians 4:22. “Holiness” properly refers to purity toward God, and “righteousness” to integrity toward people; but it is not certain that this distinction is observed here. The general idea is, that the renovated man is made an upright and a pious man; and that, therefore, he should avoid the vices which are practiced by the pagan, and which the apostle proceeds to specify. This phrase also proves that, when man was created, he was a holy being.

^{<4025>}**Ephesians 4:25.** *Wherefore putting away lying* It may seem strange that the apostle should seriously exhort Christians to put away “lying,” implying that they were in the habit of indulging in falsehood. But we are to remember:

(1) that lying is the universal vice of the pagan world. Among the ancient pagans, as among the moderns, it was almost universally practiced. It has been remarked by a distinguished jurist who had spent much time in India, that he would not believe a Hindu on his oath. The same testimony is borne

by almost all the missionaries. of the character of pagans everywhere. No confidence can be placed in their statements; and, where there is the slightest temptation to falsehood, they practice it without remorse.

(2) The Ephesians had been recently converted, and were, to a great extent, ignorant of the requirements of the gospel. A conscience has to be “created” when pagans are converted, and it is long before they see the evils of many things which appear to us to be palpably wrong.

(3) The effects of former habits abide long, often, after a man is converted. He who has been in the habit of profane swearing, finds it difficult to avoid it; and he who has been all his life practicing deception, will find himself tempted to practice it still. It was for reasons such as these, probably, that the apostle exhorted the Ephesians to put away “lying,” and to speak the truth only. Nor is the exhortation now inappropriate to Christians, and there are many classes to whom it would now be proper — such as the following:

(1) He who is in the habit of concealing the defects of an article in trade, or of commending it for more than its real value — “let him put away lying.”

(2) He, or she, who instructs a servant to say that they are not at home, when they are at home: or that they are sick, when they are not sick or that they are engaged, when they are not engaged — “let them put away lying.”

(3) He that is in the habit of giving a coloring to his narratives; of conveying a false impression by the introduction or the suppression of circumstances that are important to the right understanding of an account — “let him put away lying.”

(4) He that is at no pains to ascertain the exact truth in regard to any facts that may affect his neighbor; that catches up flying rumors without investigating them, and that circulates them as undoubted truth, though they may seriously affect the character and peace of another — “let him put away lying.”

(5) He that is in the habit of making promises only to disregard them — “let him put away lying.” The community is full of falsehoods of that kind, and they are not all confined to the people of the world. Nothing is more important in a community than simple “truth” — and yet, it is to be feared that nothing is more habitually disregarded. No professing Christian can do any good who has not an unimpeachable character for integrity and truth

— and yet who can lay his hand on his breast and say before God that he is in all cases a man that speaks the simple and unvarnished TRUTH?

For we are members one of another We belong to one body — the church — which is the body of Christ; see the notes ^{<4012>}Romans 5:12. The idea is, that falsehood tends to loosen the bonds of brotherhood. In the “human body” harmony is observed. The eye never deceives the hand, nor the hand the foot, nor the heart the lungs. The whole move harmoniously as if the one could put the utmost confidence in the other — and falsehood in the church is as ruinous to its interests as it would be to the body if one member was perpetually practicing a deception on another.

^{<4026>}**Ephesians 4:26.** *Be ye angry and sin not* It has been remarked that the direction here is conformable to the usage of the Pythagoreans, who were bound, when there were any differences among them, to furnish some token of reconciliation before the sun set. Burder, in Ros. Alt. u. neu. Morgenland, in loc. It is implied here:

- (1) that there “may” be anger without sin; and
- (2) that there is special danger in all cases where there is anger that it will be accompanied with sin.

“Anger” is a passion too common to need any description. It is an excitement or agitation of mind, of more or less violence, produced by the reception of a real or supposed injury, and attended commonly with a desire or purpose of revenge. The desire of revenge, however, is not essential to the existence of the passion, though it is probably always attended with a disposition to express displeasure, to chide, rebuke, or punish; compare ^{<4036>}Mark 3:5. To a great extent the sudden excitement on the reception of an injury is involuntary, and consequently innocent. Anger is excited when a horse kicks us; when a serpent hisses; when we dash our foot against a stone — and so when a man raises his hand to strike us. The “object or final cause” of implanting this passion in the mind of man is, to rouse him to an immediate defense of himself when suddenly attacked, and before his reason would, have time to suggest the proper means of defense. It prompts at once to self-protection; and when that is done its proper office ceases. If persevered in; it becomes sinful malignity. or revenge — always wrong. Anger may be excited against a “thing” as well as a “person;” as well against an act as a “man.” We are suddenly excited by a wrong “thing,” without any malignancy against the “man;” we may wish to

rebuke or chide “that,” without injuring “him.” Anger is sinful in the following circumstances:

- (1) When it is excited without any sufficient cause — when we are in no danger, and do not need it for a protection. We should be safe without it.
- (2) When it transcends the cause, if any cause really exists. All that is beyond the necessity of immediate self-protection, is apart from its design, and is wrong.
- (3) When it is against “the person” rather than the “offence.” The object is not to injure another; it is to protect ourselves.
- (4) When it is attended with the desire of “revenge.” That is always wrong; ~~61217~~Romans 12:17,19.
- (5) When it is cherished and heightened by reflection. And
- (6) When there is an unforgiving spirit; a determination to exact the utmost satisfaction for the injury which has been done.

If people were perfectly holy, that sudden “arousing of the mind” in danger, or on the reception of an injury; which would serve to prompt us to save ourselves from danger, would exist, and would be an important principle of our nature. As it is now, it is violent; excessive; uncontrollable; persevered in — and is almost always wrong. If people were holy, this excitement of the mind would obey the first injunctions of “reasons,” and be wholly under its control; as it is now, it seldom obeys reason at all — and is wholly wrong. Moreover, if ALL people were holy; if there were none “disposed” to do an injury, it would exist only in the form of a sudden arousing of the mind against immediate danger — which would all be right. Now, it is excited not only in view of “physical” dangers, but in view of the “wrongs” done by others — and hence it terminates on the “person” and not the “thing,” and becomes often wholly evil.

Let not the sun go down Do not cherish anger. Do not sleep upon it. Do not harbor a purpose of revenge; do not cherish ill-will against another. “When the sun sets on a man’s anger, he may be sure it is wrong.” The meaning of the whole of this verse then is, “If you be angry, which may be the case, and which may be unavoidable, see that the sudden excitement does not become sin. Do not let it overleap its proper bounds; do not cherish it; do not let it remain in your bosom even to the setting of the sun.

Though the sun be sinking in the west, let not the passion linger in the bosom, but let his last rays find you always peaceful and calm.”

Ephesians 4:27. *Neither give place to the devil* This has respect probably to the exhortation in the former verse. “Do not yield to the suggestions and temptations of Satan, who would take every opportunity to persuade you to cherish unkind and angry feelings, and to keep up a spirit of resentment among brethren.” Many of our feelings, when we suppose we are merely defending our rights, and securing what is our own, are produced by the temptations of the devil. The heart is deceitful; and seldom more deceitful in any case than when a man is attempting to vindicate himself from injuries done to his person and reputation. The devil is always busy when we are angry, and in some way, if possible, will lead us into sin; and the best way to avoid his wiles is to curb the temper, and restrain even sudden anger. No man sins by “restraining” his anger: no man is certain that he will not who indulges it for a moment.

Ephesians 4:28. *Let him that stole steal no more* Theft, like lying, was, and is, almost a universal vice among the pagan. The practice of pilfering prevails in, probably, every pagan community, and no property is safe which is not guarded, or so locked up as to be inaccessible. Hence, as the Christian converts at Ephesus had been long addicted to it, there was danger that they would fall into it again; and hence the necessity of special cautions on that head. We are not to suppose that “pilfering” was a common vice in the church, but the cautions on this point proceed on the principle that, where a man has been long in the habit of a particular sin, he is in great danger of falling into it again. Hence, we caution the man who has been intemperate against the least indulgence in intoxicating drinks; we exhort him not to touch that which would be so strong a temptation to him. The object of the apostle was to show that the gospel requires holy living in all its friends, and to entreat Christians at Ephesus in a special manner to avoid the vices of the surrounding pagan.

But rather let him labour Let him seek the means of living in an honest manner, by his own industry, rather than by wronging others.

Working with his hands Pursuing some honest employment. Paul was not ashamed to labor with “his own hands” (**Acts 20:35**); and no man is dishonored by labor. God made man for toil (**Genesis 2:15**); and employment is essential to the happiness of the race. No man, who is

“able” to support himself, has a “right” to depend on others; see the notes on ^{<521>}Romans 12:11.

That he may have to give to him that needeth Margin, “distribute.” Not merely that may have the means of support, but that he may have it in his power to aid others. The reason and propriety of this is obvious. The human race is one great brotherhood. A considerable part “cannot” labor to support themselves. They are too old, or too young; or they are crippled, or feeble, or laid on beds of sickness. If others do not divide with them the avails of their labors, they will perish. We are required to labour in order that we may have the privilege of contributing to their comfort. Learn from this verse:

(1) That every Christian should have some calling, business, or profession, by which he may support himself. The Saviour was carpenter; Paul a tentmaker; and no man is disgraced by being able to build a house or to construct a tent.

(2) Christianity promotes industry. It is rare that an idle man becomes a Christian; but if he does, religion makes him industrious just in proportion as it has influence over his mind. To talk of a “lazy Christian,” is about the same as to talk of burning water or freezing fire.

(3) Christians should have some “useful” and “honest” employment. They should work “that which is good.” They should not pursue an employment which will necessarily injure others. No man has a right to place a nuisance under the window of his neighbor; nor has he any “more” right to pursue an employment that shall lead his neighbor into sin or ruin him. An honest employment benefits everybody. A good farmer is a benefit to his neighborhood and country; and a good shoemaker, blacksmith, weaver, cabinetmaker, watchmaker, machinist, is a blessing to the community. He injures no one; he benefits all. How is it with the distiller, and the vender of alcoholic drinks? He benefits no one; he injures every body. Every quart of intoxicating drink that is taken from his house does evil somewhere — evil, and only evil, and that continually. No one is made better, or richer; no one is made more moral or industrious; no one is helped on the way to heaven by it. Thousands are helped on the way to hell by it, who are already in the path; and thousands are “induced” to walk in the way to death who, but for that distillery, store, or tavern, might have walked in the way to heaven. Is this then “working that WHICH is GOOD?” Would Paul have done it? Would Jesus do it? Strange, that by a professing Christian it was ever

done! See a striking instance of the way in which the Ephesian Christians acted when they were first converted, in the Acts of the Apostles, ^{<449>}Acts 19:19; compare notes on that place.

(4) The main business of a Christian is not to “make money,” and to become rich. It is that he may have the means of benefiting others. Beyond what he needs for himself, his poor, and sick, and aged, and afflicted brother and friend has a claim on his earnings — and they should be liberally bestowed.

(5) We should labor in “order” that we may have the means of doing good to others. It should be just as much a matter of plan and purpose to do this, as it is to labor in order to buy a coat, or to build a house, or to live comfortably, or to have the means of a decent burial. Yet how few are those who have any such end in view, or who pursue their daily toil definitely, “that they may have something to give away!” The world will be soon converted when all Christians make that the purpose of life; see the notes on ^{<521>}Romans 12:11

^{<492>}**Ephesians 4:29.** *Let no corrupt communication proceed* see the notes on ^{<453>}1 Corinthians 15:33. The word rendered “corrupt” (**σαπρος** ^{<450>}) means bad, decayed, rotten, and is applied to putrid vegetable or animal substances. Then it is applied to a tree that is of a useless character, that produces no good fruit; ^{<477>}Matthew 7:17. Then it is used in a moral sense, as our word “corrupt” is, to denote that which is depraved, evil, contaminating, and may denote here anything that is obscene, offensive, or that tends to corrupt others. The importance of this admonition will be appreciated when it is remembered:

(1) that such obscene and filthy conversation prevailed everywhere, and does still among the pagan. So general is this, that at almost every missionary station it has been found that the common conversation is so corrupt and defiling that missionaries have felt it necessary to send their children home to be educated, in order to secure them from the contaminating influence of those around them.

(2) Those who have had the misfortune to be familiar with the common conversation of the lower classes in any community, and especially with the conversation of young men, will see the importance of this admonition. Scarcely anything can be conceived more corrupt or corrupting, than that

which often prevails among young men — and even young men in the academies and colleges of this land.

(3) Its importance will be seen from the “influence” of such corrupt communications. “The passage of an impure thought through the mind leaves pollution behind it;” the expression of such a thought deepens the pollution on the soul, and corrupts others. It is like retaining an offensive carcass above ground, to pollute the air, and to diffuse pestilence and death, which should at once be buried out of sight. A Christian should be PURE in his conversation. His Master was pure. His God is pure. The heaven to which he goes is pure. The religion which he professes is pure. Never should he indulge himself in an obscene allusion: never should he retail anecdotes of an obscene character, or smile when they are retailed by others. Never should he indulge in a jest having a double meaning; never should he listen to a song of this character. If those with whom he associates have not sufficient respect for themselves and him to abstain from such corrupt and corrupting allusions, he should at once leave them.

But that which is good to the use of edifying Margin, to edify profitably.” Greek, “to useful edification:” that is, adapted to instruct, counsel, and comfort others; to promote their intelligence anti purity. Speech is an invaluable gift; a blessing of inestimable worth. We may so speak as “always” to do good to others. We may give them some information which they have not; impart some consolation which they need; elicit some truth by friendly discussion which we did not know before, or recall by friendly admonition those who are in danger of going astray. He who talks for the mere sake of talking will say many foolish things; he whose great aim in life is to benefit others, will not be likely to say that which he will have occasion to regret; compare ^{<1026>}Matthew 12:36; ^{<2082>}Ecclesiastes 5:2; ^{<3009>}Proverbs 10:19; ^{<5019>}James 1:19.

^{<4083>}**Ephesians 4:30.** *And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God* This is addressed to Christians, and it proves that it is possible for them to grieve the Holy Spirit. The word used here — *λυπειτε* ^{<3076>} — means properly to afflict with sorrow; to make sad or sorrowful. It is rendered to make sorry, or sorrowful, ^{<0149>}Matthew 14:9; 17:23; 18:31; 19:22; 26:22,37; ^{<1149>}Mark 14:19; ^{<6161>}John 16:20; ^{<7002>}2 Corinthians 2:2; 6:10; 7:8,9,11; ^{<5013>}1 Thessalonians 4:13. It is rendered “grieved,” ^{<1102>}Mark 10:22; ^{<6217>}John 21:17; ^{<6145>}Romans 14:15; ^{<7004>}2 Corinthians 2:4,5; ^{<4083>}Ephesians 4:20: and once. “in heaviness,” ^{<0006>}1 Peter 1:6. The verb does not elsewhere occur in

the New Testament. The common meaning is, to treat others so as to cause grief. We are not to suppose that the Holy Spirit literally endures “grief, or pain,” at the conduct of people. The language is such as is suited to describe what “men” endure, and is applied to him to denote that kind of conduct which is “suited” to cause grief; and the meaning here is, “do not pursue such a course as is “suited” in its own nature, to pain the benevolent heart of a holy being. Do not act toward the Holy Spirit in a manner which would produce pain in the bosom of a friend who loves you. There is a course of conduct which will drive that Spirit from the mind as if he were grieved and pained — as a course of ingratitude and sin would pain the heart of an earthly friend, and cause him to leave you.” If asked what that conduct is, we may reply:

- (1) Open and gross sins. They are particularly referred to here; and the meaning of Paul is. that theft, falsehood, anger, and kindred vices, would grieve the Holy Spirit and cause him to depart.
- (2) Anger, in all its forms. Nothing is more suited to drive away all serious and tender impressions from the mind, than the indulgence of anger.
- (3) Licentious thoughts and desires. The Spirit of God is pure, and he dwells not in a soul that is filled with corrupt imaginings.
- (4) Ingratitude. “We” feel ingratitude more than almost anything else; and why should we suppose that the Holy Spirit would not feel it also?
- (5) Neglect. The Spirit of God is grieved by that. Often he prompts us to pray; he disposes the mind to seriousness, to the perusal of the Bible, to tenderness and penitence. We neglect those favored moments of our piety, and lose those happy seasons for becoming like God.
- (6) Resistance. Christians often resist the Holy Spirit. He would lead them to be dead to the world; yet they drive on their plans Of gain. He would teach them the folly of fashion and vanity; yet they deck themselves in the most frivolous apparel. He would keep them from the splendid party, the theater, and the ballroom; yet they go there. All that is needful for a Christian to do in order to be eminent in piety, is to yield to the gentle influences which would draw him to prayer and to heaven.

Whereby ye are sealed see the notes on ⁴⁰¹²2 Corinthians 1:22.

Unto the day of redemption see the notes on ⁴⁰¹⁴Ephesians 1:14,

◀406▶ Ephesians 4:31. *Let all bitterness* see the notes on **◀404▶ Ephesians 4:2.**

And wrath The word here does not differ essentially from anger.

Anger see the note on **◀406▶ Ephesians 4:26.** All cherished, unreasonable anger.

And clamour Noise, disorder, high words; such as men use in a brawl, or when they are excited. Christians are to be calm and serious. Harsh contentions and strifes; hoarse brawls and tumults, are to be unknown among them.

And evil-speaking Slander, backbiting, angry expressions, tale-bearing, reproaches, etc.

With all malice Rather, “with all evil” — **κακία** **<549>**. Every kind and sort of evil is to be put away, and you are to manifest only that which is good.

◀406▶ Ephesians 4:32. *And be ye kind one to another* Benignant, mild, courteous, “polite” — **χρηστοί** **<543>**. **◀408▶** 1 Peter 3:8. Christianity produces true courteousness, or politeness. It does not make one rough, crabby, or sour; nor does it dispose its followers to violate the proper rules of social contact. The secret of true politeness is “benevolence,” or a desire to make others happy; and a Christian SHOULD be the most polite of people. There is no religion in a sour, misanthropic temper; none in rudeness, stiffness, and repulsiveness; none in violating the rules of good breeding. There is a hollow-hearted politeness, indeed, which the Christian is not to aim at or copy. His politeness is to be based on “kindness;” **<582>** Colossians 3:12. His courtesy is to be the result of love, good-will, and a desire of the happiness of all others; and this will prompt to the kind of conduct that will render his conversation. with others agreeable and profitable.

Tender-hearted Having a heart disposed to pity and compassion, and especially disposed to show kindness to the faults of erring brethren; for so the connection demands.

Forgiving one another see the notes on **◀462▶** Matthew 6:12.

As God for Christ’s sake hath forgiven you As God, on account of what Christ has suffered and done, has pardoned you. He has done it:

- (1) “freely” — without merit on your part — when we were confessedly in the wrong.
- (2) “Fully;” he has forgiven “every” offence.
- (3) “Liberally;” he has forgiven “many” offences, for our sins have been innumerable.

This is to be the rule which we are to observe in forgiving others. We are to do it “freely, fully, liberally.” The forgiveness is to be entire, cordial, constant. We are not to “rake up” old offences, and charge them again upon them; we are to treat them as though they had not offended, for so God treats us Learn:

- (1) That the forgiveness of an offending brother is a DUTY which we are not at liberty to neglect.
- (2) The peace and happiness of the church depend on it. All are liable to offend their brethren, as all are liable to offend God; all need forgiveness of one another, as we all need it of God.
- (3) There is no danger of carrying it too far. Let the rule be observed, “As God has forgiven you, so do you forgive others.” Let a man recollect his own sins and follies; let him look over his life, and see how often he has offended God; let him remember that all has been forgiven; and then, fresh with this feeling, let him go and meet an offending brother, and say, “My brother, I forgive you. I do it frankly, fully, wholly. So Christ has forgiven me; so I forgive you. The offence shall be no more remembered. It shall not be referred to in our contact to harrow up your feelings; it shall not diminish my love for you; it shall not prevent my uniting with you in doing good. Christ treats me, a poor sinner, as a friend; and so I will treat you.”

NOTES ON EPHESIANS 5

This chapter (Ephesians 5) is a continuation of the practical exhortations commenced in Ephesians 4. It comprises the following points, or subjects:

1. The exhortation to be followers of God, and to walk in love; ^{<418>}Ephesians 5:1,2.
2. The duty of avoiding the impure practices of the surrounding pagan, and of wholly breaking off from the vices in which even they themselves had indulged, before their conversion to Christianity; ^{<418>}Ephesians 5:3-17.
3. The apostle cautions them particularly against the use of wine, and the revelry which attends its use, and exhorts them rather to engage in the exercises to which the Holy Spirit would prompt them, and to the services of praise and thanksgiving; ^{<418>}Ephesians 5:18-20.
4. He exhorts them to mutual subjection; and particularly enjoins on wives the duty of being subject to their husbands; ^{<418>}Ephesians 5:21-24.
5. The chapter closes with a statement of the duty of husbands to love their wives, illustrated by that which Christ showed for the church; ^{<418>}Ephesians 5:25-33.

^{<418>}**Ephesians 5:1.** *Be ye therefore followers of God* Greek, “Be imitators — ^{<340>}μιμηται — of God.” The idea is not that they were to be the friends of God, or numbered among his followers, but that they were to imitate him in the particular thing under consideration. The word “therefore” — ^{<376>}ουν — connects this with the previous chapter, where he had been exhorting them to kindness, and to a spirit of forgiveness, and he here entreats them to imitate God, who was always kind and ready to forgive; compare ^{<418>}Matthew 5:44-47: As he forgives us (^{<418>}Ephesians 4:32), we should be ready to forgive others; as he has borne with our faults, we should bear with theirs; as he is ever ready to hear our cry when we ask for mercy, we should be ready to hear others when they desire to be forgiven; and as he is never weary with doing us good, we should never be weary in benefiting them.

As dear children The meaning is, “as those children which are beloved follow the example of a father, so we, who are beloved of God, should

follow his example.” What a simple rule this is! And how much contention and strife would be avoided if it were followed! If every Christian who is angry, unforgiving, and unkind, would just ask himself the question, “How does God treat me?” it would save all the trouble and heart-burning which ever exists in the church.

Ephesians 5:2. *And walk in love* That is, let your lives be characterized by love; let that be evinced in all your deportment and conversation; see notes on ^{<4834>}John 13:34.

As Christ also hath loved us We are to evince the same love for one another which he has done for us. He showed his love by giving himself to die for us, and we should evince similar love to one another; ^{<4816>}1 John 3:16.

And hath given himself for us “As Christ also hath loved us.” We are to evince the same love for one another which he has done for us He showed his love by giving himself to die for us, and we should evince similar love to one another; ^{<4816>}1 John 3:16. “And hath given himself for us.” This is evidently added by the apostle to show what he meant by saying that Christ loved us, and what we ought to do to evince our love for each other. The strength of his love was so great that he was willing to give himself up to death on our account; our love for our brethren should be such that we would be willing to do the same thing for them; ^{<4816>}1 John 3:16.

An offering The word used here — **προσφορα** ^{<4376>} — means properly that which is “offered to God” in any way; or whatever it may be. It is, however, in the Scriptures commonly used to denote an offering without blood — a thank-offering — and thus is distinguished from a sacrifice or a bloody oblation. The word occurs only in ^{<4026>}Acts 21:26; 24:17; ^{<6156>}Romans 15:16; ^{<4816>}Ephesians 5:2; ^{<8105>}Hebrews 10:5, 8,10,14,18. It means here that he regarded himself as an offering to God.

And a sacrifice **θυσιαν** ^{<2378>}. Christ is here expressly called a “Sacrifice” — the usual word in the Scriptures to denote a proper sacrifice. A sacrifice was an offering made to God by killing an animal and burning it on an altar, designed to make atonement for sin. It always implied the “killing” of the animal as an acknowledgment of the sinner that he deserved to die. It was the giving up of “life,” which was supposed to reside in the “blood” (see the notes on ^{<4825>}Romans 3:25), and hence it was necessary that

“blood” should be shed. Christ was such a sacrifice; and his love was shown in his being willing that his blood should be shed to save people.

For a sweet-smelling savour see the notes on ^{<4015>}2 Corinthians 2:15. where the word “savor” is explained. The meaning here is, that the offering which Christ made of himself to God, was like the grateful and pleasant smell of “incense,” that is, it was acceptable to him. It was an exhibition of benevolence with which he was pleased, and it gave him the opportunity of evincing his own benevolence in the salvation of people. The meaning of this in the connection here is that the offering which Christ made was one of “love.” So, says Paul, do you love one another. Christ sacrificed himself by “love,” and that sacrifice was acceptable to God. So do you show love one to another. Sacrifice everything which opposes it. and it will be acceptable to God. He will approve nil which is designed to promote love, as he approved the sacrifice which was made, under the influence of love, by his Son.

^{<4015>}**Ephesians 5:3.** *But fornication* A “common” vice among the pagan then as it is now, and one into which they were in special danger of falling; see notes on ^{<4012>}Romans 1:29; ^{<4015>}1 Corinthians 6:18.

And all uncleanness Impurity of life; see the notes on ^{<4012>}Romans 1:24; compare ^{<4015>}Romans 6:19; ^{<4015>}Galatians 5:19; ^{<4015>}Ephesians 4:19; ^{<4015>}Colossians 3:5.

Or covetousness The “connection” in which this word is found is remarkable. It is associated with the lowest and most debasing vices, and this, as well as those vices, was not once to be “named” among them. What was Paul’s estimate then of covetousness? He considered it as an odious and abominable vice; a vice to be regarded in the same light as the most gross sin, and as wholly to be abhorred by all who bore the Christian name see ^{<4015>}Ephesians 5:5. The covetous man, according to Paul, is to be ranked with the sensual, and with idolaters (^{<4015>}Ephesians 5:5), and with those who are entirely excluded from the kingdom of God Is this the estimate in which the vice is held now? Is it the view which professing Christians take of it? Do we not feel that there is a “great” difference between a covetous man and a man of impure and licentious life? Why is this? Because:

(1) it is so common;

(2) because it is found among those who make pretensions to refinement and even religion;

(3) because it is not so easy to define what is covetousness, as it is to define impurity of life; and

(4) because the public conscience is seared, and the mind blinded to the low and grovelling character of the sin. Yet is not the view, of Paul the right view? Who is a covetous man? A man who, in the pursuit of gold, neglects his soul, his intellect, and his heart. A man who, in this insatiable pursuit, is regardless of justice, truth, charity, faith, prayer, peace, comfort, usefulness, conscience; and who shall say that there is any vice more debasing or degrading than this? The time “may” come, therefore, when the covetous man will be regarded as deserving the same rank in the public estimation with the most vicious, and when to COVET will be considered as much opposed to the spirit of the gospel as any of the vices here named. When that time shall come, the world’s conversion will probably be not a distant event.

Let it not be once named among you That is, let it not exist; let there be no occasion for mentioning such a thing among you; let it be wholly unknown. This cannot mean that it is wrong to “mention” these vices for the purpose of rebuking them, or cautioning those in danger of committing them — for Paul himself in this manner mentions them here, and frequently elsewhere — but that they should not “exist” among them.

As becometh saints As befits the character of Christians, who are regarded as holy. Literally, “as becometh holy ones” — ἁγίοις ^{<40>}.

^{<40>}**Ephesians 5:4.** *Neither filthiness* That is, obscene, or indecent conversation. Literally, that which is shameful, or deformed — αἰσχροτης ^{<45>}. The word does not elsewhere occur in the New Testament.

Nor foolish talking This word — μωρολογία ^{<347>} — does not occur elsewhere in the New Testament. It means that kind of talk which is insipid, senseless, stupid, foolish; which is not suited to instruct, edify, profit — the idle “chitchat” which is so common in the world. The meaning is, that Christians should aim to have their conversation sensible, serious, sincere — remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, “that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment;” ^{<402>}Matthew 12:36.

Nor jesting εὐτραπέλια^{<216>}. This word occurs also nowhere else in the New Testament. It properly means, that which is “well-turned” εὖ^{<2095>} — well, and πρεπω^{<4241>} — to turn); and then that which is sportive, refined, courteous; and then “urbanity, humor, wit; and then jesting, levity” — which is evidently the meaning here. The apostle would not forbid courteousness, or refinement of manners (compare ^{<4188>}1 Peter 3:8), and the reference, therefore, must be to that which is light and trifling in conversation; to that which is known among us as jesting. It may be observed:

- (1) that “courteousness” is not forbidden in the Scriptures, but is positively required; ^{<4188>}1 Peter 3:8.
- (2) “Cheerfulness” is not forbidden — for if anything can make cheerful, it is the hope of heaven.
- (3) “Pleasantry” cannot be forbidden. I mean that quiet and gentle humor that arises from good-nature, and that makes one good-natured in spite of himself.

Such are many of the poems of Cowper, and many of the essays of Addison in the “Spectator” — a benevolent humor which disposes us to smile, but not to be malignant; to be good-natured, but not to inspire levity. But levity and jesting, though often manifested by ministers and other Christians, are as inconsistent with true dignity as with the gospel. Where were they seen in the conversation of the Redeemer? Where in the writings of Paul?

Which are not convenient That is, which are not fit or proper; which do not become the character of Christians; notes, ^{<4128>}Romans 1:28. Christians should be grave and serious — though cheerful and pleasant. They should feel that they have great interests at stake, and that the world has too. They are redeemed — not to make sport; purchased with precious blood — for other purposes than to make people laugh. They are soon to be in heaven — and a man who has any impressive sense of that will habitually feel that he has much else to do than to make people laugh. The true course of life is midway between moroseness and levity; sourness and lightness; harshness and jesting. Be benevolent, kind, cheerful, bland, courteous, but serious. Be solemn, thoughtful, deeply impressed with the presence of God and with eternal things, but pleasant, affable, and benignant. Think not a smile sinful; but think not levity and jesting harmless.

But rather giving of thanks Thanks to God, or praises are more becoming Christians than jesting. The idea here seems to be, that such employment would be far more appropriate to the character of Christians, than idle, trifling, and indelicate conversation. Instead, therefore, of meeting together for low wit and jesting; for singing songs, and for the common discourse which often attends such “gatherings” of friends, Paul would have them come together for the purpose of praising God, and engaging in his service. Human beings are social in their nature; and if they do not assemble for good purposes, they will for bad ones. It is much more appropriate to the character of Christians to come together to sing praises to God, than to sing songs; to pray than to jest; to converse of the things of redemption than to tell anecdotes, and to devote the time to a contemplation of the world to come, than to trifles and nonsense.

⚭ Ephesians 5:5. *For this ye know* Be assured of this. The object here is to deter from indulgence in those vices by the solemn assurance that no one who committed them could possibly be saved.

Nor unclean person No one of corrupt and licentious life can be saved; see **⚭ Revelation 22:15.**

Nor covetous man, who is an idolater That is, he bestows on money the affections due to God; see **⚭ Colossians 3:5.** To worship money is as real idolatry as to worship a block of stone. If this be so, what an idolatrous world is this! How many idolatrous are there in professedly Christian lands! How many, it is to be feared, in the church itself! And since every covetous man is certainly to be excluded from the kingdom of God, how anxious should we be to examine our hearts, and to know whether this sin may not lie at our door!

Hath any inheritance, ... Such an one shall never enter heaven. This settles the inquiry about the final destiny of a large portion of the world; and this solemn sentence our conscience and all our views of heaven approve. Let us learn hence:

(1) that heaven will be “pure.”

(2) That it will be a “desirable” place for who would wish to live always with the licentious and the impure?

(3) It is right to reprove these vices and to preach against them. Shall we not be allowed to preach against those sins which will certainly exclude people from heaven?

(4) A large part of the world is exposed to the wrath of God. What numbers are covetous! What multitudes are licentious! In how many places is licentiousness openly and unblushingly practiced! In how many more places in secret! And in how many more is the “heart” polluted, while the external conduct is moral; the soul “corrupt,” while the individual moves in respectable society!

(5) What a world of shame will hell be! How dishonorable and disgraceful to be damned forever, and to linger on in eternal fires, because the man was TOO POLLUTED to be admitted into pure society! Here, perhaps, he moved in fashionable life, and was rich and honored, and flattered; there he will be sent down to hell because his whole soul was corrupt, and because God would not suffer heaven to be contaminated by his presence!

(6) What doom awaits the “covetous” man! He, like the sensualist, is to be excluded from the kingdom of God. And what is to be his doom? Will he have a place apart from the common damned — a golden palace and a bed of down in hell? No. It will be no small part of his aggravation that he will be doomed to spend an eternity with those in comparison with whom on earth, perhaps, he thought himself to be pure as an angel of light.

(7) With this multitude of the licentious and the covetous, will sink to hell all who are not renewed and sanctified. What a prospect for the “happy,” the fashionable, the moral, the amiable, and the lovely, who have no religion! For all the impenitent and the unbelieving, there is but one home in eternity. Hell is less terrible from its penal fires and its smoke of torment, than from its being made up of the profane, the sensual, and the vile; and its supremest horrors arise from its being the place where shall be gathered all the corrupt and unholy dwellers in a fallen world; all who are so impure that they cannot be admitted into heaven. Why then will the refined, the moral, and the amiable not be persuaded to seek the society of a pure heaven? to be prepared for the world where holy beings dwell?

☞ Ephesians 5:6. *Let no man deceive you* Let no one by artful pleas persuade you that; there will be no danger from practicing these vices, We may suppose that they would be under strong temptations to mingle in the “happy” and festive scenes where these vices were not frowned on, or

where they were practiced; or that they might be tempted to commit them by some of the plausible arguments which were then used for their indulgence. Many of their friends may have been in these circles; and they would endeavor to convince them that such were the customs which had been long practiced, and that there could be no harm still in their indulgence. Not a few philosophers endeavored, as is well known, to defend some of these practices, and even practiced them themselves; see the notes on Romans 1. It required, therefore, all the authority of an apostle to convince them, that however plausible were the arguments in defense of them, they certainly exposed those who practiced them to the wrath of God.

For because of these things cometh the wrath of God see the notes on <4018>Romans 1:18; 2:8,9.

Upon the children of disobedience see the notes on <4000>Matthew 1:1; <4018>Romans 2:8.

<4017>**Ephesians 5:7.** *Be not ye therefore partakers with them* Since these things displease God and expose to his wrath, avoid them.

<4018>**Ephesians 5:8.** *For ye were sometimes darkness* see the notes on <4011>Ephesians 2:11,12; <4011>1 Corinthians 6:11. The meaning here is, that they were themselves formerly sunk in the same ignorance, and practiced the same abominations.

But now are ye light in the Lord Light is the emblem of happiness, knowledge, holiness. The meaning is, that they had been enlightened by the Lord to see the evil of these practices, and that they ought, therefore, to forsake them.

Walk as children of light see the notes on <4000>Matthew 1:1, on the use of the word “son,” or “children.” The meaning here is, that they should live as became those who had been enlightened to see the evil of sin, and the beauty of virtue and religion; compare <4026>John 12:36, where the same phrase occurs.

<4018>**Ephesians 5:9.** *For the fruit of the Spirit* That is, since the Holy Spirit through the gospel produces goodness, righteousness, and truth, see that you exhibit these in your lives, and thus show that you are the children of light. On the fruits of the Spirit, see the notes on <4012>Galatians 5:22,23.

Is in all goodness Is seen in producing all kinds of goodness. He who is not good is not a Christian.

Ephesians 5:10. *Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord* That is, "Walk as children of light (⁴⁸⁸Ephesians 5:8), thus showing what is acceptable to the Lord." Rosenmuller supposes that the participle is used here instead of the imperative. The meaning is, that by so living you will make a fair trial of what is acceptable to the Lord. The result on your happiness in this life and the next, will be such as to show that such a course is pleasing in his sight. Dr. Chandler, however, renders it as meaning that by this course they would show that they discerned and approved of what was acceptable to the Lord. See the notes on ⁴⁵¹²Romans 12:2, where a similar form of expression occurs.

Ephesians 5:11. *And have no fellowship* See the sentiment here expressed fully explained in the notes on ⁴⁷⁶⁴2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

The unfruitful works The deeds of darkness that produce no "benefit" to the body or the soul. The word "unfruitful" is used here in contrast with the "fruit of the Spirit," ⁴⁸⁹Ephesians 5:9.

But rather reprove them By your life, your conversation, and all your influence. This is the business of Christians. Their lives should be a standing rebuke of a sinful world, and they should be ever ready to express their disapprobation of its wickedness in every form.

Ephesians 5:12. *For it is a shame even to speak ...;* compare notes, ⁴⁸²⁴Romans 1:24-32. It is still a shame to speak of the practices of the pagan. Missionaries tell us that they "cannot" describe the images on the car of Juggernaut, or tell us what is done in the idol temples. All over the world the same thing is true. The cheek of modesty and virtue would be suffused with shame at the very mention of what is done by the worshippers of idols; and the same is true of what is done by multitudes in Christian lands, who are not worshippers of idols. Their deeds cannot be described in the circles of the refined and the delicate; they cannot be told in the presence of mothers and sisters. Is there not emphasis here in the words "even to SPEAK of these things!" If the apostle would not allow them to name those things, or to "speak" of them, is it wise or safe for Christians now to be familiar with the accounts of those practices of pollution, and for ministers to portray them in the pulpit, and for the friends of "moral reform" to describe them before the world? The very "naming"

of those abominations often produces improper associations in the mind; the description creates polluting images before the imagination; the exhibition of pictures, even for the purpose of condemning them, defiles the soul. There are some vices which, from the corruptions of the human heart, cannot be safely described, and it is to be feared that, under the plea of faithfulness, many have done evil by exciting improper feelings, where they should have only alluded to the crime, and then spoken in thunder. Paul did not “describe” these vices, he denounced them; he did not dwell upon them long enough for the imagination to find employment, and to corrupt the soul. He mentioned the vice — and then he mentioned the wrath of God; he alluded to the sin, and then he spoke of the exclusion from heaven; compare notes on ~~416B~~ 1 Corinthians 6:18.

Which are done of them in secret Many have supposed that there is an allusion here to the “mysteries” which were celebrated in Greece, usually at night, and far from the public eye. Many of these were indeed impure and abominable, but there is no necessity for supposing that there is such an allusion here. The reference may be to the vices which were secretly practiced then as now; the abominations which flee from the eye of day, and which are performed far from the public gaze.

~~416B~~ **Ephesians 5:13.** *But all things that are reprov'd* Margin, discovered. The word used here properly means proved, demonstrated, reprov'd, or convicted (see the notes on ~~416B~~ John 16:8); but it seems here to be used in the sense of disclosed, or discovered. The sense is, that “its true nature is demonstrated;” that is, it is made known.

Are made manifest by the light The sense is, “light is the means of seeing what things are. We discern their form, nature, appearance, by it. So it is with the gospel — the light of the world. It enables us to see the true nature of actions. They are done in darkness, and are like objects in the dark. Their form and nature cannot then be known; but, when the light shines, we see what they are;” compare notes on ~~416B~~ John 3:20,21.

For whatsoever doth make manifest is light “Anything which will show the real form and nature of an object, deserves to be called light.” Of the truth of this, no one can doubt. The meaning in this connection is, that that system which discloses the true nature of what is done by the pagan, deserves to be considered as “light;” and that the gospel which does this, should be regarded as a system of light and truth. It discloses their

odiousness and vileness, and it stands thus in strong contrast with all the false and abominable systems which have upheld or produced those vices.

Ephesians 5:14. *Wherefore he saith* Margin, or “it.” $\Delta\iota\omicron$

$\lambda\epsilon\gamma\epsilon\iota$. The meaning may be, either that the Lord says, or the Scripture. Much difficulty has been experienced in endeavoring to ascertain “where” this is said. It is agreed on all hands that it is not found, in so many words, in the Old Testament. Some have supposed that the allusion is to Isaiah 26:19, “Thy dead men shall live — awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust, for thy dew is as the dew of herbs,” etc. But the objections to this are obvious and conclusive.

(1) This is not a quotation of that place, nor has it a “resemblance” to it, except in the word “awake.”

(2) The passage in Isaiah refers to a different matter, and has a different sense altogether; see the notes on the passage.

To make it refer to those to whom the gospel comes, is most forced and unnatural. Others have supposed that the reference is to Isaiah 60:1-3, “Arise, shine; for thy light is come,” etc. But the objection to this is not less decisive.

(1) It is “not” a quotation of that passage, and the resemblance is very remote, if it can be seen at all.

(2) “That” is addressed to the church, calling on her to let her light shine; “this,” to awake and arise from the dead, with the assurance that Christ would give them light. The exhortation here is to Christians, to “avoid the vices of the pagan around them;” the exhortation in Isaiah is to the church, to “rejoice and exult” in view of the fact that the day of triumph had come, and that the pagan were to be converted, and to come in multitudes and devote themselves to God. In the “design” of the two passages there is no resemblance. Some have supposed that the words are taken from some book among the Hebrews which is now lost. Epiphanius supposed that it was a quotation from a prophecy of Elijah; Syncellus and Euthalius, from some writing of Jeremiah; Hippolytus, from the writing of some now unknown prophet. Jerome supposed it was taken from some apocryphal writings. Grotius supposes that it refers to the word “light” in Ephesians 5:13, and that the sense is, “That light says; that is, that a man who is pervaded by that light, let him so say to another.” Heumann,

and after him Storr, Michaelis, and Jennings (Jewish Ant. 2:252), suppose that the reference is to a song or hymn that was sung by the early Christians, beginning in this manner, and that the meaning is, "Wherefore, as it is said in the hymns which we sing,

*'Awake, thou that sleepest;
Arise from the dead;
Christ shall give thee light.'*

Others have supposed that there is an allusion to a sentiment which prevailed among the Jews, respecting the significancy of blowing the trumpet on the first day of the month, or the feast of the new moon. Maimonides conjectures that that call of the trumpet, especially in the month Tisri, in which the great day of atonement occurred, was designed to signify a special call to repentance; meaning, "You who sleep, arouse from your slumbers; search and try yourselves; think on your Creator, repent, and attend to the salvation of the soul." "Burder," in Ros. Alt. u. neu. Morgenland, in loc. But all this is evidently conjecture. I see no evidence that Paul meant to make a quotation at all. Why may we not suppose that he speaks as an inspired man, and that he means to say, simply, that God now gives this command, or that God now speaks in this way? The sense then would be, "Be separate from sinners. Come out from among the pagan. Do not mingle with their abominations; do not name them. You are the children of light; and God says to you, awake from false security, rouse from the death of sin, and Christ shall enlighten you." Whatever be the origin of the sentiment in this verse, it is worthy of inspiration, and accords with all that is elsewhere said in the Scriptures.¹⁵

Awake thou that sleepest Arouse from a state of slumber and false security. "Sleep and death" are striking representations of the state in which people are by nature. In "sleep" we are, though living, insensible to any danger that may be near; we are unconscious of what may be going on around us; we hear not the voice of our friends; we see not the beauty of the grove or the landscape; we are forgetful of our real character and condition. So With the sinner. It is as if his faculties were locked in a deep slumber. He hears not when God calls; he has no sense of danger; he is insensible to the beauties and glories of the heavenly world; he is forgetful of his true character and condition. To see all this, he must be first awakened; and hence this solemn command is addressed to man. He must rouse from this condition, or he cannot be saved. But can he awaken himself? Is it not the work of God to awaken a sinner? Can he rouse himself to a sense of his

condition and danger? How do we do in other things? The man that is sleeping on the verge of a dangerous precipice we would approach, and say, "Awake, you are in danger." The child that is sleeping quietly in its bed, while the flames are bursting into the room, we would rouse, and say, "Awake, or you will perish." Why not use the same language to the sinner slumbering on the verge of ruin, in a deep sleep, while the flames of wrath are kindling around him? We have no difficulty in calling on sleepers elsewhere to awake when in danger; how can we have any difficulty when speaking to the sinner?

And arise from the dead The state of the sinner, is often compared to death; see the notes on Ephesians 2: 1. People are by nature dead in sins; yet they must rouse from this condition, or they will perish. How singular, it may be said, to call upon the dead to rise! How could they raise themselves up? Yet God speak thus to people, and commands them to rise from the death of sin. Therefore, learn:

- (1) That people are not dead in sin in any such sense that they are not moral agents, or responsible.
- (2) That they are not dead in any such sense that they have no power of any kind.
- (3) That it is right to call on sinners to arouse from their condition, and live.
- (4) That they must put forth their efforts as if they were to "begin" the work themselves, without waiting for God to do it for them. "They" are to awake; "they" are to arise. It is not God who is to awake; it is not Christ who is to arise. It is the sinner who is to awake from his slumber, and arise from the state of death nor is he to wait for God to do the work for him.

And Christ shall give thee light Christ is the light of the world; see the notes on ⁴⁰⁰⁰John 1:4,9; 8:12; ⁵⁰⁰³Hebrews 1:3. The idea here is, that if they will use all the powers with which God has endowed them, and arouse from their spiritual slumber, and make an appropriate effort for salvation, then they may expect that Christ will shine upon them, and bless them in their efforts. This is just the promise that we need, and it is all that we need. All that man can ask is, that if he will make efforts to be saved, God will bless those efforts, so that they shall not be in vain. Faculties of mind have been given us to be employed in securing our salvation; and if we will employ them as they were intended to be employed, we may look for the

divine aid; if not, we cannot expect it. “God helps those who help themselves;” and they who will make no effort for their salvation must perish as they who will make no effort to provide food must starve. This command was indeed addressed at first to Christians; but it involves a principle which is applicable to all. Indeed, the “language” here is rather descriptive of the condition of impenitent sinners, than of Christians. In a far more important sense they are “asleep,” and are “dead;” and with the more earnestness, therefore, should they be entreated to awake, and to rise from the dead, that Christ may give them light.

4815 **Ephesians 5:15.** *See then that ye walk circumspectly* Carefully, anxiously, solicitous lest you fall into sin. The word rendered “circumspectly” — **ακριβως** ^{<199>} — means “diligently,” and the idea here is, that they were to take special pains to guard against the temptations around them, and to live as they ought to.

Not as fools, but as wise Not as the people of this world live, indulging in foolish pleasures and desires, but as those who have been taught to understand heavenly wisdom, and who have been made truly wise.

4816 **Ephesians 5:16.** *Redeeming the time* The word rendered here as “redeeming,” means “to purchase; to buy up” from the possession or power of anyone; and then to redeem, to set free — as from service or bondage; notes, **4813** Galatians 3:13. Here it means, to rescue or recover our time from waste; to improve it for great and important purposes.

Because the days are evil Because the times in which you live are evil. There are many allurements and temptations that would lead you away from the proper improvement of time, and that would draw you into sin. Such were those that would tempt them to go to places of sinful indulgence and revelry where their time would be wasted, and worse than wasted. As these temptations abounded, they ought therefore to be more especially on their guard against a sinful and unprofitable waste of time. This exhortation may be addressed to all, and is applicable to all periods. The sentiment is, that we ought to be solicitous to improve our time to some useful purpose, because “there are, in an evil world, so many temptations to waste it.” Time is given us for most valuable purposes. There are things enough to be done to occupy it all, and no one need have it hang heavy on his hands. He that has a soul to be saved from eternal death, need not have one idle moment. He that has a heaven to win, has

enough to do to occupy all his time. Man has just enough given him to accomplish all the purposes which God designs, and God has not given him more than enough. They redeem their time who employ it:

- (1) in gaining useful knowledge;
- (2) in doing good to others;
- (3) in employing it for the purpose of an honest livelihood for themselves and families;
- (4) in prayer and self-examination to make the heart better;
- (5) in seeking salvation, and in endeavoring to do the will of God.

They are to redeem time from all that would waste and destroy it — like recovering marshes and fens to make them rich meadows and vineyards. There is time enough wasted by each sinner to secure the salvation of the soul; time enough wasted to do all that is needful to be done to spread religion around the world, and to save the race. We should still endeavor to redeem our time for the same reasons which are suggested by the apostle — because the days are evil. There are evil influences abroad; allurements and vices that would waste time, and from which we should endeavor to rescue it. There are evil influences tending to waste time:

- (1) in the allurements to pleasure and amusement in every place, and especially in cities;
- (2) in the temptations to novel-reading, consuming the precious hours of probation to no valuable purpose;
- (3) in the temptations of ambition, most of the time spent for which is wholly thrown away, for few gain the prize, and when gained, it is all a bauble, not worth the effort;
- (4) in dissipation — for who can estimate the amount of valuable time that is worse than thrown away in the places of revelry and dissipation;
- (5) in wild and visionary plans — temptations to which abound in all lands, and pre-eminently in our own;
- (6) and in luxurious indulgence — in dressing, and eating, and drinking.

Ephesians 5:17. *Be ye not unwise* Be not fools in the employment of your time, and in your manner of life. Show true wisdom by endeavoring to understand what the will of the Lord is, and then doing it.

Ephesians 5:18. *And be not drunk with wine* A danger to which they were exposed and a vice to which those around them were much addicted. Compare notes on ^{<42134>}Luke 21:34. It is not improbable that in this verse there is an allusion to the orgies of Bacchus, or to the festivals celebrated in honor of that pagan god. He was “the god of wine,” and during those festivals, men and women regarded it as an acceptable act of worship to become intoxicated, and with wild songs and cries to run through streets, and fields, and vineyards. To these things the apostle opposes psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs, as much more appropriate modes of devotion, and would have the Christian worship stand out in strong contrast with the wild and dissolute habits of the pagan. Plato says, that while those abominable ceremonies in the worship of Bacchus continued, it was difficult to find in all Attica a single sober man. Rosenmuller, *Alt. u. neu. Morgenland*, in loc. On the subject of wine, and the wines used by the ancients, see the notes on ^{<41210>}John 2:10,11. We may learn from this verse:

(1) that it was not uncommon in those times to become intoxicated on wine; and

(2) that it was positively forbidden. All intoxication is prohibited in the Scriptures — no matter by what means it is produced.

There is, in fact, but one thing that produces intoxication. It is “alcohol” — the poisonous substance produced by fermentation. This substance is neither created nor changed, increased nor diminished, by distillation. It exists in the cider, the beer, and the wine, after they are fermented, and the whole process of distillation consists in driving it off by heat, and collecting it in a concentrated form, and so that it may be preserved. But distilling does not “make” it, nor change it. Alcohol is precisely the same thing in the wine that it is in the brandy after it is distilled; in the cider or the beer that it is in the whisky or the rum; and why is it right to become intoxicated on it in one form rather than in another? Since therefore there is danger of intoxication in the use of wine, as well as in the use of ardent spirits, why should we not abstain from one as well as the other? How can a man prove that it is right for him to drink alcohol in the form of wine, and that it is wrong for me to drink it in the form of brandy or rum?

Wherein is excess There has been much difference of opinion about the word rendered here as excess — **ασωτια** ^{<810>}. It occurs only in two other places in the New Testament, where it is rendered “riot;” ^{<3006>} Titus 1:6; ^{<4004>} 1 Peter 4:4. The “adjective” occurs once (^{<2153>} Luke 15:13), where it is rendered riotous. The word (derived, according to Passow, from **α** ^{<4>}, the alpha privative (not), and **σωζω** ^{<492>} — to save, deliver) means that which is unsafe, not to be recovered; lost beyond recovery; then that which is abandoned to sensuality and lust; dissoluteness, debauchery, revelry. The meaning here is, that all this follows the use of wine. Is it proper then for Christians to be in the habit of drinking it? “Wine is so frequently the cause of this, by the ungrateful abuse of the bounty of providence in giving it, that the enormity is represented by a very strong and beautiful “figure” as contained in the very liquor.” Doddridge.

But be filled with the Spirit The Holy Spirit. How much more appropriate to Christians than to be filled with the spirit of intoxication and revelry! Let Christians, when about to indulge in a glass of wine, think of this admonition. Let them remember that their bodies should be the temple of the Holy Spirit, rather than a receptacle for intoxicating drinks. Was any man ever made a better Christian by the use of wine? Was any minister ever better suited to counsel an anxious sinner, or to pray, or to preach the gospel, by the use of intoxicating drinks? Let the history of wine-drinking and intemperate clergymen answer.

^{<4159>} **Ephesians 5:19.** *Speaking to yourselves* Speaking among yourselves, that is, endeavoring to edify one another, and to promote purity of heart, by songs of praise. This has the force of a command, and it is a matter of obligation on Christians. From the beginning, praise was an important part of public worship, and is designed to be to the end of the world; see the notes on ^{<6445>} 1 Corinthians 14:15. Nothing is more clear than that it was practiced by the Saviour himself and the apostles (see ^{<4153>} Matthew 26:30), and by the primitive church, as well as by the great body of Christians in all ages.

In psalms The Psalms of David were sung by the Jews at the temple, and by the early Christians (notes ^{<4153>} Matthew 26:30), and the singing of those psalms has constituted a delightful part of public worship in all ages. They speak the language of devotion at all times, and a large part of them are as well suited to the services of the sanctuary now as they were when first composed.

And hymns It is not easy to determine precisely what is the difference in the meaning of the words used here, or to designate the kind of compositions which were used in the early churches. A “hymn” is properly a song or ode in honor of God. Among the pagan it was a song in honor of some deity. With us now it denotes a short poem, composed for religious service, and sung in praise to God. Such brief poems were common among the pagan, and it was natural that Christians should early introduce and adopt them. Whether any of them were composed by the apostles it is impossible now to determine, though the presumption is very strong that if they had been they would have been preserved with as much care as their epistles, or as the Psalms. One thing is proved clearly by this passage, that there were other compositions used in the praise of God than the Psalms of David; and if it was right then to make use of such compositions, it is now. They were not merely “Psalms” that were sung, but there were hymns and odes.

Spiritual songs Spiritual “odes” — $\omega\delta\alpha\iota\varsigma$ ^{<560>}. Odes or songs relating to spiritual things in contradistinction from these which were sung in places of festivity and revelry. An “ode” is properly a short poem or song adapted to be set to music, or to be sung; a lyric poem. In what way these were sung, it is now vain to conjecture. Whether with or without instrumental accompaniments; whether by a choir or by the assembly; whether by an individual only, or whether they were by responses, it is not possible to decide from anything in the New Testament. It is probable that it would be done in the most simple manner possible. Yet as music constituted so important a part of the worship of the temple, it is evident that the early Christians would be by no means indifferent to the nature of the music which they had in their churches. And as it was so important a part of the worship of the pagan gods, and contributed so much to maintain the influence of paganism, it is not unlikely that the early Christians would feel the importance of making their music attractive, and of making it tributary to the support of religion. If there is attractive music at the banquet, and in the theater, contributing to the maintenance of amusements where God is forgotten, assuredly the music of the sanctuary should not be such as to disgust those of pure and refined taste.

Singing $\alpha\delta\omicron\nu\tau\epsilon\varsigma$ ^{<1030>}. The prevailing character of music in the worship of God should be vocal. If instruments are employed, they should be so subordinate that the service may be characterized as singing.

And making melody “Melody” is an agreeable succession of sounds; a succession so regulated and modulated as to please the ear. It differs from “harmony,” inasmuch as melody is an agreeable succession of sounds by a single voice; harmony consists in the accordance of different sounds. It is not certain, however, that the apostle here had reference to what is properly called “melody.” The word which he uses — $\psi\alpha\lambda\lambda\omega$ ^{<567>} — means to touch, twitch, pluck — as the hair, the beard; and then to twitch a string — to “twang” it — as the string of a bow, and then the string of an instrument of music. It is most frequently used in the sense of touching or playing a lyre, or a harp; and then it denotes to make music in general, to sing — perhaps usually with the idea of being accompanied with a lyre or harp. It is used, in the New Testament, only in ^{<618>}Romans 5:19; ^{<645>}1 Corinthians 14:15, where it is translated “sing;” in ^{<618>}James 5:13, where it is rendered “sing psalms,” and in the place before us. The idea here is, that of singing in the heart, or praising God from the heart. The psalms, and hymns, and songs were to be sung so that the heart should be engaged, and not so as to be mere music, or a mere external performance. On the phrase “in the heart,” see the notes on ^{<645>}1 Corinthians 14:15.

To the Lord In praise of the Lord, or addressed to him. Singing, as here meant, is a direct and solemn act of worship, and should be considered such as really as prayer. In singing we should regard ourselves as speaking directly to God, and the words, therefore, should be spoken with a solemnity and awe becoming such a direct address to the great Yahweh. So Pliny says of the early Christians, “Carmenque Christo quasi Deo dicere secure invicem” — “and they sang among themselves hymns to Christ as God.” If this be the true nature and design of public psalmody, then it follows:

- (1) that all should regard it as an act of solemn worship in which they should engage — in “heart” at least, if they cannot themselves sing.
- (2) Public psalmody should not be entrusted wholly to the light and frivolous; to the trifling and careless part of a congregation.
- (3) They who conduct this part of public worship ought to be pious. The leader “ought” to be a Christian; and they who join in it “ought” also to give their hearts to the Redeemer. Perhaps it would not be proper to say absolutely that no one who is not a professor of religion should take part in the exercises of a choir in a church; but there can be no error in saying that such persons “ought” to give themselves to Christ, and to sing from the

heart. Their voices would be none the less sweet; their music no less pure and beautiful; nor could their own pleasure in the service be lessened. A choir of sweet singers in a church — united in the same praises here — “ought” to be prepared to join in the same praises around the throne of God.

440 **Ephesians 5:20.** *Giving thanks always* This is probably designed to be connected with the preceding verse, and to denote that the proper subject of psalms and hymns is thanksgiving and praise. This is indeed always the main design, and should be so regarded; and this part of worship should be so conducted as to keep up in the heart a lively sense of the mercy and goodness of God.

For all things ὑπερ ^{<528>} παντων ^{<3956>} — for all things, or all “persons.” Dr. Barrow supposes that the meaning here is, that they were to give thanks for “all persons,” and to regard themselves as under obligations to give thanks for the mercies bestowed upon “the human race,” in accordance with the idea expressed in the Liturgy of the Episcopal church, “We, thine unworthy servants, do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for thy goodness and loving-kindness to us, and to all men.” This idea is beautiful: and it accords with the requirements of the Scriptures elsewhere; ^{<5100>}1 Timothy 2:1.

“I exhort, therefore, that first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all people.

Such is the duty of Christians; and I see no departure from the fair meaning of the words here, in supposing that the apostle may have designed to express such an idea. The sense, according to this, would be, that we are to praise God for his general mercy to mankind; for all the happiness which mortals are permitted to enjoy; for the love of God to mankind in creation, in providence, and in redemption — just as a grateful child will give thanks for all the kindness shown to his brothers and sisters. One obvious effect of this would be to overcome “selfishness,” and to make us rejoice in the happiness of others as well as in our own. Another effect would be to make us feel a deeper interest in the condition of our fellow creatures. Another would be to elevate and enlarge our conceptions of the goodness of God — directing the mind to all the favors which he has bestowed on the race. Man has much for which to be grateful; and the duty of acknowledging the mercy of God to the race should not be forgotten. We are often prone so to magnify our calamities, and to contemplate the woes of the race, that we

overlook the occasions for gratitude; and we should, therefore, look upon the “mercies” which we enjoy as well as the miseries which we endure, that our hearts may be right. He who looks only on his trials will soon find his mind soured and complaining; he who endeavors to find how many occasions for gratitude he has, will soon find the burden of his sorrows alleviated, and his mind tranquil and calm. Yet, if the words here are to be taken as in our translation, “for all things.” they are full of force and beauty. At the close of life, and in heaven, we shall see occasion to bless God for all his dealings with us. We shall see that we have not suffered one pang too much, or been required to perform one duty too severe. We shall see that all our afflictions, as well as our mercies were designed for our good, and were needful for us. Why then should we not bless God in the furnace as well as in the palace; on a bed of pain as well as on a bed of down; in want as well as when sitting down at the splendid banquet? God knows what is best for us; and the way in which he leads us, mysterious though it seem to be now, will yet be seen to have been full of goodness and mercy.

Unto God and the Father Or, “to God, even the Father.” It cannot mean to God as distinguished from the Father, or first to God and then to the Father, as if the Father were distinct from God. The meaning is, that thanks are to be given specially to God the Father — the great Author of all mercies, and the source of all blessings.

In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ That is, through his mediation, or trusting in him; see the notes on ^{<414>}John 14:13. The meaning is, that we are “always” to approach God through the mediation of the Lord Jesus. When we ask for mercy, it is to be on his account, or through his merits; when we plead for strength and grace to support us in trial, it is to be in dependence on him; and when we give thanks, it is to be through him, and because it is through his intervention that we receive all blessings, and by his merits that even the gratitude of beings so sinful as we are can be accepted.

^{<412>}**Ephesians 5:21.** *Submitting yourselves one to another* Maintaining due subordination in the various relations of life. This general principle of religion, the apostle proceeds now to illustrate in reference to wives (^{<412>}Ephesians 5:22-24); to children (^{<412>}Ephesians 6:1-3); and to servants, ^{<412>}Ephesians 6:5-8. At the same time that he enforces this duty of submission, however, he enjoins on others to use their authority in a proper

manner, and gives solemn injunctions that there should be no abuse of power. Particularly he enjoins on husbands the duty of loving their wives with all tenderness (^{<BIB>}Ephesians 5:25-33); on fathers, the duty of treating their children so that they might easily obey them (^{<BIB>}Ephesians 6:4); and on masters, the duty of treating their servants with kindness, remembering that they have a Master also in heaven; ^{<BIB>}Ephesians 6:9. The general meaning here is, that Christianity does not break up the relations of life, and produce disorder, lawlessness, and insubordination; but that it will confirm every proper authority, and make every just yoke lighter. Infidelity is always disorganizing; Christianity, never.

^{<BIB>}**Ephesians 5:22.** *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands*

On this passage, compare notes on ^{<BIB>}1 Corinthians 11:3-9. The duty of the submission of the wife to her husband is everywhere enjoined in the Scriptures; see ^{<BIB>}1 Peter 3:1; ^{<BIB>}Colossians 3:18; ^{<BIB>}Titus 2:5. While Christianity designed to elevate the character of the wife, and to make her a fit companion of an intelligent and pious husband, it did not intend to destroy all subordination and authority. Man, by the fact that he was first created; that the woman was taken from him; that he is better qualified for ruling than she is, is evidently designed to be at the head of the little community that constitutes a family. In many other things, woman may be his equal; in loveliness, and grace, and beauty, and tenderness, and gentleness, she is far his superior; but these are not the qualities adapted for government. Their place is in another sphere; and “there,” man should be as cautious about invading her prerogative, or abridging her liberty, as “she” should be about invading the prerogative that belongs to him. In every family there should be a head — someone who is to be looked up to as the counselor and the ruler; someone to whom all should be subordinate. God has given that prerogative to man; and no family prospers where that arrangement is violated. Within proper metes and limits, therefore, it is the duty of the wife to obey, or to submit herself to her husband. Those limits are such as the following:

1. In domestic arrangements, the husband is to be regarded as the head of the family; and he has a right to direct as to the style of living, the expenses of the family, the clothing, etc.
2. In regard to the laws which are to regulate the family, he is the head. It is his to say what is to be done; in what way the children are to employ themselves, and to give directions in regard to their education, etc.

3. In business matters, the wife is to submit to the husband. She may counsel with him, if he chooses; but the affairs of business and property are under his control, and must be left at his disposal.

4. In everything, except that which relates to “conscience and religion,” he has authority. But there his authority ceases. He has no right to require her to commit an act of dishonesty, to connive at wrong-doing, to visit a place of amusement which her conscience tells her is wrong, nor has he a right to interfere with the proper discharge of her religious duties. He has no right to forbid her to go to church at the proper and usual time, or to make a profession of religion when she pleases. He has no right to forbid her endeavoring to exercise a religious influence over her children, or to endeavor to lead them to God. She is bound to obey God, rather than any man (see the notes on ~~400~~ Acts 4:19); and when even a husband interferes in such cases, and attempts to control her, he steps beyond his proper bounds, and invades the prerogative of God, and his authority ceases to be binding. It ought to be said, however, that in order to justify her acting independently in such a case, the following things are proper:

- (1)** It should be really a case of conscience — a case where the Lord has plainly required her to do what she proposes to do — and not a mere matter of whim, fancy, or caprice.
- (2)** When a husband makes opposition to the course which a wife wishes to pursue in religious duties, it should lead her to re-examine the matter, to pray much over it, and to see whether she cannot, with a good conscience, comply with his wishes.
- (3)** If she is convinced that she is right, she should still endeavor to see whether it is not “possible” to win him to her views, and to persuade him to accord with her; see ~~400~~ 1 Peter 3:1. It is “possible” that, if she does right, he may be “persuaded” to do right also.
- (4)** If she is constrained, however, to differ from him, it should be with mildness and gentleness. There should be no reproach, and no contention. She should simply state her reasons, and leave the event to God.
- (5)** She should, “after” this, be a better wife, and put forth more and more effort to make her husband and family happy. She should show that the effect of her religion has been to make her love her husband and children more; to make her more and more attentive to her domestic duties, and

more and more kind in affliction. By a “life” of pure religion, she should aim to secure what she could not by her entreaties — his consent that she should live as she thinks she ought to, and walk to heaven in the path in which she believes that her Lord calls her. While, however, it is to be conceded that the husband has “authority” over the wife, and a “right” to command in all cases that do not pertain to the conscience, it should be remarked:

(1) That his command should be reasonable and proper.

(2) He has no right to require anything wrong, or contrary to the will of God.

(3) WHERE COMMANDS BEGIN “in this relation,” HAPPINESS USUALLY ENDS; and the moment a husband “requires” a wife to do anything, it is usually a signal of departing or departed affection and peace. When there are proper feelings in both parties in this relation there will be no occasion either to command or to obey. There should be such mutual love and confidence, that the known “wish” of the husband should be a law to the wife: and that the known desires of the wife should be the rule which he would approve. A perfect government is that where the known wish of the lawgiver is a sufficient rule to the subject. Such is the government of heaven; and a family on earth should approximate as nearly as possible to that.

As unto the Lord As you would to the Lord, because the Lord requires it, and has given to the husband this authority.

☞Ephesians 5:23 *For the husband is the head of the wife* see the notes on **☞1 Cor** 11:3.

As Christ is the head of the church As Christ rules over the church, and has a right to direct and control it.

And he is the Saviour of the body That is, of the church, represented as “his body;” see notes, **☞Ephesians 1:23**. The idea here seems to be, that as Christ gave himself to save his body, the church; as he practiced self-denial and made it an object of intense solicitude to preserve that church, so ought the husband to manifest a similar solicitude to make his wife happy, and to save her from want, affliction, and pain. He ought to regard himself as her natural protector; as bound to anticipate and provide for her needs; as under obligation to comfort her in trial, even as Christ does the

church. What a beautiful illustration of the spirit which a husband should manifest is the care which Christ has shown for his “bride,” the church! See the notes on ~~Ⓢ~~Ephesians 5:25-29.

~~Ⓢ~~**Ephesians 5:24.** *In everything* In everything which is not contrary to the will of God; see the notes on ~~Ⓢ~~Ephesians 5:23.

~~Ⓢ~~**Ephesians 5:25.** *Husbands, love your wives* The duty of the wife is to obey; the right of the husband is to command. But the apostle would guard against the abuse of that right by enjoining the manifestation of such a spirit on the husband as would secure obedience on the part of the wife. He proceeds, therefore, to show, that the husband, in all his conversation with the wife, should manifest the same spirit which the Lord Jesus did toward the church; or, in other words, he holds up the conduct of the Redeemer toward the church, as the model for a husband to imitate. If a husband wished a rule that would be short, simple, clear, and efficacious, about the manner in which he should regard and treat his wife, he could not find a better one than that here suggested.

Even as Christ loved the church This was the strongest love that has ever been evinced in this world. It follows, that a husband is in no danger of loving his wife too much, provided she be not loved more than God. We are to make the love which Christ had for the church the model.

And gave himself for it Gave himself to die to redeem it. The meaning here is, that husbands are to imitate the Redeemer in this respect. As he gave himself to suffer on the cross to save the church, so we are to be willing to deny ourselves, and to bear toil and trial, that we may promote the happiness of the wife. It is the duty of the husband to toil for her support; to provide for her needs; to deny himself of rest and ease, if necessary, in order to attend on her in sickness to go before her in danger; to defend her if she is in peril; and to be ready to die to save her Why should he not be? If they are shipwrecked, and there is a single plank on which safety can be secured, should he not be willing to place her on that, and see her safe at all hazards to himself? But there may be more implied in this than that a man is to toil, and even to lay down his life for the welfare of his wife. Christ laid down his life to save the church; and a husband should feel that it should be one great object of his life to promote the salvation of his wife. He is bound so to live as not to interfere with her salvation, but so as to promote it in every way possible. He is to furnish her all the “facilities” that

she may need, to enable her to attend on the worship of God; and to throw no obstacles in her way. He is to set her the example; to counsel her if she needs counsel, and to make the path of salvation as easy for her as possible. If a husband has the spirit and self-denial of the Saviour, he will regard no sacrifice too great if he may promote the salvation of his family.

4956 **Ephesians 5:26.** *That he might sanctify* The great object of the Redeemer was to purify and save the church. The meaning here is, that a husband is to manifest similar love toward his wife, and a similar desire that she should be prepared to “walk before him in white”.

And cleanse it with the washing of water In all this there is an allusion doubtless to the various methods of purifying and cleansing those who were about to be married, and who were to be united to monarchs as their brides. In some instances this previous preparation continued for twelve months. The means of purification were various, but consisted usually in the use of costly unguents; see **4792** Esther 2:12.

“Six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odors, and with other things for the purifying of women;”

compare **4953** Psalm 45:13,14; **2667** Ezekiel 16:7-14. As such a virgin was purified and prepared for her husband by washing and by anointing, so the church is to be prepared for Christ. It is to be made pure and holy. Outwardly there is to be the application of water — the symbol of purity; and within there is to be holiness of heart; see the notes on **4710** 2 Corinthians 11:2, where Paul says of the Corinthians, “I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.”

By the word There has been much diversity of opinion respecting the meaning of this. Probably the sense of the expression is, that all this was to be accomplished by the instrumentality of the truth — the Word of God. By that truth they were to be sanctified (**4877** John 17:17); and in accordance with that the whole work from the commencement to the close was to be accomplished. It was not by external ceremonies, and not by any miraculous power on the heart, but by the faithful application of truth to the heart.

4957 **Ephesians 5:27.** *That he may present it to himself* In the last day, when he shall receive the church as his spouse to heaven; **4620** Revelation 21:9. Perhaps the word “prepare” would better express the sense here than

“present” — that he may prepare it for himself as a holy church. Tyndale renders it, “to make it unto himself.”

A glorious church A church full of honor, splendor, beauty. The idea of “shining,” or of being “bright,” would convey the sense here. Probably there is still here an allusion to a bride “adorned for her husband” (~~REV~~ Revelation 21:2; compare ~~PSM~~ Psalm 45:9-14); and the ideal is, that the church will be worthy of the love of the bridegroom, to whom it will then be presented.

Not having spot Not having a stain, a defect, or any impurity — still retaining the allusion to a bride, and to the care taken to remove every blemish.

Or wrinkle In the vigor and beauty of youth like a bride in whom there is no wrinkle of age.

Or any such thing Nothing to deform, disfigure, or offend. To this beautiful illustration of the final glory of the church, the apostle was led by the mention of the relation of the husband and the wife. It shows:

(1) The tendency of the thoughts of Paul. He delighted to allow the associations in his mind, no matter what the subject was, to draw him along to the Redeemer.

(2) The passage here shows us what the church will yet be. There will be a period in its history when there shall not be any imperfection; when there shall be neither spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing. In heaven all will be pure. On earth we are preparing for that world of purity; and it cannot be denied that here there is much that is imperfect and impure. But in that future world, where the church shall be presented to Christ, clothed in the robes of salvation, there shall not be one unholy member; one deceiver or hypocrite; one covetous or avaricious man; one that shall pain the hearts of the friends of purity by an unholy life. And in all the million that shall be gathered there out of every land, and people, and tongue, and age, there shall be no envy, malice, backbiting, pride, vanity, worldliness; there shall be no annoying and vexing conflict in the heart with evil passions, “nor any such thing.” How different from the church as it now is; and how we should pant for that blessed world!

~~EPH~~ **Ephesians 5:28.** *So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies* Because they are one flesh; ~~EPH~~ Ephesians 5:31. This is the subject

on which Paul had been speaking, and from which he had been diverted by the allusion to the glorified church. The doctrine here is, that a husband should have the same care for the comfort of his wife which he has for himself. He should regard her as one with himself; and as he protects his own body from cold and hunger, and, when sick and suffering, endeavors to restore it to health, so he should regard and treat her.

He that loveth his wife loveth himself

- (1) Because she is one with him, and their interests are identified.
- (2) Because, by this, he really promotes his own welfare, as much as he does when he takes care of his own body. A man's kindness to his wife will be more than repaid by the happiness which she imparts; and all the real solicitude which he shows to make her happy, will come to more than it costs. If a man wishes to promote his own happiness in the most effectual way, he had better begin by showing kindness to his wife.

ⲘⲚⲞⲩ **Ephesians 5:29.** *For no man ever yet hated his own flesh* This is urged as an argument why a man should love his wife and show kindness to her. As no man disregards the happiness of his own body, or himself, so he should show equal care to promote the happiness of his wife. A sentiment similar to this is found in the classic writers. Thus, Curtius (lib. vii.) says, "Corporibus nostris quoe utique non odimus" — "We do not hate those things that pertain to our own bodies." So Seneca (Epis. 14), "Fateor insitam nobis esse corporis nostri charitatem" — "I confess that there is implanted in us the love of our own body." The word nourisheth here means properly to bring up, as e. g., children. The sense here is, that he provides for it, and guards it from exposure and want. The word "cherisheth" — **θαλαπει** **<228>** — means properly to "warm;" and may mean here that he defends it from cold by clothing — and the two expressions denote that he provides food and raiment for the body. So he is to do for his wife; and in like manner the Lord Jesus regards the church, and ministers to its spiritual necessities. But this should not be spiritualized too far. The "general" idea is all that we want — that Christ has a tender concern for the needs of the church, as a man has for his own body, and that the husband should show a similar regard for his wife.

ⲘⲚⲞⲩ **Ephesians 5:30.** *For we are members of his body* Of the body of Christ; see notes on **ⲘⲚⲞⲩ** 1 Corinthians 11:3; 12:27; **ⲘⲚⲞⲩ** John 15:1-6, and **ⲘⲚⲞⲩ** Ephesians 1:23. The idea here is, that there is a close and intimate union

between the Christian and the Saviour — a union so intimate that they may be spoken of as “one”.

Of his flesh, and of his bones There is an allusion here evidently to the language which Adam used respecting Eve. “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh;” ^{<0023>}Genesis 2:23. It is language which is employed to denote the closeness of the marriage relation, and which Paul applies to the connection between Christ and his people. Of course, it cannot be understood “literally.” It is not true literally that our bones are a part of the bones of Christ, or our flesh of his flesh; nor should language ever be used that would imply a miraculous union. It is not a physical union, but a union of attachment; of feeling; of love. If we avoid the notion of a “physical” union, however, it is scarcely possible to use too strong language in describing the union of believers with the Lord Jesus. The Scriptures make use of language which is stronger than that employed to describe any other connection; and there is no union of affection so powerful as that which binds the Christian to the Saviour. So strong is it, that he is willing for it to forsake father, mother, and home; to leave his country, and to abandon his possessions; to go to distant lands and dwell among barbarians to make the Redeemer known; or to go to the cross or the stake from simple love to the Saviour. Account for it as people may, there has been manifested on earth nowhere else so strong an attachment as that which binds the Christian to the cross. It is stronger love than that which a man has for his own flesh and bones; for it makes him willing that his flesh should be consumed by fire, or his bones broken on the wheel rather than deny him. Can the infidel account for this strength of attachment on any other principle than that it has a divine origin?⁶⁶

^{<0051>}**Ephesians 5:31.** *For this cause* ^{<475>}ΑΥΤΙ ^{<5127>}ΤΟΥΤΟΥ. This verse is a quotation from ^{<0024>}Genesis 2:24, and contains the account of the institution of marriage. The meaning of the phrase rendered “for this cause” is, “answerably to this;” or corresponding to this — that is, to what Paul had just said of the union of believers and the Redeemer. On the meaning of this verse, see the notes on ^{<0004>}Matthew 19:4. There is no evidence that the marriage connection was originally designed to symbolize or typify this union, but it may be used to illustrate that connection, and to show the strength of the attachment between the Redeemer and his people. The comparison should be confined, however, strictly to the use made of it in the New Testament.

☞ Ephesians 5:32. *This is a great mystery* The Latin Vulgate translates this, “sacramentum hoc magnum est” — “this is a great sacrament” — and this is the proof, I suppose, and the only proof adduced by the papists that marriage is a “sacrament.” But the original here conveys no such idea. The word “mystery” — **μυστήριον** ^{<3466>} — means something which is concealed, hidden, before unknown; something into which one must be “initiated” or instructed before he can understand it. It does not mean that it is “incomprehensible” when it is disclosed, but that hitherto it has been kept secret. When disclosed it may be as intelligible as any other truth; see the word explained in the notes on **☞ Ephesians 1:9**. Here it means simply, that there was much about the union of the Redeemer with his people, resembling the marriage connection, which was not obvious, except to those who were instructed; which was obscure to those who were not initiated; which they did not understand who had not been “taught.” It does not mean that no one could understand it, but that it pertained to the class of truths into which it was necessary for one to be “initiated” in order to comprehend them. The truth that was so great a mystery was, that the eternal Son of God should form such an union with people; that he should take them into a connection with himself, implying an ardor of attachment, and a strength of affection superior to even that which exists in the marriage relation. This was a great and profound truth, to understand which, it was necessary to receive instruction. No one would have understood it without a revelation; no one understands it now except they who are taught of God.

But I speak concerning Christ and the church This, it seems to me, is an explicit disclaimer of any intention to be understood as affirming that the marriage contract was designed to be a “type” of the union of the Redeemer and his people. The apostle says expressly, that his remarks do not refer to “marriage at all” when he speaks of the mystery. They refer “solely” to the union of the Redeemer and his people. How strange and unwarranted, therefore, are all the comments of expositors on this passage designed to explain marriage as “a mysterious type” of the union of Christ and the church! If people would allow the apostle to speak for himself, and not force on him sentiments which he expressly disclaims, the world would be saved from such insipid allegories as Macknight and others have derived from this passage. The Bible is a book of sense; and the time will come, it is hoped, when, freed from all such allegorizing expositions, it will commend itself to the good sense of mankind. Marriage is an important, a

holy, a noble, a pure institution, altogether worthy of God; but it does not thence follow that marriage was designed to be a type of the union between Christ and the church, and it is certain that the apostle Paul meant; to teach no such thing.

⋄ Ephesians 5:33. *Nevertheless* The apostle here resumes the subject which he had been discussing in **⋄ Ephesians 5:21-29**, and says that it was the duty of every man to love his wife as he did himself. This was the main topic, from which he had been diverted by the discussion respecting the love which the Redeemer had shown for his church.

And the wife see that she reverence her husband The word “see” is supplied by our translators. The meaning is, that it was the special duty of the wife to show respect for her husband as the head of the family, and as set over her in the Lord; see notes on **⋄ Ephesians 5:22,28**. The word rendered “reverence,” is that which usually denotes “fear”— **φοβηται** **<539>**. She is to fear; i.e., to honor, respect, obey the will of her husband. It is, of course, not implied that it is not also her duty to love her husband, but that there should be no usurping of authority; no disregard of the arrangement which God has made; and that order and peace should be secured in a family by regarding the husband as the source of law.

From what is here said of the duties of husband and wife we may remark:

(1) That the happiness of society depends on just views of the marriage relation. It is true the world over, that the views which prevail in regard to this relation, determine everything in reference to all other relations of life, and to all other sources of enjoyment.

(2) God designed that woman should occupy a subordinate, though an important place in the relations of social life. This arrangement is never disregarded without evils which cannot be corrected until the original intention is secured. No imaginary good that can come out of the violation of the original design; no benefits which females, individual or associated, can confer on mankind by disregarding this arrangement, can be a compensation for the evil that is done, nor can the evil be remedied unless woman occupies the place which God designed she should fill. There nothing else can supply her place; and when she is absent from that situation — no matter what good she may be doing elsewhere — there is a silent evil reigning, which can be removed only by her return. It is not hers to fight battles, or to command armies and navies, or to control kingdoms,

or to make laws. Nor is it hers to go forward as a public leader even in enterprises of benevolence, or in associations designed to act on the public mind. Her empire is the domestic circle; her first influence is there; and in connection with that, in such scenes as she can engage in without trenching on the prerogative of man, or neglecting the duty which she owes to her own family.

(3) It is not best that there should be the open exercise of authority in a family. When “commands” begin in the relation of husband and wife, “happiness” flies; and the moment a husband is “disposed” to COMMAND his wife, or is “under a necessity” of doing it, that moment he may bid adieu to domestic peace and joy.

(4) A wife, therefore, should never give her husband “occasion” to command her to do anything, or forbid anything. His known wish, except in cases of conscience, should be law to her. The moment she can ascertain what his will is, that moment ought to settle her mind as to what is to be done.

(5) A husband should never “wish” or “expect” anything that it may not be perfectly proper for a wife to render. He, too, should consult “her” wishes; and when he understands what they are, he should regard what she prefers as the very thing which he would command. The known wish and preference of a wife, unless there be something wrong in it, should be allowed to influence his mind, and be that which he directs in the family.

(6) There is no danger that a husband will love a wife too much, provided his love be subordinate to the love of God. The command is, to love her as Christ loved the church. What love has ever been like that? How can a husband exceed it? What did not Christ endure to redeem the church? So should a husband be willing to deny himself to promote the happiness of his wife; to watch by her in sickness, and, if need be, to peril health and life to promote her welfare. Doing this, he will not go beyond what Christ did for the church. He should remember that she has a special claim of justice on him. For him she has left her father’s home, forsaken the friends of her youth, endowed him with whatever property she may have, sunk her name in his, confided her honor, her character, and her happiness, to his virtue; and the least that he can do for her is to love her, and strive to make her happy. This was what she asked when she consented to become his; and a husband’s love is what she still asks to sustain and cheer her in the trials of life. If she has not this, whither shall she go for comfort?

(7) We may see, then, the guilt of those husbands who withhold their affections from their wives, and forsake those to whom they had solemnly pledged themselves at the altar; those who neglect to provide for their needs, or to minister to them in sickness; and those who become the victims of intemperance, and leave their wives to tears. There is much, much guilt of this kind on earth. There are many, many broken vows. There are many, many hearts made to bleed. There is many a pure and virtuous woman who was once the object of tender affection, now, by no fault of hers, forsaken, abused, broken-hearted, by the brutal conduct of a husband.

(8) Wives should manifest such a character as to be worthy of love. They owe this to their husbands. They demand the confidence and affection of man; and they should show that they are worthy of that confidence and affection. It is not possible to love that which is unlovely, nor to force affection where it is undeserved; and, as a wife expects that a husband will love her more than he does any other earthly being, it is but right that she should evince such a spirit as shall make that proper. A wife may easily alienate the affections of her partner in life. If she is irritable and fault-finding; if none of his ways please her; if she takes no interest in his plans, and in what he does; if she forsakes her home when she should be there, and seeks happiness abroad; or if, at home, she never greets him with a smile; if she is wasteful of his earnings, and extravagant in her habits, it will be impossible to prevent the effects of such a course of life on his mind. And when a wife perceives the slightest evidence of alienated affection in her husband, she should inquire at once whether she has not given occasion for it, and exhibited such a spirit as tended inevitably to produce such a result.

(9) To secure mutual love, therefore, it is necessary that there should be mutual kindness, and mutual loveliness of character. Whatever is seen to be offensive or painful, should be at once abandoned. All the little peculiarities of temper and modes of speech that are observed to give pain, should be forsaken; and, while one party should endeavor to tolerate them, and not to be offended, the other should make it a matter of conscience to remove them.

(10) The great secret of conjugal happiness is in the cultivation of a proper temper. It is not so much in the great and trying scenes of life that the strength of virtue is tested; it is in the events that are constantly occurring;

the manifestation of kindness in the things that are happening every moment; the gentleness that flows along every day, like the stream that winds through the meadow and around the farm-house, noiseless but useful, diffusing fertility by day and by night. Great deeds rarely occur. The happiness of life depends little on them, but mainly on the little acts of kindness in life. We need them everywhere; we need them always. And eminently in the marriage relation there is need of gentleness and love, returning each morning, beaming in the eye, and dwelling in the heart through the livelong day.

NOTES ON EPHESIANS 6

This chapter (Ephesians 6) comprises the following subjects:

- (1) An exhortation to children to obey their parents, with a promise of the blessing that would follow from obedience; ^{<401>}Ephesians 6:1-3.
- (2) An exhortation to fathers to manifest such a character that children could properly obey them, and to train them up in a proper manner; ^{<401>}Ephesians 6:4.
- (3) The duty of servants; ^{<405>}Ephesians 6:5-8.
- (4) The duty of masters toward their servants; ^{<406>}Ephesians 6:9.
- (5) An exhortation to put on the whole armor of God, with a description of the Christian soldier, and of the Christian panoply; ^{<403>}Ephesians 6:10-17.
- (6) The duty of prayer, and especially of prayer for the apostle himself, that he might be enabled to speak with boldness in the cause of his Master; ^{<408>}Ephesians 6:18-20.
- (7) In the conclusion (^{<402>}Ephesians 6:21-24), he informs them that if they wished to make any inquiries about his condition, Tychicus, who conveyed this letter, could acquaint them with his circumstances; and then closes the Epistle with the usual benedictions.

^{<401>}**Ephesians 6:1.** *Children* τέκνα ^{<504>} This word usually signifies those who are young; but it is used here, evidently, to denote those who were under the care and government of their parents, or those who were not of age.

Obey your parents This is the first great duty which God has enjoined on children. It is, to do what their parents command them to do. The God of nature indicates that this is duty; for he has impressed it on the minds of all in every age; and the Author of revelation confirms it. It is particularly important:

- (1) Because the good order of a family, and hence of the community, depends on it; no community or family being prosperous where there is not due subordination in the household.

- (2) Because the welfare of the child depends on it; it being of the highest importance that a child should be early taught obedience to “law,” as no one can be prosperous or happy who is not thus obedient.
- (3) Because the child is not competent as yet; to “reason” on what is right, or qualified to direct himself; and, while that is the case, he must be subject to the will of some other person.
- (4) Because the parent, by his age and experience, is to be presumed to be qualified to direct and guide a child. The love which God has implanted in the heart of a parent for a child secures, in general, the administration of this domestic government in such a way as not to injure the child. A father will not, unless under strong passion or the excitement of intoxication, abuse his authority. He loves the child too much. He desires his welfare; and the placing of the child under the authority of the parent is about the same thing in regard to the welfare of the child, as it would be to endow the child at once with all the wisdom and experience of the parent himself.
- (5) It is important, because the family government is designed to be an imitation of the government of God. The government of God is what a perfect family government would be; and to accustom a child to be obedient to a parent, is designed to be one method of leading him to be obedient to God. No child that is disobedient to a parent will be obedient to God; and that child that is most obedient to a father and mother will be most likely to become a Christian, and an heir of heaven. And it may be observed, in general, that no disobedient child is virtuous, prosperous, or happy. Everyone foresees the ruin of such a child; and most of the cases of crime that lead to the penitentiary, or the gallows, commence by disobedience to parents.

In the Lord That is, as far as their commandments agree with those of God, and no further. No parent can have a right to require a child to steal, or lie, or cheat, or assist him in committing murder, or in doing any other wrong thing. No parent has a right to forbid a child to pray, to read the Bible, to worship God, or to make a profession of religion. The duties and rights of children in such cases are similar to those of wives (see the notes on ~~4972~~ Ephesians 5:22); and in all cases, God is to be obeyed rather than man. When a parent, however, is opposed to a child; when he expresses an unwillingness that a child should attend a particular church, or make a profession of religion, such opposition should in all cases be a sufficient reason for the child to pause and re-examine the subject. he should pray

much, and think much, and inquire much, before, in any case, he acts contrary to the will of a father or mother; and, when he does do it, he should state to them, with great gentleness and kindness, that he believes he ought to love and serve God.

For this is right It is right:

- (1) because it is so appointed by God as a duty;
- (2) because children owe a debt of gratitude to their parents for what they have done for them;
- (3) because it will be for the good of the children themselves, and for the welfare of society.

Ephesians 6:2. *Honour thy father and mother* see **Exodus 20:12**; compare notes on **Matthew 15:4**.

Which is the first commandment with promise With a promise annexed to it. The promise was, that their days should be long in the land which the Lord their God would give them. It is not to be supposed that the observance of the four first commandments would not be attended with a blessing, but no particular blessing is promised. It is true, indeed, that there is a “general declaration” annexed to the second commandment, that God would show mercy to thousands of generations of them that loved him and that kept his commandments. But that is rather a declaration in regard to all the commands of God than a promise annexed to that specific commandment. It is an assurance that obedience to the law of God would be followed with blessings to a thousand generations, and is given in view of the first and second commandments together, because they related particularly to the honor that was due to God. But the promise in the fifth commandment is a “special promise.” It does not relate to obedience to God in general, but it is a particular assurance that they who honor their parents shall have a particular blessing as the result of that obedience.

Ephesians 6:3. *That it may be well with thee* This is found in the fifth commandment as recorded in **Deuteronomy 5:16**. The whole commandment as there recorded is,

“Honour thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.”

The meaning here is, that they would be more happy, useful, and virtuous if they obeyed their parents than if they disobeyed them.

And thou mayest live long on the earth In the commandment as recorded in ⁽¹²⁾Exodus 20:12, the promise is, “that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.” This referred to the promised land — the land of Canaan. The meaning doubtless, is, that there would be a special providence, securing to those who were obedient to parents length of days. Long life was regarded as a great blessing; and this blessing was promised. The apostle here gives to the promise a more general form, and says that obedience to parents was connected at all times with long life. We may remark here:

(1) that long life is a blessing. It affords a longer space to prepare for eternity; it enables a man to be more useful; and it furnishes a longer opportunity to study the works of God on earth. It is not improper to desire it; and we should make use of all the means in our power to lengthen out our days, and to preserve and protect our lives.

(2) It is still true that obedience to parents is conducive to length of life, and that those who are most obedient in early life, other things being equal, have the best prospect of living long. This occurs because:

(a) obedient children are saved from the vices and crimes which shorten life. No parent will command his child to be a drunkard, a gambler, a spendthrift, a pirate, or a murderer. But these vices and crimes, resulting in most cases from disobedience to parents, all shorten life; and they who early commit them are certain of an early grave. No child who disobeys a parent can have any “security” that he will not fall a victim to such vices and crimes.

(b) Obedience to parents is connected with virtuous habits that are conducive to long life. It will make a child industrious, temperate, sober; it will lead him to restrain and govern his wild passions; it will lead him to form habits of self-government which will in future life save him from the snares of vice and temptation.

(c) Many a life is lost early by disobeying a parent. A child disobeys a father and goes into a dramshop; or he goes to sea; or he becomes the companion of the wicked — and he may be wrecked at sea, or his

character on land may be wrecked forever. Of disobedient children there is perhaps not one in a hundred that ever reaches an honored old age.

(d) We may still believe that God, in his providence, will watch over those who are obedient to a father and mother. If he regards a falling sparrow (~~400~~ Matthew 10:29), he will not be unmindful of an obedient child; if he numbers the hairs of the head (~~400~~ Matthew 10:30), he will not be regardless of the little boy that honors him by obeying a father and mother.

~~400~~ **Ephesians 6:4.** *And ye fathers* A command addressed particularly to “fathers,” because they are at the head of the family, and its government is especially committed to them. The object of the apostle here is, to show parents that their commands should be such that they can be easily obeyed, or such as are entirely reasonable and proper. If children are required to “obey,” it is but reasonable that the commands of the parent should be such that they can be obeyed, or such that the child shall not be discouraged in his attempt to obey. This statement is in accordance with what he had said (~~400~~ Ephesians 5:22-25) of the relation of husband and wife. It was the duty of the wife to obey — but it was the corresponding duty of the husband to manifest such a character that it would be pleasant to yield obedience — so to love her, that his known wish would be law to her. In like manner it is the duty of children to obey a parent; but it is the duty of a parent to exhibit such a character, and to maintain such a government, that it would be proper for the child to obey; to command nothing that is unreasonable or improper, but to train up his children in the ways of virtue and pure religion.

Provoke not your children to wrath That is, by unreasonable commands; by needless severity; by the manifestation of anger. So govern them, and so punish them — if punishment is necessary — that they shall not lose their confidence in you, but shall love you. The apostle here has hit on the very danger to which parents are most exposed in the government of their children. It is that of souring their temper; of making them feel that the parent is under the influence of anger, and that it is right for them to be so too. This is done:

(1) when the commands of a parent are unreasonable and severe. The spirit of a child then becomes irritated, and he is “discouraged;” ~~500~~ Colossians 3:21.

(2) When a parent is evidently “excited” when he punishes a child. The child then feels:

(a) that if his “father” is angry, it is not wrong for him to be angry; and

(b) the very fact of anger in a parent kindles anger in his bosom — just as it does when two men are contending. If he submits in the case, it is only because the parent is the “strongest,” not because he is “right,” and the child cherishes “anger,” while he yields to power. There is no principle of parental government more important than that a father should command his own temper when he inflicts punishment. He should punish a child not because he is “angry,” but because it is “right;” not because it has become a matter of “personal contest,” but because God requires that he should do it, and the welfare of the child demands it. The moment when a child sees that a parent punishes him under the influence of anger, that moment the child will be likely to be angry too — and his anger will be as proper as that of the parent. And yet, how often is punishment inflicted in this manner! And how often does the child feel that the parent punished him simply because he was the “strongest,” not because it was “right;” and how often is the mind of a child left with a strong conviction that wrong has been done him by the punishment which he has received, rather than with repentance for the wrong that he has himself done.

But bring them up Place them under such discipline and instruction that they shall become acquainted with the Lord.

In the nurture παιδεία ^{<380>}. The word used here means “training of a child;” hence education, instruction, discipline. Here it means that they are to train up their children in such a manner as the Lord approves; that is, they are to educate them for virtue and religion.

And admonition The word used here — νοουθεσία ^{<355>} means literally, “a putting in mind,” then warning, admonition, instruction. The sense here is, that they were to put them in mind of the Lord — of his existence, perfections, law, and claims on their hearts and lives. This command is positive, and is in accordance with all the requirements of the Bible on the subject. No one can doubt that the Bible enjoins on parents the duty of endeavoring to train up their children in the ways of religion, and of making it the grand purpose of this life to prepare them for heaven. It has been often objected that children should be left on religious subjects to form their own opinions when they are able to judge for themselves.

Infidels and irreligious people always oppose or neglect the duty here enjoined; and the plea commonly is, that to teach religion to children is to make them prejudiced; to destroy their independence of mind; and to prevent their judging as impartially on so important a subject as they ought to. In reply to this, and in defense of the requirements of the Bible on the subject, we may remark:

- (1) That to suffer a child to grow up without any instruction in religion, is about the same as to suffer a garden to lie without any culture. Such a garden would soon be overrun with weeds, and briars, and thorns — but not sooner, or more certainly, than the mind of a child would.
- (2) People do instruct their children in a great many things, and why should they not in religion? They teach them how to behave in company; the art of farming; the way to make or use tools; how to make money; how to avoid the arts of the cunning seducer. But why should it not be said that all this tends to destroy their independence, and to make them prejudiced? Why not leave their minds open and free, and suffer them to form their own judgments about farming and the mechanic arts when their minds are matured?
- (3) People DO inculcate their own sentiments in religion. An infidel is not usually “very” anxious to conceal his views from his children. People teach by example; by incidental remarks; by the “neglect” of that which they regard as of no value. A man who does not pray, is teaching his children not to pray; he who neglects the public worship of God, is teaching his children to neglect it; he who does not read the Bible, is teaching his children not to read it. Such is the constitution of things, that it is impossible for a parent not to inculcate his own religious views on his children. Since this is so, all that the Bible requires is, that his instructions should be RIGHT.
- (4) To inculcate the truths of religion is not to make the mind narrow, prejudiced, and indisposed to perceive the truth. Religion makes the mind candid, conscientious, open to conviction, ready to follow the truth. Superstition, bigotry, infidelity, and “all” error and falsehood, make the mind narrow and prejudiced.
- (5) If a man does not teach his children truth, others will teach them “error.” The young sceptic that the child meets in the street; the artful infidel; the hater of God; the unprincipled stranger; “will” teach the child.

But is it not better for a parent to teach his child the “truth” than for a stranger to teach him error?

(6) Religion is the most important of all subjects, and “therefore” it is of most importance that children on that subject should be taught TRUTH. Of whom can God so properly require this as of a parent? If it be asked “in what way” a parent is to bring up his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, I answer:

1. By directly inculcating the doctrines and duties of religion — just as he does anything else that he regards as of value.

2. By placing them in the Sunday school, where he may have a guarantee that they will be taught the truth

3. By “conducting” them — not merely “sending” them — to the sanctuary, that they may be taught in the house of God.

4. By example — all teaching being valueless without that.

5. By prayer for the divine aid in his efforts, and for the salvation of their souls. These duties are plain, simple, easy to be performed, and are such as a man “knows” he ought to perform. If neglected, and the soul of the child be lost, a parent has a most fearful account to render to God.

~~4015~~ **Ephesians 6:5.** *Servants* ~~4172~~ **οἱ** ~~3588~~ **δουλοὶ** ~~1401~~. The word used here denotes one who is bound to render service to another, whether that service be free or voluntary, and may denote, therefore, either a slave, or one who binds himself to render service to another. It is often used in these senses in the New Testament, just as it is elsewhere. It cannot be demonstrated that the word here necessarily means “slaves;” though, if slavery existed among those to whom this Epistle was written — as there can be little doubt that it did — it is a word which would apply to those in this condition; compare notes on ~~4172~~ 1 Corinthians 7:21; ~~4173~~ Galatians 3:28. On the general subject of slavery, and the Scripture doctrine in regard to it; see notes on ~~2886~~ Isaiah 58:6. Whether the persons here referred to were slaves, or were those who had bound themselves to render a voluntary servitude, the directions here given were equally appropriate. It was not the design of the Christian religion to produce a rude sundering of the ties which bind man to man, but to teach all to perform their duties aright in the relations in which Christianity found them, and gradually to modify the

customs of society, and to produce ultimately the universal prevalence of that which is right.

Be obedient to them This is the uniform direction in the New Testament; see ^{<4028>}1 Peter 2:18; ^{<5431>}1 Timothy 6:1-3; notes ^{<4072>}1 Corinthians 7:21. The idea is that they were to show in that relation the excellence of the religion which they professed. If they could be made free, they were to prefer that condition to a state of bondage (^{<4072>}1 Corinthians 7:21), but while the relation remained, they were to be kind, gentle, and obedient, as became Christians. In the parallel place in Colossians (^{<5022>}Colossians 3:22), it is said that they were to obey their masters “in all things.” But evidently this is to be understood with the limitations implied in the case of wives and children (see the notes on ^{<4074>}Ephesians 5:24; 6:1), and a master would have no right to command that which was morally wrong.

According to the flesh This is designed, evidently, to limit the obligation to obedience. The meaning is, that they had control over “the body, the flesh.” They had the power to command the service which the body could render; but they were not lords of the spirit. The soul acknowledged God as its Lord, and to the Lord they were to be subject in a higher sense than to their masters.

With fear and trembling With reverence and with a dread of offending them. They have authority and power over you, and you should be afraid to incur their displeasure. Whatever might be true about the propriety of slavery, and whatever might be the duty of the master about setting the slave free, it would be more to the honor of religion for the servant to perform his task with a willing mind than to be contumacious and rebellious. He could do more for the honor of religion by patiently submitting to even what he felt to be wrong, than by being punished for what would be regarded as rebellion. It may be added here, that it was presumed that servants then could read. These directions were addressed to them, not to their masters. Of what use would be directions like these addressed to American slaves — scarce any of whom can read?

In singleness of your heart With a simple, sincere desire to do what ought to be done.

As unto Christ Feeling that by rendering proper service to your masters, you are in fact serving the Lord, and that you are doing that which will be well-pleasing to him; see the notes on ^{<4072>}1 Corinthians 7:22. Fidelity, in

whatever situation we may be in life, is acceptable service to the Lord. A Christian may as acceptably serve the Lord Jesus in the condition of a servant, as if he were a minister of the gospel, or a king on a throne. Besides, it will greatly lighten the burdens of such a situation, and make the toils of an humble condition easy, to remember that we are then “serving the Lord.”

<406> Ephesians 6:6. *Nor with eye-service* That is, not with service rendered only under the eye of the master, or when his eye is fixed on you. The apostle has here adverted to one of the evils of involuntary servitude as it exists everywhere. It is, that the slave will usually obey only when the eye of the master is upon him. The freeman who agrees to labor for stipulated wages may be trusted when the master is out of sight; but not the slave. Hence the necessity where there are slaves of having “drivers” who shall attend them, and who shall compel them to work. This evil it is impossible to avoid, except where true religion prevails — and the extensive prevalence of true religion would set the slave at liberty. Yet as long as the relation exists, the apostle would enjoin on the servant the duty of performing his work conscientiously, as rendering service to the Lord. This direction, moreover, is one of great importance to all who are employed in the service of others. They are bound to perform their duty with as much fidelity as though the eye of the employer was always upon them, remembering that though the eye of man may be turned away, that of God never is.

As men-pleasers As if it were the main object to please people. The object should be rather to please and honor God.

But as the servants of Christ see the notes on **<407> 1 Corinthians 7:22.**

Doing the will of God from the heart That is, God requires industry, fidelity, conscientiousness, submission, and obedience in that rank of life. We render acceptable service to God when, from regard to his will, we perform the services which are demanded of us in the situation in life where we may be placed, however humble that may be.

<407> Ephesians 6:7. *As to the Lord, and not to men* That is, he should regard his lot in life as having been ordered by Divine Providence for some wise and good purpose; and until he may be permitted to enjoy his liberty in a quiet and peaceable manner (notes, **<407> 1 Corinthians 7:21**), he should perform his duties with fidelity, and feel that he was rendering acceptable

service to God. This would reconcile him to much of the hardships of his lot. The feeling that “God” has ordered the circumstances of our lives, and that he has some wise and good ends to answer by it, makes us contented there; though we may feel that our fellowman may be doing us injustice. It was this principle that made the martyrs so patient under the wrongs done them by people; and this may make even a slave patient and submissive under the wrongs of a master. But let not a master think, because a pious slave shows this spirit, that, therefore, the slave feels that the master is right in withholding his freedom; nor let him suppose, because religion requires the slave to be submissive and obedient, that, therefore, it approves of what the master does. It does this no more than it sanctioned the conduct of Nero and Mary, because religion required the martyrs to be unresisting, and to allow themselves to be led to the stake. A conscientious slave may find happiness in submitting to God, and doing his will, just as a conscientious martyr may. But this does not sanction the wrong, either of the slave-owner or of the persecutor.

◀Ephesians 6:8. *Knowing that whatsoever good thing* Whatever a man does that is right, for that he shall be appropriately rewarded. No matter what his rank in life, if he discharges his duty to God and man, he will be accepted. A man in a state of servitude may so live as to honor God; and, so living, he should not be greatly solicitous about his condition. A master may fail to render suitable recompense to a slave. But, if the servant is faithful to God, he will recompense him in the future world. It is in this way that religion would make the evils of life tolerable, by teaching those who are oppressed to hear their trials in a patient spirit, and to look forward to the future world of reward. Religion does not approve of slavery. It is the friend of human rights. If it had full influence on earth, it would restore every man to freedom, and impart to each one his rights. Christianity nowhere requires its friends to make or to own a slave. No one under the proper influence of religion ever yet made a man a slave; there is no one under its proper influence who would not desire that all should be free; and just in proportion as true religion spreads over the world, will universal freedom be its attendant. But Christianity would lighten the evils of slavery even while it exists, and would comfort those who are doomed to so hard a lot, by assuring them that there they may render acceptable service to God, and that they soon will be admitted to a world where galling servitude will be known no more. If they may not have freedom here, they may have contentment if they feel that wrong is done them by

men, they may feel that right will be done them by God; if their masters do not reward them for their services here, God will; and if they may not enjoy liberty here, they will soon be received into the world of perfect freedom — heaven.

◀408▶ Ephesians 6:9. *And, ye masters* The object of this is, to secure for servants a proper treatment. It is evident, from this, that there were in the Christian church those who were “masters;” and the most obvious interpretation is, that they were the owners of slaves. Some such persons would be converted, as such are now. Paul did not say that they could not be Christians. He did not say that they should be excluded at once from the communion. He did not hold them up to reproach, or use harsh and severe language in regard to them. He taught them their duty toward those who were under them, and laid down principles which, if followed, would lead ultimately to universal freedom.

Do the same things unto them τα ^{<3588>} αὐτα ^{<346>}. The “same things,” here seem to refer to what he had said in the previous verses. They were, to evince toward their servants the same spirit which he had required servants to evince toward them — the same kindness, fidelity, and respect for the will of God. He had required servants to act conscientiously; to remember that the eye of God was upon them, and that in that condition in life they were to regard themselves as serving God, and as mainly answerable to him. The same things the apostle would have masters feel. They were to be faithful, conscientious, just, true to the interests of their servants, and to remember that they were responsible to God. They were not to take advantage of their power to oppress them, to punish them unreasonably, or to suppose that they were freed from responsibility in regard to the manner in which they treated them. In the corresponding passage in Colossians (iv, 1), this is, “Masters, give unto your servants that which is just and equal;” see the note on that place.

Forbearing threatening Margin, “moderating.” The Greek word means to “relax, loosen;” and then, to “omit, cease from.” This is evidently the meaning here. The sense is, that they were to be kind, affectionate, just. It does not mean that they were to remit punishment where it was deserved; but the object is to guard against that to which they were so much exposed in their condition — a fretful, dissatisfied temper; a disposition to govern by terror rather than by love. Where this unhappy state of society exists, it would be worth the trial of those who sustain the relation of masters, to

see whether it would not be “possible” to govern their servants, as the apostle here advises, by the exercise of love. Might not kindness, and confidence, and the fear of the Lord, be substituted for threats and stripes?

Knowing that your Master also is in heaven Margin, “Some read, both your and their.” Many MSS. have this reading; see Mill. The sense is not materially affected, further than, according to the margin, the effect would be to make the master and the servant feel that, in a most important sense, they were on an equality. According to the common reading, the sense is, that masters should remember that they were responsible to God, and this fact should be allowed to influence them in a proper manner. This it would do in two ways:

- (1) By the fact that injustice toward their servants would then be punished as it deserved — since there was no respect of persons with God.
- (2) It would lead them to act toward their servants as they would desire God to treat them. Nothing would be better adapted to do this than the feeling that they had a common Master, and that they were soon to stand at his bar.

Neither is there respect of persons with him see this expression explained in the notes on ^{◀841▶}Romans 2:11. The meaning here is, that God would not be influenced in the distribution of rewards and punishments, by a regard to the rank or condition of the master or the slave. He would show no favor to the one because he was a master; he would withhold none from the other because he was a slave. He would treat both according to their character. In this world they occupied different ranks and conditions; at his bar they would be called to answer before the same Judge. It follows from this:

- (1) that a slave is not to be regarded as a “chattel,” or a “thing,” or as “property.” He is a man; a redeemed man; an immortal man. He is one for whom Christ died. But Christ did not die for “chattels” and “things.”
- (2) The master and the servant in their great interests are on a level. Both are sinners; both will soon die; both will moulder back in the same manner to dust; both will stand at the tribunal of God; both will give up their account. The one will not be admitted to heaven because he is a master; nor will the other be thrust down to hell because he is a slave. If both are Christians, they will be admitted to a heaven where the distinctions of rank and color are unknown. If the master is not a Christian and the servant is,

he who has regarded himself as superior to the servant in this life, will see “him” ascend to heaven while he himself will be thrust down to hell.

(3) Considerations like these will if they have their proper influence, produce two effects:

(a) They will lighten the yoke of slavery while it continues, and while it may be difficult to remove it at once. If the master and the slave were both Christians, even if the relation continued, it would be rather a relation of mutual confidence. The master would become the protector, the teacher, the guide, the friend; the servant would become the faithful helper — rendering service to one whom he loved, and to whom he felt himself bound by the obligations of gratitude and affection.

(b) But this state of feeling would soon lead to emancipation. There is something shocking to the feelings of all, and monstrous to a Christian, in the idea of holding “a Christian brother” in bondage. So long as the slave is regarded as a “chattel” or a mere piece of “property,” like a horse, so long people endeavor to content themselves with the feeling that he may be held in bondage. But the moment it is felt that he is a “Christian brother” — a redeemed fellow-traveler to eternity, a joint heir of life — that moment a Christian should feel that there is something that violates all the principles of his religion in holding him AS A SLAVE; in making a “chattel” of that for which Christ died, and in buying and selling like a horse, an ox, or an ass, a child of God, and an heir of life. Accordingly, the prevalence of Christianity soon did away the evil of slavery in the Roman empire; and if it prevailed in its purity, it would soon banish it from the face of the earth.

◀160 **Ephesians 6:10.** *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord* Paul had now stated to the Ephesians the duties which they were to perform. He had considered the various relations of life which they sustained, and the obligations resulting from them. He was not unaware that in the discharge of their duties they would need strength from above. He knew that they had great and mighty foes, and that to meet them, they needed to be clothed in the panoply of the Christian soldier. He closes, therefore, by exhorting them to put on all the strength which they could to meet the enemies with which they had to contend; and in the commencement of his exhortation he reminds them that it was only by the strength of the Lord that they could hope for victory. To be “strong in the Lord,” is:

(1) to be strong or courageous in his cause;

(2) to feel that he is our strength, and to rely on him and his promises.

Ephesians 6:11. *Put on the whole armor of God* The whole description here is derived from the weapons of an ancient soldier. The various parts of those weapons — constituting the “whole panoply” — are specified in ^{<4014>}Ephesians 6:14-17. The word rendered “whole armor” (^{<3833>}πανοπλιαν, “panoply”), means “complete armor,” offensive and defensive; see ^{<2112>}Luke 11:22; notes, ^{<51312>}Romans 13:12; ^{<4017>}2 Corinthians 6:7. “The armor of God” is not that which God wears, but that which he has provided for the Christian soldier. The meaning here is:

(1) that we are not to provide in our warfare such weapons as people employ in their contests, but such as God provides; that we are to renounce the weapons which are carnal, and put on such as God has directed for the achievement of the victory.

(2) We are to put on the “whole armor.” We are not to go armed partly with what God has appointed, and partly with such weapons as people use; nor are we to put on “a part” of the armor only, but the “whole” of it. A man needs “all” that armor if he is about to fight the battles of the Lord; and if he lacks “one” of the weapons which God has appointed, defeat may be the consequence.

That ye may be able to stand The foes are so numerous and mighty, that unless clothed with the divine armor, victory will be impossible.

Against the wiles of the devil The word rendered “wiles” (^{<3180>}μεθοδεια), means properly that which is traced out with “method;” that which is “methodized;” and then that which is well laid — art, skill, cunning. It occurs in the New Testament only in ^{<4014>}Ephesians 4:14, and in this place. It is appropriately rendered here as “wiles,” meaning cunning devices, arts, attempts to delude and destroy us. The wiles “of the devil” are the various arts and stratagems which he employs to drag souls down to perdition. We can more easily encounter open force than we can cunning; and we need the weapons of Christian armor to meet the attempts to draw us into a snare, as much as to meet open force. The idea here is, that Satan does not carry on an open warfare. He does not meet the Christian soldier face to face. He advances covertly; makes his approaches in darkness; employs cunning rather than power, and seeks rather to delude and betray than to vanquish by mere force. Hence, the necessity of being constantly armed to meet him whenever the attack is made. A man who has to contend with a

visible enemy, may feel safe if he only prepares to meet him in the open field. But far different is the case if the enemy is invisible; if he steals upon us slyly and stealthily; if he practices war only by ambushes and by surprises. Such is the foe that we have to contend with — and almost all the Christian struggle is a warfare against stratagems and wiles. Satan does not openly appear. He approaches us not in repulsive forms, but comes to recommend some plausible doctrine, to lay before us some temptation that shall not immediately repel us. He presents the world in an alluring aspect; invites us to pleasures that seem to be harmless, and leads us in indulgence until we have gone so far that we cannot retreat.

4012 *Ephesians 6:12.* *For we wrestle* Greek, “The wrestling to us;” or, “There is not to us a wrestling with flesh and blood.” There is undoubtedly here an allusion to the ancient games of Greece, a part of the exercises in which consisted in wrestling; see the notes on **4102** 1 Corinthians 9:25-27. The Greek word used here — *πᾶλη* **3823** — denotes a “wrestling;” and then a struggle, fight, combat. Here it refers to the struggle or combat which the Christian has to maintain — the Christian warfare.

Not against flesh and blood Not with people; see the notes on **8116** Galatians 1:16. The apostle does not mean to say that Christians had no enemies among men that opposed them, for they were exposed often to fiery persecution; nor that they had nothing to contend with in the carnal and corrupt propensities of their nature, which was true of them then as it is now; but that their main controversy was with the invisible spirits of wickedness that sought to destroy them. They were the source and origin of all their spiritual conflicts, and with them the warfare was to be maintained.

But against principalities There can be no doubt whatever that the apostle alludes here to evil spirits. Like good angels, they were regarded as divided into ranks and orders, and were supposed to be under the control of one mighty leader; see the notes on **4101** Ephesians 1:21. It is probable that the allusion here is to the ranks and orders which they sustained before their fall, something like which they may still retain. The word “principalities” refers to principal rulers, or chieftains.

Powers Those who had power, or to whom the name of “powers” was given. Milton represents Satan as addressing the fallen angels in similar language:

“Thrones, dominations, principedoms, virtues, powers.”

Against the rulers of the darkness of this world The rulers that preside over the regions of ignorance and sin with which the earth abounds, compare notes on ~~AMP~~ Ephesians 2:2. “Darkness” is an emblem of ignorance, misery, and sin; and no description could be more accurate than that of representing these malignant spirits as ruling over a dark world. The earth — dark, and wretched and ignorant, and sinful — is just such a dominion as they would choose, or as they would cause; and the degradation and woe of the pagan world are just such as foul and malignant spirits would delight in. It is a wide and a powerful empire. It has been consolidated by ages. It is sustained by all the authority of law; by all the omnipotence of the perverted religious principle; by all the reverence for antiquity; by all the power of selfish, corrupt, and base passions. No empire has been so extended, or has continued so long, as that empire of darkness; and nothing on earth is so difficult to destroy. Yet the apostle says that it was on that kingdom they were to make war. Against that, the kingdom of the Redeemer was to be set up; and that was to be overcome by the spiritual weapons which he specifies. When he speaks of the Christian warfare here, he refers to the contest with the powers of this dark kingdom. He regards each and every Christian as a soldier to wage war on it in whatever way he could, and wherever he could attack it. The contest therefore was not primarily with people, or with the internal corrupt propensities of the soul; it was with this vast and dark kingdom that had been set up over mankind. I do not regard this passage, therefore, as having a primary reference to the struggle which a Christian maintains with his own corrupt propensities. It is a warfare on a large scale with the entire kingdom of darkness over the world. Yet in maintaining the warfare, the struggle will be with such portions of that kingdom as we come in contact with and will actually relate:

- (1) to our own sinful propensities — which are a part of the kingdom of darkness;
- (2) with the evil passions of others — their pride, ambition, and spirit of revenge — which are also a part of that kingdom;
- (3) with the evil customs, laws, opinions, employments, pleasures of the world — which are also a part of that dark kingdom;

(4) with error, superstition, false doctrine — which are also a part of that kingdom; and

(5) with the wickedness of the pagan world — the sins of benighted nations — also a part of that kingdom. Wherever we come in contact with evil — whether in our own hearts or elsewhere — there we are to make war.

Against spiritual wickedness Margin, “or wicked spirits.” Literally, “The spiritual things of wickedness;” but the allusion is undoubtedly to evil spirits, and to their influences on earth.

In high places εν <172> τοις <358> επουρανιοις <203> — “in celestial or heavenly places.” The same phrase occurs in <400> Ephesians 1:3; 2:6, where it is translated, “in heavenly places.” The word (επουρανιος <203>) is used of those that dwell in heaven, <485> Matthew 18:35; <3190> Philippians 2:10; of those who come from heaven, <454> 1 Corinthians 15:48; <3192> Philippians 3:21; of the heavenly bodies, the sun, moon, and stars, <450> 1 Corinthians 15:40. Then the neuter plural of the word is used to denote the heavens; and then the “lower” heavens, the sky, the air, represented as the seat of evil spirits; see the notes on <400> Ephesians 2:2. This is the allusion here. The evil spirits are supposed to occupy the lofty regions of the air, and thence to exert a baleful influence on the affairs of man. What was the origin of this opinion it is not needful here to inquire. No one can “prove,” however, that it is incorrect. It is against such spirits, and all their malignant influences, that Christians are called to contend. In whatever way their power is put forth — whether in the prevalence of vice and error; of superstition and magic arts; of infidelity, atheism, or antinomianism; of evil customs and laws; of pernicious fashions and opinions, or in the corruptions of our own hearts, we are to make war on all these forms of evil, and never to yield in the conflict.

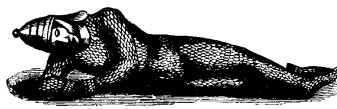
<403> **Ephesians 6:13.** *In the evil day* The day of temptation; the day when you are violently assaulted.

And having done all, to stand Margin, “or overcome.” The Greek word means, to work out, effect, or produce; and then to work up, to make an end of, to vanquish. Robinson, Lexicon. The idea seems to be, that they were to overcome or vanquish all their foes, and thus to stand firm. The whole language here is taken from war; and the idea is, that every foe was

to be subdued — no matter how numerous or formidable they might be. Safety and triumph could be looked for only when every enemy was slain.

◀464▶ Ephesians 6:14. *Stand therefore* Resist every attack — as a soldier does in battle. In what way they were to do this, and how they were to be armed, the apostle proceeds to specify; and in doing it, gives a description of the ancient armor of a soldier.

Having your loins girt about The “girdle, or sash,” was always with the ancients an important part of their dress, in war as well as in peace. They wore loose, flowing robes; and it became necessary to gird them up when they traveled, or ran, or labored. The girdle was often highly ornamented, and was the place where they carried their money, their sword, their pipe, their writing instruments, etc.; see the notes on **◀468▶** Matthew 5:38-41. The “girdle” seems sometimes to have been a cincture of iron or steel, and designed to keep every part of the armor in its place, and to gird the soldier on every side. The following figures will give an idea of part of the armor of an ancient soldier.



CUIRASSES, OR COATS OF MAIL

With truth It may not be easy to determine with entire accuracy the resemblance between the parts of the armor specified in this description, and the things with which they are compared, or to determine precisely why he compared truth to a girdle, and “righteousness” to a breast-plate, rather than why he should have chosen a different order, and compared righteousness to a girdle, etc. Perhaps in themselves there may have been no special reason for this arrangement, but the object may have been merely to specify the different parts of the armor of a soldier, and to compare them with the weapons which Christians were to use, though the comparison should be made somewhat at random. In some of the cases, however, we can see a particular significancy in the comparisons which are made; and it may not be improper to make suggestions of that kind as we

go along. The idea here may be, that as the girdle was the bracer up, or support of the body, so truth is suited to brace us up, and to gird us for constancy and firmness. The girdle kept all the parts of the armor in their proper place, and preserved firmness and consistency in the dress; and so truth might serve to give consistency and firmness to our conduct. “Great,” says Grotius, “is the laxity of falsehood; truth binds the man.” Truth preserves a man from those lax views of morals, of duty and of religion, which leave him exposed to every assault. It makes the soul sincere, firm, constant, and always on its guard. A man who has no consistent views of truth, is just the man for the adversary successfully to assail.

And having on the breast-plate The word rendered here as “breastplate” (θώραξ ^{<2382>}) denoted the “cuirass,” Lat.: lorica, or coat of mail; i.e., the armor that covered the body from the neck to the thighs, and consisted of two parts, one covering the front and the other the back. It was made of rings, or in the form of scales, or of plates, so fastened together that they, would be flexible, and yet guard the body from a sword, spear, or arrow. It is referred to in the Scriptures as a “coat of mail” (^{<9175>}1 Samuel 17:5); an “habergeon” (^{<16916>}Nehemiah 4:16). or as a “breast-plate.” We are told that Goliath’s coat of mail weighed five thousand shekels of brass, or nearly one hundred and sixty pounds. It was often formed of plates of brass, laid one upon another, like the scales of a fish. The following cuts will give an idea of this ancient piece of armor.

Of righteousness Integrity, holiness, purity of life, sincerity of piety. The breast-plate defended the vital parts of the body; and the idea here may be that the integrity of life, and righteousness of character, is as necessary to defend us from the assaults of Satan, as the coat of mail was to preserve the heart from the arrows of an enemy. It was the incorruptible integrity of Job, and, in a higher sense, of the Redeemer himself, that saved them from the temptations of the devil. And it is as true now that no one can successfully meet the power of temptation unless he is righteous, as that a soldier could not defend himself against a foe without such a coat of mail. A want of integrity will leave a man exposed to the assaults of the enemy, just as a man would be whose coat of mail was defective, or some part of which was missing. The king of Israel was smitten by an arrow sent from a bow, drawn at a venture, “between the joints of his harness” or the “breast-plate” (margin), ^{<11234>}1 Kings 22:34; and many a man who thinks he has on the “Christian” armor is smitten in the same manner. There is some defect of character; some want of incorruptible integrity; some point that is

unguarded — and that will be sure to be the point of attack by the foe. So David was tempted to commit the enormous crimes that stain his memory, and Peter to deny his Lord. So Judas was assailed, for the want of the armor of righteousness, through his avarice; and so, by some want of incorruptible integrity in a single point, many a minister of the gospel has been assailed and has fallen. It may be added here, that we need a righteousness which God alone can give; the righteousness of God our Saviour, to make us perfectly invulnerable to all the arrows of the foe.

<065> Ephesians 6:15. *And your feet shod* There is undoubtedly an allusion here to what was worn by the ancient soldier to guard his feet. The Greek is, literally, “having underbound the feet;” that is, having bound on the shoes, or sandals, or whatever was worn by the ancient soldier. The protection of the feet and ankles consisted of two parts:

- (1) The sandals, or shoes, which were probably made so as to cover the foot, and which often were fitted with nails, or armed with spikes, to make the hold firm in the ground: or
- (2) with “greaves” that were fitted to the legs, and designed to defend them from any danger. These “greaves,” or boots (**<076>** 1 Samuel 17:6), were made of brass, and were in almost universal use among the Greeks and Romans.

With the preparation Prepared with the gospel of peace. The sense is, that the Christian soldier is to be prepared with the gospel of peace to meet attacks similar to those against which the ancient soldier designed to guard himself by the sandals or greaves which he wore. The word rendered “preparation” — (ἑτοιμασία **<091>**) — means properly readiness, fitness for, alacrity; and the idea, according to Robinson (Lexicon), is, that they were to be ever ready to go forth to preach the gospel. Taylor (Fragments to Calmet’s Dic., No. 219) supposes that it means, “Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel; not iron, not steel — but patient investigation, calm inquiry, assiduous, laborious, lasting; or with “firm footing” in the gospel of peace.” Locke supposes it to mean, “with a readiness to walk in the gospel of peace.” Doddridge supposes that the allusion is to “greaves,” and the spirit recommended is that peaceful and benevolent temper recommended in the gospel, and which, like the boots worn by soldiers, would bear them safe through many obstructions and trials that might be opposed to them, as a soldier might encounter sharp-

pointed thorns that would oppose his progress. It is difficult to determine the exact meaning; and perhaps all expositors have erred in endeavoring to explain the reference of these parts of armor by some particular thing in the gospel. The apostle figured to himself a soldier, clad in the usual manner. Christians were to resemble him. One part of his dress or preparation consisted in the covering and defense of the foot. It was to preserve the foot from danger, and to secure the facility of his march, and perhaps to make him firm in battle. Christians were to have the principles of the gospel of peace — the peaceful and pure gospel — to facilitate them; to aid them in their marches; to make them firm in the day of conflict with their foes. They were not to be furnished with carnal weapons, but with the peaceful gospel of the Redeemer; and, sustained by this, they were to go on in their march through the world. The principles of the gospel were to do for them what the greaves and iron-spiked sandals did for the soldier — to make them ready for the march, to make them firm in their foot-tread, and to be a part of their defense against their foes.

Ephesians 6:16. *Above all* **Ev** ^{<172>} **πᾶσιν** ^{<3956>}. Not “above all” in point of importance or value, but “over” all, as a soldier holds his shield to defend himself. It constitutes a protection over every part of his body, as it can be turned in every direction. The idea is, that as the shield covered or protected the other parts of the armor, so faith had a similar importance in the Christian virtues.

The shield note, ^{<200>} Isaiah 21:9. The shield was usually made of light wood. or a rim of brass, and covered with several folds or thicknesses of stout hide, which was preserved by frequent anointing. It was held by the left arm, and was secured by straps, through which the arm passed, as may be seen in the annexed figures. The outer surface of the shield was made more or less rounding. Item the center to the edge, and was polished smooth, or anointed with oil, so that arrows or darts would glance off, or rebound.



Of faith On the nature of faith, see the notes on ^{<1166>} Mark 16:16. Faith here is made to occupy a more important place than either of the other Christian

graces. It bears, to the whole Christian character, the same relation which the shield does to the other parts of the armor of a soldier. It protects all, and is indispensable to the security of all, as is the case with the shield. The shield was an ingenious device by which blows and arrows might be parried off, and the whole body defended. It could be made to protect the head, or the heart, or thrown behind to meet all attack there. As long as the soldier had his shield, he felt secure; and as long as a Christian has faith, he is safe. It comes to his aid in every attack that is made on him, no matter from what quarter; it is the defense and guardian of every other Christian grace; and it secures the protection which the Christian needs in the whole of the spiritual war.

Wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked Or, rather, “of the WICKED ONE” — του <388> πονηρου <490>. The allusion is undoubtedly to the great enemy of the people of God, called, by way of eminence, THE “wicked one;” compare <388> 2 Thessalonians 3:3. Mr. Locke renders this, “Wherein you may receive, and so render ineffectual,” etc. There seems a little incongruity in the idea of “quenching” darts by “a shield.” But the word “quench,” here, means only that they would be “put out” by being thrown “against” the shield, as a candle would by being thrown against anything. “The fiery darts” that were used in war were small, slender pieces of cane, which were filled with combustible materials, and set on fire; or darts around which some combustible material was wound, and which were set on fire, and then shot “slowly” against a foe. The object was to make the arrow fasten in the body, and increase the danger by the burning; or, more frequently, those darts were thrown against ships, forts, tents, etc., with an intention to set them on fire. They were in common use among the ancients. Arrian (Exped. Alexan. 11) mentions the πυρφορα <442> βελη <56>, the fire-bearing weapons; Thucydides (ii. c. 75), the πυρφοροι <442> οιστοι <542>, the fire-bearing arrows; and Livy refers to similar weapons as in common use in war; lib. xxi. c. 8. By the “fiery darts of the wicked,” Paul here refers, probably, to the temptations of the great adversary, which are like fiery darts; or those furious suggestions of evil, and excitements to sin, which he may throw into the mind like fiery darts. They are — blasphemous thoughts, unbelief, sudden temptation to do wrong, or thoughts that wound and torment the soul. In regard to them, we may observe:

(1) that they come suddenly, like arrows sped from a bow;

(2) they come from unexpected quarters, like arrows shot suddenly from an enemy in ambush;

(3) they pierce, and penetrate, and torment the soul, as arrows would that are on fire;

(4) they set the soul on fire, and enkindle the worst passions, as fiery darts do a ship or camp against which they are sent. The only way to meet them is by the “shield of faith;” by confidence in God, and by relying on his gracious promises and aid. It is not by our own strength; and, if we have not faith in God, we are wholly defenseless. We should have a shield that we can turn in any direction, on which we may receive the arrow, and by which it may be put out.

Ephesians 6:17. *And take the helmet* The helmet was a cap made of thick leather, or brass, fitted to the head, and was usually crowned with a plume, or crest, as an ornament. Its use was to guard the head from a blow by a sword, or war-club, or battle-axe. The cuts will show its usual form.

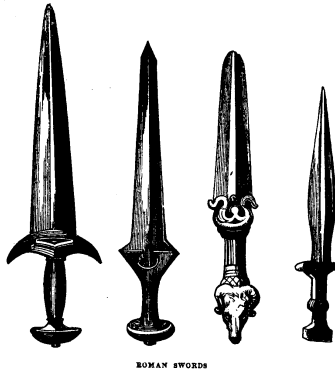


a, b, c, Egyptian Helms, worn by Warriors; d, e, Caps of Egyptian Soldiers;
f, g, Persian Helms; h, i, k, Syrian; l, m, n, o, Phrygian; p, q, Dacian.

Of salvation That is, “of the hope of salvation;” for so it is expressed in the parallel place in **1** Thessalonians 5:8. The idea is, that a well-founded hope of salvation will preserve us in the day of spiritual conflict, and will

guard us from the blows which an enemy would strike. The helmet defended the head, a vital part; and so the hope of salvation will defend the soul, and keep it from the blows of the enemy. A soldier would not fight well without a hope of victory. A Christian could not contend with his foes, without the hope of final salvation; but, sustained by this, what has he to dread?

And the sword The sword was an essential part of the armor of an ancient soldier. His other weapons were the bow, the spear, or the battle-axe. But, without a sword, no soldier would have regarded himself as well armed. The ancient sword was short, and usually two-edged, and resembled very much a dagger.



ROMAN SWORDS

Of the Spirit Which the Holy Spirit furnishes; the truth which he has revealed.

Which is the word of God What God has spoken — his truth and promises; see the notes on ^{<3042>}Hebrews 4:12. It was with this weapon that the Saviour met the tempter in the wilderness; Matthew 4. It is only by this that Satan can now be met. Error and falsehood will not put back temptation; nor can we hope for victory, unless we are armed with truth. Learn, hence:

- (1) That we should study the Bible, that we may understand what the truth is.
- (2) We should have texts of Scripture at command, as the Saviour did, to meet the various forms of temptation.
- (3) We should not depend on our own reason, or rely on our own wisdom. A single text of Scripture is better to meet a temptation, than all the

philosophy which the world contains. The tempter can reason, and reason plausibly too. But he cannot resist a direct and positive command of the Almighty. Had Eve adhered simply to the Word of God, and urged his command, without attempting to “reason” about it, she would have been safe. The Saviour (~~408~~ Matthew 4:4,7,10), met the tempter with the Word of God, and he was foiled. So we shall be safe if we adhere to the simple declarations of the Bible, and oppose a temptation by a positive command of God. But, the moment we leave that, and begin to parley with sin, that moment we are gone. It is as if a man should throw away his sword, and use his naked hands only in meeting an adversary. Hence,

(4) we may see the importance of training up the young in the accurate study of the Bible. There is nothing which will furnish a better security to them in future life, when temptation comes upon them, than to have a pertinent text of Scripture at command. Temptation often assails us so suddenly that it checks all “reasoning;” but a text of Scripture will suffice to drive the tempter from us.

~~408~~ **Ephesians 6:18.** *Praying always* It would be well for the soldier who goes forth to battle to pray — to pray for victory; or to pray that he may be prepared for death, should he fall. But soldiers do not often feel the necessity of this. To the Christian soldier, however, it is indispensable. Prayer crowns all lawful efforts with success and gives a victory when nothing else would. No matter how complete the armor; no matter how skilled we may be in the science of war; no matter how courageous we may be, we may be certain that without prayer we shall be defeated. God alone can give the victory; and when the Christian soldier goes forth armed completely for the spiritual conflict, if he looks to God by prayer, he may be sure of a triumph. This prayer is not to be intermitted. It is to be always. In every temptation and spiritual conflict we are to pray; see notes on ~~210~~ Luke 18:1.

With all prayer and supplication With all kinds of prayer; prayer in the closet, the family, the social meeting, the great assembly; prayer at the usual hours, prayer when we are specially tempted, and when we feel just like praying (see the notes, ~~408~~ Matthew 6:6) prayer in the form of supplication for ourselves, and in the form of intercession for others. This is, after all, the great weapon of our spiritual armor, and by this we may hope to prevail.

*“Restraining prayer, we cease to fight;
Prayer makes the Christian armor bright,
And Satan trembles when he sees
The meanest saint upon his knees.”*

In the Spirit By the aid of the Holy Spirit; or perhaps it may mean that it is not to be prayer of form merely, but when the spirit and the heart accompany it. The former idea seems, however, to be the correct one.

And watching thereunto Watching for opportunities to pray; watching for the spirit of prayer; watching against all those things which would hinder prayer; see the notes, ~~4188~~ Matthew 26:38,41; compare ~~4007~~ 1 Peter 4:7.

With all perseverance Never becoming discouraged and disheartened; compare notes, ~~2801~~ Luke 18:1.

And supplication for all saints For all Christians. We should do this:

- (1) because they are our brethren — though they may have a different skin, language, or name.
- (2) because, like us, they have hearts prone to evil, and need, with us, the grace of God.
- (3) because nothing tends so much to make us love others and to forget their faults, as to pray for them.
- (4) because the condition of the church is always such that it greatly needs the grace of God. Many Christians have backslidden; many are cold or lukewarm; many are in error; many are conformed to the world; and we should pray that they may become more holy and may devote themselves more to God.
- (5) because each day many a Christian is subjected to some special temptation or trial, and though he may be unknown to us, yet our prayers may benefit him.
- (6) because each day and each night many Christians die. We may reflect each night as we lie down to rest, that while we sleep, some Christians are kept awake by the prospect of death, and are now passing through the dark valley; and each morning we may reflect that “today” some Christian will die, and we should remember them before God.

(7) because we shall soon die, and it will be a comfort to us if we can remember then that we have often prayed for dying saints, and if we may feel that they are praying for us.

~~406~~ **Ephesians 6:19.** *And for me* Paul was then a prisoner at Rome. He specially needed the prayers of Christians:

(1) that he might be sustained in his afflictions; and

(2) that he might be able to manifest the spirit which he ought, and to do good as he had opportunity.

Learn hence that we should pray for the prisoner, the captive, the man in chains, the slave. There are in this land (the United States) about ten thousand prisoners — husbands, fathers, sons, brothers; or wives, mothers, daughters. True, they are the children of “crime,” but they are also the children of sorrow; and in either case or both they need our prayers. There are in this land not far from three million of slaves — and they need our prayers. They are children of misfortune and of many wrongs; they are sunk in ignorance and want and we; they are subjected to trials, and exposed to temptations to the lowest vices. But many of them, we trust, love the Redeemer; and whether they do or do not, they need an interest in the prayers of Christians.

That utterance may be given unto me Paul, though a prisoner, was permitted to preach the gospel; see the notes, ~~423~~ Acts 28:30,31.

That I may open my mouth boldly He was in Rome. He was almost alone. He was surrounded by multitudes of the wicked. He was exposed to death. Yet he desired to speak boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus, and to invite sinners to repentance. A Christians in chains, and surrounded by the wicked, may speak boldly, and “may” have hope of success — for Paul was not an unsuccessful preacher even when a captive at Rome; see the notes on ~~402~~ Philippians 4:22.

The mystery of the gospel notes, ~~400~~ Ephesians 1:9.

~~403~~ **Ephesians 6:20.** *For which I am an ambassador in bonds* In chains (see the margin); or in confinement. There is something especially touching in this. He was “an ambassador” — sent to proclaim peace to a lost world. But he was now in chains. An ambassador is a sacred character. No greater affront can be given to a nation than to put its ambassadors to death, or

even to throw them into prison. But Paul says here that the unusual spectacle was witnessed of an ambassador seized, bound, confined, imprisoned; an ambassador who ought to have the privileges conceded to all such people, and to be permitted to go everywhere publishing the terms of mercy and salvation. See the word “ambassador” explained in the notes on ^{<4751>}2 Corinthians 5:20.

That therein Margin, or “thereof.” Greek, ^{<172>}εἰς ^{<846>}αὐτῷ — “in it;” that is, says Rosenmuller, in the gospel. It means that in speaking the gospel he might be bold.

I may speak boldly Openly, plainly, without fear; see the notes on ^{<4013>}Acts 4:13; 9:27; 13:46; 14:3; 18:26; 19:8:26:26.

As I ought to speak Whether in bonds or at large. Paul felt that the gospel ought always to be Spoken with plainness, and without the fear of man. It is remarkable that he did not ask them to pray that he might be released. “Why” he did not we do not know; but perhaps the desire of release did not lie so near his heart as the duty of speaking the gospel with boldness It may be of much more importance that we perform our duty aright when we are afflicted, or are in trouble, than that we should be released.

^{<4121>}**Ephesians 6:21.** *But that ye also may know my affairs* May understand my condition, my feelings, and in what I am engaged. To them it could not but be a subject of deep interest.

And how I do Greek, “What I do; that is how I am employed.

Tychicus Tychicus was of the province of Asia, in Asia Minor, of which Ephesus was the capital; see ^{<4310>}Acts 20:4. It is not improbable that he was of Ephesus, and that he was well known to the church there. He also carried the letter to the Colossians (^{<5107>}Colossians 4:7), and probably the Second Epistle to Timothy; ^{<5012>}2 Timothy 4:12. Paul also proposed to send him to Crete to succeed Titus; ^{<51812>}Titus 3:12. He was high in the confidence of: Paul, but it is not known when he was converted, or why he was now at Rome. The Greeks speak of him as one of the seventy disciples, and make him bishop of Colophon, in the province of Asia.

^{<4122>}**Ephesians 6:22.** *Whom I have sent unto you* The churches where Paul had preached, would feel a great interest in his welfare. He was a prisoner at Rome, and it was doubtful what the result would be. In this situation, he felt it proper to despatch a special messenger to give

information about his condition; to state what was doing in Rome; to ask the prayers of the churches; and to administer consolation to them in their various trials. The same sentiment in regard to the embassy of Tychicus, is expressed in the Epistle to the Colossians, ^{<5107>}Colossians 4:7,8. No small part of the consolation which he would impart to them would be found in these invaluable letters which he bore to them from the apostle.

^{<4023>}**Ephesians 6:23.** *Peace be to the brethren* The Epistle is closed with the usual salutations. The expression “peace to you,” was the common form of salutation in the East (see the notes, ^{<4003>}Matthew 10:13; ^{<4236>}Luke 24:36; ^{<5153>}Romans 15:33; compare ^{<4016>}Galatians 6:16; ^{<4054>}1 Peter 5:14; ^{<4014>}3 John 1:14), and is still the “salam” which is used — the word “salam” meaning “peace.”

And love with faith Love united with faith; not only desiring that they might have faith, but the faith which worked by love.

From God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ The Father and the Son are regarded as equally the author of peace and love; compare notes on ^{<4734>}2 Corinthians 13:14.

^{<4024>}**Ephesians 6:24.** *Grace be, ...* note, ^{<5151>}Romans 16:20.

That love our Lord Jesus Christ see the notes on ^{<4162>}1 Corinthians 16:22.

In sincerity Margin, “with incorruption.” With a pure heart; without dissembling; without hypocrisy. There could not be a more appropriate close of the Epistle than such a wish; there will be nothing more needful for us when we come to the close of life than the consciousness that we love the Lord Jesus Christ IN SINCERITY. To writer and reader may this be equally the inestimable consolation then! Better, far better then will be the evidence of such sincere love, than all the wealth which toil can gain, all the honors which the world can bestow — than the most splendid mansion, or the widest fame. The subscription to this Epistle, like those affixed to the other epistles, is of no authority, but in this instance there is every reason to believe that it is correct. Compare notes at the end of the Epistle to the Romans and 1 Corinthians.

FOOTNOTES

^{ft} What is the import of the expression “children of wrath”? It is allowed on all hands that it intimates “obnoxiousness to punishment,” that the persons to whom it is applied are worthy of wrath and punishment, or, as our author has it, are exposed or liable to wrath.

But whence comes this obnoxiousness or liability to punishment? Is it because of personal transgression, because of the practice or habit of sin, in which people indulge from the time they become moral agents? On account of these things, indeed, the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience. But such is not the cause assigned here.

People are obnoxious to punishment in another way than by personal transgression, than by acts or habits of sin. How? **Φυσει** ^{<549>} by birth, by original constitution, by nature, in consequence of something that is coeval with one’s very being. That this is the true meaning has been triumphantly established. Several commentators, indeed, have attempted to prove, by citation from the classics, that **φυσικῶς** ^{<549>} may be explained of confirmed habit or practice, which is sometimes styled a second nature. In most, however, if not in all the places cited by them, the idea of “natural,” in opposition to “acquired,” distinctly enough appears. Bloomfield speaks most emphatically on the point, “My own experience,” says he, “of the Classical writers enables me to confirm the remark of Mr. Scott, that the word was “never” used of any other customs than such as resulted from innate propensities.”

It may be alleged, however, that the text, properly speaking, does not assign a cause for the liability or obnoxiousness to punishment. It simply states the fact that people are “born” so liable, that they come into the world in this condition. But the “inference” is not far to seek, that if the punishment come not in consequence of “personal” sin, as from the nature of the case it cannot, it must come in consequence of the sin of Adam imputed to us — unless we allow, that such obnoxiousness to punishment might arise without sin of any kind, which is repugnant to all our views of God’s character. To say that this obnoxiousness arises from our innate depravity, or is its “regular result,” assigns as a cause that which is merely a consequence. The

depraved “nature” itself is penal, and a consequence of our union with Adam.

The author maintains, that the text proves no more than that people are “born exposed to wrath, or in a situation which would render them liable to wrath, and says nothing about the time “when they began” to be children of wrath. It may be at birth, or further on, for anything this text affirms.” Without doubt, however, the “natural” and just interpretation of the words teaches, that people are obnoxious to wrath from the moment of their birth, or as Calvin has it, in a note on the place, “in ipso utero maledicti essent.” And so the passage has been explained by the general consent of evangelical Christians. Nor can this universal condition of the race be otherwise accounted for, than by reference to our connection with the first Adam, as our head and representative. Even on the modified view that people are born in a situation that, at one time or other, “ultimately” brings them to be children of wrath, how shall we account for such situation? Why should God place human beings in it? It is impossible to escape the conclusion stated above. See the supplementary notes on ~~<B12>~~Romans 5:12ff. for a full discussion of the question of imputation.

^{ft2} See the supplementary notes, ~~<B17>~~Romans 8:7; ~~<B17>~~Galatians 5:17.

Whenever it is said the sinner has power, the kind of power should be defined. Certainly he has not moral power. This, indeed, the author allows, but for want of distinct definition of what he understands by “power,” both here and elsewhere, the reader is apt to misapprehend him.

^{ft3} For remarks on the subject of accommodation. in connection with quotations from the Old Testament into the New Testament, see the supplementary notes, ~~<B15>~~Hebrews 1:5. and ~~<B15>~~Hebrews 2:6. The principle of accommodation, if admitted at all, should be used with great caution. Doubtless it is sanctioned by great names both in Europe and America. Yet it must be allowed, that the apostles understood the mind of the Spirit, in the Old Testament, that their inspiration preserved them from every error. When, therefore, they tell us that certain passages have an ultimate reference to the Messiah and his times, through we should never have discovered such reference without their aid, nothing of the kind, it may be, “appearing” in the original places, yet we are bound to receive it “on their testimony.” It is alleged, indeed, that the apostles sometimes use the ordinary forms of

quotation, without intending to intimate thereby any prophetic reference in the passages titus introduced, nay, when such reference is obviously inadmissible. This, in the opinion of many, is a very hazardous statement, and introduces into the apostolic writings, and especially into the argumentative part of them, where so great use is made of the Old Testament, no small measure of uncertainty. Let the reader examine the passages in question, keeping in view. at the same time, the typical nature of the ancient economy, and he will have little difficulty in admitting the prophetic reference in most, if not in all of them. See Haldane on ^{<B017>}Romans 1:17. for a very masterly view of this subject, with remarks on ^{<A126>}Matthew 2:16, and other passages supposed to demand the accommodation theory.

“Nothing can be more dishonorable,” says that prince of English commentators, on the Epistle to the Romans, “to the character of divine revelation, and injurious to the edification of believers, than this method of explaining the quotations in the New Testament from the Old, not as predictions or interpretations, but as mere illustrations, by way of accommodation. In this way, many of the prophecies referred to in the Epistles are set aside from their proper application, and Christians are taught that they do not prove what the apostles adduced them to establish.” In reference to the quotation in this place, there seems little difficulty in connection with the view, that though the primary reference be to the bringing up of the ark to Mount Zion, the ultimate one is to the glorious ascension of Jesus into the highest heavens. The Jews rightly interpret part of this psalm (Psalm 68) of the Messiah. Nor is it to be believed that the apostle would have applied it to the ascension of Christ unless that application had been admitted by the Jews in his time, and unless himself were persuaded of its propriety.

^{†4} Doubtless there is a reciprocal influence between the dark mind and depraved heart. The one acts on the other. Admitting that the understanding is affected “first,” through the will or heart, and that it is a bad heart which makes a spiritually dark mind, still the fact remains the same, that “in consequence of our union with Adam, in consequence of the fall,” ALL our faculties, understanding, will, affections, have been corrupted. See the supplementary notes, Romans 5

^{†5} The grand objection to this view of our author is, that the apostle evidently introduces a citation. In the writings of Paul, the form $\delta\iota\omicron$

<1352> λαγει <3004> is never used in any other sense. Whence then is the quotation taken? There is nothing absurd in supposing, with Scott and Guyse, that the apostle gives the general sense of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the calling of the Gentiles. But <2300> Isaiah 60:1-3, bears a sufficiently close resemblance to the passage in Ephesians, to vindicate the very commonly received opinion, that the apostle quotes that prophecy, in which the subject is the increase of the Church by the accession of the pagan nations. The church is called to arise and shine, and the apostle reminds the converted Ephesians of their lofty vocation. It forms no very serious objection, that between the place in Isaiah and that in Ephesians, there are certain verbal discrepancies. No one will make much of this, who remembers, that in a multitude of cases similar variations occur, the apostles contenting themselves with giving the sense of the places to which they refer. “Accordingly,” says Dr. Dodridge, “the sense of the passage before us is so fairly deducible from the words of Isaiah, that I do not see any necessity of having recourse to this supposition,” namely, that the quotation was from an apocryphal book ascribed to Jeremiah.

^{†6} See the supplementary note, <600> Romans 8:10, on the union between Christ and his people, in which it is shown that a mere union of feeling and love is far beneath the truth.

^{†7} Yet we cannot but regard Paul’s “ignorance in unbelief” as, in itself, a grievous sin, He had abundant means of knowing the truth had he been disposed to inquire with patience and candor. His great abilities and excellent education are a further aggravation of the crime. It is, therefore, impossible to acquiesce in any solution of this clause which seems to make criminal ignorance a ground of mercy. The author, however, intends nothing of this kind, nor would it be fair to put such construction on his words. Yet, a little more fullness had been desirable on a subject of this nature. It is certain, that, independent of the nature of the ignorance, whether willful or otherwise, the character of crime is affected by it. He who should oppose truth, knowing it to be such, is more guilty than he who opposes it in ignorance, or under the conviction that it is not truth, but falsehood. In a certain sense, too, this ignorance, may be regarded as a reason why mercy is bestowed on such as sin desperately or blasphemously under it. Rather, it is a reason why they are not excluded from mercy. It shows why persons so guilty are not beyond its pale. This is, we think, the true key both to the

passage, and that in ~~2734~~ Luke 23:34. The ignorance is not a reason why God should bestow mercy on such persons, rather than on others left to perish, but a reason why they obtain mercy at all, who, by their blasphemies had been supposed to have reached the sin against the Holy Spirit.

Now consider the passage in this view. The apostle had just been showing how great a sinner he had formerly been. His criminality had been so great that it went near to shutting him out from mercy altogether. Had he maliciously persecuted and blasphemed Christ, knowing him to be the Messiah, his had been the unpardonable sin, and his lot that of judicial, final obduracy. But he had not got that length. He was saved from that gulph, and obtained mercy, because, sinning ignorantly and in unbelief, he was not beyond its range.

That Paul should set himself to excuse his guilt is altogether impossible. He does the very reverse. He has but escaped the unpardonable sin. He is chief of sinners. He owes his salvation to exceeding abundant grace. All long-suffering has been exercised toward him. He affirms, that mercy was extended to him, that, to the end of time, there might be a proof or pattern of mercy to the guiltiest. Had he been assigning a reason why he obtained tainted mercy, rather than others left to perish, doubtless that had been what he has elsewhere assigned and defended, "God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy, and he will have compassion on whom he will have compassion;" ~~495~~ Romans 9:15.