



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume 37
Issue 921

"The God of All Comfort"

Part 1

by — Hannah Whitall Smith (1832–1911)

Key Points:

We can know God by believing what is written in the scriptures.....7785
We can learn to know and trust God by studying His name (character)..... 7788

Once you know God, He is absolutely irresistible..... 7788
Everything we need to learn to know God is revealed in Christ's life and character..... 7788

WHY THIS HAS BEEN WRITTEN

Because we do not know God, we naturally get all sorts of wrong ideas about Him. We think He is an angry Judge who is on the watch for our slightest faults, or a harsh Taskmaster determined to exact from us the uttermost service, or a self-absorbed Deity demanding His full measure of honor and glory, or a far-off Sovereign concerned only with His own affairs and indifferent to our welfare. Who can wonder that such a God can neither be loved nor trusted? And who could expect Christians, with such ideas concerning Him, to be anything but full of discomfort and misery?



Your trouble is that you have got a wrong idea of what knowing God is, or at least the kind of knowing I mean. For I do not mean any mystical interior revelations of any kind. The kind of knowing I mean is just the plain matter-of-fact knowledge of God's nature and character that comes to us by believing what is revealed to us in the Bible concerning Him. The kind of knowing I mean is the knowing that comes from believing the things that are *written*.

But I can assert boldly, and without fear of contradiction, that it is impossible for anyone who really knows God to have such uncomfortable thoughts about Him. Plenty of outward discomforts there may be, and many earthly sorrows and trials, but through them all the soul that knows God cannot but dwell inwardly in a fortress of perfect peace.

I mean that, to be practical, when I read in the Bible that "*God is love*," faith believes it, just because "it is written," and not because I have had any inward revelation that is true; and when the Bible says that He cares for us as He cares for the lilies of the field and the birds of the air, and that the very hairs of our head are all numbered, *faith believes it, just because it is written, not because I have any inward revelation of it.*

"Ah, yes," you say, "but how am I to get to know Him. Other people *seem* to have some kind of inward revelation that makes them know Him, but I never do; and no matter how much I pray, everything seems dark to me. I want to know God, but I do not see how to manage it."

Although this may seem very dry and bare to start with, it will, if steadfastly persevered in, result in very blessed inward awareness, and will sooner or later lead us out into such a knowledge of God as will transform

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our lives. This kind of knowing brings us convictions; and to my mind convictions are far superior to any supposed inward revelations. An inward “revelation” may be upset by the state of one’s health, or by many other upsetting things, but a conviction is permanent. Once convince a man that two and two make four, no amount of digestive disorders, or liver complaint, or east winds, or anything else but actual lunacy, can upset his conviction. He knows it just as well when he has an attack of indigestion as he does when his digestion is in good working order. Convictions come from knowledge, and no amount of good feelings or bad feelings, of good health or ill health, can alter knowledge.

It is to try to help my readers to come to a knowledge of God in the plain matter-of-fact sort of way of which I have spoken, and to the convictions which result from this knowledge, that this is written. I shall show that God is the God and Father of each one of us, and I shall also point out some of the things that seem to me the principal hindrances to becoming really acquainted with Him.

I am so absolutely certain that coming to know Him,

as He really is, will bring unfailing comfort and peace to every troubled heart, so that I long unspeakably to help everyone within my reach to this knowledge. One of Job’s friends said, in his arguments against Job’s bitter complaints, “*Acquaint now thyself with God, and be at peace.*”¹

WHAT IS HIS NAME?

*And Moses said unto God, “Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, ‘The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you’; and they shall say to me, ‘What is His name?’ What shall I say unto them?”*²

The condition of a country depends upon the character of its rulers. Therefore, everything in the universe depends upon the sort of Creator and Ruler Who has brought the universe into existence, and the whole welfare of human beings is of necessity bound up with the character of their Creator. If the God Who created us is a good God, then everything must of necessity be all

1. Job 22:21.
2. Exodus 3:13.

Bible Student’s Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

ISSN: 1936-9360

Volume 37, No. 921 – May 23, 2022

Scripture education in a weekly format!

This free electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the absolute sovereignty and deity of God (Romans 11:36);
- the proclamation of the riches of God’s abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the universality of death and resurrection (I Corinthians 15:21);
- the unique gospel of Paul – which he calls “my gospel” (Romans 2:16; 16:25; II Timothy 2:8; I Corinthians 15:1-4; Acts 13-28; Acts 20:24);
- the “preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past” (Romans 16:25);
- the epistles of the present Secret Administration being Ephesians & Colossians (Ephesians 3:2, 9; Colossians 1:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the One Body (Ephesians 4:16);
- the Secret Administration, being the operational revelation for today (Ephesians 3:9);
- the unprophesied, Celestial hope and calling of the One Body (Colossians 3:4);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 3:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);

- union in His death, burial and resurrection and ascended seated position among the celestials (Romans 6; Ephesians 2:6);
- adult sonship position (Ephesians 1:5).

This publication is the product of humble efforts of ordinary men intended to stimulate the earnest study of Scripture. We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication; thus they are not meant to imply finality on any subject discussed, or that further research would not add further light from the Word of God. God’s storehouse of truth is inexhaustible, so draw on its wealth by prayerful study. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any “church,” “denomination,” “movement,” “organization,” “mission,” “creed,” “meeting,” “school,” “conference” or “fellowship.”

We are always open for discussion, but never for disputation. – André Sneidar

Bible Student’s Notebook™

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For definitions of abbreviations/acronyms, see the [online key](#).

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right for us. But if He is a bad God, or a careless God, or an unkind God, then we cannot be sure that anything is right, and can have no peace or comfort anywhere.

The true ground for peace and comfort is only to be found in the sort of God we have. Therefore, we need first of all to find out what is His name, or, in other words, what is His character – in short, what sort of a God He is.

In Bible language *name* always means character. Names are not given arbitrarily there, as with us, but are given with reference to the character or work of the person named. Cruden, in his Concordance, says that the names of God signify that which He really is, and are used throughout the Bible to express His attributes, and His purposes, His glory, His grace, His mercy, and His love, His wisdom, and power, and goodness. A careful study of His names will make this plain.

When, therefore, the children of Israel asked, “*What is His name?*” they meant, “Who and what is this God of whom you speak? What is His character; what are His attributes; what does He do? In short, what sort of a being is He?”

The psalmist says, “*They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee.*”³ Again he says, “*The name of the LORD is a strong tower.*”⁴ “*They that know Thy name will put their trust in Thee.*”⁵ They cannot do anything else, because in knowing His name they know His character and His nature, that He is a God Whom it is safe to trust to the uttermost. And there can be no doubt that a large part of the unrest and discomfort

in so many Christian hearts comes simply from the fact that they do not yet know His name.

“*Some trust in chariots and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God. They are brought down and are fallen, but we are risen and stand upright.*”⁶ In all that we read concerning Israel of old we find this constant refrain, that all they were and all they had depended upon the fact that their God was the Lord.

The question of all questions for each one of us, therefore, is this one, “*What is His name?*” To the Israelites, God Himself answered this question. God said to Moses, “*I am that I am*”; and He said, “*Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I Am hath sent me unto you.*”⁷

These simple words, “*I am*,” express unchangeableness of existence, which is the very first element necessary in a God Who is to be depended upon. No dependence could be placed by any one of us upon a changeable God. “*For I am the LORD, I change not.*”⁸ And thus it must be if we are to have any peace or comfort.

But is this all that His name implies, simply “*I am ...*”? “*I am what?*” we ask. What does this “*I am*” include?

It includes everything the human heart longs for and needs. The whole Bible tells us what this unfinished name of God means. Every attribute of God, every revelation of His character, every proof of His undying love, every declaration of His watchful care, every assertion of His purposes of tender mercy, every

3. Psalm 9:10.

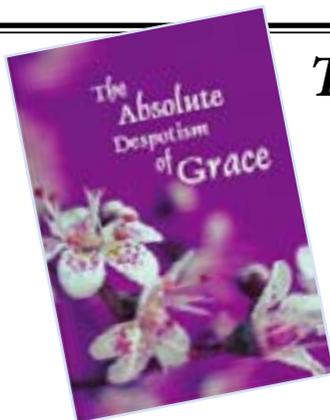
4. Proverbs 18:10.

5. Psalm 9:10.

6. Psalm 20:7-8.

7. Exodus 3:14.

8. Malachi 3:6.



The Absolute Despotism of Grace

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manifestation of His loving kindness – all are the filling out of this unfinished “I am ...”

The psalmist says that those who know God’s name will put their trust in Him, and it is, I am convinced, impossible for anyone really to know Him and not to trust Him. A trustworthy person commands trust – not in the sense of ordering people to trust him, but by irresistibly winning their trust by his trustworthiness.

When once you know Him, He is absolutely irresistible. You can no more help trusting Him than you can help breathing. Could the whole world but know Him as He is, the whole world, sinners and all, would fall at His feet in adoring worship. They simply could not help it. His surpassing loveliness would carry all before it.

How then can we become acquainted with God? There are two things necessary: first, God must reveal Himself; and second, faith accepts His revelation and believes what He reveals.

The apostle John tells us that “no man hath seen God at any time,” but “the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.” Christ, then, is the revelation of God. We have none of us seen God, and we never can see Him in this present stage of our existence, for we have not the faculties that would make it possible. But in Christ we can see God, since He was a man like one of us.

Christ revealed God by what He was, by what He did, and by what He said. From the cradle to the grave, every moment of His life was a revelation of God. We must go to Him, then, for our knowledge of God, for

Christ is declared to be the “express image”¹⁰ of God.

Just what God would have said and done under the circumstances, Christ said and did. “I do nothing of Myself,”¹¹ was His continual assertion. “I say nothing of Myself; the Father that dwelleth in Me He doeth the works”;¹² “He that seeth Me seeth Him that sent Me.”¹³

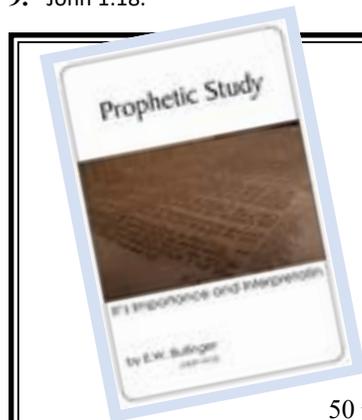
“If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also, and from henceforth ye know Him and have seen Him.”¹⁴ Philip could not understand this, and said, “Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us.”¹⁵ And then Jesus repeated His former statement even more strongly: “Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me Philip? He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Show us the Father?”¹⁶

If we would know, then, the length, and breadth, and height, and depth of what God meant when He gave to Moses that apparently unfinished name of “I am,” we shall find it revealed in Christ. He is the translation of God. He is “the image of the invisible God.”¹⁷ We are to behold the “light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”¹⁸

We are all aware that the Old Testament revelation of God seems sometimes to contradict the revelation in Christ, and the question arises as to which we are to receive as the truest. In view of the fact

9. John 1:18.

10. Hebrews 1:3.
11. John 8:28.
12. John 14:10.
13. John 12:45.
14. John 14:7.
15. John 14:8.
16. John 14:8-9.
17. Colossians 1:15.
18. II Corinthians 4:6.



Prophetic Study: Its Importance and Interpretation

by — E.W. Bullinger (1837-1913)

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that God Himself tells us that He has “spoken to us by His Son,”¹⁹ who is the “brightness of His glory and the express image of His person,”²⁰ we may not dare reject Christ’s testimony, but must look upon the Old Testament revelation, where it differs from the revelation in Christ, as *partial and imperfect*; and must accept as a true setting forth of God only that which we find in Christ. Christ alone tells us the true and genuine name of God. In His last wonderful prayer He says, “I have manifested Thy name.”²¹

“The words that I speak unto you,” Christ says, “I speak not of Myself; but the Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works.”²² Over and over He asserts that He says only what the Father tells Him to say. “I speak to the world those things which I have heard of Him.”²³ “I do nothing of Myself, but as My Father hath taught Me I speak these things.”²⁴

The apostle declares most emphatically that it “pleased the Father” that in Christ should “dwell all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.”²⁵ And although

we may not understand all that this means theologically, we at least cannot fail to see that if we want to know God, we need only to become acquainted with Christ’s character in order to become acquainted with God’s character. “He that hath seen Me,” He says, “hath seen the Father.”²⁶ And again He declares that “neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and He to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him.”²⁷

We may, and we do, have all sorts of thoughts of God, we may conjecture this or imagine that, but we are wasting our energies in it all. We simply cannot know God, no man can, except through the revelation of Christ.

We may know a good many things *about* Him, but that is very different from knowing Him Himself, as He really is in nature and character. Other witnesses have told us of His visible acts, but from these we often get very wrong impressions of His true character, but Christ can tell us of the real secrets of God’s bosom, for of none other can it be said, as it is of Him, that “the only begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him.”²⁸ It will make all of the difference between comfort and discomfort in our lives, whether or not we believe this to be a fact. If

- 19. Hebrews 1:2.
- 20. Hebrews 1:3.
- 21. John 17:6.
- 22. John 14:10.
- 23. John 8:26.
- 24. John 8:28.
- 25. Colossians 1:19.

- 26. John 14:9.
- 27. Matthew 11:27.
- 28. John 1:18.



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we do believe it to be a fact, then the stern Judge and hard Taskmaster whom we have feared, even while we tried to follow Him, and whose service we have found so irksome and so full of discomfort, will disappear; and His place will be taken by the God of love Who is revealed to us in “*the face of Jesus Christ*,” the God Who cares for us as He cares for the sparrows,²⁹ and for the flowers of the field,³⁰ and Who tells us that He numbers even the hairs of our head.³¹ No human being could be afraid of a God like this.

If we have been accustomed, therefore, to approach God with any mistrust of the kindness of His feelings toward us; if our life has been poisoned by fear; if unworthy thoughts of His character and will have filled our hearts with suspicions of His goodness; if we have pictured Him as an unjust deposit of a self-seeking tyrant; if, in short, we have imagined Him in any way other than that which has been revealed to us in “*the face of Jesus Christ*,” we must go back in all simplicity of heart to the records of that lovely life, and must bring our conceptions of God into perfect accord with the character and ways of Him Who declares that He came to manifest the name of God to men.

In reply then to the question, “*What is His name?*” I have only this one thing to say: Ask Christ. If we want to know God's name, we have only to read the manifestation. All the darkness that enshrouds the character of God will vanish if we will but accept the light Christ has shed on the matter, and believe the manifestation of His name that Christ has given us.

A great many of God's children utterly ignore Christ's testimony and choose instead to listen to the testimony of their own doubting hearts, which tells them that it is impossible that God could be as loving in His care for us, or as tender toward our weakness and foolishness, as Christ has revealed Him to be.

In the face of such unqualified assertions as these out of the lips of our Lord Himself, it becomes not only our privilege, but our bounded duty to cast out of our conception of God every element that could in any way conflict with the real name of God, that Christ has revealed to us, and must listen to no other.

Whatever characteristics then we see in Christ, these are the filling out of the “*I am*” of God. As we look at Christ and listen to His words, we can hear God saying, I am rest for the weary; I am peace for the storm-tossed; I am strength for the strengthless; I am wisdom for the foolish; I am righteousness for the sinful; I am all that the neediest soul on Earth can want; I am “*exceeding abundantly, beyond all you can ask or think.*”³²

But here the doubter may say, “Ah yes, this is no doubt all true, but how can I get hold of it? I am such a poor, unworthy creature that I dare not believe such a fullness of grace can belong to me.”

Stand on His trustworthiness. Believe what Christ says about God. No matter what your own thoughts and feelings are, nor what anybody else may say, know that what Christ says about God must be true. Never be frightened of God anymore. Never again let yourself think of Him as a stern Lawgiver who is angry with you because of your sins, nor as a hard Taskmaster who demands from you impossible tasks, nor as a far-off unapproachable Deity, Who is wrapped up in His own glory, and is indifferent to your sorrows and fears. All such ideas of God become impossible, as you know Christ as the true manifestation of God. Refuse unwaveringly to cherish any thought of God that is at variance with what Christ has revealed.

Hold steadfastly here, for old doubts and fears will be sure to come back and demand admittance; but we must turn our backs on them resolutely, and must declare that now at last we know the name, or in other words, the character of our God, and that therefore we simply refuse point-blank to listen for a moment to any such libels on His character or His ways.

May God grant that what we shall learn in our consideration of the names of God may make all such doubts and fears impossible to us from this time forth and forevermore.

(edited abridgement)

(to be continued)

TOPICS:

Major: Comfort; Faith; God; Grace; Jesus Christ

Minor: Names; Sovereignty

32. Ephesians 3:20.

^{29.} Matthew 10:29-31.

^{30.} Matthew 6:28-30.

^{31.} Luke 12:7.



Editor's Desk

A Word Regarding Hannah Whitall Smith and her work, *The God of All Comfort*



Hannah Whitall Smith was the author of the famed *A Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* (1875). She was an influential author of “higher life” and “holiness” movements. Her books have been published by dozens of publishers over the years, most notable among them are: Moody, Revell, Zondervan, Word, Spire, Broadman & Holman, Barbour, Whitaker, Guideposts, Asbury, Ballantine, Grosset & Dunlap.

Remarkably, Smith would come to see and embrace the salvation of all. She included a description of this journey and understanding in her autobiography published in 1903 by Fleming H. Revell, *The Unselfishness of God and How I Discovered It*.¹

Not surprisingly, her autobiography would subsequently be republished, but with her accounts of coming to the conviction of the salvation of all having been removed. In 2009 we ran the missing chapters from her book in the Bible Student's Notebook.² Then in 2014 we published these absent chapters in a book, along with the missing chapters from Han-

nah Hurnard's (1905-1990) *The Unveiled Glory*.³ The book *The Unveiled Glory & My Unexpected Discovery* has been widely distributed.⁴

Smith's works written prior to 1903 were presentations of the classic “holiness” doctrine, and are overall harmful to believers' understanding and walk. However, while still somewhat under the influence of a doctrinal system that had gripped her life since childhood, a remarkable clarity came with her awareness of the salvation of all that made her ensuing work, *The God of All Comfort*, most noteworthy.

While on occasion drifting back into her “holiness” past, *The God of All Comfort* offers beautiful insights concerning God. We are in the process of carefully producing an abridged edition that should bring joy to the heart of those rejoicing in

The Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort (II Corinthians 1:3).

At the conclusion of these installments, they will be made available in book form.

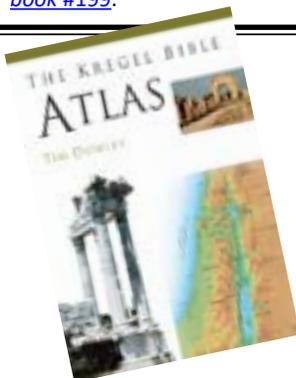
Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.
The Pilkington Abbey
Paint, PA

Topics:

Major: Editor's Desk; Smith, Hannah Whitall
Minor: Biography; Salvation of All

1. Available from [Study Shelf](#), as an unabridged facsimile of the 1903 edition. See [order form](#) under “Biographies.”
2. “My Unexpected Discovery,” My Story #5, [Bible Student's Notebook #199](#).

3. “The Unveiled Glory,” My Story #6, [Bible Student's Notebook #225](#).
4. Available at [Study Shelf](#), and on the [order form](#) under “Other Authors.”



The Kregel Bible Atlas

by — Tim Dowley

This is a full-color resource for Bible geography and historical study. Carefully organized and annotated, with easily accessible information that will make this a standard reference.

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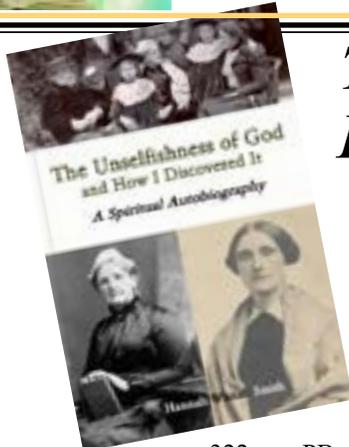
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Thank you so much for making these helpful studies available in so many formats. I'm planning on ordering more printed materials. ... I will continue to pray for you and the ministry God has called you to. – **HI**

This article by Knoch [in [BSN #902](#)], *Among the Celestials*, is one of the best reads I have ever had (to date). He is truly enlightened by our Father and such an artist at putting context to what is beyond our current ability to fully fathom. But by God's gracious gift of understanding we can grasp a fleeting glimpse of the glory that is ours. I need to say that this kind of insightful written imagery, that touches us at our deepest hope, is beyond valuation. Knoch said in a previous article that the greatest treasure available to man, his greatest treasure, is God-consciousness. I pray to Father that as we face our greatest challenges, the hardest things we must face as mortals, that we will have the ability to hold fast to the understanding set forth in this amazing article. – **IN**

I am experiencing a new life even better than "when I first believed." I pinch myself wondering why it was so late in coming. ... Let us spread the Good News



322 pp., PB

See [order form](#) under "Biographies."

The Unselfishness of God and How I Discovered It

The autobiography of Hannah Whitall Smith (1832–1911)

Smith was the author of the famed *A Christian's Secret of a Happy Life* (1875). She was influential in the "higher life" and "holiness" movements. Remarkably, she would come to see and embrace the *salvation of all*. She included a description of this journey and understanding in this autobiography published in 1903.

Not surprisingly, her autobiography would subsequently be republished, but with her accounts of coming to the conviction of the *salvation of all* having been removed. This publication is the complete and unabridged facsimile of the original edition.

of the Grace and Glory of God the Father and Our Lord Jesus Christ. Amazing. The Best is Yet to Come. Really. And for everyone. – **TX**

All of the materials I have received thus far from Study Shelf is simply an unbelievable gifting! – **ID**

5 stars for [BSN #891](#) & [#892](#)! I believe that these 2 BSNs are the most profound and enlightening articles that the Lord has ever produced through your spirit. I stopped and read each footnote at each reference and the sum total of the two is incredible! When I finished I just had this sense of profound wonderment in my heart and spirit. I felt like getting up and dancing before the Lord for His marvelous wisdom, love and grace. What an awesome Dad we have! What an awesome plan He has! (I am so very, very, very unworthy of any of it.)

Oh, the magnificence of Father's grace and the self-sacrificial love of our Savior. Just wonderful! The hours and hours of sleep you sacrifice for Father's glory are well sacrificed and bearing deep-rooted fruit in my life. ... Sometimes there are just no words to describe the effervescent praise that rises unbidden from our spirits to Father, spirit to Spirit, heart to heart. Beyond words ... I also loved seeing all the compilation books referenced in the footnotes, it's like all the preliminary work had to be done first for all this to come together at this exact time (including the new Pleroma compilation book). The Divine Subjector and Placer is coordinating all the hearts and minds and spirits to bring this to completion (just as it will be in the Consummation), and this thought brings peace and joy to my heart. – **SD** **BSN**