
Thoughts on the Names by which God is Known

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FOREWORD

The following consideration of the Scripture setting of divine Names was written during a period of enforced inactivity from ill health. It has afforded the writer much spiritual enjoyment, which, while deeply conscious of the mine of wealth yet untouched by it, he trusts may be shared by its readers.

The Scripture quotations are in general from the New Translation by J. N. Darby.

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GOD

THE Creator, Elohim, the plural form of Eloah, as in Genesis i, 1. "In the beginning God (Elohim) created the heavens and the earth."

Let us at the outset note carefully that, in view of the complete breakdown of man, wherever set up in responsibility, in the last book of the Bible, (Rev. iii, 14), the Lord Jesus Christ is said to be "the beginning of the creation of God," as being before the divine mind in creation. He is also said, in Col. i, 15, 16, to be the "image of the invisible God, firstborn of all creation, because by him were created all things," etc. This is not to say that He is a creature, which would be wholly wrong, but that in taking part and place in His own creation, He is of necessity the beginning of it, and firstborn in it. See Psa. lxxxix, 27.

The Creator thus in His mind begins with what will never end or fail. There is no evolution here, but perfection at the beginning. This is not the way of man. We shall have to speak of that which has been sadly marred, but which, at the outset, was "very good." As to God, what is seen in the work of His hands is His "eternal power and divinity," (Rom. i, 20), not yet His love. He breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living soul. There was thus a moral link established between the Creator and His creature Man, in connection with which is a responsibility

which did not attach to any other earthly creature, and which he can in no wise shake off; he can give nothing "in exchange for his soul." Mark viii, 37.

[The creation of angels had its place we know not when; but of such we read there were those who kept not their first estate, and also that there are elect angels, spirits, who minister to those "who shall inherit salvation." Heb. i, 14. There was one created being, the chief of all, who became, we know not how or when, the great enemy of God.]

Now if man is the creature of God, and is responsible as such, it is evident that his first obligation is to recognise his Creator's right that for his "pleasure they are and were created." Rev. iv, 11. That is, we are set here as His creatures, for the will and pleasure of God. Alas! Man has sought his own will and pleasure, and "all have gone out of the way, they have together become unprofitable, there is not one that practices goodness, there is not so much as one." Rom. iii, 12. All the world has thus become guilty before God. The gospel tells us how all this is met, and how God in the exercise of His righteousness has asserted His right as Creator to redeem His creature man, who had, by reason of sin, come under the liability of death and judgment. No one but God had the right of redemption, and this He has exercised in wondrous grace "through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus," whom He "has set forth a

mercy-seat through faith, in his blood . . for the shewing forth of his righteousness in the present time, so that he should be just and justify him that is of the faith of Jesus." Rom. iii, 24-26. The bearing of this righteousness is "towards all, and upon all those who believe." Rom. iii, 22.

The life of every creature belongs to God, and man may only take it as allowed by God. Gen. ix, 6. Man has therefore no right to take his own life. Man's blood, if shed, God will require at the hand of every animal, "and at the hand of each (the blood) of his brother will I require the life of man." Gen. ix, 5. Man must not eat blood, since blood is the life, hence things strangled and other things are prohibited as ignoring the fundamental rights of God. Acts xv, 29.

The marriage tie is ordained of God. Our Lord insisted upon this in His reply to self-righteous Pharisees, "Have ye not read that he who made them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, On account of this a man shall leave father and mother, and shall be united to his wife, and the two shall be one flesh; so that they are no longer two, but one flesh? What therefore God hath joined together, let no man separate. Math. xix, 4—6.

The relative position of man and woman in the creation is laid down among the authoritative directions of the apostle Paul. "If any one thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him recognise the things that I write to you, that it is the Lord's

commandment." I Cor. xiv, 37. "But I wish you to know that the Christ is the head of every man, but woman's head is the man, and the Christ's head God . . . For man indeed ought not to have his head covered, being God's image and glory, but woman is man's glory." I Cor. xi, 3, 7, "Let her be covered". v-6.

The good hand of God gives to men "rain and fruitful seasons, filling your hearts with food and gladness." Acts xiv, 17.

If we "suffer according to the will of God," we may commit the keeping of our souls to Him in well doing to "a faithful creator." I Pet. iv, 19.

The full truth of God having been now given, we know that He "is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not practice the truth." I John, i, 5, 6. "God is love, and he that abides in love, abides in God, and God in him." I John, iv, 16. In the eternal state the tabernacle of God will be with men, "and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, their God." Rev. xxi, 3. God will then "be all in all." i Cor. xv, 28. "From eternity to eternity" He is God.

In Ps. xci, we have what may be reverently called a divine conundrum. "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of Jehovah, My refuge

and my fortress, my God, I will confide in him."

It is proposed to take up these names seriatim, and to gather from scripture their import, so that we may realise the blessing of being able to put together the value of these names, adding at the close the Name of Father now revealed in and by His Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Every fresh name carries with it its own particular import and blessing, and nothing is lost of what was previously given when a further communication is given, as I trust we may see.

THE MOST HIGH GOD OR MOST HIGH

It has often been observed that when first a subject is spoken of in scripture its main features are disclosed. On turning to Gen. xiv, we have the first allusion to a name, whose use is found not infrequently elsewhere. In this historical record we have a prophetic picture of the way in which the Most High God, the possessor of heaven and earth, will be proved to be such, and will take His place as Supreme in the millennial scene, when Christ comes out as Priest, King of righteousness, and King of peace, with all the blessing attached to it for His people and for men at large.

To succour His kinsman Abram had utterly routed the forces of four confederate kings, who had carried Lot captive along with Sodom. On his victorious return with

Lot and all the captives and spoil he was met by Melchizidek, King of Salem, and Priest of the Most High God, whose name is interpreted in Heb. vii as King of righteousness and King of peace, type of Christ, the order of whose priesthood is that of Melchizidek, and to whom Jehovah has said "Sit at my right hand until I put thine enemies as footstool of thy feet. Ps. cx, 1. While awaiting there the day when He will come forth publicly as King, before whom all enemies will be subdued, He is exercising His priesthood on the Aaronic pattern.

Melchizidek brought forth bread and wine, blessed Abram of the Most High God, and blessed the Most High God, the possessor of heaven and earth. Blessing characterises this priesthood, and the bread and wine speak of that which satisfies and fills with joy the saints in this our day, as telling of the love of Christ and love of God, our blessed portion while still Christ is on high at the right hand of God. Thus sustained and invigorated Abram scorned the proposals of the King of Sodom (the world for us) from whom he would not take from a thread to a sandal thong.

"The secret place of the Most High" would seem to refer to what we know of the blessed God in His triumph over the whole power of the enemy through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ—a triumph known only to faith, but not yet publicly displayed until the day when His foes will indeed be made His footstool.

The confederacy of four kings which had led Lot captive, (a true saint, but involved in this world's calamities, which in its prosperity, like so many Christians to-day, had sadly diverted him from the path of faith,) will have its counterpart in a confederacy of ten kings or nations, as we learn from the prophetic testimony of Ps. lxxxiii, who will combine in the last days with the view not only to exterminate the people of God (the Jews) but to take their land in possession for themselves. God is besought to deal with them as of old in Gideon's and Barak's days with kings and nations, that the nations of the earth might know that Jehovah, the God of Israel, is the "Most High over all the earth." This He will do, and in result our blessed Lord will be established, Priest of the Most High God, as King of righteousness and King of peace.

Blessed indeed it is to dwell in "the secret place of the Most High," to come under the shadow of the Almighty, and to know the sheltering power and faithfulness of the great I Am!

THE ALMIGHTY GOD

In Genesis xvii, the revelation of this name formed a fresh starting point for the man of faith. Abram was 99 years old and Sarai 90. All hope of a seed, as after the flesh, was gone, but Abram was now to learn what Almighty power in resurrection

could and would effect to secure the seed according to promise, and it was before such a God that Abram was now to walk. See Rom. iv, 17-22. He should be a father of many nations, which the changing of his name to Abraham would henceforth indicate. God's covenant was now with Abraham on these lines, and this He would establish with His seed after him to give them the land whereon he was a sojourner. The "I wills" of this covenant are numerous and most blessed. But if the incapacity of the flesh had been the occasion for God to make Himself known as the Almighty to Abraham, the total disallowance of the flesh became at once a fundamental principle to be observed by Abraham and his seed after him. "As for thee thou shalt keep my covenant, thou and thy seed after thee in their generations.. that every male among you be circumcised." The maintenance of this principle involves for faith to-day to be "circumcised with the circumcision not done by hand in putting off the body of the flesh in the circumcision of the Christ," that is morally to put the knife to the flesh as that which has been put off in the death of Christ. This necessarily attaches to those who "are complete in him who is the head of all principality and authority."

If the blessing of the covenant has reached our hearts, may we never forget this principle on which alone the blessing can be enjoyed! May we walk before the Almighty God, now made known to us as

Father who has wrought such wonders for us through the death and resurrection of Christ, and "be perfect" in the full disallowance of that which has been condemned in His death!

JEHOVAH

Exodus iii, 14, vi, 2—8. The assumption of this name by God, as marking a special relationship with a people on earth, forms a new point of departure and the beginning of dealings with a chosen race, which while proving the utter incapacity of man after the flesh to answer to the covenant of God (who had given him a perfect rule of life in the Law), and that in fact he had sinned and come short of His glory, have already proved for faith the faithfulness of Jehovah, and will prove it eventually in a public way in the world to come, but all on the basis of the work of Christ, whose death is the closing up of the history of man after the flesh, and whose resurrection forms the ground on which man can live before God, whether he be Jew or Gentile. The Old Testament gives the story of the first and the prophetic witness of the second, while the New Testament shews how men have both seen and heard God come in the greatness of His love for man's redemption, of which we shall speak later, and of its blessed results according to the purpose of God both for His own glory and man's blessing.

Jehovah's faithfulness in results is celebrated prophetically in Ps. lxxii, in its

closing words, "Blessed be Jehovah Elohim, the God of Israel, who alone doeth wondrous things! And blessed be his glorious name for ever! And let the whole earth be filled with his glory! Amen and Amen."

The inauguration of this movement on the part of God calls for close attention. The people of God were in dire distress as bond-slaves in Egypt. Moses had already sought their deliverance, but had to learn during 40 years the futility of the power of man to effect this, however distinguished he might be. He was now to learn what God could do. It was on "the mount of God" that God appeared to him in a most arresting manner, in a flame of fire in the midst of a thorn bush, which did not burn. God appeared in gracious intimacy to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but never in such a character as this, which called for the instant removal of sandals from the foot of man. If God was about to *dwell* with His people, they would have to learn that the ground on which they were henceforth to stand was holy ground. This Moses learned by the peremptory and repeated call, "Moses, Moses." But he was now to hear most touching words of grace from the midst of the fire, namely that God had seen the affliction of His people, and had heard their cry by reason of their task-masters, and that He was come down to deliver them from the Egyptians and to bring them into a good and spacious land flowing with milk and honey. Moreover God would send Moses to Pharaoh to bring

these things to pass. It was in the presence of such a sight and such words that in response to Moses' enquiry for His Name, God gave him the words "I am that I am." How blessed indeed it is to know that God is what He is, even as our Lord could say that He Himself was altogether such as he said. John viii, 25. If Israel were to learn this in connection with a material deliverance from Egypt, guidance and preservation in a material wilderness, spite of all the contrariness that was in them, and a settlement in a material land of plenty, we are privileged to learn it in a still more blessed way on spiritual lines; yet it is ever to be borne in mind that, as regards the flesh, it is true for us that "our God is a consuming fire." Heb. xii, 29.

In chapter vi of Exodus, God gives Moses the Name which, though apparently in use for long and by the Patriarchs, had never been given as one of special relationship, nor interpreted by God Himself as the "I am" in such conditions. "I am Jehovah" He said. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had known Him as the Almighty God, though not in definite relationship as Jehovah, but He had made a covenant with them as the Almighty, to give them the land in which they sojourned, and He had now come down to fulfil it in their children. He repeats His consideration for the misery of the people in Egypt, but He would redeem them with a stretched out arm and great judgments, would take them for a people, would be their

God and bring them into the land which He had sworn to give unto their fathers. He concludes, as He had begun with the simple, yet profoundly grand words "I am Jehovah." His faithfulness as the great I am is assured. In this regard we may well quote the words of the prophet Malachi, whose testimony closed the Old Testament history of man's responsibility as under the law, "I Jehovah change not, and ye, sons of Jacob are not consumed." However consumable a thorn bush naturally is, God has ever had in His unchanging character a remnant according to the election of grace on whom His moral beauty has been placed, which is not consumable, and in whom He will be glorified. In the day yet to come it will be said to Jerusalem, "Arise, shine! for thy light is come, and the glory of Jehovah is risen upon thee." Is. lx, 1. The vision which justly amazed Moses will yet be verified as to God's people Israel in the world to come, Jehovah will dwell with His people and they will not be consumed. Spite of the public failure and ruin of the church, God has doubtless secured through its history what is referred to in the Epistle to the Philippians "that ye may be harmless and simple, irreproachable children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverted generation, among whom ye appear as lights in the world holding forth the word of life." Phil. ii, 15.

The song of Moses in Deut. xxxii, seems to be a very epitome of the name of Jehovah,

while putting on record the prophetic history of His dealings with His people according to the import of that Name. "For the Name of Jehovah will I proclaim; ascribe greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are righteousness; a God of faithfulness without deceit, just and right is he." It may be truly said, as we read this song, that "with mercy and with judgment, their web of time He wove," but in the end, which is not yet reached, the faithfulness of the unchanging Jehovah is established in the triumphant appeal, "Shout for joy, ye nations with his people, for he avengeth the blood of his servants, and rendereth vengeance to his enemies, and maketh atonement for his land, for his people." The intervening experience of the disciplinary dealings of Jehovah had been long and faithful, but necessary and salutary.

One would have to transcribe a large part of the Psalms and Prophets to bring their testimony to bear on the subject of the faithfulness of Jehovah to His Name as the I am. The Person of Christ, His life, testimony, rejection, death, resurrection and glory, both heavenly and earthly, are all testified of. His atoning work forms the righteous basis on which the faithfulness of Jehovah can be maintained, and in fact it is now disclosed that the very glory of Jehovah that Isaiah saw high and lifted up in chapter vi. of his prophecy was no other than that of the despised and rejected Jesus of Nazareth. "These things said Esaias because he saw his

glory and spoke of him." John, xii, 41. Among the hundreds of passages which might be quoted to illustrate the "I am's" faithfulness to what Moses saw and heard when Jehovah gave that Name as the one by which He should be known by His people Israel, one may well cite, "For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be still, until her righteousness go forth as brightness and her salvation as a torch that burneth. And the nations shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory; and thou shalt be called by a new name, which the mouth of Jehovah will name. And thou shalt be a crown of beauty in the hand of Jehovah, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God. Thou shalt no more be termed, Forsaken; neither shall thy land any more be termed, Desolate: but thou shalt be called, My delight is in her, and thy land, Married; for Jehovah delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married. For as a young man marrieth a virgin, shall thy sons marry thee, and with the joy of the bridegroom over the bride shall thy God rejoice over thee." Is. lxii, 1-5. Here there is a bush which the fire of Jehovah's glory will not consume. It is only with unshod feet that such a sight can be contemplated, and Jehovah's glory adored.

The mystery is indeed great, but it is the same Person, recognised by Isaiah as Jehovah, who, in His perfect manhood, could say of Jehovah "My refuge and my fortress, my God, I will confide in him," and to whom

the Spirit could say, "Because thou hast made Jehovah my refuge, the Most High, thy dwelling-place, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy tent. For he shall give his angels charge concerning thee, to keep thee in all thy ways: they shall bear thee up in their hands lest thou dash thy foot against a stone." It is He who in perfection can put together the three names of Most High, Almighty, and Jehovah (Ps. xci) with the import attached to each with their consequent blessing.

THE FATHER

And now what shall we say of the revelation of the blessed God as the Father in His Son Jesus Christ our Lord? The full truth of the Godhead is now revealed, God is in the light, and three distinct Persons stand out in the perfect unity of the Godhead. God is one in Father, Son and Holy Spirit, three Persons in absolute equality as in the Godhead, but in *revelation* we are told that "to us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for him, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him." I Cor. viii. 6. We are told also in ch. xii. 4-6, "But there are distinctions of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are distinctions of services, and the same Lord; and there are distinctions of operations, but the same God who operates all things in all." The distinct sovereign action of the Holy Spirit in this unity is seen in verse 11, "But all these things

operates the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each in particular according *as he pleases.*" The sovereignty of the Son is affirmed by Himself in Matt. xi. 27. "All things have been delivered to me by my Father, and no one knows the Son but the Father, nor does any one know the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son *may be pleased* to reveal him." The same word in Greek implying sovereignty, as just quoted of the Spirit and the Son, is used by our Lord in His agony in the garden (Luke xxii, 42) of the Father "if *thou wilt* remove this cup from me."

It is with the declaration of God as Father (John i, 18) that we have now to do. For this it was necessary that while one divine Person remained unchanged in form, Another should take a condition of manhood in the likeness of sinful flesh, taking a bondman's form, in which condition of lowly subjection He could make this declaration and carry out the will of His Father, even to death itself; while still another divine Person should subsequently be sent by the Father and the Son, to speak not "from himself, but whatsoever he shall hear," and to glorify the One who had been rejected here by men. In the mediatorial system of blessing two divine Persons are seen in wondrous movements of divine love, taking a subject place, while still being in Person, what they ever were in eternity. One, our blessed Lord, assumed a new condition, that of humanity; Another, the Holy Spirit a new place, coming from heaven to dwell in God's

habitation on earth—indeed to make it God's habitation by dwelling in it. Eph. ii, 22. Let us now consider with deep reverence the great mystery of the Incarnation. In John i, 14, we are simply told, "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us." In Matthew and Luke we have the details of this great wonder. By the mighty operation of the Holy Spirit "God sent forth his Son, come of woman." There never had been such a man as the Man Christ Jesus, One whose Father was God, yet who in Person was from eternity, for He could say "Before Abraham was I am." The unchangeable Person is thus evidenced in the words of our Lord Himself. We can distinguish the perfect humanity and Godhead glory of our Lord, but we must not separate. The One who laid down His life (*Psukē*, soul, human condition) was in Person God, but we could not say that God laid down His life. Our blessed Lord distinguishes His humanity in John vi, as the "bread which came down from heaven," "the bread that I will give is my flesh which I will give for the life of the world;" it was morally "out of heaven." See I Cor., xv, 47. There was now a Man on this earth, who, in the right of His birth could look up to heaven and call God His Father, yet who was Himself, in Person, God's equal. Zech. xiii. 7. God could acclaim a Man here as His beloved Son in whom He was well pleased. In the temptation in the wilderness the devil tried to get this blessed Man to exercise His God-

head power to relieve His human necessity of hunger, but in vain. He replied all through the temptation as a man in entire dependence on God. While the glory of His Person shines out in John's gospel as in no other, our blessed Lord ever maintained in perfect consistency the place of dependence suitable to the condition in which He was. A heavenly Man, the Son of God was here to do the will of Him who sent Him, and to finish His work. In chap. xii. when told that certain Greeks wished to see Him, He replied, "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it abides alone; but if it die it bears much fruit." vv. 23, 24.

Under this simple, but blessed figure, we have the wondrous truth disclosed that His death was to result in a great harvest for God, every grain of which should take the form and character morally of the solitary heavenly corn of wheat. If that one Man stood alone in His life here in relationship with God as His Father, the outcome of His death and resurrection should be a vast host of human beings, all deriving their life and character from the risen Man, who should stand in this same place of relationship with God as their Father as He did. The appalling nature of the hour that was necessary to be passed through, before this wonder of divine love and counsel could be effected, then pressed on the soul of our blessed Lord, but the Father's glory and name were para-

mount with Him over and above the unspeakable suffering it was to be for Him, and in response to it the Father testified "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." So it came, to pass on the resurrection morn the glad and wondrous message reached the disciples, "Go to my brethren and say to them, I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." We must distinguish, while in no wise losing sight of our Lord's essential Deity, that the relationship into which His own are brought is that in which our Lord stood *as Man* with His Father and God. That He said "*My God and your God*" proves incontestably that this is so. It would be blasphemous to suppose that we are brought into a relationship existing between divine Persons in their eternal character as such. No message that ever reached men's ears has exceeded in blessedness that which Mary Magdalen was privileged to carry in the announcement of this new and heavenly relationship, which was the accompaniment of the full revelation of God the Father in the Son and by the Holy Spirit.

The death of Christ closed up our history as of the fallen race of Adam, with all the sins appertaining to us. All was judged and consumed there by the judgment of God. The ground has thus been cleared of all that was offensive to God both of the sins and the man who sinned, and God can now righteously carry out His counsels of divine love, and give us, in this christian dispensation, a place and relationship such as pleases

Him, to the glory and honour of His beloved Son as the immediate fruit of His death. "Because ye are sons, God has sent out the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying Abba, Father." Gal. iv. 6.

And here we may be reminded of our Lord's words to the woman of Samaria, "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for also the Father seeks such as his worshippers." We have now seen how that is brought about which characterizes this present hour.

Now while we have referred to the present revelation of God as Father, and the full blessedness of the relationship into which, in the great love of God, we are brought, and enabled to enjoy, by the gift of the Holy Spirit, consequent on the death and resurrection of Christ, it must not be passed over that in His ministry here He spoke freely to His disciples of God as their Father. But this was not yet to bring them *in resurrection* as His brethren on to His own ground of relationship. The prophetic statement in Ps. xxii, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren" *follows* the unique record there of His atoning sufferings and death; and historically it was so done, as is seen in John xx. In Matthew v. 44, our Lord taught His disciples "But I say unto you Love your enemies bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you and pray for those who insult you and persecute you that ye may be the sons of your Father who is in

the heavens; for he makes his sun rise on evil and good, and sends rain on just and unjust . . . Be ye therefore perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." One is reminded here of the Almighty's word to Abraham, "Walk before me and be thou perfect." As his course here was thenceforward to be governed by his knowledge of the Almighty, so that of the disciples by what they now knew of their heavenly Father in His gracious actions towards men. In Luke xi. 2, they were taught how to pray and to say "Father thy name be hallowed, thy kingdom come." In chapter xii. 30, they were assured "Your Father knows that ye have need of these things," namely "what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink," and even what they should put on. These communications were to put them in their right place in regard to God as then made known, and that while looking for the Father's kingdom to come, they might rest assured of His ability to meet all their need in the goodness of His heart as their heavenly Father. They lost none of this when, after the Lord's resurrection, He breathed on them as the "last Adam, a quickening Spirit," and gave them life as deriving from Him in the power of the Holy Spirit, saying "Receive ye (the) Holy Spirit." He had said "I am come that they might have life, and might have it abundantly" John, x, 10. This was a great advance on what they had before, as they were now brought on to resurrection ground in association with the risen Head. And this is where Christians stand.

In Luke xv. we have the parable in which the activity of the Godhead, for the gratification of each divine Person, is set forth, in a way that has won and bowed the hearts of millions since the day it was uttered, in seeking finding and blessing poor lost human beings. The climax of the parable is the Father's welcome, and amazing endowment of a repentant sinner in the sovereign activity of divine love.

In Matthew's gospel, at the very close, the disciples are sent by the risen Lord to make disciples of all nations, baptising them to the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—a commission yet to be completed in the world to come. What a day it will be when all nations shall be in the blessing by the Holy Spirit of the knowledge of God in His Son Jesus Christ!

The gospel of John presents things somewhat differently than do the historical gospels. In these the ministry, rejection and death of our blessed Lord are recorded in their due order; but in that of John it is referred to at the outset, and what is thereupon presented is based upon it. "He was in the world, and the world had its being through him, and the world knew him not. He came to his own and his own received him not; but as many as received him, to them gave he the right to be children of God to those that believe on his name, etc." John i. 10, 11, 12. And this is shortly followed by "No one has seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared

him." v. 18. The declaration of the Father by the Son is the great subject of the gospel, so much so that when later Philip said, in ch. xiv, 8-10 "shew us the Father," our Lord's reply was, "Am I so long a time with you and thou hast not known me Philip? He that has seen me has seen the Father; and how sayest thou, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father and that the Father is in me? The words which I speak to you I do not speak from myself; but the Father, who abides in me, He does the works." How perfectly then was the Father declared, when the very words and works of the Lord, Jesus, heard and seen of men, were those of the Father.

The grêat blessing of eternal life lies in the knowledge of the Father, as the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He has sent. John xvii, 3. The world has not known Him, but His Name has been made known to believers, that the love wherewith He loved His Son may be in them and He in them. v. 26.

When our blessed Lord returns from where He has gone to prepare a place for us in the many mansions of His Father's house, He will receive us to Himself, that where He is there we may be also. And so we may gladly sing,

"Thy Father's house the dwelling,
Made ready for that day,"

and if experimentally true, we may also sing,

"In spirit there already,
Soon we ourselves shall be,

In soul and body perfect,
All glorified with Thee."

Here we may well call to mind the words at the close of Heb. xi, where the faith and doings of saints in Old Testament times are so blessedly recorded, "And these all having obtained witness through faith, did not receive the promise, God having foreseen some better thing for us, that they should not be made perfect without us." That "better thing" is the result of God having Himself spoken "in Son" with all its blessed and eternal consequences. Who indeed could speak after the Son?

We have so far not touched, save incidentally, on the ministry of Paul in relation to this subject. Though it was not his line, as it was particularly that of John, it is not infrequently introduced. In Rom. vi. he speaks of our baptism being to the death of Christ, "in order that even as Christ has been raised up from among the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also should walk in newness of life." He had invoked, at the outset of his epistle, "grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ." The new (different) life to be walked by the baptized, was to take character from the resurrection of Christ as bound up with the glory of the Father. "God our Father" is invoked in both Corinthian epistles. In Colossians i. 12 Paul gives "thanks to the Father who has made us fit for sharing the portion of the saints in light, who has delivered us from

the authority of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love."

The assembly of Thessalonians is addressed as being "in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." Lately converted, they were just babes in Christ, yet they knew the Father, see I John ii, 13. This knowledge is the fundamental privilege of every believer.

In II Cor. xi, 31, after having given an almost incredible account of the perils and sufferings he had undergone, and of the cares and burdens which lay upon him, he calls to witness "The God and Father of the Lord Jesus knows—he who is blessed for ever—that I do not lie."

In the epistle to the Ephesians we have the full height of the communications which the Spirit has given to the church by the apostle Paul. In this we find two prayers, the first. in chap. 1, addressed to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory; the second, in chap iii to the Father. In the first he prays for three things, that we may "know what is the hope of his (God's) calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of his power towards us who believe, according to the working of the might of his strength in which he wrought in the Christ in raising him from among the dead;" In the second, addressed to the Father, "of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named," he prays that "he may give you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with

power by his Spirit in the inner man, that the Christ may dwell, through faith, in your hearts, being rooted and founded in love, in order that ye may be fully able to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of the Christ which surpasses knowledge; that ye may be filled even to all the fulness of God."

In the subjects of these prayers we have an unfolding, as we may believe, of what our blessed Lord had before Him when announcing to His disciples, in resurrection, "I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God." Paul takes the two thoughts in reverse order, and begins with "My God and your God." The hope of His calling would seem to refer to the pleasure of God in having His chosen ones in Christ before Him in love, holy and blameless. "The riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" speaks of the exuberance of the glory of God's portion in His people in this our day, as Moses had said in his, "For Jehovah's portion is his people; Jacob the lot of his inheritance." There is great enlargement now. The "working of the might of his strength," is seen in the resurrection of the Christ from among the dead; the greatest proof of the power of God ever witnessed, as procuring a ground on which He can bring to pass all His counsels of blessing both for heaven and earth. The knowledge of these wonders is objective, but to be known as we are enlightened in the eyes of our hearts. It is the "My God" of

our Lord Jesus Christ whom we are to know in these great unfoldings. But in the prayer of chap iii the Apostle bows his knees to the Father, after having spoken of the mystery of the Christ, in which the nations are seen to be "joint heirs, and a joint body, and joint partakers of his promise in Christ Jesus," of things which had never before "been made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit." It is as though he felt that only by prayer to the Father could the saints be given to apprehend these things as strengthened with might by the power of His Spirit in the inner man. At the outset of this prayer we learn that of the Father "every family in the heavens and on earth is named." This was not so of the "Almighty" or "Jehovah"—indeed of the latter only one family was named, the children of Israel. "You only have I known of all the families of the earth." Amos iii, 2.

In the universe of God there are various families, both heavenly and earthly, but each and all take character and are derived from the blessed Being who is now known to us as the Father; in this however the church has its own special place, as called out from the world during the time of the Lord's rejection here. The prayer is that the absent Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, being rooted and founded in love, in order that we may be fully able to apprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, it does not say

of what, but the thought is that saints may in the Spirit's power survey the vast expanse of blessing in Christ in which they are placed in an infinite circle of divine love. The love of Christ too, which passes knowledge, may be known (paradoxical as it may seem) that we may be filled even to all the fulness of God. Thus all that may be known by the creature of the blessed God is within our apprehension, that we may be filled thereby, now that the Father's Name has been declared. For this *His* Spirit's mighty power is needed working in the inner man.

“But to him that is able to do far exceedingly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to him be glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages.”

With the revelation of the Father's Name we have thus touched eternity, and in doing so we can join with all saints in the good of this blessing by the Spirit's power, and sing:—

“Father, Thine own unbounded love
Has reached us through Thy Son;
We now behold Him crowned above,
Eternity's begun.”

D. L. H.

Since writing the foregoing I have come across a passage in a short paper by F. E. R. on “God is in the Light” which is well worth transcribing. He says, “I think from what has been said that it will be seen how the partial light which God had given of Himself depended on the full revelation in which God

has now been pleased to shine forth in holy splendour. The power of resurrection, and that to life, has vindicated the name of Almighty; and the gathering of a remnant of Israel into the church the name of Jehovah; and it need hardly be added that the power and faithfulness of God expressed in these names will yet come out into full display. But all this awaits a result of the activity of God, which is going on at the present time—the formation of a company of sons by whom God should be known in such a way as that they can freely approach Him, and in the midst of whom Christ should be pre-eminent, the First-born among many brethren; and further, in whom every moral trait of Christ should set forth—“His fulness;” and further still, in whom, as the bride of Christ, God should shew, in the presence of the universe, the exceeding riches of His grace—the witness of His triumph over all the power of evil.

Only one word needs to be added, namely, that while we are in the light of that particular name under which in Christianity God is revealed, we evidently have the good which attached to every name, if we are prepared to accept the condition of separation which was very distinctly marked in the case of the fathers and of Israel—for it is said, “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.”

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