

ARTICLE II.

THE APOSTOLIC SALUTATIONS AND BENEDICTIONS.

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FROM the earliest days of the Christian church, widely different views have been taken respecting the meaning of the apostolic salutations and benedictions, and their significance in the position assigned them in public worship. They who invest Christ's ministers with sacerdotal powers and functions, regard these formulas as the actual conferral from priestly lips of spiritual blessings; and by implication, if not by express statute, they argue that the power to pronounce maledictions belongs in like manner to the ministerial office. Others go to the opposite extreme, and consider them mere expressions of earnest desire that blessings may descend upon God's people, and implying no such official power or prerogative, as to render them unsuitable to be uttered by private Christians at the opening and close of religious services. Between these extremes lies a third view, that they are solemn declarations of the permanent possession and enjoyment of the grace of God by all who are embraced in the covenant of redeeming love.

We believe that very few persons in evangelical churches are disposed to attach a priestly significance and potentiality to these sacred formulas, and we dismiss therefore, as irrelevant to the special object of this Article, any refutation of this belief, and confine ourselves to the simple question, whether they are to be regarded as expressive of strong desire, or as declarative of a great truth, applicable to all of Christ's family, and in all time. That they are not prayers, in the proper acceptance of the term, is quite evident from the fact that they are not addressed to God, and have not the usual form of supplication. But as might be expected from such short, elliptical, and independent formulas,

it is a matter of doubt whether they are to be interpreted as earnestly expressed wishes or positive declarations.

That a difference of opinion exists on this point, is manifest from the variety of form employed by ministers of the gospel in pronouncing the benediction. It is the practice of some to say : " May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all ;" others adopt the same form, but substitute " *us* " for " *you* ." Many drop the potential form, but, nevertheless change the pronoun from the second to the first person plural : " The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with *us* all." Another class adhere precisely to the language of scripture, and say : " The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all."

It is our present purpose to inquire, whether the last-mentioned form of the benediction does not express its true and only meaning, or, in other words, whether the official act is not nuncupative of that which really exists, rather than the expression of a wish that the blessing of God may be bestowed upon his people. To maintain the former of these views is by no means to deny that a strong and earnest desire, on the part of the person who pronounces the benediction, may accompany this official annunciation of the abiding grace of Christ with believers. But our design is to show that the benediction is an announcement of the possession of a blessing promised *in perpetuum* to the church of Christ, and not a simple wish or desire, as some think it to be. The same sense we would also assign to the salutations when employed according to apostolic usage.

The usual form of salutation in Paul's epistles, is *χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη ἀπὸ Θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*. This is the form employed in the Epistles to the Romans, Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Thessalonians, and Philemon. In the Epistle to the Galatians, *ἡμῶν* is omitted after *πατρὸς*, and supplied with *Κυρίου*. In the First Epistle to Timothy, *ἡμῶν* is found in both clauses, and *ἔλεος* is added to *χάρις καὶ εἰρήνη*, in the order *χάρις, ἔλεος καὶ εἰρήνη*. The form in 2 Timothy is the same,

except that ἡμῶν is wanting in the first member. In the Epistle to Titus we also find χάρις, ἔλεος καὶ εἰρήνη, but ἡμῶν is omitted in both members; while to the words Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, is added epexegetically, τοῦ σωτῆρος ἡμῶν, *even our Saviour.*

No form of salutation is found in the Epistle to the Hebrews. In accordance with his brief, pointed, straightforward style, James employs the simple infinitive χαίρειν. In his first epistle, Peter uses the form χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη πληθυνεῖη. It is noticeable that in this salutation a verb is employed, the writer wishing to express a fulness of blessing, which the verb of existence, understood in the other salutations, would not have denoted. The same form of salutation, except that the verb is omitted, is used by Peter in his second epistle, to which, however, he adds the words ἐπιγνώσει τοῦ Θεοῦ καὶ Ἰησοῦ τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν, *in the knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ our Lord.* In John's first epistle there is no form of salutation. Quite an expanded one is, however, found in his second letter, ἔσται μεθ' ὑμῶν χάρις, ἔλεος, εἰρήνη παρὰ Θεοῦ πατρὸς, καὶ παρὰ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ πατρὸς, ἐν ἀληθείᾳ καὶ ἀγάπῃ. This is the only instance in the salutations, where we find the verb of existence expressed; and it will be noticed that, instead of being in the optative εἴη, *may grace, mercy, and peace be with you,* or the imperative ἔστω, *let grace, mercy, and peace be with you,* it is the indicative future; the realization of the promised blessing being rendered emphatic by the position of the verb at the very commencement of the sentence, "*shall be with grace,*" etc. John's third epistle has no form of salutation. In the epistle of Jude, we find a form similar to that in Peter's first epistle, except that ἀγάπη is added. In the salutation of John to the seven churches in Asia, the usual form, ἀπὸ Θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν κ. τ. λ. is varied to ἀπὸ τοῦ ὁ ὢν καὶ ὁ ἦν καὶ ὁ ἐρχόμενος· καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἑπτὰ πνευμάτων ἃ ἔστιν ἐνώπιον τοῦ θρόνου αὐτοῦ· καὶ ἀπὸ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὁ μάρτυς ὁ πιστός, ὁ πρωτότοκος ἐκ τῶν νεκρῶν καὶ ὁ ἀρχὼν τῶν βασιλείων τῆς γῆς.

It will be observed that in all these apostolic salutations,

there is the same general form of construction, and, except in the one last cited, a very close resemblance in language. It may seem somewhat remarkable that, while the Father and Son are in every instance referred to, no mention is made of the Holy Spirit, the third person in the adorable Trinity. It may be a reason for this that, as the Spirit of inspiration, the Holy Ghost conveys these salutations, by apostolic agency, from God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ to the churches. Or perhaps prominence is intended to be given to the great economical fact in the plan of redemption, that it is God the Father who sends, and God the Son who is sent to achieve human salvation, while it is the office-work of God the Spirit to apply truth to the hearts of men, and make it effectual to their regeneration and sanctification. "Grace, mercy, and peace" may then be said to come from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ, and, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, to rest upon all who are embraced in the covenant of redeeming love. But whatever weight may be given to these conjectural reasons for the omission of the name of the Holy Spirit in the apostolic salutations, no valid argument can be drawn from this omission against either the personality of the Spirit or his equality with the Father and the Son.

In the apostolic benedictions, we find greater diversity of form. In Romans, Philippians, 2 Thessalonians, and the Apocalypse, the simple form is *ἡ χάρις τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν*. In first Corinthians, *ἡμῶν* and *πάντων* are omitted. In 2 Corinthians we find the form which is generally designated *the apostolic benediction*: *ἡ χάρις τοῦ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, καὶ ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Θεοῦ, καὶ ἡ κοινωνία τοῦ Ἁγίου Πνεύματος μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν*. The benediction in Galatians is changed from the usual *μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν* to *μετὰ τοῦ πνεύματος ὑμῶν, ἀδελφοί*. In Ephesians the form suffers a still greater change, *εἰρήνη τοῖς ἀδελφοῖς καὶ ἀγάπη μετὰ πίστεως ἀπὸ Θεοῦ πατρὸς καὶ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*. The form in Colossians is simply *ἡ χάρις μεθ' ὑμῶν*. In 2 Timothy, the benediction is addressed first to Timothy and then to the church of which he was bishop:

ὁ Κύριος Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς μετὰ τοῦ πνεύματός σου ἡ χάρις μεθ' ὑμῶν. A similar form of benediction closes the letter to Philemon: ἡ χάρις τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ τοῦ πνεύματος ὑμῶν, the plural ὑμῶν referring not only to Philemon, but also to the persons embraced in the salutation, vs. 1, 2. In Titus and Hebrews, it is ἡ χάρις μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν. The benediction is omitted in the epistle of James. The form in Peter's first epistle is εἰρήνη ὑμῶν πᾶσι τοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. In his second letter, a doxology takes the place of the benediction. No benediction is found in the first and second epistles of John. In his third epistle it is briefly εἰρήνη σου. Jude's epistle closes with a doxology instead of a benediction.

We see from this inspection that the apostles did not confine themselves to any one form of benediction, and that in some instances they omitted it altogether. The inference is obvious, that, as now employed in the dismissal of Christian assemblies, the minister who pronounces the benediction is under no obligation to use one form to the exclusion of the rest, nor to seek variety by introducing forms of his own composing. It would seem preferable, however, to adhere strictly to scripture language, and avoid a monotonous repetition of the same form by a variety of selection, reference being always had to the character of the religious services which the benediction is intended to close. No stress should be laid upon the use of "the" or "our," before the words "Lord Jesus Christ." Some of the benedictions have ἡμῶν; in some it is omitted. Even where the pronoun is omitted, we may read "*our* Lord Jesus Christ," inasmuch as the article, according to the Greek usage, often supplies the place of an unemphatic possessive pronoun.

From this survey we also see how marked is the correspondence of form and sentiment between the apostolic salutations and benedictions. Were it not for their difference of position, the one class introducing and the other closing the epistles, so far as their sense and grammatical construction are concerned, they might all be denominated benedictions. But whatever appellation may be given them,

to distinguish the one from the other, they ought never to be regarded as independent or isolated, but as possessing such a mutual relationship, that the full sense of the one cannot be reached, except through the medium of the other. The salutations refer to the origin or source of the grace of the gospel, the benedictions, to its perfected fulness in Christ's forgiving love. The prepositional construction, ἀπὸ Θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, finds in the benedictions its counterpart in the subjective genitive, ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. The preposition ἀπό in the salutations, by the *constructio pugnans*, imparts to the omitted verb the idea of motion, *away from*. Χάρις, ἔλεος, καὶ εἰρήνη are announced as proceeding from God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, and resting upon all who are embraced in the covenant of redemption. This notion of origin or source is left out of the benedictions, and the permanent indwelling of grace in the soul of the believer is that which is alone expressed.

In all his epistles recorded in the New Testament, Paul first announces his official relation to the churches, as an apostle of Jesus Christ, by virtue of which office, he proceeds to declare, in the terms of the salutation, that the grace and favor of God rest upon all true believers. This intimate relationship between the announcement of his apostleship and the salutation, imparts to the latter a depth of meaning, which is not reached by regarding it as a wish or prayer for the descent of spiritual blessings upon the churches addressed. Such a sense is also forbidden by the context which follows. Why is the salutation in every instance, and in such express terms, limited to the saints in Christ, the elect of God? Would it not have comported with his abundant labors as a missionary of Jesus Christ, for Paul to have invoked God's forgiving love to descend upon all, both converted and unconverted? Must it not have been the all-absorbing, controlling desire of his heart, that grace, mercy, and peace, with all the sanctifying influences of the Holy Spirit, should descend upon the Gentile world, to which in a special sense he was set apart as an

apostle? Did he not aver that his heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel was that they might be saved? Could they not have been embraced in the comprehensive sweep of these salutations, regarded simply as the expression of a strong desire for the descent of spiritual blessings? Why were these apostolic greetings in every instance so carefully limited to those who were true believers?

To this there can be but one answer. It is because they were not mere wishes or prayers, embracing all in their benevolent scope, but declarative of blessings actually conferred upon Christ's followers, to which unbelievers had no claim, and were in no respect whatever the recipients. Let a few citations suffice to show in what express terms all others than true believers are excluded from the blessings conveyed in these salutations. In Romans, the salutation is addressed to the "beloved of God called to be saints;" in Ephesians, "to the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus;" in Philippians, "to all the saints in Christ Jesus with the bishops and deacons;" in Colossians, "to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ," and so throughout the epistles. It was not enough that this limitation was indicated by the words "to the church of Christ at Corinth," or to the church at Ephesus, but it was rendered still more emphatic and explicit by the appended clauses just cited. This shows that these salutations are not to be regarded as mere wishes or prayers. They refer manifestly to the bestowal of a blessing which belongs only to God's people, and in which men in a state of impenitence and unbelief have no share.

From this point of view, let us examine the benedictions with which these same epistles are closed. Upon whom were they pronounced? To what class of persons does *ὑμῶν πάντων* refer? Most unquestionably to the same believers in Christ to whom the salutation had been previously addressed. The form varies somewhat from that of the salutation, but the sense is substantially the same. There was no necessity of repeating *ἀπὸ Θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν καὶ Κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ*. The divine source of the grace of the gospel having been affirmed in the salutation, and proved

and illustrated throughout the whole epistle, there was a peculiar appropriateness in closing with the more tender and informal, ἡ χάρις τοῦ Κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν. Are we not justified, then, in attaching to the benediction as weighty a significance as to the salutation? Nay, more, might we not have inferred that the great idea of the salutation would be repeated with more enlarged signification after the manifold grace of God in the work of redemption had been descanted upon in the epistle? These salutations and benedictions, when regarded as a solemn and formal announcement of the grace of God resting upon all his people, very appropriately introduce and close the apostolic letters. But how comparatively frigid and meaningless are they, when considered simply as prayers or desires for the descent of blessings upon the churches.

The argument for this exegesis gathers strength from the grammatical construction of the passages under consideration. In every instance, with a single exception, the verb is omitted. The ellipsis is beyond all doubt to be supplied by some form of εἶμι, the verb of existence. Commentators, however, are not agreed as to what this form shall be. If these salutations and benedictions are to be interpreted as wishes or prayers, we must suppose an ellipsis of εἶη, the 3 sing. optat. present. We will not go so far as to pronounce such an ellipsis in a sentence, independent of some preceding clause containing the optative, a grammatical absurdity, but it is so improbable that we would not venture to build an exegesis on so slight a foundation.

Winer cites several passages in the New Testament, where he would supply the optative εἶη. But a reference to some of these passages will show that the ellipsis of this mood is quite doubtful. One of them is John xx. 21, εἰρήνη ὑμῖν, *peace to you*. But when we take into consideration the personage who employed this salutation, and the time and circumstances in which it was uttered, we cannot but attach to it a higher significancy than that of a simple wish that peace might rest in the troubled minds of the disciples. Another passage which Winer cites as containing the ellipsis

είη, is Luke i. 28, when the angel addresses Mary with *ὁ Κύριος μετὰ σοῦ, εὐλογομένη σὺ ἐν γυναιξίν, the Lord with you, blessed thou among women*. If the ellipsis here is to be supplied with *είη*, the translation would be, *may the Lord be with you, may you be blessed among women*. Can this be the sense of this angelic salutation? Is it not rather to be interpreted as a solemn annunciation that the Lord was with Mary, and that she was, in the highest sense of the term, blessed among women? But this, which is the obvious sense, would require an ellipsis of the indicative. The other citations of Winer to prove an ellipsis of the optative are made from the apostolic salutations and benedictions which are the subject of our present consideration. We hope to show that such an ellipsis is not only grammatically improbable, but subversive of the sense of the passages in themselves considered.

Professor Stuart and many other excellent commentators supply the imperative *ἔστω*. This is certainly admissible, especially in such passages as *ἡ ἀγάπη ἀνπόκριτος* (let love (be) without dissimulation (Rom. xii. 9); and in *ὁ λόγος ὑμῶν πάντοτε ἐν χάριτι*, (let your speech (be) always with grace (Colossians iv. 6); where the context obviously places these elliptical phrases in the category of commands. Such an ellipsis of *ἔστω* may be supplied in the doxologies, Rom. xvi. 26; Philip. iv. 20; 1 Pet. v. 11. But it is questionable whether we are justified in supplying the imperative in the salutations and benedictions, inasmuch as they are neither ascriptions of praise to God nor the injunction of duties upon man. But, when grammatically considered, there is nevertheless far less objection to an ellipsis of the imperative than of the optative, and its adoption at once raises these salutations and benedictions far higher than mere wishes or desires for the bestowal upon God's people of the blessings referred to. We do not think, however, that the imperative gives the precise sense, or is wholly free from grammatical objections.

The usual forms of the verb which in sentences of this sort suffer ellipsis, are *ἔστω* and *εἰσὶ*. In questions or com-

mands, where the sense cannot well be misunderstood, many other verbs in common use may be omitted, but in simple annunciations, the third person of εἶμι or γίγνομαι, or a similar verb, is the only form which in general suffers ellipsis. There is no obscurity from the omission of ἐστὶ in the proposition, ἀγαθὸς ὁ ἀνὴρ, *the man (is) good*, or in θεῶν δύναμις μεγίστη, *the power of the gods (is) greatest*, or in τῷ Κύρῳ μεγάλη βασιλεία, *a large palace (was) to Cyrus*, i. e. Cyrus had a large palace. But suppose we would express our wish that the man might be good, the form would be ἀγαθὸς ὁ ἀνὴρ εἴη, *may the man be good*, i. e. would that he might be good. So τῷ Κύρῳ μεγάλη βασιλεία εἴη *O that Cyrus possessed a large palace*. Sometimes the particles, εἰ, εἰ γάρ, εἴθε, ὥς, are placed before this optative to make it more definite or emphatic. The grammatical canon is that the optative is employed in the expression of a wish, and in such a use the verb in an independent sentence seldom suffers ellipsis, inasmuch as there would then be no way to distinguish the wish of the optative from the positive assertion of the indicative. One may say σοὶ μυρίαν ἔχω χάριν, *I give you ten thousand thanks*; or σοὶ μυρία χάρις (sc. ἐστὶ), *ten thousand thanks (are) to you*, the elliptical form being as readily understood as the one in which the verb is expressed. But if the optative as freely suffered ellipsis as the indicative, there would be no means of determining whether σοὶ μυρία χάρις denoted the actual bestowal of thanks, or a wish that thanks might be bestowed.

Let us now examine more particularly the grammatical construction of these salutations and benedictions. The omitted verb in all the salutations is followed by what is called the dative of the possessor, and in all the benedictions, except in Peter's first epistle, by the preposition μετὰ with the genitive. There is no essential difference between these two forms of expression, the dative simply giving prominence to the idea of *coming to* or *into* possession of, the genitive with the preposition, the notion of participation or full possession of the blessings referred to. In this construction, the thing possessed is put as the subject of the

sentence, and the verb may be, and often is, omitted, especially when no obscurity would arise therefrom, and no special emphasis is required to be given to the verb. But in such cases the ellipsis is to be supplied with the same forms of the verb which are found expressed, and these forms are in the indicative. Thus, we may say with equal perspicuity *ἀγαθὰ ἡμῖν ἐστί*, *good things are to us, we have good things*, or *ἀγαθὰ ἡμῖν*, *good things (are) to us*. The idea of *belonging to*, as one's own possession, is equally clear in both forms of expression.

In view, therefore, of the well-established grammatical law, that the present indicative is the form which commonly suffers ellipsis in such constructions, we are of the opinion that *ἐστί* is the omitted verb in these apostolic salutations and benedictions. We dismiss, as irrelevant to this special point, all references to the early liturgies of the church. The simple question before us is, what sense the Greek construction demands; and this is to be determined by the application of well-established grammatical laws. If we were composing a treatise on liturgical forms, it would then be incumbent on us to trace the changes and various usages of the church at different periods of her history.

We have alluded to the fact that the salutation in John's second epistle has the verb expressed in the indicative future. This seems to us proof positive that the same mood is to be assigned to the omitted verbs in the other salutations and benedictions. The employment of the future tense does not in the least degree weaken our argument. Concinnity with *ἔσται* in the preceding verse seems to have been the reason why the verb was put in the future, and had its emphatic position at the very commencement of the salutation. But the question before us has reference, not to the tense of the omitted verb, but to the mood, or, in other words, whether the optative of request or desire is to be preferred to the indicative declarative of an actual fact. We would not then argue from the passage cited that the future of *εἰμί* is to be supplied in the other forms of salutation and benediction, but that the mood used by John proves

beyond all question, that his salutation is something more than a simple wish or prayer.

The ellipsis of *ἔστι* which we have assumed, is justified by the context of some of the benedictions. In Romans, a doxology immediately follows the benediction. If the verb of the benediction be the optative of a wish or prayer, the same form of the verb is naturally to be supplied in the doxology, *μόνη σοφῶ θεῶ ᾧ ἡ δόξα εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας*, or, in other words, the doxology must be regarded as nothing more than a prayer that glory may be rendered to God. In like manner the benediction in 1 Corinthians is followed by *ἡ ἀγάπη μου μετὰ πάντων ὑμῶν ἐν Χριστῶ Ἰησοῦ*; in precisely the same grammatical form of construction. If the benediction is to be interpreted as a prayer or desire that the grace of Christ may be with the Corinthian church, the verse which follows is nothing more than a wish or prayer that the apostle's love may also be with them. Colloquially expressed, it is simply: "I desire that my love may be with you all;" "I pray that I may love you all." How preferable is the construction by which we read: "my love is with you all." It is worthy of note that in the verse preceding this benediction in 1 Corinthians, where the imperative mood is obviously required, the verb is expressed, *ἦτω ἀνάθεμα*, *let him be anathema*. This confirms our position, that when the mood is other than the indicative, the verb in an independent sentence seldom suffers ellipsis.

In the context which precedes the benediction in 1 Thessalonians, the apostle declares it to be his prayer that the whole spirit, soul, and body of the Thessalonian Christians may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here, as might be expected, the verb in the optative is expressed. So in Hebrews, the benediction is preceded by the imploration, "now the God of peace that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect," etc. Here, also, the verb is found in the optative. If the benediction which follows in immediate proximity to these texts were also a prayer or

strong desire for grace to be imparted to the churches, may we not suppose that in like manner the verb would have been expressed in the optative?

If, then, *ἔστω* is the omitted verb, the sense of these salutations and benedictions is very clear. They serve as official announcements of the permanent indwelling of the grace of God in the hearts of his people. They are emphatic declarations of a great and comforting truth, and fitly stand at the beginning and close of the apostolic epistles, penned for the guidance, comfort, and edification of the churches to which they were addressed.

This result, however, may be reached by another line of argument. If the official privilege of pronouncing the blessing of God upon his people was accorded to the patriarchs, kings, and prophets of the Old Testament, may we not argue, *a fortiori*, that the authority to do this would be granted to those who held the relation of divinely authorized teachers to the churches of the New Testament dispensation? Turn we, then, to the pages of the Old Testament. We pass by, as of no account in this discussion, those forms of salutation and leave-taking common in social intercourse to the Hebrews, as well as to other oriental nations. We refer now to those benedictions pronounced by the patriarchs and prophets, which conveyed a real blessing to the recipients, or at least were solemn prophetic declarations of the purpose of God to bless them. Such was the blessing which Noah pronounced upon his sons, Shem and Japheth (Gen. ix. 26, 27). With a blessing of this sort Melchizedek met Abraham when returning from the slaughter of the kings at the valley of Shaveh (Gen. xiv. 18-20). That this was not an invocation for blessings to descend upon the patriarch, is evident from the use made of it by the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, in proof of the official superiority of Melchizedek to Abraham. "Without all contradiction the less is blessed of the greater," or, as Professor Stuart renders it, "the inferior is blessed of the superior" (Heb. vii. 7). An inferior may pray for his superior, and bestow upon him his best wishes. Paul (1. Thess. v. 25) desired

the prayers of those who were far inferior to him in piety and official station. But a blessing like that which Melchizedek pronounced upon Abraham, could be given only by a superior to an inferior. This shows that it was not a prayer or invocation or common salutation, but a solemn blessing, pronounced by one who, as priest of the Most High God, and king of Salem, was Abraham's official superior.

Another blessing of the class we are now referring to, is that which Isaac pronounced upon Jacob (*Gen. xxvii. 27 - 29*), for the revocation of which Esau pleaded in vain, even though it was fraudulently obtained by the younger brother. This was not a prayer or desire for Jacob's temporal or spiritual prosperity. It was something which carried with it the possession of a real blessing, and as such was beyond the power of Isaac himself to revoke, when once it had been pronounced. Cf. *Gen. xxvii. 37*. We find a similar blessing given by Jacob to Ephraim and Manasseh (*Gen. xlviii. 8 - 20*). This was deemed of such moment, and required so full and firm a belief in the divine promise on the part of Jacob, strangers and sojourners in the land of Egypt as he and his children were at the time, that it is referred to in the Epistle to the Hebrews (*xi. 20*) as one of the examples of remarkable faith exercised by the Old Testament worthies. The patriarchal blessing which Jacob (*Gen. xlix*), when about to die, pronounced upon his twelve sons, is another example of the blessings to which we are now referring. So also are those pronounced by Moses (*Deut. xxxii. 1 - 29*) upon the children of Israel before his death. Throughout the historical books of the Old Testament, we not unfrequently meet with prophetic benedictions from the lips of the authorized teachers of God's chosen people.

But not the more eminent saints only of the Old Testament dispensation were invested with this authority to bless the people of God. As an official act, it formed a part of the priestly service of the Mosaic economy. We read in *Lev. ix. 22*, that "Aaron lifted up his hand toward the people, and blessed them," after having waved the breasts and the right shoulder of the bullock and the ram for a

“wave offering before the Lord,” after which both “Moses and Aaron went into the tabernacle of the congregation, and came out and blessed the people, and the glory of the Lord appeared unto all the people.” In Numb. vi. 23–26, a form of benediction is prescribed for Aaron and his sons. “On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, the Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make his face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace. And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel, and I will bless them.”

Our argument from this is simple and obvious. If the patriarchal and Mosaic dispensations, serving as mere types and shadows of the good things to come, and not being the very image of those things, were yet so fraught with blessings, that patriarchs, priests, and kings were invested with official authority to bless those who waited for the word of the Lord, might we not, with reason, expect that this prerogative, or something like it, would constitute a prominent feature of the new dispensation? Was it the privilege of Moses to bless the people of God before he ascended Mount Nebo to die, and of David and Solomon to pronounce a benediction upon the great congregations convened on such occasions as the bringing of the ark to Jerusalem and the dedication of the temple; and was Paul, the servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, the High Priest of good things to come, and the mediator of a better covenant established upon better promises, to be restricted to the simple utterance of his wish or prayer that the grace of his Divine Master might rest upon the churches which he had planted? We are slow to believe this. The same line of argument which proves that the ordinance of infant baptism, resting, as it does, upon the Abrahamic covenant, and abrogated by no enactment expressed or implied, is the right and privilege, *a fortiori*, of those who live under a dispensation so much more ample in its covenanted blessings and mercies, demonstrates beyond a doubt, that no official prerogative, like that we are considering, belonged to the patriarchs, prophets, and kings of the

Old Testament, which did not, in increased degree, belong to the apostles and evangelists of the new dispensation.

We pass, then, from the Old to the New Testament. In the very foreground is the Sermon on the Mount, the beatitudes of which cast far into the background the benedictions of the Old Testament, whether regard be had to the dignity of the one who pronounced them, or the richness and amplitude of the blessings themselves. Similar beatitudes or benedictions meet the eye throughout the gospels. "My peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you." In the spirit of this great utterance, which secures the possession of true and lasting peace to the soul of every believer, Paul, with no misgivings that he is doing something extra-official or presumptuous, announces in his salutations and benedictions, that the peace of God, through Jesus Christ, does, and ever will, abide with all true believers.

Was this an official prerogative too great to be granted to him and his fellow apostles? Did our Lord not say (Matt. xvi. 19), that he 'would give unto them the keys of Heaven, that whatsoever they should bind on earth should be bound in Heaven, and whatsoever they should loose on earth should be loosed in heaven;' and did he not, when he had imparted unto them by his divine breath the Holy Ghost, also say, on another occasion (John xx. 22, 23): "whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained?" Is it an unwarrantable stretch of authority for men clothed with such extraordinary powers to declare, in the name of their divine Master, that his grace is, and always will be, with all who believe in his name? Interpreted as solemn averments of this great truth, the apostolic salutations and benedictions very appropriately introduce and close the epistles. But if, through a mistaken apprehension that words of such gracious import cannot be uttered by human lips, we interpret them as mere prayers or earnest desires, their prominent position at the beginning and end of the epistles, we cannot but regard, as comparatively meaningless and incongruous. We have

only to ask, which of these interpretations comports best with the sublime promises, hopes, and consolations of the epistles, which serves as the most fitting introduction to so triumphant a consummation of grace as is brought to view in the eighth chapter of Romans, the fifteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians, or the first chapter of Ephesians, and there can be but one reply, namely, that interpretation which regards these salutations and benedictions as declarations of God's accredited ambassadors that the grace of Christ is the portion of every believer. Thus explained, the epistles serve to expand and illustrate the great idea of the salutation, which is again repeated with increased emphasis in the closing benediction.

The only question which remains, and which may be disposed of very briefly, is, whether the ministers of Christ are authorized to pronounce these salutations and benedictions, in the sense in which they were employed by the apostles. We believe that they are thus authorized. "When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Ephes. iv. 8, 11, 12). Were these ascension gifts designed only or chiefly for the apostolic age of the church? Were there no saints to be perfected, and no body of Christ to be edified, after Paul and his fellow laborers had ceased from their work on earth? May not the Christian minister now come before his people in the fulness of the gospel of Christ, as Paul was sure he should come to the church at Rome? Has he no official authority to pronounce words of peace and joy to those who are the Israel of God, and to whom in a special sense pertain the promises? Most assuredly he has. When he pronounces the salutation or benediction in the forms given by the Spirit of inspiration, it carries with it all that wealth of spiritual grace and peace which it was designed to convey when expressed by Paul, Peter, or John. It was not in their own name or by their own authority, but as

ambassadors of Jesus Christ, that they uttered words of such blessed and comprehensive import. Every minister of Jesus Christ, however obscure his position or humble his sphere, is commissioned to preach the same gospel which the apostles preached, and to feed the church with the same hopes and promises. There is no official prerogative, apart from their extraordinary apostolic powers as inspired teachers of truth, which he does not possess.

But while the power to pronounce these salutations and benedictions in their full original sense, is to be conceded to every ordained minister of Jesus Christ, the people should be carefully instructed in regard to the nature of this service, and its position in the ordinances and worship of God's house. They should be cautioned against attaching to it any mysterious virtue or efficacy, as though the minister who pronounces it has power to forgive sin, or bestow blessings. It should be well understood that no new or special spiritual gift is communicated by this ministerial act, but that it is the reiterated declaration of a truth as old as the Christian religion itself; that the grace of Jesus Christ is with his people, in accordance with the express provisions of his everlasting love, ratified by his death on the cross, and that it will ever abide with them in this world and in that which is to come. The congregation should be explicitly taught that, although the language of these formulas embraces all who are within sound of the minister's voice, inasmuch as it is not his prerogative to withhold the riches of the gospel of grace from any who wait upon his ministration, yet the blessing contained therein belongs to and rests upon those only who are true believers, and even upon such has little vitality and force, unless they are in the lively exercise of faith to discern its full and gracious import.

It is to be feared that there is in all our congregations much misapprehension in regard to the nature and import of the benediction. The people stand in reverential attitude during the pronouncement of this simple and sublime formula. There is danger, however, of their coming to regard themselves as the passive recipients of a blessing, in

reference to which their only duty is to assume a befitting posture. This may not be true of all. Some, doubtless, have such enlightened views, as to attach to this part of divine service no vital saving power, only as it rests upon those who by faith in Jesus Christ appropriate it to themselves, as a pledge and earnest of God's unchanging love. But such is the natural tendency to rely upon forms and observances, and to substitute them for the living faith of the gospel, that no doubt with many the benediction is regarded as the actual conferral of a blessing, irrespective of that spirituality of mind in the recipient necessary to make it such.

It has always seemed to us eminently befitting the relation which subsists between the minister and people, the one as God's ambassador, the other as a congregation gathered together to listen to the divine message, that public worship should be commenced with a salutation, not necessarily in a form composed in Old Testament language, but sometimes in that employed by Paul, "grace be unto you and peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." This solemn and affectionate announcement that the favor of God rests ever upon the congregation of his saints, would constitute a fitting introduction to the services of the sanctuary, and confirm the faith and animate the hopes of those who "wait upon the Lord," and seek in the ordinances of his house to renew their spiritual strength. A beautiful correspondence also would then be maintained between the commencement and close of public worship, and due prominence would be given to the great and comforting truth of the superabounding grace of God bestowed upon his people.

But whatever position may be assigned them in public worship, let not these salutations and benedictions be regarded, on the one hand, as possessing some mysterious, indefinable power, when pronounced by priestly lips, so that a blessing is communicated to the whole congregation irrespective of personal faith in Christ, nor, on the other hand, as merely expressive of a wish or prayerful desire for the bestowal of the divine favor upon those in whose hear-

ing they are pronounced. Let them rather be regarded as declarative of the great and fundamental fact of the gospel, that the grace of Christ abides with all his saints according to his promise, when about to lay down his life to bring in eternal redemption from sin and death.

ARTICLE III.

WEDGWOOD ON ENGLISH ETYMOLOGY.¹

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PHILOLOGY, or the science of language, is almost wholly the growth of the last fifty years ; and in that time it has made rapid progress. Nearly all the known languages have been to some extent explored, and their sources and mutual relations pointed out. But philosophical research into the English language, by English scholars, has not kept pace with the advance in other directions. There has been produced no good and reliable work on English etymology, — not from lack of a rich field to work in, but from the incompetency of the laborers. Skinner and Junius lived before language was scientifically studied, and their works have been long out of date. Richardson and Webster, though still in use, are too inaccurate and incomplete to be of much service. They not only lacked the results worked out by investigators in other languages to aid their own researches, but they were both deficient in the genius and the capacities suitable for such studies. While Germany has become a nation of scholars, the age of English scholarship, even in the classics, seems to be past. The student of English has therefore

¹ A Dictionary of English Etymology. By Hensleigh Wedgwood, M. A., late Fellow of Chr. Coll. Cam. Vol. I. (A-D.) 8vo. pp. xiv. 507. London : Trübner & Co. 1859.

The same ; with Notes and Additions by George P. Marsh. 4to. pp. 247. New York : Sheldon & Co. 1862.