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EXODUS 34:1 The LORD said to Moses, "Chisel two stone tablets like the first: and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke."

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Moses is commanded to hew two tables similar to the first, and bring them up to the mount, to get the covenant renewed, Exo 34:1-3. He prepares the tables and goes up to meet the Lord, Exo 34:4. The Lord descends, and proclaims his name Jehovah, Exo 34:5. What this name signifies, Exo 34:6, Exo 34:7. Moses worships and intercedes, Exo 34:8, Exo 34:9. The Lord promises to renew the covenant, work miracles among the people, and drive out the Canaanites, etc., Exo 34:10, Exo 34:11. No covenant to be made with the idolatrous nations, but their altars and images to be destroyed, Exo 34:12-15. No matrimonial alliances to be contracted with them, Exo 34:16. The Israelites must have no molten gods, Exo 34:17. The commandment of the feast of unleavened bread, and of the sanctification of the first-born, renewed, Exo 34:18-29; as also that of the Sabbath, and the three great annual feasts, Exo 34:21-23. The promise that the surrounding nations shall not invade their territories, while all the males were at Jerusalem celebrating the annual feasts, Exo 34:24. Directions concerning the passover, Exo 34:25; and the first-fruits, Exo 34:26. Moses is commanded to write all these words, as containing the covenant which God had now renewed with the Israelites, Exo 34:27. Moses, being forty days with God without eating or drinking, writes the words of the covenant; and the Lord writes the ten commandments upon the tables of stone, Exo 34:28. Moses descends with the tables; his face shines, Exo 34:29. Aaron and the people are afraid to approach him, because of his glorious appearance, Exo 34:30. Moses delivers to them the covenant and commandments of the Lord; and puts a veil over his face while he is speaking, Exo 34:31-33, but takes it off when he goes to minister before the Lord, Exo 34:34, Exo 34:35.

#### Verse 1

Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first - In Exo 32:16 we are told that the two first tables were the work of God, and the writing was the writing of God; but here Moses is commanded to provide tables of his own workmanship, and God promises to write on them the words which were on the first. That God wrote the first tables himself, see proved by different passages of Scripture at the end of Exodus 32 (Exo 32:35 (note)). But here, in Exo 34:27, it seems as if Moses was commanded to write these words, and in Exo 34:28 it is said, And he wrote upon the tables; but in Deu 10:1-4 it is expressly said that God wrote the second tables as well as the first.

In order to reconcile these accounts let us suppose that the ten words, or ten commandments, were written on both tables by the hand of God himself, and that what Moses wrote, Exo 34:27, was a copy of these to be delivered to the people, while the tables themselves were laid up in the ark before the testimony, whither the people could not go to consult them, and therefore a copy was necessary for the use of the congregation; this copy, being taken off under the direction of God, was authenticated equally with the original, and the original itself was laid up as a record to which all succeeding copies might be continually referred, in order to prevent corruption. This supposition removes the apparent contradiction; and thus both God and Moses may be said to have written the covenant and the ten commandments: the former, the original; the latter, the copy. This supposition is rendered still more probable by Exo 34:27 itself: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Write thou these words (that is, as I understand it, a copy of the words which God had already written); for After The Tenor (על פי al pi According To The Mouth) of these words I have made a covenant with thee and with Israel." Here the original writing is represented by an elegant prosopopoesia, or personification,

as speaking and giving out from its own mouth a copy of itself. It may be supposed that this mode of interpretation is contradicted by Exo 34:28 : And He wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant; but that the pronoun He refers to the Lord, and not to Moses, is sufficiently proved by the parallel place, Deu 10:1-4 : At that time the Lord said unto me, Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first - and I will write on the tables the words that were in the first tables - and I hewed two tables of stone as at the first - And He wrote on the tables according to the first writing. This determines the business, and proves that God wrote the second as well as the first tables, and that the pronoun in Exo 34:28 refers to the Lord, and not to Moses. By this mode of interpretation all contradiction is removed. Houbigant imagines that the difficulty may be removed by supposing that God wrote the ten commandments, and that Moses wrote the other parts of the covenant from Exo 34:11 to Exo 34:26, and thus it might be said that both God and Moses wrote on the same tables. This is not an improbable case, and is left to the reader's consideration. See Clarke's note on Exo 34:27.

There still remains a controversy whether what are called the ten commandments were at all written on the first tables, those tables containing, according to some, only the terms of the covenant without the ten words, which are supposed to be added here for the first time. "The following is a general view of this subject. In Exodus 20 the ten commandments are given; and at the same time various political and ecclesiastical statutes, which are detailed in chapters 21, 22, and 23. To receive these, Moses had drawn near unto the thick darkness where God was, Exo 20:21, and having received them he came again with them to the people, according to their request before expressed, Exo 20:19 : Speak thou with us - but let not the Lord speak with us, lest we die, for they had been terrified by the manner in which God had uttered the ten commandments; see Exo 20:18. After this Moses, with Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and the seventy elders, went up to the mountain; and on his return he announced all these laws unto the people, Exo 24:1-3, etc., and they promised obedience. Still there is no word of the tables of stone. Then he wrote all in a book, Exo 24:4, which was called the book of the covenant, Exo 24:7. After this there was a second going up of Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and the seventy elders, Exo 24:9, when that glorious discovery of God mentioned in Exo 24:10, Exo 24:11 took place. After their coming down Moses is again commanded to go up; and God promises to give him tables of stone, containing a law and precepts, Exo 24:12. This is the first place these tables of stone are mentioned; and thus it appears that the ten commandments, and several other precepts, were given to and accepted by the people, and the covenant sacrifice offered, Exo 24:5, before the tables of stone were either written or mentioned." It is very likely that the commandments, laws, etc., were first published by the Lord in the hearing of the people; repeated afterwards by Moses; and the ten words or commandments, containing the sum and substance of the whole, afterwards written on the first tables of stone, to be kept for a record in the ark. These being broken, as is related Exo 32:19, Moses is commanded to hew out two tables like to the first, and bring them up to the mountain, that God might write upon them what he had written on the former, Exo 34:1. And that this was accordingly done, see the preceding part of this note.

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EXODUS 34:2 Be ready by the morning, and come up in the morning to Mount Sinai, and present yourself there to me on the top of the mountain.

EXODUS 34:3 No one shall come up with you; neither let anyone be seen throughout all the mountain; neither let the flocks nor herds feed before that mountain."

EXODUS 34:4 He chiselled two tablets of stone like the first; and Moses rose up early in the morning, and went up to Mount Sinai, as the LORD had commanded him, and took in his hand two stone tablets.

EXODUS 34:5 The LORD descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the LORD's name.

EXODUS 34:6 The LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, "The LORD! the LORD, a merciful and gracious God, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness and truth,

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#### Verse 6

And the Lord passed by - and proclaimed, The Lord, etc. - It would be much better to read this verse thus: "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed Jehovah," that is, showed Moses fully what was implied in this august name. Moses had requested God to show him his glory, (see the preceding chapter, Exo 33:18 (note)), and God promised to proclaim or fully declare the name Jehovah, (Exo 33:19); by which proclamation or interpretation Moses should see how God would "be gracious to whom he would be gracious," and how he would "be merciful to those to whom he would show mercy. Here therefore God fulfils that promise by proclaiming this name. It has long been a question, what is the meaning of the word יהוה Jehovah, Yehovah, Yehue, Yehveh, or Yeve, Jeue, Jao, lao, Jhueh, and Jove; for it has been as variously pronounced as it has been differently interpreted. Some have maintained that it is utterly inexplicable; these of course have offered no mode of interpretation. Others say that it implies the essence of the Divine nature. Others, that it expresses the doctrine of the Trinity connected with the incarnation; the letter ' yod standing for the Father, ה he for the Son, and ו vau (the connecting particle) for the Holy Spirit: and they add that the ה he being repeated in the word, signifies the human nature united to the Divine in the incarnation. These speculations are calculated to give very little satisfaction. How strange is it that none of these learned men have discovered that God himself interprets this name in Exo 34:6, "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed יהוה Yehovah the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty." These words contain the proper interpretation of the venerable and glorious name Jehovah. But it will be necessary to consider them in detail.

The different names in this and the following verse have been considered as so many attributes of the Divine nature. Commentators divide them into eleven, thus: -

1. יהוה Jehovah.
2. אל EL, the strong or mighty God.
3. רחום Rachum, the merciful Being, who is full of tenderness and compassion.
4. חנון Channun, the gracious One; he whose nature is goodness itself; the loving God.
5. ארך אפים Erech Appayim, long-suffering; the Being who, because of his goodness and tenderness, is not easily irritated, but suffers long and is kind.
6. רב Rab, the great or mighty One.
7. חסד Chesed, the bountiful Being; he who is exuberant in his beneficence.

8. אמת Emeth, the truth or true One; he alone who can neither deceive nor be deceived, who is the fountain of truth, and from whom all wisdom and knowledge must be derived.

9. נצר חסד Notser Chesed, the preserver of bountifulness; he whose beneficence never ends, keeping mercy for thousands of generations, showing compassion and mercy while the world endures.

10. נשא עון ופשע וחטאה Nose avon vaphesha vechattaah, he who bears away iniquity and transgression and sin: properly, the Redeemer, the Pardoner, the Forgiver; the Being whose prerogative alone it is to forgive sin and save the soul. נקה לא (נקה) לו (Nakkeh lo yentakkeh, the righteous Judge, who distributes justice with an impartial hand, with whom no innocent person can ever be condemned.

11. פקד עון Poked avon, etc.; he who visits iniquity, who punishes transgressors, and from whose justice no sinner can escape. The God of retributive and vindictive justice.

These eleven attributes, as they have been termed, are all included in the name Jehovah, and are, as we have before seen, the proper interpretation of it; but the meaning of several of these words has been variously understood.

EXODUS 34:7 keeping loving kindness for thousands, forgiving iniquity and disobedience and sin; and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the children's children, on the third and on the fourth generation."

#### Verse 7

That will by no means clear the guilty - This last clause is rather difficult; literally translated it signifies, in clearing he will not clear. But the Samaritan, reading לו lo, to him, instead of the negative לא lo, not, renders the clause thus: With whom the innocent shall be innocent; i.e., an innocent or holy person shall never be treated as if he were a transgressor, by this just and holy God. The Arabic version has it, He justifies and is not justified; and the Septuagint is nearly as our English text, και ου καθαρει τον ενοχον, and he doth not purify the guilty. The Alexandrian copy of the Septuagint, edited by Dr. Grabe, has και τον ενοχον καθαρισμω ου καθαρει, and the guilty he will not cleanse with a purification-offering. The Coptic is to the same purpose. The Vulgate is a paraphrase: nullusque apud te per se innocens est, "and no person is innocent by or of himself before thee." This gives a sound theological sense, stating a great truth, That no man can make an atonement for his own sins, or purify his own heart; and that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.

EXODUS 34:8 Moses hurried and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped.

EXODUS 34:9 He said, "If now I have found favour in your sight, Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us; although this is a stiff-necked people; pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance."

#### Verse 9

O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us - The original is not יהוה Jehovah, but אדני Adonai in both these places, and seems to refer particularly to the Angel of the Covenant, the Messiah. See Clarke's note on Gen 15:8.

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EXODUS 34:10 He said, "Behold, I make a covenant: before all your people I will do marvels, such as have not been worked in all the earth, nor in any nation; and all the people among which you are shall see the work of the LORD; for it is an awesome thing that I do with you.

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#### Verse 10

I will do marvels - This seems to refer to what God did in putting them in possession of the land of Canaan, causing the walls of Jericho to fall down; making the sun and moon to stand still, etc. And thus God made his covenant with them; binding himself to put them in possession of the promised land, and binding them to observe the precepts laid down in the following verses, from Exodus 34:11-26 inclusive.

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EXODUS 34:11 Observe that which I command you this day. Behold, I drive out before you the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite.

EXODUS 34:12 Be careful, lest you make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land where you are going, lest it be for a snare in your midst:

EXODUS 34:13 but you shall break down their altars, and dash in pieces their pillars, and you shall cut down their Asherah poles;

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#### Verse 13

Ye shall destroy their images - See the subjects of this and all the following verses, to Exo 34:28, treated at large in the notes on Exodus 23 (note).

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EXODUS 34:14 for you shall worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God.

EXODUS 34:15 "Don't make a covenant with the inhabitants of the land, lest they play the prostitute after their gods, and sacrifice to their gods, and one call you and you eat of his sacrifice;

EXODUS 34:16 and you take of their daughters to your sons, and their daughters play the prostitute after their gods, and make your sons play the prostitute after their gods.

EXODUS 34:17 "You shall make no cast idols for yourselves.

EXODUS 34:18 "You shall keep the feast of unleavened bread. Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, as I commanded you, at the time appointed in the month Abib; for in the month Abib you came out of Egypt.

EXODUS 34:19 "All that opens the womb is mine; and all your livestock that is male, the firstborn of cow and sheep.

EXODUS 34:20 The firstborn of a donkey you shall redeem with a lamb: and if you will not redeem it, then you shall break its neck. All the firstborn of your sons you shall redeem. No one shall appear before me empty.

EXODUS 34:21 "Six days you shall work, but on the seventh day you shall rest: in ploughing time and in harvest you shall rest.

#### Verse 21

In earing time and in harvest thou shalt rest - This commandment is worthy of especial note; many break the Sabbath on the pretense of absolute necessity, because, if in harvest time the weather happens to be what is called bad, and the Sabbath day be fair and fine, they judge it perfectly lawful to employ that day in endeavoring to save the fruits of the field, and think that the goodness of the day beyond the preceding, is an indication from Providence that it should be thus employed. But is not the above command pointed directly against this? I have known this law often broken on this pretense, and have never been able to discover a single instance where the persons who acted thus succeeded one whit better than their more conscientious neighbors, who availed themselves of no such favorable circumstances, being determined to keep God's law, even to the prejudice of their secular interests; but no man ever yet ultimately suffered loss by a conscientious attachment to his duty to God. He who is willing and obedient, shall eat the good of the land; but God will ever distinguish those in his providence who respect his commandments.

EXODUS 34:22 "You shall observe the feast of weeks with the first fruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of harvest at the year's end.

EXODUS 34:23 Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD, the God of Israel.

EXODUS 34:24 For I will drive out nations before you and enlarge your borders; neither shall any man desire your land when you go up to appear before the LORD, your God, three times in the year.

#### Verse 24

Neither shall any man desire thy land - What a manifest proof was this of the power and particular providence of God! How easy would it have been for the surrounding nations to have taken possession of the whole Israelitish land, with all their fenced cities, when there were none left to protect them but women and children! Was not this a standing proof of the Divine origin of their religion, and a barrier which no deistical mind could possibly surmount! Thrice every year did God work an especial miracle for the protection of his people; controlling even the very desires of their enemies, that they might not so much as meditate evil against them. They who have God for their protector have a sure refuge; and how true is the proverb, The path of duty is the way of safety! While these people went up to Jerusalem to keep the Lord's ordinances, he kept their families in peace, and their land in safety.

EXODUS 34:25 "You shall not offer the blood of my sacrifice with leavened bread; neither shall the sacrifice of the feast of the Passover be left to the morning.

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Verse 25

The blood of my sacrifice - That is, the paschal lamb. See Clarke on Exo 23:18 (note).

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EXODUS 34:26 "You shall bring the first of the first fruits of your ground to the house of the LORD your God.

"You shall not boil a young goat in its mother's milk."

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Verse 26

Thou shalt not seethe a kid in his mother's milk - See this amply considered Exo 23:19 (note).

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EXODUS 34:27 The LORD said to Moses, "Write you these words: for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel."

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Verse 27

Write thou these words - Either a transcript of the whole law now delivered, or the words included from Exo 34:11 to Exo 34:26. God certainly wrote the ten words on both sets of tables. Moses either wrote a transcript of these and the accompanying precepts for the use of the people, or he wrote the precepts themselves in addition to the ten commandments which were written by the finger of God. See Clarke on Exo 34:1 (note). Allowing this mode of interpretation, the accompanying precepts were, probably, what was written on the back side of the tables by Moses; the ten commandments, what were written on the front by the finger of Jehovah: for we must pay but little attention to the supposition of the rabbins, that the letters on each table were cut through the stone, so as to be legible on each side. See Clarke on Exo 32:15 (note).

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EXODUS 34:28 He was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he neither ate bread, nor drank water. He wrote on the tablets the words of the covenant, the ten commandments.

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Verse 28

Forty days and forty nights - See Clarke's note on Exo 24:18.

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EXODUS 34:29 When Moses came down from Mount Sinai with the two tablets of the testimony in Moses' hand, when he came down from the mountain, Moses didn't know that the skin of his face shone by reason of his speaking with him.

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 Verse 29

The skin of his face shone - קָרַן karan, was horned: having been long in familiar intercourse with his Maker, his flesh, as well as his soul, was penetrated with the effulgence of the Divine glory, and his looks expressed the light and life which dwelt within. Probably Moses appeared now as he did when, in our Lord's transfiguration, he was seen with Elijah on the mount, Matthew 17. As the original word קָרַן karan signifies to shine out, to dart forth, as horns on the head of an animal, or rays of light reflected from a polished surface, we may suppose that the heavenly glory which filled the soul of this holy man darted out from his face in coruscations, in that manner in which light is generally represented. The Vulgate renders the passage, *et ignorabat quod cornuta esset facies sua*, "and he did not know that his face was horned;" which version, misunderstood, has induced painters in general to represent Moses with two very large horns, one proceeding from each temple. But we might naturally ask, while they were indulging themselves in such fancies, why only two horns? for it is very likely that there were hundreds of these radiations, proceeding at once from the face of Moses. It was no doubt from this very circumstance that almost all the nations of the world who have heard of this transaction, have agreed in representing those men to whom they attributed extraordinary sanctity, and whom they supposed to have had familiar intercourse with the Deity, with a lucid nimbus or glory round their heads. This has prevailed both in the east and in the west; not only the Greek and Roman saints, or eminent persons, are thus represented, but those also among the Mohammedans, Hindoos, and Chinese.

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EXODUS 34:30 When Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come near him.

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 Verse 30

They were afraid to come nigh him - A sight of his face alarmed them; their consciences were still guilty from their late transgression, and they had not yet received the atonement. The very appearance of superior sanctity often awes the guilty into respect.

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EXODUS 34:31 Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned to him; and Moses spoke to them.

EXODUS 34:32 Afterward all the children of Israel came near, and he gave them all of the commandments that the LORD had spoken with him on Mount Sinai.

EXODUS 34:33 When Moses was done speaking with them, he put a veil on his face.

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 Verse 33

And till Moses had done speaking - The meaning of the verse appears to be this: As often as Moses spoke in public to the people, he put the veil on his face, because they could not bear to look on the brightness of his countenance; but when he entered into the tabernacle to converse with the Lord, he removed this veil, Exo 34:34. St. Paul, 2Cor 3:7, etc., makes a very important use of the



transactions recorded in this place. He represents the brightness of the face of Moses as emblematical of the glory or excellence of that dispensation; but he shows that however glorious or excellent that was, it had no glory when compared with the superior excellence of the Gospel. As Moses was glorious in the eyes of the Israelites, but that glory was absorbed and lost in the splendor of God when he entered into the tabernacle, or went to meet the Lord upon the mount; so the brightness and excellence of the Mosaic dispensation are eclipsed and absorbed in the transcendent brightness or excellence of the Gospel of Christ. One was the shadow, the other is the substance. One showed Sin in its exceeding sinfulness, together with the justice and immaculate purity of God; but, in and of itself, made no provision for pardon or sanctification. The other exhibits Jesus, the Lamb of God, typified by all the sacrifices under the law, putting away sin by the sacrifice of himself, reconciling God to man and man to God, diffusing his Spirit through the souls of believers, and cleansing the very thoughts of their hearts by his inspiration, and causing them to perfect holiness in the fear of God. The one seems to shut heaven against mankind, because by the law was the knowledge, not the cure, of Sin; the other opens the kingdom of heaven to all believers. The former was a ministration of death, the latter a dispensation of life. The former ministered terror, so that even the high priest was afraid to approach, the people withdrew and stood afar off, and even Moses, the mediator of it, exceedingly feared and trembled; by the latter we have boldness to enter into the holiest through the blood of Jesus, who is the end of the law for righteousness - justification, to every one that believeth. The former gives a partial view of the Divine nature; the latter shows God as he is, "Full orb'd, in his whole round of rays complete."

The apostle farther considers the veil on the face of Moses, as being emblematical of the metaphorical nature of the different rites and ceremonies of the Mosaic dispensation, each covering some spiritual meaning or a spiritual subject; and that the Jews did not lift the veil to penetrate the spiritual sense, and did not look to the end of the commandment, which was to be abolished, but rested in the letter or literal meaning, which conferred neither light nor life.

He considers the veil also as being emblematical of that state of intellectual darkness into which the Jewish people, by their rejection of the Gospel, were plunged, and from which they have never yet been recovered. When a Jew, even at the present day, reads the law in the synagogue, he puts over his head an oblong woollen veil, with four tassels at the four corners, which is called the *taled* or *thalet*. This is a very remarkable circumstance, as it appears to be an emblem of the intellectual veil referred to by the apostle, which is still upon their hearts when Moses is read, and which prevents them from looking to the end of that which God designed should be abrogated, and which has been abolished by the introduction of the Gospel. The veil is upon their hearts, and prevents the light of the glory of God from shining into them; but we all, says the apostle, speaking of believers in Christ, with open face, without any veil, beholding as in a glass the glory of God, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord; 2Cor 3:18. Reader, dost thou know this excellence of the religion of Christ? Once thou wert darkness; art thou now light in the Lord? Art thou still under the letter that killeth, or under the Spirit that giveth life? Art thou a slave to sin or a servant of Christ? Is the veil on thy heart, or hast thou found redemption in his blood, the remission of sins? Knowest thou not these things? Then may God pity, enlighten, and save thee!

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EXODUS 34:34 But when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he took the veil off, until he came out; and he came out, and spoke to the children of Israel that which he was commanded.

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EXODUS 34:35 The children of Israel saw Moses' face, that the skin of Moses' face shone: and Moses put the veil on his face again, until he went in to speak with him.

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