

# The Heavenly Calling and the Church.

J. G. Bellett.

Article 18 of 47 **Short Meditations**

(Cavenagh, 1866.)

The heavenly calling has been known from the beginning. The earth having been, in every age, a scene of Divine disappointment, (to speak after the way of men,) and the elect being therefore strangers and sufferers in it, the heavens have been disclosed to them as their place of rest and inheritance. Abraham desired a heavenly country. Enoch had been already translated there. Moses lost the land of promise, but got the Pisgah of God. David confessed that he and all his fathers had been strangers with God in the earth. Elijah among the Prophets in the latter days of the Old Testament, as Enoch among the Patriarchs in its earlier days, was taken to heaven. And thus, the heavenly calling was had in constant remembrance, and kept in view. And all the elect, in these Old Testament times, whether Patriarchal, Mosaic, or Prophetic, have, I doubt not, a part in the heavenly places. The Lord calls them all "children of resurrection" — and by that He teaches us that they will be called to their inheritance by resurrection from the dead, when they will not, as He further teaches, marry and give in marriage, as though they were children of the earth.

In the Divine reasoning of the Epistle to the Galatians, they are alluded to, and considered as standing in *sonship and heirship*, with the elect now gathering.

So, in the Hebrews, they are considered as *perfected and sharers of the heavenly calling*, with us of this day.

But the Epistle to the Ephesians never takes them up to associate them with the saints now gathering in *the body of Christ*.

These distinctions are very significant, and they lead us to the conclusion that the Old Testament saints enjoy the heavenly calling, or heavenly places as their home and their inheritance, though kept apart from the Church, the body of Christ, and the Bride of Christ. I may say this concerning them.

But leaving these times of the Old Testament, times of Patriarchs and Prophets, and having entered the New, we reach in due season the day of Pentecost. The Holy Ghost is then on earth, upon the glorification of the Son of Man in heaven; and we find Him doing a work of "exceeding riches of grace," and which is to be to "the praise of the glory of God" in the ages to come. He is baptizing the election now gathering, into one body; a body of which Christ is the Head; a body which is also called "the fulness of Him that filleth all in all." And the whole, Head and body together, is called by an eminent, wondrous title, Christ." (1 Cor. 12: 12) — All this is peculiar indeed.

Of course this election, thus forming the body or fulness of Christ, will, with the Old Testament saints, have their place and inheritance in heaven. But while they thus share the heavenly calling with their Old Testament brethren, those brethren will not be in the body of Christ with them. When the Kingdom in its glorious form comes to be displayed, when "the world to come" is reached, Old Testament saints will have "a name" there, and be, as it were, principalities and powers in heavenly-places; but the election now gathering, and baptized into one body, will then be "the fulness" of Him who sits above those principalities and powers and names, of Him who "filleth all in all."

I am suggesting and submitting my judgment on these truths.

And then — as I would go on to say — when all these have been translated to meet the Lord in the air — when Old and New Testament saints together, as alike "children of the resurrection," have taken their place in the heavens, as thus ordained to be theirs from the beginning — then the action of the Apocalypse, from Revelation 4, begins. In the course of that action, some saints of God will die as martyrs; and such also will be taken to heaven, and there occupy their places as certain dignities and thrones, "a noble army," or "a goodly fellowship," as we may say; but they will not be a part of the body of Christ with the election now gathering.

Those saints of God who survive the great judicial process of the Book of the Apocalypse, will form the seed or firstfruits of the earthly people. Their calling is not heavenly. They have no part in the heavenly places. They begin to fill and furnish the millennial earth; and to them as a firstfruits will be gathered a harvest, till the face of the whole earth be fruitful

Jerusalem, the land of Israel, the people of Israel, and the nations all the world over, constituting a scene of power and of government, and a sanctuary for the service of the God of heaven and earth, who will then be displaying his Kingdom-glories.

And this Kingdom is the subject of notice in the scriptures of the Old Testament, together with the judgments which introduce it, and the glories which give it its character. But the calling out of a body for Him who is the Head of that Kingdom, is not the subject of those scriptures. It is called, in an eminent sense, "the mystery," and is declared to have been "hid in God from the foundation of the world," and only now revealed to the prophets of the New Testament, Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles being made the great vessel and depositary of it, its special witness and publisher.

There have, however, been glances at it from the very beginning; the Divine mind letting out hints of the secret it carried, now and again, as we ourselves are wont to do with some favourite thought of which we cannot or dare not speak particularly, times and seasons forbidding it. Is not this so? Is not this so with us, and do we not delight in seeing it thus with God and His secret? In spite of such forbiddings, in the face of such restraints, however respected they may be, and rightly so, the secret will at times break bounds, and cross the field of our vision in a type or in a story, leaving the eye of many a gazer unable to make out what it is or what it means.

Such glimpses of this brilliant secret I would now look at for a moment or two, having already travelled from the beginning to the end of Scripture, as "with all saints," noticing the destiny of the Old Testament saints, of the election now gathering under the Holy Ghost, and of the Apocalyptic saints, whether they die in the course of it, or outlive the action of that awful season.

I believe, then, that "the mystery," the Church, the Bride of the Lamb, begins to tell itself out in the first Woman. She was taken, as we know, from the side of Adam, when he was cast into a deep sleep; and she was then formed by the Lord God for Adam; and finally set at his side to be his helpmeet, and in a sense and measure, his co-ordinate companion.

All this tells us of the Bride of Christ. (Eph. 5) The same mystery, in different phases of it, is to be read in the stories of other women in the book of Genesis, as in Rebecca, in Rachel, and in Asenath. And so, in the Book of Exodus, in Zipporah the Gentile Bride of Moses.

It is very easy to read something of the Church in each of these. Ephesians 5 has surely encouraged us, and led us in the way, and given us a sample of the manner in which we are to read these types.\*

\*One has noticed, that the language of Ephesians 5 is in the style of the delight of Adam when he received the Woman whom God had prepared for him. See Gen. 2: 23, Eph. v. 30.

I cannot doubt that the Gleaner in Leviticus 23, is also a like mysterious or typical person. She is introduced in the interval of the story of Israel and of the earth, or, between the Feast of Pentecost and the Feast of Trumpets. For a parenthesis of about three months in the Jewish ecclesiastical year, we lose sight of everything but this Gleaner. She is but a poor Stranger. She has entered the fields of the lords of the soil, not to covet or usurp, but as a Stranger to come in, and as a Stranger to go out, satisfied, as it were, with "food and raiment," which is the Stranger's fare, and the Christian's or the Church's contentment. (Deut. 10: 18; 1 Tim. 6: 8)

I say not, that Ruth may not be a like figure with the Gleaner of Leviticus 23, for she enters the scene also in an interval that breaks the story of Israel; as between their utter moral ruin at the close of Judges, and their revival at the opening of 1 Samuel.\* But I grant that we may, the rather, see in Ruth the Remnant of the latter day coming in on the Gentile terms of sovereign grace, according to Romans 11: 31.

\*The Church, as we know, enters the scene just when these Gleaners do, in a time when a break in the story of Israel has been experienced.

But such Old, Testament types are but faint indeed. The mystery of the Church is specially disclosed in the Epistle to the Ephesians. It is there spoken of under two titles, which are exclusively its own. It is "the body of Christ," and "the bride of Christ."

One has strikingly said, "It is not in the heavens above, nor in the earth beneath, nor in angels themselves, bright witnesses as they are of creative power, that the character and ways of God will be manifested in the ages to come: it is in the now, redeemed creation in Christ, in the Church and by the Church, that God's manifold wisdom will be made known. In the Church, brightest emanation of the Divine mind, masterpiece of God's handiwork, every perfection of light and glory and beauty shall be displayed; otherwise she would be unworthy of her high destiny as the Bride. The depths and heights of the grace and love and power of God will never be known to the heavenly hosts, till they behold the Church, chosen from Adam's ruined and apostate race, not only brought into the closest and sweetest intimacy of sonship to God, but exalted to the highest dignity in heaven, a partaker of the ineffable glory of her risen Head."

Surely these words are good for the use of edifying. — But further. In unfolding grace and glory in this Epistle to the Ephesians, (which Epistle I would now consider somewhat particularly,) we may observe that there is a peculiar accumulation of language, as I may express it, as though the Writer (the Spirit) were conscious of what a theme of peculiar weight and dignity he was treating. We read of "the glory of grace," of "the riches of grace," of "the exceeding riches of grace," of "the praise of His glory," and of "the praise of the glory of His grace." This is the style in which the magnificent secrets of this Epistle are brought out to view. The casket is according to the treasure.

And the sight given of the ascended Lord is in the same style presented to us. It has been observed by another, that St. Mark tells us, that our Lord was carried up into heaven. The Epistle to the Hebrews tells us that He was carried up *through* the heavens. But this Epistle tells us, that He ascended up *far above all heavens*. (Mark 16: 19; Heb. 4: 14; Eph. 4: 10.) What a varied, wondrous account of Him! But the Ephesian account is the most magnificent — for it gives the Son of Man the very place which is given to God Himself in Deuteronomy 10: 14.

And this accumulation of language, of which I have spoken, is preserved in the second chapter, where the Spirit comes to look at the objects of this high calling, and not, as before, at the character of the calling itself. He takes knowledge of us sinners in two conditions, *dead* and *alienated*; dead as in ourselves, alienated as from God — and then he sees us as translated into the opposite conditions of

*life and nearness.* But He accumulates language, in treating of these things, as He had done before. Terms are multiplied, descriptions are repeated elaborately, that all these conditions in which we are presented, and each of them separately, may be apprehended with great emphasis by our souls. The death-estate in which we lay by nature was awfully complete; the life-estate into which we are now brought, is thoroughly, eternally perfect. Our condition of distance from God, in which grace found us, is described to have been such that nothing could pass beyond it — our present condition of nearness to Him is such as the Son Himself alone could have enjoyed, so to say, before us.

But further. The characteristic of the Church's blessing is this — that they are *in Christ*. Earlier saints, as we have seen, will be heavenly in their destiny; but the Church's calling is heavenly, *in and with Christ*.

The word "in" abounds there in a remarkable manner — and it is always in "Christ." In the course of the wondrous disclosures there made, we learn that having been quickened together *with Him*, we are now *seated in heavenly places in Him*.

Being thus ascended, we are also taught that, there on high, we are *blest with all blessings in Him*.

And again — we are *accepted in Him, the Beloved* — made the objects of personal love, as well as blessed with all spiritual blessings.

And again — in Him God has abounded towards us *in all wisdom and knowledge*, making known to us His thoughts and good pleasure touching ages to come; giving us the place of friends.

Thus is it with us *now*. — But this same scripture looks forward and backward, and shows us the interest we had "in Christ" before the world was, and what we are to have "in Him" when the world has run its course. Ere the world was, we learn that we were "chosen" in Him, and "predestinated" unto the adoption of children. And when the world shall be over, and dispensations have finished the display of themselves, and closed their wondrous story, we learn that we shall be "heirs" in Him and with Him of that great new system, "the world to come," in which all things shall be gathered together under Him as their Head.

This is a great theme indeed — our eternal portion in Christ, our standing in Him, with the counsels that purposed it ere the world was, the high condition and prerogatives in which it now puts us, and the portion which it will convey to us in the ages to come. And all this excellent estate is ours, simply because we now believe or trust in Him.

But that which had been thus "chosen in Christ" from before the foundation of the world, was "hid in God" till revealed by the Spirit to New Testament prophets. And the revelation of it completed the Word of God. (Col. 1: 25.) It was the closing, crowning disclosure, made specially through St. Paul the Apostle of the Gentiles. The Church is called into the highest place of dignity, and the revelation of it is in the last, the latest place in the communications of God. Yes. The *Church* has been revealed the *last*. The Gentile Apostleship has brought it forth. Though chosen in Christ before the world, and hid in God for ages and from ages, it now stands revealed, the crown of all His purposes, as it is the last of all His communications.

I ask, Is this strange? Must this be a surprise, or are we prepared for it? Has Scripture, has God Himself in His Word, prepared us for such a thing as this, such a method as this?

I believe He has. We get other like things, things kindred with this, in Scripture.

*The Woman* was the last creature revealed or brought out in the work of creation. Adam was at

home, in his estate, and in his dominions, ere he got the Woman. All the provisions of the Garden were his. He had been crowned the lord of all he surveyed. He had named all cattle, beasts of the field, and fowl of the air. He was in his dominions, as well as at home, and in his estate. But the Woman was not yet. She comes forth the last — but the crown of his joy and the perfection of his condition. (Gen. 2)

So with *Jerusalem* in Canaan, as with the Woman in Eden.

The land itself had been subdued and divided. The sword of Joshua and the lot of Eleazer had done this, centuries before. But Jerusalem was still a stronghold of the Jebusite. It was still the possession of the Gentile. The Judges had ruled in their several day, and Saul had reigned. But Jerusalem was as nothing all that time, unvalued, unrevealed. At the last, David reduced it to the hands of Israel; and he beautified it and furnished it. It became the throne and the sanctuary, the great centre of attraction, the object of note in all Scripture, whose beauty and dignity is an exhaustless theme. The Spirit in Scripture celebrates it again and again; Israel, in the days of their nation, had their delights there, keeping feast-days and holy-days in her; and our scriptural thoughts are still full of her. She is the gem, the pearl, the queen, the object, in the land and in the story of Israel. — The last again is the chiefest. The Jerusalem of Canaan is as the Woman of Eden.

And so again with the *Golden City* of Rev. 21.

The judgments which were to clear the Inheritance and to take out of the kingdom all that offended, have been executed. The victory of the white-horsed Rider and His army has been won. The reign of the thousand years has been set (Rev. 19, Rev. 20) But as yet the Bride has remained unrevealed. But now at the last, in the very close of the Book, as we take leave of the unspeakably precious oracles of God, it is the Woman we see, the Woman again of Genesis 2, the Jerusalem again of the land of Israel — only, it is the heavenly Woman, and not the Eden-Woman, the heavenly and not the earthly Jerusalem. She now, the Lamb's Wife, stands revealed, the chiefest in Divine workmanship, the latest in Divine revelation.

Is there not, then, I ask again, kindredness in all these things? May we not be prepared to find that excellent thing which was chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, to remain hid in God for ages, and brought out only as the revelation of all secrets was about to be completed, and the Word of God to be filled up?

Surely there has been a rich and wondrous unfolding of the secrets of the bosom! *Home-secrets* are made known, as well as *kingdom-glories*. We are to stand by and see the way of God again.

When Israel had got beyond the fear and the sword of the Destroying Angel, and, under the conduct of the Cloud, had reached the neighbourhood of the Red Sea, they were commanded to stand still and see the salvation of God. (Ex. 14) They did so — and that salvation displayed itself in vast and wondrous forms of grace and power which till then had been hidden. They had already known redemption by blood. The first-born had been already delivered, and the judgment of God was now left behind. It had spent itself, and they were safe. But, the Glory in the Cloud, the rod of Moses, the Angel that waited in the camp, all had now to disclose some rare and wondrous virtues which as yet, up to that moment, had not been told. The Angel changed His place and came between the camp of Israel and the host of Egypt, to keep the one apart from the other all the night. The rod of Moses commanded the waters of the Sea to stand up as an heap. The Glory looked out from the Cloud and troubled the Egyptian army. Strange, mysterious powers, new and surpassing revelations of grace! Israel is safe and quiet and triumphant, and have only to go forward, and sing the song of victory and deliverance, of present service in the sanctuary, and of coming glories in the kingdom.

So here, in the Epistle to the Ephesians, the sinner has been already rescued by the blood of Jesus. Sins are forgiven — and the saints, thus beyond judgment, are summoned to listen, till the high calling of the Church in Christ Jesus under the exceeding riches of the grace of God, like the salvation of God at the Red Sea, discloses itself in their hearing. They have but to listen. If they talk of responsibility, this is it; to listen, to accept, to be happy and thankful, because all this is what it is, and the God of all grace is to them what He is. And the Apostle, who teaches them these rich and marvellous secrets, only prays for them, that as they listen, they may have hearts to understand.

His prayers for them, whether in the first or third chapter, give us other samples of that accumulation of language, of which I have already spoken, and which is so expressive of the consciousness of having to deal with themes and thoughts of very peculiar weight and dignity.

As we get in on the fourth chapter, we come into company with something wonderful in its way, like that which we have seen already.

The captivity of man under the hand of the old Serpent, in Genesis 3, was complete. Satan's lie was accepted, man became a sinner, separate from God, and lost: Eden was forfeited, the ground put under a curse, the man and the woman under penalties, and Satan as a liar and a wanderer went about on the face of the earth.

This earliest story of man's captivity is glanced at in Ephesians 4 — as by contrast. The Captor himself with all his host are now made captives, (a captive multitude,) and by man's Deliverer led in triumph, or made a show of openly, as another kindred Scripture speaks. (Col. 2) But this Deliverer has proved Himself not only mighty after this manner, but glorious. He fills all things. He has both descended and ascended — has been in the lower parts of the earth, the grave, the very stronghold of the Captor; and is now far above all heavens. And such an One, this Deliverer, mighty and glorious, has taken it upon Him to write the history or secure the fortunes of Satan's old captive. And it is wonderful, as we further read in this chapter. Having wrought the deliverance in the lower parts of the earth, He has now in the highest places, far above all heavens, received gifts for the former victims of the Serpent; and has dispensed them; and through them has endowed them with the richest portions and highest dignities. These endowments have brought the ancient captive of the great enemy to perfection; made him, in a divine, spiritual sense, independent; given him security against the wiles of the deceiver; and set his resources *within himself*, through the Holy Ghost given to him. (See ver. 8-16.)

It may surprise us at first to find such a thing as this — the ruins of man in Genesis 3 thus confronted by the recovery of man in Ephesians 4 — the gain and triumph of the old Serpent there, answered and annulled by his shame and overthrow here. But so it is. And surprise may cease, when we remember that the Epistle to the Ephesians, as we have seen, is the most marvellous exhibition of the results of redemption, which Scripture presents to us. We may, therefore, expect to find Genesis 3 confronted in such an Epistle. It is the special writing on the Church which is "the Body of Christ" and "the Bride of Christ" — the first of these titles telling us that she is set in *the very highest place of honour*; the second of them telling us that she is set also *in the dearest and most intimate place of personal affection and, relationship*. She is made, moreover, to the creation of God, to principalities and powers in heavenly places, the great witness, the only adequate witness, of grace, glory, and wisdom; of the exceeding riches of grace, of the praise of glory, and of the manifold resources and secrets of wisdom. She is this — and the revelation of her, again we may remember, has completed or filled out and up to its full measure, the Word of God.

It has been observed by another, that the calling of God of old was either of *individuals*, that they might walk with God; or of a *nation*, (as that of Israel), that they might observe the statutes and do the

laws of God their King. But now, the calling of God is into a *body*. But though this is so, the individuality of the saint is still contemplated; and the Epistle to the Ephesians keeps this in view, addressing us emphatically in our personal, individual places, in Ephesians 5.

This is suited, seasonable truth, at the close of this wondrous Epistle. And surely we ought to know our personal standing, our own individual perfection, ere we occupy ourselves with the calling of the Church or the Body. Accordingly, in another place, the Apostle lets the saints know, that he would speak of such wisdom, the wisdom of these Divine mysteries, only among them that were perfect. (1 Cor. 2: 6.) And so here, in Ephesians we are individually chosen, predestinated, forgiven, accepted, instructed, sealed, (according to Eph. 1); and then, we are prayed for, that we may have that spirit of wisdom and revelation which capacitates us to learn our Church-calling, the strength that is leading us, and the glory that we are to reach: "The Church corporately is composed of individual believers; and while viewed in its corporate character, it has relations to Christ which the believer individually has not — for no believer is the Body of Christ or the Bride of Christ — yet, it is in the affections and conscience of the individual believer, that the relations of the Church to Christ are to be recognized and have their effect."

Surely this is so. Individual saints are first perfected, under the given Spirit, and then the Body is edified — as we have in Eph. 4: 12. The precepts, which we find from Eph. 4: 17 to Eph. 6: 9, address us individually; but the Church-state is assumed or contemplated here and there throughout.

And here, let me say, as to precepts, that the calling itself, the grace in which we stand, might direct us, without precepts. This thought is sanctioned by such passages as Titus 2: 11, 12, and 2 Peter 3: 11, 14. The saints in Genesis act without law or precept. Their calling suggested their duties. "How can I do this great wickedness," said one of them, "and sin against God?" The grace in which New Testament saints stand might do the same. Still they are called to listen to precepts — as here in this portion of the Epistle to the Ephesians. But the precepts strikingly honour the doctrines. They commonly either refer to, or tacitly assume, the doctrines; and thus, as I may say, they present themselves as so many expressions of the *moral* virtue which lies hid in the doctrine.

And further. They let us know, that holiness must have a dispensational character. It is not simply moral virtue, such as conscience would suggest: it is not legal righteousness, such as the law might demand: nor is it what John Baptist would have prescribed. It is Christian. The holiness, or the due character, of a saint, is to derive itself out of the Christian calling. It finds its springs and sanctions in Christian truth. It measures itself by that Word which now addresses itself to us, and which delineates our dispensational place and peculiarity. It is the sanctification of the *truth*, the washing of water by *the Word*, that is looked for. It is this which gives definite character to the morals which God accepts, and which the Spirit works. And this is what is very much neglected or passed by, but which, to be in the light as God is in the light, must be heeded.

But there is still another thing in this Epistle. There is conflict or wrestling. We see the walk of a saint in Eph. 5, his *fight* in Eph. 6. His walk lies through the chequered paths of life, the circumstances and relations which make up human history. His fight is with "the wiles of the devil," or with "spiritual wickedness in heavenly places."

These wicked spirits come forth from heavenly places — and they come with lies and deceivableness of infinite variety. 2 Chr. 18 is a direct witness of this. There, a spirit is seen to come forth from heaven with a lie in his mouth; or with a lie which he puts into the mouth of one of Ahab's false prophets. And that he leads Ahab to the fatal battle of Ramoth-gilead.

The Serpent, at the beginning, entered the garden as a liar, and with one of his "wiles" ruined the

man. (Gen. 3) Satan, with another of them, tempted David to number the people, and led him to a terrible day of retribution. (1 Chr. 21) This same character of a deceiver is recognized in Rev. 12: 9, Rev. 20: 8. And signs and lying wonders and all deceivableness of unrighteousness are spoken of as the working of Satan in 2 Thess. 2: 9-10.

Thus we have wicked spirits in heavenly places exercising "wiles" here in the midst of us.

These wiles, these lies of "the rulers of the darkness of this world," may be multitudinous; such as, infidel suggestions, perversions of truth, devotional human superstitions, confounding of things which dispensationally differ, false calculations touching the world's progress, and the like. How solemn the thought! But how well to be told of these wiles, and thus to be put in preparation for them. Distinct instances of these wiles are again noticed in 2 Cor. 2: 11, 2 Cor. 11: 3; 2 Tim. 2: 26.

It is with these wiles we have to wrestle. In other characters, (as when he is a liar or a persecutor,) we may have to fall under the enemy. For our fight is not with flesh and blood, as was that of a Joshua or a David. God sent them forth to such conflict, having put armour upon them that was suited to meet flesh and blood. But it is in no wise so now. Not one piece of our armour would do for the battle at Ai, or for the day of the valley of Elah. Our enemies are not the Amorites or the Philistines. It is armour fitted to meet the corrupter of the truth, him who ceaseth not to pervert the right ways of the Lord. (Acts. 13: 10) It is, the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit.\*

\* Satan is an *accuser of the Brethren* in heaven, (Job 1; Rev. 12) On earth he is an *accuser of God*, (Gen. 2) and a *persecutor of saints*. (Job. 2; Rev. 12) But the Apostle here speaks only of his wiles or deceivings.

The whole age through which we are passing is regarded as "a war," with occasional fights or "evil days" — and therefore the Apostle says to us, "That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand."

These "wiles," too, may become "fiery darts." That is; these lies and deceivings which at all times are abroad, may now and again, in some shape or another, be levelled directly and personally at ourselves.

And it is striking to observe what this one Epistle teaches us about these evil principalities and powers. It tells us, that they are *Christ's captives*, the *saint's enemies*, with whom he has to wrestle, and *the rulers of the world's darkness*. (Eph. 4: 8; Eph. 6: 11, 12.)\*

\*It has been observed by another, that Ephesus is exhibited very specially as having been the scene of those wicked spirits that practise their lies and deceivings. (See Acts 19: 19.)

But here I might add, (though our Epistle does not suggest it) that the present ruler of the darkness of this world is doomed to take a solemn journey by-and-by. He is to be cast out of heaven where he now is, and act on the earth only. He is then, in season, to be taken from the earth and put into the bottomless pit. He is, then, as taken out of the pit, to be given over to the lake of fire, or his eternal doom. (See Luke 10: 18; Rev. 12, Rev. 20)

And this, I may further add, is the very contrary or opposite journey of that of the Lord. The Lord came from the grave as a Conqueror. He had been "death of death and hell's destruction." He returned to the earth, tarrying there for forty days, giving pledges and promises touching His future kingdom here. And then, He ascended to the highest heavens, receiving all power, and sending down the Holy Ghost to dwell in His saints, and prepare them for Himself in the day of exceeding glory, when He

shall be displayed as filling all things — according to this same Epistle.

Here we end, save the very conclusion, which has, however, a character in it that I must notice.

The Apostle speaks of himself as "an ambassador in bonds." What another witness was he, then, at that moment, of the character of the world which he had just recognized as under the rule of the powers of darkness! God's ambassador was put in prison by the world into which He had sent him! Does one nation treat the representative of another in this way? Is not the person of an ambassador sacred?

But, man's prisoner is God's freeman; and in the care of thoughtful love, from his prison-house he will send messages of sympathy and comfort and encouragement to his loved brethren hundreds of miles away from him beyond the seas.