Notes On St Paul's letter To The Ephesians
2:1-22
From A Devout Commentary On The Epistle Of The Ephesians
Based Primarily on the Works of St Thomas Aquinas
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"St. Paul at Ephesus" by Gustave Doré

Act 19:19 Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men: and they counted the price of them, and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.
CHAPTER II

I. THE BENEFIT OF SUPERNATURAL LIFE GIVEN BY GOD TO GENTILES AND JEWS

1, 2. And you, when you were dead in your offences and sins (God hath quickened in Christ), wherein in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of this air, of the spirit that now worketh on the children of unbelief.

After the word sins we must supply the words that occur in verse 5, God hath quickened us together in Christ. As the words stand, And you has no verb, and therefore it is evident that the Apostle having said, when you were dead in your offences and sins, suddenly breaks off into a long parenthesis, which continues to verse 5. Leaving out the parenthesis the text would read, And you, when you were dead in your offences and sins, God hath quickened together with us in Christ, that is, you Ephesian Gentiles together with us who were Jews. The verse is intimately connected in sense with verse 19 of chapter i., in which St. Paul speaks of the power by which God raised Christ from the dead, setting Him on His right hand in the heavenly places, and now hath
STATE OF FALLEN MAN

raised us up together, and hath made us sit together in the heavenly places, through Christ Jesus (ii. 6).

And you, when you were yet dead. Dead, that is, in the spiritual death of sin. Sin is called death, because by it man is separated from the Lord Who is life: “I am the way, the truth and the life” (John xiv. 6).

In your offences and sins. What is the difference between offences and sins? Perhaps the Apostle had in his mind the words of Leviticus vii. 7, “As the sacrifice of sin is offered, so also is that of a trespass.” St. Thomas interprets offences as sins of omission, and sins as faults of commission. Others refer offences to wilful transgressions, and sins to trespasses against the law through ignorance or inadvertence.

Wherein in time past you walked. The word walked implies the multitude and frequency of their transgressions, in which they remained habitually, growing worse and worse (Phil. iii. 18; Jer. ii. 5).

In these two verses the dreadful condition of fallen man before the redemption by Christ is vividly portrayed.

1. In God’s sight they were dead: “they had the name of being alive and were dead” (Apoc. iii. 1).

2. They were ruled by the spirit of this world, according to the course of this world, and not by the Spirit of God. Of this spirit of the world St. John declares, “If any man love the world, the charity of the Father is not in him” (i John ii. 15).
They were under the power and dominion of the devil according to the prince of the power of this air. The power exercised by the devil over men was not a power that resided in him by nature, since he is neither lord nor creator; but he ruled, and does rule, over man as far as by sin man freely subjects himself to his influence. Our Lord called Satan by the name of the "Prince of this world," when He said, "Now shall the prince of this world be cast out" (John xii. 31), and again later, "The prince of this world cometh, and in Me he hath not anything" (John xiv. 30).

The expression in this air* is probably equivalent to "in this world," the evil spirits being allowed for the trial of men to tempt and harass them, chiefly that the righteous may gain greater merit.

Of the spirit that now worketh on (or in) the children of unbelief. The Greek word translated unbelief properly means obstinacy. The revised English version has "children of disobedience." The word refers to the revolt of the mind against faith, and of the will against the law. The children of unbelief repel from themselves, by their stubborn incredulity and disobedience, the fruit of the passion of Christ. These miserable men, having no faith in

* From this passage (v. 2) and Ephesians vi. 12, 2 Peter ii. 4, Jude 6, the Fathers and Catholic Doctors have concluded (1) that a multitude of fallen angels fill the air, (2) that many of them have fallen into the eternal abyss where their chief already is, (3) that after the last judgment they will all join their leader, Satan, and the other lost in hell (Drach).
eternal things, and no hope of salvation through Christ, are those in whom the prince of the power of this air works according to his will, leading them whithersoever he wills, about whom it is said that "despairing, they give themselves up to lasciviousness, and the working of all uncleanness" (Eph. iv. 19).

The phrase children of unbelief means given up to or addicted to unbelief. The Scripture often speaks of those addicted to a vice or loving a virtue as the "children" of that vice or virtue. When the word "children" is used with a genitive expressing reward or punishment, it means worthy of that reward or punishment, as children of death, of hell, of the resurrection, of heaven.

3. In which (or, among whom) also we all had our conversation (that is, lived) in time past, in the desires of our flesh, fulfilling the will of the flesh and of our thoughts, and were by nature children of wrath (worthy of wrath) even as the rest.

In verse 2 the Apostle has been describing the past evil state of the Gentiles, now he turns to the Jews (we, who were Jews), and shows in what an evil plight even they were before the coming of Christ. Here he does not mention that subjection to the devil which he had noticed among the Gentiles, but three different evils springing from corrupt human nature.
1. The desires of our flesh, that is, sins of the heart. Internal sins spring from giving way to the corrupt desires of the heart. In another Epistle St. Paul says, "We ourselves also were sometime unwise, incredulous, erring, slaves to divers desires and pleasures" (Titus iii. 3). Of such desires the Holy Ghost says, "If thou give thy soul her desires, she will make thee a joy to thy enemies" (Ecclus. xviii. 31).

2. Sins of outward act are nothing else than the expression of the interior desire or concupiscence. Now there are two kinds of interior concupiscence, both of which St. Paul mentions here. The first is the lust of the flesh in sensual appetite—gluttony, drunkenness, impurity. To gratify these desires is to fulfill the will of the flesh, and of this St. Paul says, "They who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. viii. 8).

The second interior lust of the soul is the desire of honour, of our own excellency—pride, vainglory, etc., and this St. Paul means by the will of our thoughts, or of the mind. Such desires do not spring from the body, but from corruption of the soul in evil thoughts arising from pride, which is the impurity of the soul.

3. And were by nature children of wrath. These words refer to original sin, as a source of corruption, common both to the Jews and Gentiles (cf. Rom. v. 12). We were by nature; not by nature as nature, but as corrupted by the original sin of Adam, for
as nature came from the hand of God it was good.

Children of wrath, that is, worthy of God’s anger and of punishment, even as the rest, that is, the Gentiles.

From this picture of fallen human nature how clearly do we recognise the need of a Redeemer, powerful, merciful, good; and what infinite thanks do we owe Him Who hath delivered us from so woeful a state by the sacrifice of His life.

4-6. But God, Who is rich in mercy, for His exceeding charity wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together in Christ (by Whose grace you are saved), and hath raised us up together, and hath made us sit together in the heavenly places, through Christ Jesus. *

God hath quickened us, that is, made us who were dead in sin to live again by true spiritual life. God Himself is the real efficient cause of our justification, and He justified us because He is rich in mercy, and hath loved us with exceeding great charity. This description of our Heavenly Father, by the inspired Apostle, should fill us with unbounded confidence, and should comfort us in moments of depression. God is infinite in every perfection; but the riches which He delights above all to display, and to pour

* St. Jerome considers the word “But,” in verse 4, to have been introduced by the error of copyists into the text.
forth abundantly, are the endless riches of His tender mercy and His lovingkindness.

St. Thomas bids us reflect on the difference between the love that God displays to us and the love which unites us one to the other, in order that we may understand why God is called rich in mercy. When we love, our love is caused by some good which attracts us in the object loved, and therefore our love is caused by justice; for it is just to love good wherever it is seen.

But when love causes goodness in the object loved, then it is love proceeding from mercy. Now, the love with which God loves us does cause good in us; and therefore, mercy, not justice, is here assigned as the root of divine love (cf. Isa. lxiii. 7).

In this mercy, from which springs His love for us, our Father is rich, because He has it not only in abundance, but to an inexhaustible and infinite degree. The mercy of the most compassionate man is limited, and the bounds are easily reached; but not so with God.

(a) Man is limited in riches, and therefore, however liberal in desire, his power in granting favours is strictly limited, so that he can only “be merciful according to his ability” (Tobias iv. 8). But the Lord of all “is rich unto all that call on Him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved” (Rom. x. 13; Joel ii. 32).

(b) Human mercy is limited because a man can only forgive what is done against himself person-
God's Mercy, Infinite

ally; and even in forgiveness there must be a limit, lest men should abuse leniency to offend with greater freedom (cf. Eccles. viii. 11). But God nothing can hurt; so He can forgive every offence, as Elihu or Elihu says in the Book of Job, “If thou sinnest, how shalt thou hurt Him; and if thy iniquities are multiplied, what shalt thou give Him?” (xxxv. 6, 7).

(c) Man can show mercy in remitting punishments; but in this also there is a limit, for he must take heed lest he oppose a higher law of justice; but God is able to forgive the punishment of all, since He is not restrained by the law of any superior. “When He granteth peace, who is there that can condemn?” (Job xxxiv. 29). The mercy of God, therefore, is infinite; it is not limited either by poverty, or fear of doing harm, or by respect to the law of a superior.

For (or on account of) His exceeding charity wherewith He hath loved us.

The charity of God is the efficient cause of our justification, that is the real agent that produces the result. Why does the Apostle call it exceeding charity? The word exceeding means extraordinary, more than sufficient, measureless; and that God's charity is rightly so called may be seen by the four following considerations:—

1. He has made us and given us our being. “Thou lovest all things that are, and hatest none of those things Thou hast made” (Wisd. xi. 25).

2. He has made us to His own image and likeness,
and capable of His own happiness. "With Him thousands of the saints; in His right Hand a fiery law: He hath loved the people; all the saints are in His hand" (Deut. xxxiii. 2).

3. He has redeemed men corrupted by sin. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee" (Jer. xxxi. 3).

4. Because for our salvation He has given His own Son. "For God so loved the world, as to give His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting" (John iii. 16).

Truly may we exclaim with St. Gregory, "O inestimable love of charity, to redeem a slave Thou hast delivered up Thy Son!" When we were dead in sin, and could never even have hoped by our own strength to rise again to supernatural life, any more than Lazarus could have hoped to raise himself, God hath quickened us together in Christ, by Whose grace you are saved. As the Apostle has already told us (i. 20), the exemplar or pattern of what saving grace does and will do in us is seen in Christ. Now he enumerates three benefits, one of which comes to us here below, and the other two will be bestowed on us hereafter, through the grace of Christ our Redeemer. These are, Justification, Resurrection from the dead, Ascension into heaven.

1. Of justification St. Paul speaks when he says that God hath quickened us together in Christ. We partake by grace of the life which is, in all its fulness,
THREE BENEFITS IN CHRIST

in Christ; and we participate in that life by the action of His grace upon us, by Whose grace we are saved (cf. John i. 12, 16).

2. The resurrection of our souls from sin is already accomplished by the same power that raised Christ from the dead; in this way, therefore, we have already risen with Christ. God hath raised us up together in Him. The resurrection of our bodies is promised, and we possess it now in hope (Rom. viii. 11).

3. The third benefit is mentioned in the words and made us sit together in the heavenly places through Christ, now through hope, hereafter in fact. Christ promised this when He said, "Where I am, there also shall my Minister be" (John xii. 26; Apoc. iii. 21). Whither the Head has gone, the members will follow.

St. Augustine writes: "Christ already certainly sits in heavenly places; we however not yet; but because what will be, we already hold by the certainty of hope; the Apostle has said that we sit together with Him in heavenly places, not yet in our persons, but in Him" (Cont. Faust., lib. xi. cap. 8). "Although our body is not yet there, our hope is there" (St. Aug., De Agone Xti. cap. 26). The Apostle uses the past tense on account of the certainty of hope. This is a common usage in Scripture (cf. Isa. liii. 7; Ps. xxi. (xxii.) 17).
That He might show in the ages to come the abundant riches of His grace, in His bounty towards us in Christ Jesus.

St. Paul delights to repeat over and over again the holy name of Jesus. In his fourteen epistles the holy name of Jesus is found two hundred and nineteen times and the name Christ forty-one times.

Verse 7 may refer either to the succeeding ages of the Church in this world, or else to the eternal years of the life to come.

If the first meaning be adopted the verse signifies that God poured forth the abundant riches of His grace on the first Christians, that men might more easily believe in the ages to come. The second meaning would imply that God has raised us up from sin in Christ, that, in the next life, for everlasting ages, He may display towards us in heaven the abundant riches of His grace. "I came that they may have life" in this world by grace, "and that they may have it more abundantly" in heaven by glory (John x. 10).

In the next world God will show the riches of His grace, for (2 Cor. iv. 7) in this present time grace is hidden and invisible, because we have it in earthen vessels; and St. John reminds us that "it hath not yet appeared what we shall be" (1 John iii. 2), but in the next world what is now hidden will appear; the full beauty of the soul adorned by the grace of God will be manifest, and no sufferings of this passing life are worthy to be compared to the glory that then shall be revealed in us (Rom. viii. 18).
8, 9. For by grace you are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, for it is the gift of God; not of works, that no man may glory.

In verse 5 St. Paul has already incidentally taught that we are saved by grace; and he now proceeds to explain this truth more fully. I said rightly that you owe all to Christ, for, or because, by grace you are saved through faith. Faith, the beginning, foundation and root of all justification, is from the grace of God, and is given without merit that it may be the principle of all merit. First is given faith, "from which the other things, properly called works in which a man lives righteously, are gained" *(1) Cor. xv. 10; Rom. iii. 24). In this passage saved means justified. Salvation implies being freed from dangers; and therefore the perfect salvation of man is in life eternal, when he will be safe from all danger, as a ship that has been in danger of foundering is said to be saved when it reaches harbour. When in this world we are justified from sin we receive the hope of this salvation; and so in a certain sense we may be said to be saved, "for we are saved by hope" (Rom. viii. 24). This salvation wrought by grace is through the faith of Christ; for together with infusion of grace in justification there is a motion of faith in God in the case of adults, as we see in Luke viii. 48 and in Romans

* "Fides prima datur, ex qua impetrentur cætera, que propriæ opera nuncupantur in quibus justè vivitur." St. Aug., De praedest. SS, cap. 7.
v. 1. "Being justified therefore by faith" (St. Thomas in loco.).

The Apostle proceeds to show that both faith (through which we are justified) and grace (by which we are justified) come not from ourselves but from God.

And that not of yourselves.

1. As to faith, the foundation of the whole spiritual building, there are two erroneous notions, both of which are excluded by St. Paul's words.

(a) Some might imagine that faith is from ourselves, and within the power of our will unaided by grace. St. Paul therefore says, that, faith, not of yourselves. An act of supernatural faith is above the ability of our free will without God's grace, because the things of faith surpass reason (cf. Ecclus. iii. 25; 1 Cor. ii. 11). Faith requires grace for it is the gift of God (cf. Wisd. ix. 17; Phil. i. 29).

(b) Secondly, even granting that faith is a gift of God, some men might imagine that it is bestowed through merit, as the reward of preceding good works. To correct this St. Paul says not of works. This corresponds exactly with his teaching in Romans xi. 6, "If by grace, it is not now by works, otherwise grace is no more grace."

That no man may glory is the reason why God saves by pure grace, through faith, given without preceding merits, so that all the glory may be to God (Ps. cxiii. 9 (cxv. 1); 1 Cor. i. 29).

The Council of Trent has defined this doctrine in
the following words: "If anyone shall say that man may be justified before God by his own works, whether done through the teaching of human nature, or that of the law, without the grace of God through Jesus Christ, let him be anathema.

"If anyone sayeth that without the inspiration of the Holy Ghost going before, and without His help man can believe, hope, love, or be penitent as he ought, so that the grace of Justification may be bestowed upon him, let him be anathema" (Sess. vi. Can. i. and iii.).

10. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus in good works, which God hath prepared that we should walk in them.

2. As to grace. Having shown that faith is God's gift and not from ourselves, St. Paul now proceeds to teach that grace also comes from God.

We are His workmanship. If we did not make ourselves, all good that is in us comes from Him Who made us; and what is in us by grace comes not of ourselves, nor from ourselves, but from God Who made us. "Is He not thy Father that hath possessed thee and made thee and created thee" (Deut. xxxii. 6; Ps. xcix. (c.) 3). We cannot glory, for we are His workmanship.

Created does not refer to our first creation as men, but our second as Christians, when we were justified. As to create means to make out of nothing, so justification is called creation because it proceeds
from no merits on our part but from grace, and depends on the almighty power of the merits of Christ, as the first creation does on the almighty power of God.

In Christ Jesus, because the act of justification is in, or through, Jesus Christ giving the Holy Spirit (cf. Gal. vi. 15; Ps. ciii. (civ.) 30).

In good works. Not only are we justified freely by the grace of Christ, but we are constantly moved by the Holy Spirit to do various good works, which must be attributed to God, as Isaias sings in his canticle of thanksgiving, “Thou hast wrought all our works for us” (Isa. xxvi. 12).

Which God has prepared that we should walk in them. From all eternity God may be said to have prepared the good things He decreed to bestow upon us, and among them are the good works we are enabled to do by His grace. God may be said to prepare what He determines to give us. That we should walk in them. This is added to safeguard free will. The teaching about grace and the expression the good works which God has prepared, might appear to exclude the action of free will, and, therefore, he adds the words that we should walk in them, which imply the exercise of our wills, for “we are God’s coadjutors” (1 Cor. iii. 9), and the consent of our free will is needed in order that we may bring into effect the good works which God has prepared for us (comp. 1 Cor. xv. 10). Lastly, the word walk implies constant progress, for on the road to holiness
and heaven there is no standing still; we must go ever onwards or we shall fall back, and accordingly our Lord warns us to “walk while we have the light, that the darkness overtake us not” (John xii. 35).

II. For which cause be mindful that you being heretofore Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision in the flesh, made by hands.*

St. Paul here exhorts the Ephesians to bear in mind the state of misery in which they were before their conversion, in order to increase their gratitude to God for His lovingkindness. Remember, he says, that God has drawn you, without any merit of yours, from the midst of the Gentiles and from all the polluting horrors of idolatry, to the pure light of the Christian faith. In like manner Moses often exhorted (Deut. xi. 18, etc.; xvi. 12) the children of Israel to bear in mind the mercy of God in delivering them from the land of Egypt. We should remember the evils of our past lives not to delight in them, nor, on the other hand, as a source of depression, discouragement, or servile fear, but with loving sorrow and thanksgiving for having been delivered from them by God.

To prove how thankful they should be for the favour God had bestowed on them in their vocation

* Wherefore remember, that aforetime ye, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called Circumcision, in the flesh, made by hands” (R. Eng.).
to Christianity, the Apostle reminds them of the evils they suffered and the good things they were deprived of in their former state.

The three principal evils they suffered were:—

1. That they were Gentiles, and therefore idolaters, and “went to dumb idols, according as they were led” (1 Cor. xii. 2).

2. That as Gentiles they were in the flesh, that is, living enslaved to the sensual appetites. “They that are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. viii. 8).

3. That they were despised by the Jews, who had deep contempt for them as uncircumcised, and therefore not belonging to the chosen people. By the phrase that which is called the Circumcision the Apostle means the Jews; and the expression made by hands points to the contrast between the carnal and outward circumcision of the old law and the spiritual circumcision of Christ (cf. Col. ii. 11, 12).

12. (Be mindful) that you were at that time without Christ, being aliens from the conversation of Israel, and strangers to the testaments, having no hope of the promise, and without God in this world.

This verse describes the many blessings they were deprived of by being Gentiles, in all of which they now participate.

1. Without Christ, that is, without the promise of Christ which was made to the Jews, as Jeremias wrote, “Behold the days come, saith the Lord, and
I will raise up to David a just branch" (Jer. xxiii. 5). To the Jews had that glad prophecy been made, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion, shout for joy, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King will come (or, cometh), to thee, the Just and the Saviour" (Zach. ix. 9).

2. Aliens from the conversation of Israel, or "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel," as the revised English version has it. The Greek word πολιτεία means a republic, kingdom, or people. As Gentiles they were excluded from the communion of the people of God. "The Jews do not communicate with the Samaritans," said the Samaritan woman (John iv. 9); and our Lord said, "Salvation is of the Jews" (John iv. 22; cf. Deut. vii. 2).

3. Strangers to the testaments, removed far from the covenants between God and His people. Even when the Gentiles became proselytes they were treated by the Jews not as fellow-citizens, but were received as strangers to a share in the covenants. Testaments is in the plural, the reason being, according to St. Thomas, that the Jews had the Old Testament in possession and the new in hope, as it is said by Baruch ii. 35, "I will make with them another covenant that shall be everlasting, to be their God, and they shall be My people," a covenant which was given to those "to whom belongeth the adoption as of children, and the glory, and the testament, and the giving of the law, and the promises" (Rom. ix. 4).
Having no hope of the promise. The word promise is used for the thing promised. They were thus without the hope of future good, for "to Abraham were the promises made, and to his seed" (Gal. iii. 16).

4. And without God in the world. "He who is without the true God," says St. Jerome, "has no God." This was the greatest loss and misery of all, to be without God, that is, without the knowledge of God, serving idols and false gods, for "in Judea is God known: His name is great in Israel" (Ps. lxxv. lxxvi.) 1), but not among the "Gentiles that know not God" (1 Thess. iv. 5). This ignorance of God must be understood of the knowledge that comes by faith and revelation, for the Gentiles had a natural knowledge of God, and are blamed by St. Paul "because when they knew God [by the light of reason] they did not glorify Him as God" (Rom. i. 21).

If the state of the Gentiles was so deplorable, still worse must be the spiritual darkness and misery of those who, having known Christ and been baptised in Him, give up wilfully the hope of the promise and choose deliberately to live "without God in the world."

13. But now in Christ Jesus, you, who some time were afar off, are made nigh by the Blood of Christ.

In this verse St. Paul proceeds to describe the blessings they have received in and through Christ
since their conversion. **Now,** since your conversion and reception into the Church in Christ Jesus, you are in the Body of Jesus Christ, and adhere to Him by faith and charity (1 John iv. 16; Gal. vi. 15). **You, who some time were afar off,** that is, afar from God, not in distance of place, but in merit, as the Holy Ghost says, "The Lord is far from the wicked" (Prov. xv. 29). **Now you are made nigh to God by the Blood of Christ** by the merits of that Blood by which Christ has drawn you to Himself. Of this Our Lord spoke when He said, "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to Myself" (John xii. 32). This He has done through His exceeding charity, which showed itself chiefly by His death on the Cross. "The Lord hath appeared from afar to me. Yea I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee" (Jer. xxxi. 3). "Thou art near, O Lord: and all Thy ways are truth" (Ps. cxviii. cxix.) 151. "We should attentively consider that without the Blood of the Lord Jesus no one will approach God" (St. Jerome).

**14. For He is our peace, Who hath made both one, and breaking down the middle wall of partition, the enmities in His flesh.*  

He is our peace.** Christ Jesus is the cause of all these blessings, and the cause of our approach to God, the cause of our peace with God. The effect

* Revised English version, "And brake down the middle wall of partition, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances."
is put for the cause. This way of speaking is common when everything in the effect entirely depends on the cause, as we say of God, He is our salvation, because every hope of salvation is caused by God. In this case Christ has brought us near from afar off by making peace for us with the offended Majesty of God. This was the first effect of Christ’s coming. “On earth peace” (Luke ii. 14). “In His day shall justice spring up, and abundance of peace” (Ps. lxxi. 7). And after His resurrection He said, “Peace be to you” (Luke xxiv. 36; John xx. 21). “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world gives, do I give unto you” (John xiv. 27). Peace is quiet order, or the tranquillity of order; for where order is undisturbed we say that peace reigns. In man there is a threefold order—of man in himself, of man to God, and of man to his neighbour. There is therefore a threefold peace in man. Peace in his own soul when the lower nature is subject to the higher: “Much peace to those who love Thy law” (Ps. cxviii. (cxix.) 165). Again, there is the peace that results from perfect subjection to God and conformity to His Will: “Being justified by faith, let us have peace with God” (Rom. v. 1). Lastly, peace with others through charity: “Follow peace with all men, and holiness; without which no man shall see God” (Heb. xii. 14). Of all this peace Christ is the cause (comp. St. Thomas, Com. on St. John, cap. xiv. lect. vii., and Com. on Isaias, cap. xxvi. 3 and xxxii. 17).
Who hath made both one, by uniting in one body
the Jews who worshipped the true God and the
Gentiles who were idolaters, as He said Himself,
“There shall be One fold and One Shepherd” (John
x. 16); and Ezechiel prophesied, “One king shall
be king over them all” (Ezech. xxxvii. 22).

Breaking down the middle wall of partition be-
tween the Jews and the Gentiles. Imagine an
immense plain covered with a vast crowd of people,
and a wall running through the midst. The wall
makes them two multitudes; break down the wall
and they are one. The wall of partition was the
separation between Jews and Gentiles, and their
mutual contempt one for the other. The Gentiles
ridiculed circumcision and other customs among the
Jews, and spoke of them with contempt; and the
Jews had a horror of the Gentiles who were un-
circumcised, ate pork, and were unclean. Yet Christ
and the love of Christ united them in One Church.

“Perhaps,” writes Natalis Alexander, “the Apostle
was alluding to the stone-partitioned wall which
divided the court of the Gentiles from that of the
Jews in the Temple, to prevent the Gentiles from
entering the holy part into which only Jews and
those not legally impure might enter” (see Ezech.
xliv. 7; 1 Macc. ix. 54; Acts xxi. 28).

(Taking away) the enmities in His Flesh. He
hath taken away the enmities that existed between
Jews and Gentiles by offering His body and His life
on the Cross for all, and also that enmity which sin
had made between both and God, and united all in charity.

15, 16. *Making void the law of commandments contained in decrees; that He might make the two in Himself into one new man, making peace: and might reconcile both to God in one body by the cross, killing the enmities in Himself.*

*Making void the law.* How was this, seeing that our Lord said, “Do not think that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil” (Matt. v. 17)? The answer is, says St. Thomas, that the law consisted both of moral and ceremonial precepts. The moral precepts Christ did not destroy, but fulfilled, and added to them counsels of perfection, and explained aright those that the Scribes and Pharisees understood wrongly. Thus He said, “Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. v. 20); and of the love of enemies (Matt. v. 43, 44). The ceremonial precepts He fulfilled in His own life and person, and in fulfilling abolished them. For example, the command as to the paschal lamb He fulfilled, and by offering Himself as the true Lamb, prefigured by the ceremonial rite, He abolished the command.

The law of Moses is called the law of commandments contained in decrees, not because the new
law has no commandments (for our Lord Himself says, John xiii. 34, “A new commandment I give to you”), but because of the vast number of legal precepts so difficult to keep (Acts xv. 10). The Mosaical law imposed a multitude of commands, but did not give grace to keep them; on the other hand, the new law of Christ directs us by its commands as to how we ought to act, and helps us to fulfil what it enacts by conferring grace. The imperfect law was made void by the perfect; the shadow vanished before the light of truth.

That He might make the two, viz. Jews and Gentiles, in Himself into one new man, making peace. To emphasize more the closeness of the union he describes, he uses the phrase into one man, rather than into one people. He drew them together into the union of one body with one spirit, of which body (the one Church) He is the head. This unity of the Church is so true and real that our Lord says of it that it is the special glory He has given them: “The glory which Thou hast given Me, I have given to them, that they may be one, as we also are one” (John xvii. 22).

Making peace between them and with God, reconciling both with God killing by His death on the cross the enmities that separated them from one another and from God. Christ has reconciled us to God; for before the redemption He wrought, our “iniquities had divided us from God, and our sins had hidden His face from us that He should not
hear” (Isa. lix. 2). St. John Chrysostom remarks that St. Paul is not content to say taking away the enmity, but killing it altogether so that it may not rise again. How then can it rise again? By our great iniquity. Nothing but selfwill can make it rise again (cf. Rom. viii. 39).

17. And coming He preached peace to you that were afar off, and peace to them that were nigh.

He did not send His message of reconciliation and peace through any other; but coming Himself, He preached that the love of our neighbour is the way to peace with God (1 John iii. 14), and that we cannot say we have peace with Christ if we have not peace with Christians, for they are His Members. Coming visibly in the flesh, He preached to all, both Jews and Gentiles, good tidings of that peace which He wished His Apostles and conferred upon them (Luke xxiv. 36; John xx. 21; Isa. lxii. 1).

18. For by Him we have access both in one Spirit to the Father.

Here is shown the cause of that peace and the way in which it is brought about. The union between the Jews and Gentiles is caused by the Holy Ghost bestowed on both of them; and thus later (chap. iv.) St. Paul exhorts them to be careful to keep this unity in the bond of peace (1 Cor. xii. 11).
We have access to the Father by Him, through Christ, since Christ works through the Holy Spirit (Rom. viii. 9). "If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His," and therefore everything done through the Holy Spirit is done also through Christ.

To the Father Who is the Majestic King to whom we have access through the Son in the Holy Ghost (Gal. iv. 5, 6). When it is said that we have access to the Father, "we must understand it to apply to the whole Trinity, because on account of the unity of Essence, in the Father is the Son and the Holy Ghost, and in the Holy Ghost the Father and the Son. Therefore when he says to the Father, he shows especially that whatever the Son has He has from the Father, and He recognises that He has it from Him" (St. Thomas in loco).

Christ did not simply preach peace to those who lived in His own time on earth, but sent His Apostles with the good tidings far and wide over the whole world: "Hear you that are far off what I have done, and you that are near know my strength" (Isa. xxxiii. 13). "I have created the fruit of the lips (the fruit of preaching) peace, peace to him who is far off, and peace to him who is near, said the Lord." But on condition that they love God and are converted, for "the wicked are like the raging sea, which cannot rest, and the waves thereof cast up dirt and mire. There is no peace to the wicked, saith the Lord God" (Isa. lvii. 19-21).
In the next three verses it is shown that the Gentile converts were as much favoured in the spiritual kingdom of Christ as the Jewish converts, and were admitted as fully to the best gifts of Christ.

19, 20. **Now therefore you are no more strangers and foreigners; but you are fellow-citizens with the Saints, and the domestic of God, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone.**

**Now therefore** you Gentiles are no longer looked down upon as Proselytes were among the Jews, but having access through Christ in the Spirit to the Father, you enjoy every Christian privilege equally with the converts who were Jews. St. Paul has here introduced a double simile, calling the Church a "house" and a "city" (comp. 1 Tim. iii. 15 and Ps. cxxi. (cxxii.) 3). Now in a house the father rules; in a city the king or some magistrate. In a house men are collected in the relations of private life, in a city in the relations of public life. The Church resembles a family, because it is ruled by a father; and it resembles a city or commonwealth if we consider the relations of the faithful to each other. So St. Paul uses the words **strangers and foreigners**; strangers referring to the house of God looked at as a family; foreigners if we consider the Church as God's city. Formerly the Gentiles were like strangers to a
household, and foreigners to the inhabitants of a city or commonwealth. Now is fulfilled the word of Isaiah the Prophet, “Behold an inhabitant shall come who was not with me, he that was a stranger to thee before, shall be joined to thee” (Isa. lix. 15). If the Church is considered as a city, you are fellow-citizens equal in rights to us, and if as a house you are of the household, the domestics of God (cf. 1 Tim. iii. 15; Heb. iii. 2, 5, 6; x. 21; 1 Peter iv. 17).

Built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets. These words continue the simile. By a common figure of speech the container is spoken of for the things contained, so the faithful who are contained in the Church are spoken of as the building or the house itself. The foundation is first mentioned, and then is described how upon the foundation the house is built. The foundation is twofold, the principal and the secondary. St. Paul mentions the secondary first, saying that the Church is built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, that is, by the doctrine revealed to them and by them delivered to the Church as their divine message. St. John mentions the Apostles as the foundations of the heavenly Jerusalem, “and the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and in them the twelve names of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb” (Apoc. xxi. 14). They are foundations, inasmuch as they announce Christ by their doctrine.

The Prophets are introduced with the Apostles
to show that both speak of the same Christ and both preach the same truth by the same Spirit. What the Prophets foretold the Apostles declare to have been fulfilled (cf. Rom. i. 1, 2).

But the principal foundation is only Jesus Christ, and so he says Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone. Three characteristics of Christ are noted, He is (a) the stone of the foundation; (b) the corner-stone; (c) the chief stone.

(a) He is called the stone to denote the firmness and stability of the foundation, for God being wise has built His house not on sand, but on immovable rock, Christ; so that the wind, floods, and rain of this world’s trials beating upon it cannot move it, for it is founded on a rock (St. Matt. vii. 24, 25). It is built and rests on that stone cut from the mountain without hands (Dan. ii. 34).

(b) The corner-stone connects two walls, and Christ is so called because in Him the two peoples, Jews and Gentiles, are united in one Church, and therefore did David prophesy that “the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner. This is the Lord’s doing, and it is wonderful in our eyes,” a text quoted by our Lord Himself in the Gospel, and afterwards by St. Peter speaking of his risen Master (Ps. cxvii. (cxviii.) 22, 23; St. Matt. xxi. 42; Acts iv. 11).

(c) Lastly, our Lord is called the chief stone, on account of His supreme dignity, He being the strength of the whole building. “Therefore thus
saith the Lord God, Behold I will lay a stone in the foundations of Sion, a tried stone, a precious stone founded in the foundation” (Isa. xxviii. 16).

In a material building, the foundation-stone is buried in the ground, and is below all; but in the spiritual building the foundation is in heaven above and the building descends from on high: “I saw the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven” (Apoc. xxii. 2).

21. In Whom all the building, being framed together, groweth up into a holy temple in the Lord.

In this verse four things are noticed which are concerned with the construction of a house, the simile being continued.

(a) In Whom all the building. The foundation; Christ, as has already been explained, is the foundation. “Other foundation no man can lay, but that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus” (1 Cor. iii. 11).

(b) Being framed together. The actual construction on the foundation is implied in these words. If we understand them in an allegorical sense they refer to the Church as a whole, which may be said to be like a house, framed together by the conversion of men to the faith. If understood in their moral sense, we may refer them to each particular Christian soul, which resting by faith on Christ as the foundation, builds up a palace in itself for
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Him by good works done in charity with grace. The soul thus employed is typified by the wise woman of whom the Holy Ghost says, "The wise woman buildeth her house" (Prov. xiv. 1), and St. Paul warns every Christian "to take heed how he buildeth" on Christ (1 Cor. iii. 10).

God is the real and principal builder upon the foundation He has laid, for, "Unless the Lord build the house, he laboureth in vain who buildeth it"; but either the prelates of the Church (if we consider the whole Church), or each soul (if we take the moral sense) is the instrument in God's Hands, by which He does the work (Phil. ii. 13).

(c) Growth up into a holy temple. The Church increases and thus grows up like a building, when the multitude of good Christians is augmented (Acts vi. 7). "All therefore," says St. Augustine, "who thus believe (in Christ with love to Him) are like living stones of which the temple of God is constructed" in Psalm lxxxvi. Each fervent soul also groweth up, by good works in grace and charity, and by the exercise of virtue, into a holy temple of God; holy it ought to become, to be a fitting temple of God: "the Most High hath sanctified His own tabernacle" (Ps. xlv. (xlvi.) 4). That God may dwell in us as His temples we ought to prepare our souls by holiness (1 Cor. iii. 16). But are we not the temples of God immediately we are in a state of grace? We are. But in proportion as we become more perfect, God more and more dwells
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within us and this is the perfection of our spiritual building.

(d) In the Lord, in complete union with Him.

22. In Whom you also are built together, into a habitation of God in the Spirit.

On Christ, as foundation, not only we who were Jews, but you Gentiles are built together into one spiritual temple of God, one Church (cf. 1 Peter ii. 4, 5). A habitation of God, because He dwells in us by faith (Eph. iii. 17). But this cannot be done without charity, for "he that abideth in charity, abideth in God, and God in him" (1 John iv. 16). Charity, however, comes by the Holy Ghost (Rom. v. 5), therefore St. Paul adds in the Spirit.

In this chapter, while describing the benefits conferred by God on the members of the Church, St. Paul implies the distinctive notes of the true Church.

1. Unity. All are collected into one (v. 14), therefore the Church is one body (v. 16) living by one and the same internal spirit (v. 18), thus giving the external visible unity of the Body and the internal unity of the spirit; in other words, the Church is one building which has one principal foundation, Christ (v. 20).

2. Sanctity. The members of the Church are holy (v. 19), live in the Holy Spirit (vv. 18 and 22),
and are incorporated with Christ and are made one body with Him (vv. 13 and 16).

3. *Catholicity*, for the Church embraces all nations (v. 14) and extends to all times (v. 20).

4. *Apostolicity*. It is founded on the Apostles (v. 20).