

"Scripture Truth" Series—No. 1.

"FOR THIS CAUSE"

THE CHURCH: THE BRIDE OF THE LAMB

"THIS IS
A GREAT MYSTERY
BUT I SPEAK CONCERNING
CHRIST AND THE CHURCH"

Ephesians v. 32.

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“BEHOLD THE BRIDEGROOM”

The End of the Voyage.—The Holy Spirit's Chief Work.

“*Be ye also ready.*”—Luke xii. 40.

AS the mist lifted from the horizon, our port came into view ; rising up from the sea the Table Mountain reared its head to the sky and Capetown stretched itself out at the foot of it, as though proudly secure beneath the shadow of a mighty protector. Most of us were glad that we had reached the end of the voyage, but there were two of our fellow passengers who interested me more than the rest, and whose feelings^{men} as the good ship steamed into the bay, must have been as different as it was possible for them to be. One was a bride-to-be, the other a criminal, in charge of the police. The bride was eager and expectant as she leaned over the rail of the vessel and scanned the jetty through borrowed binoculars in search of the man she loved and trusted ; and it was easy to see when she had got sight of him, for the glasses were dropped suddenly and the handkerchief was waved excitedly. The criminal stood back from

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the crowd with the handcuffs upon his wrists, a dejected figure. The end of the voyage meant hopes realized, a husband, and gladness and home for the bride ; it meant a judge, and conviction, and punishment to follow for the criminal.

We are all moving on to the end of the voyage, the mists that veil the future will lift from our eyes soon. Shall we behold the Saviour as our heavenly Bridegroom ? Shall we in that hour come to the realization of *that blessed hope* ? Or shall we meet Him as the Judge, who with divine and inexorable justice will deal with our guilty lives and condemn them ? It must be one or the other. Those who have believed the gospel, who have come as sinners to the feet of the great Saviour, and there heard His voice of pardon, shall meet Him as the Bridegroom when He comes, but those who have refused His mercy, and loved *their sins* rather than God's salvation, shall meet Him as the Judge. There can be no escape from this ; whether living or dead they shall meet Him as the Judge, for “ He hath commanded us to preach and to testify that this is He who shall be judge of quick and dead.”

My book is for those who are saved, for those who can say the Son of God “ loved me and gave Himself for me.” I have good

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news for them, the best of news—it is that the Saviour, who died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and was buried, and rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures, and ascended to the right hand of God in the sight of His disciples, is coming again. Yes, Jesus is coming again, and you are to meet Him as the Bridegroom. The cry has gone forth, “Behold the Bridegroom, go ye out to meet Him.”

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S CHIEF WORK

“The Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me.”—John xv. 26.

Every one who has believed the gospel of our salvation has been sealed by the Holy Ghost (Eph. i. 13). He dwells in each one, and by His indwelling He has bound them all together into one indivisible body, and this Holy Ghost-indwelt body is to be the bride, the wife of the Lamb. This is really the subject of my book, and my desire in issuing it is that the hearts of many may be filled with hope, and be stirred up and eager for the end of the voyage, for the coming of the Bridegroom.

I have been asking myself why the blessed hope of the coming again of the Lord Jesus

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seems to move the hearts of Christians so little. Many believe it as a doctrine—they know that it must be so, because the Bible so clearly speaks of it, but that is all. It does not stir them and change them, they are not like unto men that wait for their Lord. What is the reason? I believe it is because the Holy Ghost is greatly hindered in His greatest work within them. He has been given to us, not in the first place to enable us to be free from the dominion of sin, or to give us power for service—He can and will do both—but there is something greater than these great things; they will be the natural consequence of His chief work in us if He is not hindered in it. What is that work? It is to make Christ supreme in the affections, to make Him everything to us. Let us learn this from the Lord's own words in the Gospel of John. He said, "But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and *bring all things to your remembrance whatsoever I have said unto you*" (chap. xiv. 26). And again, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, HE SHALL TESTIFY OF ME" (chap. xv. 26). And again, "Howbeit, when He, the Spirit

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of truth is come, He will guide you into all truth, for He shall not speak of Himself, but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak, and He will show you things to come. **HE SHALL GLORIFY ME :** *for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine : therefore said I, that He shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you* " (chap. xvi. 13, 14, 15).

In this little book, reference is made to Abraham's servant, who went into the distant land to bring back from it a wife for his master's son. The friends of the damsel besought him that she might remain with them for a little while. They were ready to acknowledge that it would be good for her to go, but they were against undue haste, they were not exactly enthusiastic about the matter, it was not all-important in their view of things. The servant's answer to their request was peremptory and final, "Hinder me not," he said. He would not loiter uselessly or waste his time in that distant land. The joy of his master and his master's son was before him ; and the supreme matter in his thoughts was to fulfil his mission faithfully. To them who were awaiting the success of his mission he would hasten the bride.

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Have we learnt that to gather out of the world a bride for Christ and to lead her home to Him is the supreme work of the Holy Ghost? If those who are saved have more heart for the world and for earthly things, than they have for the Lord and His things, the Holy Ghost is hindered in His great work. If we are inclined to loiter on the homeward way, or if going forth to meet the Bridegroom is not the all-important thing with us, we might well hear a grieved Holy Spirit saying to us, “Hinder Me not.” We cannot separate the bright hope of the coming again of the Lord Jesus from the work of the Holy Spirit within us ; we shall not be eager to see Him as He is, if we have not ears to hear what the Spirit has to say to us. He has come to :—

“Speak of Jesus and His love,
Passing all bounds of human thought.”

He has come to unfold the glories of the Son of God to our souls. He wants our whole hearts for Christ and is delighted when He gets them ; He is grieved and hindered when He does not.

It is remarkable that the last mention of the Holy Spirit in Holy Scripture is in the last chapter of the Bible, where we read, “The Spirit and the bride say, Come.” It shows

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us the end and the climax of the Spirit's work. Here we have “the unity of the Spirit” in practical manifestation, for here we see the hearts of the saints bound together in one great desire for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. For this the Spirit of God is labouring. He is taking the things of Christ and showing them to the saints of God, and in this way He is tuning their hearts into full unison with His own, so that the Lamb may hear at last the music of this prayer from the heart of the bride, “EVEN SO, COME, LORD JESUS.”

THE LORD'S TRIPLE CLAIM.

"Myrrh and aloes, cassia are all thy garments ; out of the ivory palaces, stringed instruments have made thee glad."—Psalm xlv. 8 (J. N. Darby's New Translation).

The Grace that Meets our Need.—The Glory of His Person.—His Suffering Love.

"We love Him because He first loved us."

OF old it was commanded, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might," and though our Lord's claim upon us is now not one whit less than that, nor could He be satisfied with anything less, it is not by commandment that He secures the love of His church or of any heart in it. Love cannot be secured in that way, as man's sad history, in every phase of it, since Sinai, declares. No, He has another way, and a way that cannot fail—He gains our love by disclosing His own ; He gains His desire to have us for Himself by showing Himself to us, as brighter and better than the brightest and best that would be a rival to His claim.

His claim to our love has a triple basis : He claims us because He can meet all our needs by His grace ; He claims us because of what He is in His own glorious person ;

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He claims us because of the love that He has for us, love that led Him into the deep suffering of death on our behalf. Psalm xlv. declares these three great things, and though this Psalm may have the earthly bride in view in the coming glorious millenium, yet we believe we are fully justified in using it for our present purpose, for it is full of Christ. It is Himself—and He showed His disciples things concerning Himself out of the Psalms. The end in view is that the fair daughter of a distant land might be attracted to the great King, for His joy and glory. Hence He is spoken of to her in glowing words that can apply to none but Christ.

“ Grace is poured into His lips ”—He speaks in tender tones to the heart, as many proved when He was here upon earth, when He spoke words in season to them that were weary : the woman by the well of Sychar, for instance, and she who wept at His feet in Simon's house, and the widow who mourned her only son, and the palsied man who groaned beneath a load of sin, and Zaccheus, and the children, and a host of others—all these found Him to be fairer than the children of men, because of the grace that was poured into His lips. And has our experience been less blessed ? We have heard His voice speaking in words of pardon

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and peace to our once troubled and burdened hearts. Grace has poured out of His lips for us. Yes, we know from blessed experience what grace is His, we have heard His voice saying :

“ Lay down, thou weary one,
Lay down, thy head upon My breast.”

THE GLORY OF HIS PERSON

But He is glorious as well as gracious. His arrows are sharp in the heart of the King's enemies. He stands out in His glory above every name that is named. He will be triumphant over all that hate Him, even as He is tender to all who hear His voice and love Him. This also must be declared of Him, that we may know that His grace to us is not weakness. In His majesty He will ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness—three great attributes that will show themselves when He comes forth to judge, but which were not wanting when He stooped to save us.

He is as great as He is gracious, for He is God, with an everlasting throne, and nothing could exceed the significance of this ; for if He is God, His claim must be supreme. It stands before all other claims. The claims of father, mother, brother, sister, husband, wife, children, and self also, must recede into

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the background when He puts in His claim. None other than God has a right to supersede these relationships which He has ordained, but He who would win our undivided hearts, is God, whose throne is for ever and ever, and to His claim we must yield.

But the final appeal is more touching than all ; verse 8 of our Psalm is given in J. N. Darby's New Translation, as “ Myrrh and aloes and cassia are all thy garments ; out of the ivory palaces, stringed instruments have made thee glad.” These fragrant spices which clothe our Saviour like a garment stir our memories ; they carry us back to the time when instead of glory and honour, a life of sorrow was His. It is of this that the myrrh speaks. The wise men from the east were divinely guided when they gave their gifts to Him as He lay in His mother's arms in the house—gold, frankincense and myrrh. The gold spoke of His divine glory ; the frankincense of His holy, fragrant humanity ; and the myrrh of His suffering even unto death. They represented the way that He took—three great steps, if you will :—

“ From Godhead's fullest glory,
Down to Calvary's depth of woe.”

We look back to it now and it is the fragrance of the myrrh that greets us and attracts us.

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We might remain unmoved in the presence of His majesty, but whose heart will not melt in the presence of His suffering ?

HIS SUFFERING LOVE

The aloes, the central spice of the three, speaks of the love that lay behind all the suffering. It was more fragrant and prized than all other spices ; nothing to be compared with it ever came out of the mysterious East. I found in an old dictionary the following account of it : " It was the inner wood, or heart, of a tree that grew in India, exceedingly fragrant, worth more than its weight in gold, and said to be a sovereign cordial for all fainting fits and nervous disorders." If the learned compiler of that dictionary had intended to give a description of the love of Christ he could not have succeeded better.

The aloes tree had to be cleft to its heart if the fragrance of it was to be disclosed, and it was on the cross of Calvary, when cleft by the sword of God's judgment against our sin, that the heart of Christ disclosed all the greatness of His love, and there is nothing in the universe more fragrant than that—the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge. Further, *His love is far more precious than gold.* If the world could give all the

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gold it possesses and offer it to us in exchange for the knowledge of the love of Christ, would any of us exchange that knowledge for that great price? We would not, for His love is more precious than gold. It cannot be purchased, but it has poured out its priceless wealth without reserve for us. *It is said to be a sovereign remedy for all fainting fits.* Do we grow weary and faint in the pilgrim way that leads us to our glorious destiny—the marriage of the Lamb? There is a sovereign remedy for such a state, let us lean upon the arm and heart of our Beloved and taste afresh the cordial of His love.

Further, *it is the sovereign remedy for all nervous disorders.* It is the *united love of His church* that the Lord looks for, but these are difficult days in which the devil has succeeded in sadly dividing the hearts of His loved ones. There seems to be an epidemic of what might well be called spiritual neurasthenia. The symptoms scarcely need to be described—they are irritability, hypersensitiveness, fault-finding, and strife, and where these things are there may be sighing and crying in secret, but there is no united crying for the coming of the Lord. What is the remedy? The aloes was the cordial for nervous disorders. This is

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the remedy—the suffering love of Christ, one full draught of this love is enough to allay the fever, sooth the spirit, throw things into their true proportion and perspective, and heal every sore and breach.

The meaning of the cassia is not so easy to determine, but it may set forth that same love that brought the Lord down from the glory into a life of suffering, and down into death and deep darkness, come forth now in resurrection, unchanged by all that it has suffered. This I believe it to be. "Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them to the end," and will for ever more. He has come forth in resurrection and shows Himself to us now in the glory, yet fragrant with all the love that led Him to die.

What answer could there be to such a presentation of Himself? Only one. He must be made glad by the music of the stringed instruments out of the ivory palaces. Our hearts are such palaces in His reckoning—He desires to make them His dwelling-places. Do we welcome Him with gladness and praise, as Zacheus did when the Lord said to him, "To-day I must abide at thy house"? He looks for this, it is His due. "In psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord."

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But while our Lord and Saviour rightly expects that we should open our hearts to Him, this is not the end that He has in view. Nothing will satisfy Him but the marriage day. He has prepared a home for His bride ; His heart is opened wide for her. So there comes the appeal, “ Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear : forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house : so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty : for He is thy Lord ; and worship thou Him.”

“ What needest thou with thy tribe’s black
tents,
When thou hast the red pavilion of My
heart.”

In the New Testament also it is the presentation of Himself that wins the desired response. In Revelation xxii. He makes a direct and personal appeal to us all : “ I Jesus . . . am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning Star.” His name—His precious name—like ointment poured forth, revives our affections ; His glory commands our admiration ; His beauty as the morning Star awakens our hopes, and in unison with the Spirit we can answer this revelation of Himself by the one word He desires to hear—“ Come ”—“ Even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

ESPOUSED TO ONE HUSBAND

"I am jealous over you with godly jealousy : for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ."—
2 Corinthians xi. 2.

The Espousals.—The Spring-time of Love.—The Answer of the Great Lover.—Christ Everything.

THE ESPOUSALS

WHAT a change it makes in a Christian's outlook when he discovers the fact that he is loved by the Lord and that he is precious and desirable in His sight. When this knowledge comes to us—and it is true of everyone who has owned the Lord's claims and trusted Him as Saviour—we are lifted on to a new plane in our thoughts of Him. We shall not think less of all that He has done for us, instead, we shall begin to understand the greatness of it better. We shall still be grateful for all His ways of grace with us, and shall often tell Him of them, but rest of heart in His love will be the dominant thing, and, what goes along with that, love to Him in response to it. We shall become conscious that we stand in a hitherto undreamt-of relationship to Him, a relationship in which mutual love has the chief place. This is a day of our espousals. Can we

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reverently contemplate the meaning of this ?

This is not mere poetic imagery, for we read in the Scriptures, and wonderful are the words, "*I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ*" (2 Cor. xi. 2). What does this mean? It can only have one meaning. The redeemed of the Lord have been affianced to Him. He loves us and has chosen us for Himself. He has made the appeal of love to us, He has said, "I want you for myself." And we have said, "Yes," to Him. It was a happy day for us when our sins were washed away and our souls were saved and we got a sure hope of heaven, but greater than all, and the end that the Lord had in view in it all, we were then espoused to Christ, to be for Him alone, the joy and rejoicing of His heart. The marriage day has not yet come, but it is coming, and we may read about it in Ephesians v. 25-27 and Revelation xix. 7-9.

These are the days of the espousals, and we have been espoused to a PERSON WHO LOVES US and has proved His love. It is on my heart to press this, for I fear that the Lord Jesus is not a living, bright reality to many Christians. "Christian Science" is spreading, and though no true child of God could follow the delusions of that cult, yet

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the spirit of it is abroad—an evil, seducing and anti-christian spirit, that would persuade us that Christ is only a divine principle in the lives of men, and not our living Saviour, Jesus our Lord, who can fill and satisfy the heart. “What matters it,” say some, “whether Jesus rose from the dead or not, so long as His spirit permeates society?” And Satan beguiles many unwary souls by this sort of thing, and the very heart is taken out of their faith, and the Lord Jesus becomes to them intangible, vague, impersonal, shadowy, and distant.

But we know that Christ is a living Person, who loves us, and delights in us and in our love to Him, and that He gave Himself for us that He might wholly possess us. He can be satisfied with nothing less than our love. The greatest joy we can give to Him is to love Him, and to yield up ourselves to Him in full surrender. The greatest work we can do is to keep ourselves for Him. This is what it means to be a chaste virgin for Christ.

It may be, that like many another, you have feared His imperious and exclusive claim. You may have felt, as Francis Thompson expressed it in his striking poem :

“For, though I knew His love who followèd,
Yet was I sore adread—
Lest having Him, I must have naught beside.”

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And so you fled from Him, but :—

“ Fear wist not to evade as Love wist to pursue.”

You tried elsewhere for satisfaction, but nothing blest your thirsting mouth, and still He followed you :—

“ With unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic majesty ;
And passed those noisèd feet
A voice came yet more fleet—
Lo ! naught contents thee, who content'st
not Me.”

You could not evade Him and now you are His for ever. Blessed be the Lord for the persistency of His love. Now His joy in us and ours in Him lies in our being wholly for Him.

THE SPRING-TIME OF LOVE

“ I am the rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley.”

The joy and beauty of this relationship to Christ in which we stand is illustrated for us in the Song of Solomon. Every chapter is fragrant with love, and if we read it, and are taught by the Holy Spirit as we read it, we shall find that the language, though figurative, describes the Lord's delight in us and ours in Him, when we know Him in this sweet relationship. Take the second chapter. There the bride-to-be has discovered that she

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is beloved, and that the one who loves her delights in her. She is precious to him ; this she has learnt, and she exclaims : "*I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valley.*" These were not high thoughts of herself. The rose of Sharon was not the queen of summer as is the gorgeous flower that we call the rose ; more likely than not it was the narcissus, a flower of the field, a fragrant flower no doubt, but not obtrusive and gay ; and the lily of the valley grew in lowly places and out of sight, and had to be sought for by the one who valued it. **BUT THESE WERE SPRING FLOWERS,** and the fragrant hope of spring was in them. As they bloomed in the valleys they told of a time when the summer's glory would crown the hills. They figured forth the beginnings of love, but they were prophetic of the time when love would come to its fulness on the marriage day.

Upon this maiden the king's choice had fallen, she was to share his crown and kingdom ; but not of this does she think and sing, for she is inwardly conscious of something greater than all the display of glory that was to come to her ; the king loved her, this was her joy ; she was precious to him, this filled her with a glad surprise ; and without fear or reserve, she tells out to him what she knows

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she is to him. Have we reached this point in our secret experience of soul with the Lord? We can only learn it as we are near to Him, for who could teach us this but Himself? This is the beginning of love, it is "first love." It is more than what He has done for us, it is Himself who has done it. We do not lose the benefaction, but we have the Benefactor. We are one with the Lord, for "*he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit*" (1 Cor. vi. 17). The freshness and the hope of the spring flowers are in this experience, and in it there is the pledge that the day will surely come when He will present the church to Himself, "a glorious church not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

THE ANSWER OF THE GREAT LOVER

"As the lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters."

But hear the answer that this great lover gives to his chosen bride. He takes up her own words, but he adds to them. He adorns them and makes them glow with his love. He makes them the opportunity of showing her the great manifestation of his great love for her, and so increases her confidence in him and enlarges her affection for him.

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“ As the lily among the thorns, so is my love among the daughters,” he says.

Let us get at the heart of this, and understand what it means for us in our relationship with the Lord. Dr. Thompson in his well-known book, *The Land and the Book*, says of this lily : “ Our flower delights most in the valleys ; but it is found also on the mountains. *It grows among thorns, and I have sadly lacerated my hands in extricating it from them.*” Does the fact that the lily grew among the thorns need any interpretation ? If we can say, “ I am the lily of the valley,” if we know that we are this to Christ, His answer is, “ Yes, but the lily among thorns.” He would have us remember that it cost Him something to secure us for Himself. How lacerated was He in extricating us from the tangled thorns in which we grew ! He showed to His disciples *His hands and side, when He came to them in resurrection.* Nothing could drive the cold unbelief from the soul of Thomas, but a sight of His wounds. And He would not that we should forget them. It is as though He said to us :—

“ Behold with what labour I won thee,
Behold in My hands and My feet,
The tale of My measureless sorrow,
The love that made suffering sweet.”

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His body was lacerated, but His soul was lacerated, too, for before He could have His lilies for Himself and extricate them from the thorns, His soul had to be made an offering for sin. Can anything move the hard heart like this? We do not love Him and adore Him because the brightest crowns of heaven shine upon His worthy brow; we are glad that He is crowned with glory, but it is not that that won our hearts. We love Him because that same brow was crowned with thorns, and because He was put to shame upon a cross when He came forth in His great love to tread the thorny way to save us for Himself. To the utmost His love was tried, and it stood the test. It passeth knowledge. When we realize this, and the wonder of it fills our souls, we do not say, “ Thank God WE are saved ! ” setting the “ we ” in the centre of our sentence and thoughts; but we say, “ *Oh, what it cost HIM to make us His.* ” He is the centre of our sentence, and relief and thanksgiving deepen into wonder and worship.

The suffering is all past but His love abides, and the suffering will not be forgotten, for when the great marriage day comes, and all heaven rejoices in the gladness of it, it is the *marriage of the LAMB* that is celebrated (Rev. xix.), and the bride is the

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LAMB'S WIFE (Rev. xxi.). Thus the sorrows of the cross and the joys of love's consummation are joined the one to the other ; the Lamb who suffered will see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied on that great day. But while we wait for that day, the love of Christ is a present reality, and we who are espoused to Him may have the joy of communion with Him now, and constrained by His love, live not unto ourselves, but unto Him who died for us and rose again ; and for this He yearns.

If any heart has been indifferent to His yearnings and has been closed against Him, let His own words move and melt it now—
"Behold I stand at the door and knock. If any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me."

CHRIST EVERYTHING

"He brought me into his banqueting house and his banner over me was love."

In this communion of love the maiden responds to the king, not now to speak of herself, but of him who fills her thoughts. Her words are great words, and the music of pure love swells in them. *"As the apple tree among the trees of the wood,"* she

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says, “ *so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste. He brought me into his banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.* ” Have we so learnt Christ? If so our vagrant desires, our restlessness of spirit have ceased and we have found satisfaction and a great hope. It was thus with Mary of Bethany at the feet of Jesus, when she heard His word, and when she poured out her precious ointment upon Him ; it was thus with John, the beloved, when he leaned his head upon Jesus’ breast at supper ; and with Thomas, of the doubtful mind, when he cried, “ My Lord and my God ” ; and with Paul the Apostle when he exclaimed, “ The Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. ” What a blessed experience this is, and the more deeply it is known in its present joy, the more will the heart long for the day of presentation, for the marriage day. Then there will be no more need for watchfulness ; faithfulness to Christ in a hostile and seductive world will be called for no more. We shall have reached eternal rest.

We shall be beyond the reach of Satan’s beguilings then, but now there is nothing he hates more than this personal intimacy with and joy in Christ. Hence the fear expressed

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by the apostle in those words of warning :
"*But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from simplicity as to Christ.*" His purpose is to draw us away from this "first love." How often he succeeds to our shame, and we have to sing sadly :—

"Yet, Lord, alas what weakness,
Within myself I find ;
No infant's changing pleasure
Is like my wandering mind."

If the backsliding is not quickly arrested how soon we become neither "cold nor hot," a state of heart that is obnoxious to the Lord.

We would not willingly be untrue to Christ ; but Satan is subtle, and if we are to be kept from his snares we must depend upon and commune with our Lord. "*He brought me into his banqueting house, and his banner over me is love.*" To abide there is to abide in a safe place, and to be satisfied with Him.

"There all His gracious favour
May to our souls be known ;
And versed in this His goodness,
Our hopes HIMSELF shall crown."

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“ And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone ; I will make him an help meet for him.”—Genesis ii. 18.

“ And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, flesh of my flesh, she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man.”—Genesis ii. 23.

“ For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother and cleave unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.”—Ephesians v. 31.

The Deep Sleep.—The Help Meet.

IF we are to understand God's purposes we must not neglect any part of His Word. The Holy Scriptures are not so many loose fragments gathered together in a haphazard way, but one complete whole. “ No Scripture is of private interpretation,” which means that no Scripture stands alone ; each part has its connection with every other part. The beginning of Genesis finds its answer at the end of Revelation, and in the building of a help-meet for Adam there was foreshadowed the great purpose that was in the heart of God for the glory and joy of His

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beloved Son. Adam was made in the image and likeness of God, and was set in dominion over this lower creation to represent God to it. The greatness of his mind was proved in that when God brought the animals to him he was able to give each a name that described its character. God had crowned him with glory and honour and set him over the works of His hands. But he had a heart as well as a mind, and none of the animals nor all the power and glory with which he was crowned in Eden could satisfy his heart. Nothing could do this but a companion who could understand his love and reciprocate it. Hence God said, “It is not good for man to be alone, I will make a help-meet for him.” And with this in view God casts him into a deep sleep and took a rib from his side, and with it He built the woman, and when Adam awoke he said, “This is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh.” She was taken out of himself and she satisfied his heart. The New Testament tells us that Adam was a figure of Him that was to come, even Christ. He is to have universal dominion, for He has been set far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in that which is to come. In that place of glory and power

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He must have His help-meet, who shall be more to Him than all the glory, one who shall satisfy His heart for evermore. “*For this cause,*” says the Word of God, “*shall a man leave his father and mother and be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh.*” For this cause, that He might have the church for Himself, and one with Himself, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, Christ went down into death, so great was His love :—

“ Down beneath those sunless waters,
He from heaven has passed ;
He has found His heart's desire,
Found His pearl at last.”

“ *For this cause* He died dishonoured,
As a felon dies ;
For His church, the pearl all priceless,
In the Saviour's eyes.”

There was no other way by which He could secure His church for Himself, for the power of death had to be broken that His loved ones might be free. As Eve was taken out of Adam when he was thrown into the deep sleep, so the church has sprung out of the death of Christ. “This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”

THE FATHER'S PURPOSE

"And Abraham rose up early in the morning . . . and Isaac . . ."—Genesis xxii.

The Early Morning : The Father and the Son.—The Heat of the Day : The Faithful Servant.—The Evening : The Meeting of the Bridegroom and the Bride.

THE EARLY MORNING

THE first time that LOVE is mentioned in the Bible is here : *"Take now thy son, thine only son, Isaac, whom thou lovest."* It is the love of the father to the son, and it typifies for us the first and the greatest of all loves, and the source from which all true love has flowed, the love of God the Father for His Son. This is a most wonderful theme, and we must consider it, for we should never have been brought into these most blessed relations to the Lord in which we now stand, and are yet to stand, apart from it. I believe that we may justly say, that all the grace that has come to us, as those who are espoused to Christ, and all the glory that we hope for, as those who are to be part of His bride, find their spring in this, "the Father loveth the Son and hath given all things into His hand" (John iii. 35). This love is shown to us very clearly in John's Gospel where Jesus is called "the only-begotten Son which is in

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the bosom of the Father," and where, when speaking to His Father, He said, "Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (chap. xvii.). He was worthy to be loved by the Father, and this was surely what the Father meant when twice He declared from the excellent glory, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." Out of this love of the Father to the Son has sprung up this great purpose for the joy and glory of the loved One, which we are considering, and for the fulfilment of this purpose *God had to awaken into activity*, if we may be permitted with the greatest reverence to use such an expression in regard to Him. This is set before us in figure when Abraham rose up early in the morning, to lead his only son, Isaac, whom he loved, to the place of sacrifice.

THE EARLY MORNING is the beginning of the day's work AND THE EVENTIDE sees its completion or failure. The day of God's work for the fulfilment of His great purpose began when His beloved Son, the Word, "became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth." John, the forerunner, knew what this coming of the beloved Son meant, for he said to his disciples, "I am sent before Him. He that hath the bride is the Bridegroom: but the friend of the

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Bridegroom, which standeth and heareth Him, rejoiceth greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, I must decrease." John may not have looked beyond Israel when he spoke, but we may take up His words and read them in the light of the full revelation of the truth.

How bright was the dawning of that day! The true light then shone in its gracious fulness for every man. How the hearts of men ought to have thrilled to it! What expectations ought to have awakened within them! Alas, the darkness did not comprehend the light, and the world did not know its Maker, but that did not turn the Father from His purpose. The day of His great work had begun, and He could do no other than work while it was day. The Father and the Son had risen up and started forth on the journey that led to the place of sacrifice—Golgotha, for judgment and death and Satan's power lay between the morning and the eventide. We learn as we read John's Gospel, how the Father and the Son "went both of them together," in an absolute and indivisible oneness of purpose. This oneness is seen in the Lord's words, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work. . . . What things soever the Father doeth, these

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also doeth the Son likewise, for the Father loveth the Son, and showeth Him all things that He Himself doeth " (John v.).

The time came in the journey of Abraham and Isaac to the land of Moriah when the young men were left behind, and the wood for the burnt offering was laid upon Isaac ; and as we read the story we are reminded of the words of Jesus to His disciples, "*Behold the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered, every man to his own, and shall leave Me alone : and yet I am not alone, because the FATHER IS WITH ME*" (John xvi. 32) ; and then "*He, bearing His cross, went forth into a place called the place of a skull, which is called in the Hebrew, Golgotha.*" (chapter xix. 1). We who are parents may have some conception of what Abraham's feelings must have been as he walked with Isaac to the place of sacrifice, and as they communed together on the way, but what heart of man can conceive what it cost the Father, when in obedience to His will, His well-beloved went forth unflinchingly to death ; and when in their communings together on the way the Son said to the Father, "*Now is My soul troubled ; and what shall I say, Father, save Me from this hour ? but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify Thy*

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name.” There was an instant answer to that cry, not that the Lord Himself needed it, for His confidence in His Father's love was absolute, but for the people's sake, that they might know that that lonely Man whom they hated was heard and beloved by the Father in heaven.

Isaac was delivered from the uplifted knife and there suffered in his stead the ram caught by its horns in the thicket, but no substitute was found for God's beloved Son ; it was impossible that He could be delivered from the stroke of death. God's purpose must be realized and there was only way by which it could be, the Lamb of God must die, if ever the marriage of the Lamb was to take place ; and Jesus, the Son of God, was the Lamb of God.

We believe that we are right in saying that it was not far from the place to which Abraham led Isaac that Jesus suffered, and Abraham called that place Jehovah-Jireh—the mount of the Lord who sees and provides. The place was well and truly named, for we see at Golgotha how God, who saw the end from the beginning, provided a Lamb for Himself, and by the death of His Lamb laid an immovable foundation for eternal peace and joy and glory, and the fulfilment of all His will.

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How wonderfully the purpose of God unfolds in this story. Abraham had said to the young men, “*I and the lad will go yonder . . . and come again to you.*” He knew that He would not come back alone ; his faith laid hold upon God and he knew that He was able to raise up his son even from the dead, “from whence also he received him in a figure.” How blessed it is for us to know that the fact infinitely exceeds the figure, and the fact is that, “*Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father*” (Rom. vi. 4), and as the risen Son of God He could send His disciples that triumphant message, “*I ascend to My Father and your Father, to My God and your God.*” Beyond the suffering of death and the darkness of the grave we see the Father and Son moving on together to the great end that the Father has in view.

THE HEAT OF THE DAY

“*Thou shalt go unto my country and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac.*”—Genesis xxiv. 4.

This brings us to Genesis xxiv., where Abraham declared what was in his heart for Isaac's joy ; it was that he should have a

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bride worthy of his love to share all his wealth. She had to be brought from a far country, and a servant who could be trusted had to be sent to fetch her. In Abraham's own household there was such a servant, who, without any thought of himself, would carry out all Abraham's desire. I am not stretching the Scripture unduly when I say that this devoted, unselfish servant is a figure of the Holy Ghost : indeed, nothing could be clearer. The story teaches us the Father's purpose for the joy and glory of His beloved Son, the Risen Man, Christ Jesus, which will be brought to full realization by the work and power of the Holy Ghost. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost all have their part in this great matter.

It is an enthralling story. How well Abraham's servant carried out his mission, journeying through the heat of the day on his great quest ; how well and wisely he spoke of his master's son ; how charming was the grace of Rebekah, and how ready was her response to the servant's appeal. All these features in the figure are found in the great antitype of it. The Holy Ghost has come from the Father to bear witness to the blessedness and unsearchable riches of Christ, and to win hearts for Him. He has come to take of His things, and show them

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to us, and to glorify Him, as John xiv. 15, 16 shows us. He works within us to produce a response in our hearts to the attractiveness of God's beloved Son, that just as Rebekah was willing to leave her father's house and her own land and to go to Isaac whom she had not seen, so we may be made willing to turn from the world and choose Christ instead of it, and say in response to the demand, "Wilt thou go with this man?" "I will go." And thus it comes to pass that we are espoused to one husband that we may be presented as a chaste virgin to Christ. Happy indeed it is for us if this work of the Holy Ghost has been effectual in us, and if it can be said of us in regard to the Lord, "*Whom having not seen, ye love, in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*" (1 Peter i. 8).

THE EVENTIDE

The meeting of the Bridegroom and the Bride.

"*And Isaac went forth to meditate in the field at eventide, and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and behold, the camels were coming, and REBEKAH. . . .*"—Genesis xxiv. 63.

The day of these divine activities is drawing to its close, we are surely very near the

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eventide when the Lamb will meet His bride. And that hour fills His thoughts. The place that it has in the closing words of Scripture is significant. Three times over in the last chapter of the Bible our Lord says, "*I come quickly.*" It is true that two of these times have to do with the rewards that He will give to His faithful servants, and He will find a peculiar joy in this, but when that side of things has been dealt with in every phase of it, and He is free to allow the feelings of His heart to break out, without any question of gain or judgment, He says—"I JESUS . . . AM THE BRIGHT, AND MORNING STAR." This is the last presentation of Himself before He comes. It does not show Him in His majesty and power, with eyes as a flame of fire and feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace, and a sharp two-edged sword going out of His mouth. It is Himself, the Saviour, who in His measureless love went down into death for His bride ; it is Himself, so meek and gentle, so full of grace and truth ; it is Himself, the altogether lovely One, and the great Lover of His church. By this name we have come to know and adore and love Him. He presents Himself in this personal way, to stir the affections of His bride, and to make her cry in unison with the Spirit, "Come"

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(Rev. xxii. 16, 17). Then He gives one final word. The very last that He has addressed to His church, it is His final love-word to his espoused and longed-for bride. “ He which testifieth these things saith, ‘ SURELY, I COME QUICKLY.’ ” There can be but one right response to that word, and may it break forth from every one of our hearts, “ Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus.”

“ *And Isaac went out . . . at eventide . . . and behold the camels were coming, and Rebekah.* ” What joy awaits us when the fact that our story prefigures actually comes to pass, but what will the joy of our Lord be? Let us see how the Scripture puts it. “ *The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout.* ” It will be a shout of triumph and of joy—as I hope to show on another page—for then the time of waiting will be past, the day’s work will be finished, the eventide will be reached, the church completed, and the true Isaac will rest in His love for her. Father, Son and Holy Ghost will rejoice together as the Lamb sees of the travail of His soul and is satisfied.

Thus shall this acceptable time, this great day of grace reach its climax. There is joy in the presence of the angels of God as one by one those who have wandered afar from Him are reached by His grace and gathered

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in. And that joy has been continuous and ever increasing in its greatness since Pentecost, but here it comes to a fulness that cannot be exceeded, for here the object and aim of all the activities of the grace of God throughout this day of grace is reached, and the heart of the Triune God exults, and overflows with joy. That joy is shared by every heart within the universe of bliss, for we read : “ I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia : for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and give honour to Him : for the marriage of the Lamb is come and His wife hath made herself ready ” (Rev. xix. 6, 7).

THE CATCHING UP OF THE CHURCH

"For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord . . . the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."—1 Thessalonians iv. 15, 16, 17.

The Lord's Last Words.—The Law of Gravitation.—That Blessed Hope.

"They that are Christ's at His coming."

THE presentation of the church to Christ will take place in heaven, and of course it must be caught up into heaven for that great event, and further, that the Scripture may be fulfilled, He must come for it Himself. Moreover, it must be there in its completeness or it would not be a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing. This fact alone is enough to show how false is the doctrine which some hold of the "partial rapture" of the church. We may be sure that when the marriage of the Lamb takes place His wife will not be a partial or mutilated wife. Again we speak of the fact that the last words ever spoken

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by the Lord to His church are, “Surely I come quickly.” They show what a place His coming for His blood-bought church has in His thoughts. When He had communicated the whole revelation that God had given Him to His servant John, He added this last personal word of tender, yearning love, “I come quickly.” And surely that word goes directly to the heart, and calls for this response, “Even so, come, Lord Jesus”?

One of the strangest things in the church's history is that this great hope seems to have been entirely forgotten for centuries. These words which should have lived in the hearts of the church, seem to have been little treasured or understood. It is strange that even now they should affect so little those who know and understand them. Yet we have not to go far to find the solution of this strange thing. It is revealed in the Lord's words to the assembly at Ephesus, “I have against thee that thou hast left thy first love.” The church has backslidden and has ceased to watch, and though the cry, “Behold the Bridegroom cometh” has gone forth with the greatest clearness, the mass of believers continue to be indifferent, as though they understood not the meaning of that midnight cry, nor wished to. Yet the

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moment is drawing on when the Lord will fulfil His word, and will "descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel and the trump of God." That shout will be a shout of pent-up joy, that will burst from His heart and lips, because the time of waiting is over at last. It will be a shout of triumph and power, an assembling shout, that shall ring through heaven and earth and down into the grave; and in response to it, "the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." What an hour of triumph that will be!

The air is the seat of Satan's power now, he is the prince of the power of the air (Ephes. ii. 2). But there in the very seat of his power the Lord will meet His church. The powers of darkness will not prevent the meeting. How they will cower and tremble in complete defeat, as the triumphant Lord meets His triumphant church in the very region where they thought themselves supreme!

Unless we are prepared to argue that words do not mean what they stand for, or that the Lord uttered vain words when He gave this revelation to His servant Paul, we

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must believe that the moment is coming when the dead in Christ will be raised up, and with them millions of people, the whole of the blood-bought church, gathered out of every nation, tribe, and tongue, will be caught up from the earth to meet the Lord in the air, to be for ever with Him. They will disappear suddenly and completely from every place, condition and pursuit, in which they have lived, to be seen no more by the world until they return with Him to reign over the earth.

That this appears an impossible thing to the human mind unenlightened by the truth, we admit ; it is incredible to everything but faith ; and we are quite prepared to hear the scoffer contend that the law of gravitation would prevent such a thing. But by the Word of the Lord it is revealed to us, and faith lays hold of that and says, " With men it is impossible, but with God all things are possible." And what says the Word ? " The Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout," and the shout of the Lord is mightier than the law of gravitation, for in that shout will be the power by which He is able to subdue all things to Himself. The law of gravitation is a natural law, and controls natural bodies, and the scoffers overlook the fact that we are to be changed

in that hour of the Lord's triumph. Our natural bodies are to be transformed by His mighty power into bodies of glory, like unto His own glorious body, and what law will control them? Not any natural law, but the law of the glory. Natural laws for natural bodies, but the law of the glory for bodies of glory; and the law of the glory is that Christ is supreme, and that He will draw up to Himself everyone that is of Himself and like Himself.

This is that "*blessed hope*." It is not the improvement of the world, as men dream, for "evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Tim. iii. 13). It is not the conversion of the world by the gospel, for the Lord Himself asked the question, "When the Son of Man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?" (Luke xviii. 8). And when He does come back to the earth with His glorified saints He will not be welcomed by glad and rapturous multitudes, but "all tribes of the earth shall mourn" (Matt. xxiv. 30). "And all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him." It is not the universal revival of divine life and energy in Christendom, for "the love of many shall wax cold," and "the time shall come when they will not endure sound doctrine" (2 Tim. iv. 3), "when they

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shall have the form of godliness but deny the power " (2 Tim. iii. 5). This *blessed hope* is not centred in the world, or in Christendom, but in Christ ; it is the hope of His coming, it is centred in Himself—in "THE LORD JESUS CHRIST OUR HOPE " (1 Tim. i. 1). " And everyone that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure " (1 John iii. 3).

" Oh ! bright and blessed hope !
When shall it be
That we His face, long loved,
Revealed shall see ?

" Oh ! when—without a cloud—
His features trace,
Whose faithful love so long
We've known in grace ? "

THE MARRIAGE OF THE LAMB

"And after these things I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia ; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God : For true and righteous are His judgments : for He hath judged the great whore, which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. . . . And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying, Alleluia : for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him : for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."—Rev. xix. 1, 2, and 6, 7.

The Judgment of the False Church.—Great Joy and its Cause.—The Lamb.—His Wife hath made Herself Ready.—The Marriage Robe.—How it is being Prepared.

THE JUDGMENT OF THE FALSE CHURCH

"And her smoke rose up for ever and ever."

A WOMAN arrayed in purple and scarlet, called in the plain language of Scripture "the great whore", and the Lamb's wife clothed in fine linen, clean and white—these two we see in these latter chapters of the Revelation ; and they stand out in startling contrast the one to the other, both as to

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their character and destiny. Chapters xvii. and xviii. describe for us the magnificence, the power, the far-stretching influence, the horrible corruption and terrible doom of the former. Chapter xix. shows us the purity and blessedness of the latter—her destiny is the glory of the Lamb. The former, whose names are given to us in capital letters in our Bible, is, "*Mystery, Babylon the great, the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.*" IT IS ROME. She professes to be the true church, the faithful spouse of the Lamb, but she is false, and denies in principle and practice His name, character and word. She will become, as shown in these chapters, utterly apostate, and upon her must fall the overwhelming and righteous judgments of God.

This mystery, described in its two-fold character of the great whore and Babylon, is not popery stripped of its temporal power, as we have known it—which power is now being restored to it, a definite sign of the times—but popery triumphant. In the time described in these chapters it will have gathered into a magnificent but corrupt unity the whole profession of Christianity, and will have brought into complete subjugation the western nations. It will not only have enslaved the consciences of men religiously,

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but will also have control over their politics. *The woman rides the beast.* The kings that she will dominate will hate her for her arrogance, and will eventually destroy her and so fulfil the will of God, but for a while she will hold undisputed sway over them all. This is all plainly taught in chapter xvii.

Rome is working for this universal supremacy now, but she cannot achieve it while the Holy Ghost who dwells in all who are truly the Lord's is here ; His power and work prevent the full development of the apostasy. But at the coming of the Lord, as given in 1 Thess. iv., the true church, which is the body of Christ, and which is to be the wife of the Lamb, will be caught up to heaven. Then not a true Christian will be left on earth, for the Lord knoweth them that are His, and the outward shell of the profession of Christ will be left behind, and Rome unfettered and unhindered will speedily reach the goal of her ambition.*

The true church, that which the Lord spoke of in Matt. xvi. as "My church," is not a great organization held together by

*Note : It is not denied that there are many sincere believers in the one and only Saviour, the Lord Jesus, in the Romish Church, and these are members of the body of Christ, and will be caught up at His coming. There is a present call to them, "Come out of her, My people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not her plagues."--Rev. xviii. 4.

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human power and wisdom, but is made up of all who have in sincerity owned Jesus as their Lord and Saviour ; all such have a vital link with Him as the Son of God, and are not Christians by profession only. They are united in one body to Christ, who is their Head in heaven. This is a unity that is of God, and it will abide for ever ; the other is a unity that is of the devil and it will perish in the depths of perdition. The mystery of iniquity doth already work, and Rome is making rapid progress towards its desired end, clearly showing that we are in “ the last days.” The growing love of ritual and popish practices in the English and other state churches are an evidence of this, and of the power and influence that it already wields. Oh, Christians, let us be fully awake to the situation. There are two great unities in Christendom, and they are growing to completion. The Spirit of God is the power in one, and the spirit of evil works in the other. We must be wholeheartedly in that which is of God and separate from that which is corrupt and of the devil. “ *Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing* ” (2 Cor. vi. 1).

“ Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye out to meet Him.”

“ FOR THIS CAUSE ”

GREAT JOY AND ITS CAUSE

“ *Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him* ” (Rev. xix. 7).

Revelation xix. opens with the adoration of the host in heaven ; they rejoice and praise God that He has judged the false and corrupt church which, instead of being faithful to Christ and a witness for Him in the earth, and so the channel of blessing to men, has corrupted men with its own terrible corruption. “ True and righteous are His judgments,” they say, as they turn from beholding the destruction of the evil thing, to rejoice in that which is eternally good. They celebrate the supremacy of the Lord God omnipotent, and since He reigneth none can thwart His eternal purposes. These purposes have their centre in Christ and His church, the Lamb and His wife. Before the worlds were made it was in the heart of God that His beloved Son should have a bride ; and in this chapter the hour has arrived, and all heaven rejoices with a great joy. “ *I heard,*” says John, “ *as it were the voice of a great multitude, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings.*” “ *Let us be glad,*” say they, “ *and rejoice . . . for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and His wife hath made herself ready.*” It is the joy

“ FOR THIS CAUSE ”

of God that fills every heart and rolls in its matchless melody to the uttermost bounds of heaven. The Father rejoices, for the hour has come for the consummation of His purpose for the joy of His Son ; the Son rejoices, for the hour has come in which He will see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied ; the Holy Ghost rejoices that His work is completed, and that the wife of the Lamb is ready for the marriage. The hour has arrived of which Ephes. v. speaks—
“ Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it ; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, THAT HE MIGHT PRESENT IT TO HIMSELF A GLORIOUS CHURCH, NOT HAVING SPOT, OR WRINKLE, OR ANY SUCH THING ; BUT THAT IT SHOULD BE HOLY AND WITHOUT BLEMISH.”

THE LAMB

“ The marriage of the Lamb is come.”

It is *the marriage of the Lamb*. We have no difficulty in identifying the Lamb. It is Jesus who died for us. In this Book of the Revelation He bears many great titles. In chapter v. He is the Lion of the Tribe of Judah ; in chapter xii. He is the Man-child that shall rule the nations with a rod of iron ; in chapter xvi. He is the King of kings and Lord of lords ; in chapter xxii.

"FOR THIS CAUSE"

He is the Alpha and Omega. Great and varied are His glories, upon His head are many crowns, but when the marriage comes, it is not by any of these titles that He is known, but as *the Lamb*. The joy of the marriage day is linked up with the sorrow of Calvary. It is the One who bowed His head beneath the judgment of God in death who is to see of the travail of His soul, and receive to Himself His church, a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. The Lamb was the sacrifice. He became sacrificially what those who were to be His bride were actually, for He was made sin for them, that they might become the righteousness of God in Him.

We have no difficulty in identifying the Lamb, who is the centre and object of this scene of glory and joy, as once He was the centre and object of man's hatred and scorn, and of all suffering and shame at Calvary. But who is the wife of the Lamb, who now appears with Him, the object of His love and the sharer of His glory? Not angels, not Israel, not the nations of men, but the church, that has been gathered out of all nations - it only can fill this place of closest relationship to Him. The church which is the great anti-type of Eve and Rebekah, the church which He called "**MY church**," the

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pearl of great price for which He sold all that He had, the church which He loved and for which He gave Himself, that it might be to Him a glorious church, “not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing”, the church which was in the Father’s counsels for the joy of His Son before ever the world was made, the church in which true bridal affections have been developed by the mighty working of the Holy Ghost—this is the wife of the Lamb. And now she appears *as His wife*, to be entirely for Him, His joy and His help-meet, enough to compensate Him for all His sorrow and woe. And she is also all that He desires her to be—all her hopes realized and her desires satisfied in Him.

“ O Bride, the saints in glory shine,
Can *they* not fill that heart of thine ?

No, were the Lamb, their light, withdrawn,
The saints, in gloom, would weep and mourn.

Can the Son of God then comfort thee ?

Yes, Christ and none besides for me,
For mine is a soul of noble birth,
That needeth more than heaven and earth ;
And the breath of God has drawn me in
To the heart that was riven for my sin,
For the Sun of the Godhead pours His rays
Through the crystal depths of His manhood’s
 grace,

And the Spirit sent by Father and Son,
Hath filled my soul and my heart hath won.”

“FOR THIS CAUSE”

HIS WIFE HATH MADE HERSELF READY

“To her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white : for the fine linen is the righteousnesses of saints” (verse 8).”

She could not make herself fit or ready for heaven ; her fitness for that spotless home of eternal love is Christ Himself, for He *“is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.”* But she makes herself ready for the marriage ; and that by being clothed in fine linen, clean and white, which is the *righteousnesses* of the saints. The word should be in the plural, it is righteousnesses, not righteousness. Christ alone is our righteousness, but being made righteous in Him, the saints of God are enabled to produce good works on earth, and these are the fine linen, clean and white, that shall be the marriage robe of the wife of the Lamb on that great day. In eastern lands, I suppose, the bride is presented to the bridegroom in the garments her own fingers have wrought. It shall be so with the wife of the Lamb, for to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, her own work. But how and where could this material be produced ?

Suppose a great prince wished to appear

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on some great state occasion in a garment designed and made by himself, but when he looked round for the material that would suit his design, he could not find anything that satisfied him, nor any loom on which it could be woven. What must he do? He must invent a loom that can produce the material, and then when his cloth is ready he must fashion it as he will for his own satisfaction and the praise of his genius. So it is; God determined, when He purposed that the Lamb should have a wife, the very sort of garment she should wear; it was to be of fine linen, clean and white, the righteousnesses of saints—but where on earth, among men, could it be found? In Old Testament days God gave men the opportunity of bringing it forth. He gave them the law, a perfect loom upon which to do it. But they miserably failed in their efforts, and after centuries of patience with them, God had to say, "ALL YOUR RIGHTEOUSNESSES ARE AS FILTHY RAGS." "They that are in the flesh cannot please God."

Then was God's intention to fail? No. If I may use my illustration—He has brought into being a new loom capable of producing that which He desires. But first He shows the design and the pattern. The Lord Jesus came into the world to do the will of God.

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He lived a life of complete obedience to God, and near the end of it He took three of His disciples into the holy mount and there He was transfigured before them, "*and His raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them*" (Mark ix. 3). This was an unearthly, heavenly whiteness, emblematic of the life of righteousness He had lived on earth. And God's great purpose is to reproduce that life in His saints; and so we read: "**FOR WE ARE HIS WORKMANSHIP, CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS UNTO GOOD WORKS, WHICH GOD HATH BEFORE ORDAINED THAT WE SHOULD WALK IN THEM**" (Ephes. ii. 10). If we do not understand that statement we shall not understand how the fine linen can be produced. We are not saved *by* works, but we are saved *for* works. It is grace that has saved us through faith, but that same grace has fashioned us for the production of good works. **GOD HAS A LOOM NOW**, and upon it He is producing fine linen, clean and white, He is reproducing in His people now the graces that shone in all their perfection in Jesus. The life of Jesus is being manifested in their mortal flesh (2 Cor. iv. 10).

We all know how cloth is produced. There is the loom, the weaver, and the raw

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material. As a matter of fact, the raw material goes through a series of processes before it reaches the loom, but there it is at last, and as the weaver works the warp and weft into the loom, the loom works out the finished article. And that is what we get in Philippians ii. 12, 13: "WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION WITH FEAR AND TREMBLING. FOR IT IS GOD THAT WORKETH IN YOU, BOTH THE WILLING AND THE DOING OF HIS GOOD PLEASURE." God is the great weaver, we are the loom, and as He works *in* we must work *out* the fine linen, clean and white. When we see this we must acknowledge that He is, He must be, deeply interested in our lives and ways with the marriage of the Lamb in view—are we also interested?

But what is this fine linen? Says one, "I should like to serve the Lord Jesus, but I cannot stand upon the platform and preach to multitudes, or do any great work for Him; I am ignorant and poor, and my life is lived in obscurity." Do not think that this fine linen is preaching, or doing some spectacular service. Many a man preaches to large congregations and produces nothing but filthy rags, for self is the end and aim of his efforts. But there is a poor woman who loves the Saviour, she is producing fine linen

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in abundance. Happy in His love she starts her arduous day with a song of praise and thanksgiving to God—that is a bit of fine linen. When spoken to harshly she answers with meekness, and overcomes evil with good—that is another bit of fine linen. You need not be great and famous for this ; if you can be patient and forbearing when you are not treated well, and if you can FORGIVE—ah, that is difficult, is it not ? He spoke so ill of you. She was so spiteful. And you have already been kind and forgiving. Your patience is exhausted, and you can't forgive again ! Can't you ? You who have been forgiven so much ! Yes, grace can enable you to do it, and if you do it will be fine linen, clean and white, for that is what Jesus did. When He was reviled, He reviled not again ; when He suffered, He threatened not, and when His foes did their worst, He prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance—all these are the threads of this beautiful fabric, the fine linen, clean and white, and not one thread will ever be lost. God Himself will preserve it, it is imperishable. You may not have thought when you did that kind act for Jesus' sake that it would live for ever,

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but it will; and that word of cheer and comfort spoken to a tried and sorrowing saint will never be forgotten, nor will that effort to win a soul for the Saviour. All these things will go to make up the marriage garment. Every Christian has the privilege of contributing to it. How important it is that we should be walking in lowliness of mind and obedience to God, that His gracious work may go on in us and through us. He has left us in the world for this—may we not forget it. Do not say that this is beyond us. We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus with this end in view. We have been saved by His grace, and fitted by Him to produce this fine linen.

This garment of fine linen, clean and white, will be a wonderful triumph for God. He will be able to show in that day the reality of His work *in* His saints. He will be able to show that in spite of the world, the flesh, and the devil, that beset His saints on earth and conspired to make them false to Christ, they have brought forth these righteousnesses. So will the devil be defeated and the accusations that are brought against the saints be silenced. How wonderful it is, that, in this filthy place, a world reeking with moral putrefaction, this work is going on, and that we may have our part in it. We have but

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to keep near to our Lord and His love will constrain us to be very diligent in this matter.

After the marriage the Lord will come forth as King of kings and Lord of lords, but when He does His saints will come with Him in this same raiment (verse 14). They will share His triumph and glory and live and reign with Him a thousand years (Rev. xx.).

THE HOLY CITY

"And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, Having the glory of God : and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal."—Revelation xxi. 9-11.

The Bride the Lamb's Wife.—Having the Glory of God.—The Wall of the City.—Four Square, and ever-open Gates.—The Street of Gold.—God is the Light and the Lamb the Lamp.—The Pure River of the Water of Life.—The Tree of Life.—The Lord God giveth them Light.

THE BRIDE OF THE LAMB.

"I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife."

WE have considered the church as *the wife of the Lamb*—what it is to Christ, how it will fill His heart with a satisfaction and joy which will be eternal.

Now our subject is the same church as the holy city—not so much what she will be TO Christ, but what she will be FOR Christ. In the first aspect of the church the great thing is LOVE, the love of Christ fully

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known by the church, and responded to without reserve; but the church as the New Jerusalem, the holy city, is not so much LOVE as LIGHT—light for the nations. It is love, divine love, filling it with a wonderful radiance, but shining out as light for all. The nations are to walk in the light of the holy city, but the city is the bride, the Lamb's wife. There is love Christward—there is light manward.

Notice how this holy city is introduced. The angel said to John: "Come, I will shew the bride, the Lamb's wife. . . . And he shewed me that great city, holy Jerusalem." When the church is all that she ought to be to Christ, for this is what the bride, the Lamb's wife, indicates, then she will be all she ought to be as light to man—the city under the administration of which men will live—and the measure of her love to Christ will be the measure of her light to men. I want to give these things a present and practical application. It follows, if this is true, that just in that measure in which we love Christ now, are we really witnesses for Him here below. Our light in the midst of the prevailing darkness is measured by our love to Christ, and our love to Christ is measured by our knowledge of His love to us. If we keep ourselves in His love, if we

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keep ourselves near to Him, separate from those things that can mar us for His pleasure, we shall enjoy His love, and we cannot enjoy His love without responding to it, and just in that measure that we respond to His love shall we be witnesses for Him in the world. Our light manward is measured by our love Christward.

HAVING THE GLORY OF GOD

“Her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal” (verse 11).

First we are to enter into the glory of God ; for us it is the Father's house, and we are made meet for it by the Father's grace and the blood of Jesus, and then we are to come out of it all radiant with the light that fills it, to shed that light upon the earth during the millennial reign of Christ. The church is to be the vessel of the glory of God. What is the glory of God ? The glory of God, in the moral aspect of it, is the display of His own blessed nature ; He has revealed Himself. How has He done that ? He has done that in the Person of His beloved Son, and having done it the great fact has come into evidence that **GOD IS LOVE**. That is the glory of God. You would not know it

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by simply scanning the heavens. They declare His handywork, His wisdom, His divinity, His power. Men did not learn this great fact at Sinai, for there in the presence of the thunderings and fire of that dread mount they were filled with terror. This great and blessed revelation was made by the beloved Son when He came into the world and passed through it to the cross of Calvary. The light that He brought into the world is to be contained in the holy city, and that light will radiate from it to the utmost bounds of creation, and all creation will rejoice in the fact that God is love.

"Each heart its praise outpouring,
To Him all praise above,
Each voice in strains adoring,
Re-echoes—'GOD IS LOVE.'"

This is our testimony to-day, for it is this fact that has changed, enlightened, and blest us. But how has it been manifested towards us? "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John. iv. 9, 10). The love of God has been made manifest in relieving us of our

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liabilities and removing the load of sins that oppressed us, and by bringing us into love and light and liberty. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." This is the gospel that we have to preach. This is the light we have to bear in the darkness. This is the glory that will shine from the new Jerusalem, and in the light of which the nations will walk. They will get an entirely new conception of God, even as we did when first we were enlightened and learned that God is love. They will learn what wisdom and righteousness in administration are, and every national and international question that can arise will be solved in the light in which they walk. This will be the glory that excelleth : GOD IS LOVE.

THE WALL OF THE HOLY CITY

"And had a wall great and high."

It is remarkable that more is said of the wall of the Holy City than of the city itself (Rev. xxi.) ; there must be an important reason for this. Why is it there ? The wall is not there to exclude from that city a single saint of God ; for "they that are written in the Lamb's book of life, shall enter in." The wall will be an inclusive wall ; everyone whom sovereign grace has chosen and called

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to heavenly glory, everyone who has been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb, will be enclosed in its shining embrace. "A GARDEN ENCLOSED IS MY SISTER, MY SPOUSE," says the Bridegroom, in the Song of Songs, meaning, that she was all for Him, and it is this that the wall of the city, great and high, teaches us. If it includes all whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life, it also indicates that the city is exclusively for God. When a man purchases an estate and puts a wall about it, he says, "That is mine; I want that for my own pleasure"—and so it is. The city will be for God's pleasure in the first instance; without restraint and in perfect complacency He will walk in its golden street, and though its gates are opened wide to every point of the compass, and will never be closed either night or day, there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth.

The wall indicates that there will be, even in that millennial age, some reserve on God's part. No wall will be needed to encircle the city in the eternal state, when God will be all in all. Then He will dwell with men, and His will shall be done on earth as it is in heaven, and no fresh invasion of sin will ever cause Him to retire behind a veil. But in the millennial age sin will not be wholly

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banished from the earth, and while God will be active towards men in goodness and blessing, there will still be reserve as far as His relations with them are concerned. His temple and dwelling-place will be walled about. But within the wall all will be as He would have it—holy and unblameable before Him in love.

The wall will not be a frowning battlement, grimly reared for defence or defiance, raised against great foes and manned by intrepid warriors, for from those heavenly places in which the city will appear, the foe will have been cast down, and the devil chained in the bottomless pit (Rev. xii. and xx.). The city will be the church triumphant, and nothing that defiles will threaten the peace of it, and it will fear no attack from without, and will be free to enjoy the riches of God's grace within. It will be God's enclosure, within it He will show His glory, and every created intelligence will learn from it what pleases Him. And through the wall the glory will shine ; it will not obscure the glory or hide its beauties. And in the foundation of it will be every manner of precious stones, cut by the supreme art of the Divine Lapidary ; the all-varied wisdom of God will radiate there, not to repel, but to attract all nations in admiring worship to it.

“FOR THIS CAUSE”

How great the glory of the city will be—**THE GLORY OF GOD.** How great is the grace that has given us a part in it—**THE GRACE OF GOD.**

FOUR SQUARE, AND EVER-OPEN GATES

“And the city lieth foursquare . . . and had twelve gates.”

The city will be four-square, facing without fear or shame every point of the compass. It will be equal on every side, and on every side there will be three gates, gates that shall not be shut at all by day, and there is no night there. I must link together the four-square city and the twelve gates in the wall of it. It is the city that is equal in every part of it that can open its gates to every quarter of the wide earth. But what for? A great city like London keeps its gates open perpetually, for it is dependent upon every part of the earth for its very life. From north, south, east, and west, supplies are continually pouring into it; but the gates of the holy city will be opened, not for supplies to flow into it, but for blessing to flow out of it, blessing for the whole earth. This city of God will look out in every direction, and wherever it looks it will pour out its blessing. Our aim must be this four-squareness now. What we are to be

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according to God's own purpose must affect us now. But, alas ! how often it is otherwise with us. A man may be intelligent in the Scriptures, and even prominent in ministry and in service, and be anything but Christ-like in his home or business. He is not four-square and just in that measure in which he lacks in this he is enfeebled in his testimony, and as a channel of blessing to men.

Suppose I act in an unchristian, ungracious way in the home or business, or in the presence of unconverted men, or I am harsh and ungracious with my brethren ; on that side in which I have failed of the grace of God the gate is shut and the blessing cannot flow out, for I am ashamed, and my mouth is closed. But if I keep myself in the love of God and maintain a conscience void of offence before God and man, then am I four-square, unashamed, and can face men and bless them. This our Lord was in all the holy perfection of His Person. He was all that He said, and none could convict Him of sin, hence wherever He went the blessing flowed in divine freeness.

The names of the twelve tribes of Israel are upon the gates, because according to promise, Israel is to have the honour of administration on earth, and all the blessing

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that flows to the nations from the heavenly city will flow through Israel as the channel of it to the nations.

AND EVERY GATE IS PEARL. The pearl is not an Old Testament figure, it does not belong to Israel. It is not mentioned at all in the Old Testament.* It is a New Testament figure, and is a similitude of the church taken out of the sea of the nations (Matt. xiii.). The merchantman sought goodly pearls, and finding one of great price, sold all that he had to possess it. Christ is the merchantman and the pearl is His church. In His eyes it is pure, precious and one. The church is to have this character in all her outgoings in witness and blessing. The gates of pearl emphasize what I have already stated, that when the church is what Christ would have it to be—pure, answering to His thoughts of its preciousness to Him, and undivided—then it will be the channel and the centre of blessing for all.

THE STREET OF GOLD

"And the street of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass."

Not streets of gold, as some of our poets have sung, but one street, a street of gold

* Job xxviii. 18 should really read "crystal."

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like unto transparent glass. Here is gold of a new sort. There is nothing so opaque, nothing so blinding to the eyes as the gold that men crave and labour for ; how devious are the ways by which they get it. But this street will be transparent gold, there will be nothing shady in it, no double dealing, no defilement there. And who will walk on this street ? It will be laid for the feet of God, and where He walks the street must be of gold. His way must be a way of righteousness which is of Himself and where He can display His character in all His ways, for this surely is the meaning of the street of gold. A man is known by the way he walks, and where he walks, and God will make known His character when He walks in this street, and there will be nothing hidden and dark in it, it will be like unto transparent glass.

It has always been His desire to walk with men. He came down into the garden to walk with Adam in the cool of the day. But there was no street of gold there, and Adam hid away in his fear of God behind the trees of the garden. He was a sinner and God could not walk with him. And when God gathered Israel out of Egypt and brought them to Himself in the wilderness, He desired to walk in and with them,

but there was no golden street in the midst of them. His commandments were on their lips but not in their hearts, and He could only be with them in the angel of His presence behind the veil of the Tabernacle—there was no liberty there either for Him or for them. But when we come to the New Testament, we have the revelation of God in Jesus; God was in Christ, and walked in Him displaying all His grace; and God's intention is that the life of Jesus should be continued in His saints. We have some wonderful words at the end of 2 Cor. vi. The saints of God are commanded to be separate from evil things, to come out from among evil men and their ways; for what communion can there be between the believer and the unbeliever, between light and darkness, Christ and Belial, between the temple of God and demons. Then come the wonderful words, “God hath said, I will dwell in them, and WALK IN THEM.” Not only dwell in them, we often stress that, but walk in them—He would form and find within them a street of gold where He could walk and show His character through them.

We may know little of this now—alas, that we should know so little—but in the day of which this vision of glory speaks it will be known in its fulness, for God shall walk

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in the holy city, and we shall walk where God walks, for we shall be holy as He is holy.

A street is for common use, and in holy communion with God, Himself delighting in the display of His own character, and in us, and we delighting in Him, we shall walk with Him.

"There in effulgence bright,
Saviour and Guide, with Thee
I'll walk, and in Thy heavenly light
Whiter my robe shall be."

GOD IS THE LIGHT AND THE LAMB THE LAMP

"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it : for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof" (margin).

God gives light to the city, but all that light is in the Lamb, for He is the lamp, as the word should be. There is no light, no knowledge of God apart from the Lamb of God. No man hath seen God at any time ; the only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him. So John tells us in the first chapter of his Gospel. Yes, but when public witness was

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borne to Him in that Gospel it was, “ Behold the Lamb of God.” He was the Light of the world, but to be this, and so that the light could reach us, He had to come as the Lamb.

What blind fools men are when they refuse the cross of Christ. They desire a gospel without a sacrifice, without the blood. God has no such gospel for men. He can give no light or blessing apart from the Lamb. The Lamb is the lamp—all the light of God abides in Him and shines forth from Him, and that light is for blessing of men.

THE PURE RIVER OF THE WATER OF LIFE

“ And He shewed me a pure river of water, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb.”

There is to be blessing unrestrained in the power of the Holy Ghost, but it flows from the throne of God and the Lamb. The throne indicates God's supremacy, but the Lamb is there. What a sight it will be for the world which crucified the Lamb when He appears in the throne of God ! The cross of a malefactor on earth, the throne of God in heaven ! But that cross and His place on

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that throne secure blessing for men. The pure river will flow forth from the throne, but that were impossible apart from the Lamb, and its streams will carry refreshment and life and healing wherever they flow. God in the supremacy of His grace, as the redeemer God, enthroned in righteousness for man's blessing, will be acknowledged as the Source of all good. And if any ask how God who is eternally just can bless from His throne a world that had sinned so foully against Him, the one and only answer is—the Lamb is there.

THE TREE OF LIFE

"In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." (Rev. xxii. 2).

The tree of life is Christ—and the fruit is God's portion in Him, the food of the privileged dwellers in that city. He is enough for God and He will be enough for them. None shall hunger there, nor will they tire of that heavenly food, for there is no monotony in Jesus for the heart of one that knows

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His love and walks in the Spirit. And He is enough now. He brings forth His fruit in His season now. He is able to meet every fresh need, every fresh longing of the soul now. He is enough the heart and mind to fill. We shall not tire of Him there. May we be satisfied with Him now, and sit under His shadow with great delight and find His fruit sweet to our taste.

Fruit is God's food, it is ever so presented symbolically in Scripture, it is for His delight. We are to share God's thoughts of Christ, and this will yield us joy and satisfaction for ever.

Then there will be no more curse, for the Lamb bore the curse. Thorns the earth was to bring forth when man sinned, and thorns were placed upon His sacred brow. He bore the curse that He might remove it. And His servants shall serve Him—they shall see His face and His name shall be in their foreheads. What a prospect! Especially for those of us who feel how feeble our service here is! But there His servants shall serve Him. Love cannot be satisfied unless it is serving, and the Lord will give His servants the joy and opportunity of serving Him in all the power of the Holy Ghost—without any faltering or failure.

“FOR THIS CAUSE”

THE LORD GOD GIVETH THEM LIGHT

“There shall be no night there ; and they need no candle, neither the light of the sun ; for the Lord giveth them light : and they shall reign for ever and ever.”

We shall have no need of either natural light or artificial light in that holy city—God will be enough. The light of our lives for ever will come from God Himself. It is what God is that will fill that scene with radiance and fill our hearts with joy. And He would do that now. The sun symbolizes God's natural mercies, and so full of tenderness and mercy is He, that He gives us these things richly to enjoy ; for having spared not His own Son, will he not with Him freely give us all things ? And these natural gifts in a certain way are light to us. But, suppose these things were taken from us, what then ? Suppose every natural joy, every comfort, every earthly ray of light were removed, and suppose we lost everything that we have devised for ourselves, of which the candle would speak, could we say, “The Lord God giveth us light—He is enough” ?

I heard of a Christian who was in very affluent circumstances. Suddenly, with one sweep, he was beggared, and in explaining

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his experience afterwards, he said, “ When I was well-to-do, I saw God in everything, and now that I have nothing, I HAVE GOT EVERYTHING IN GOD.” I heard of a wealthy American who was very glad he had wealth, not for his own sake, but for the sake of his wife whom he idolized. This lady was a Christian of a meek and gentle spirit. Her husband did not understand the secret of that quiet, happy life, but he greatly admired it, and was glad he could give her the comforts of life, for she was a delicate person. As time went on, the wheel of fortune turned and left him with scarcely a penny. He was very distressed about it. He had to leave the mansion and go into a somewhat mean flat, and he wondered how it would go with his wife. But he found she was able to sing, “ Oh ! The peace my Saviour gives,” just as sweetly without the grand piano. The Lord God was her light. Oh ! is it so, that He is able to do that for us ? Were every earthly light removed and every prop gone and every comfort taken away from us, would He be enough ? Yes, we should find Him to be enough. The Lord God is our light. Beloved Christians, what a God we have got ! And the day is coming when the vast number of those who inhabit that holy city will find

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everything in God, and when they find everything in God, there will be no night. The best things on earth change, they wax and wane, rise to their zenith and set. But when God is everything there is no night.

The Lord Himself speaking to His servant, says, "These sayings are true and faithful." Let us lay hold of them and cherish them. Let us hold to them as the very sayings of God, true and faithful—not the fallible words of men, the fruit of a darkened imagination, but the true and faithful sayings of God. Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this Book. If we keep the sayings of this Book, we shall be kept from the pollution of this world, and be those who are ready and watching and saying in unison with the Holy Ghost, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

THE ETERNAL STATE

"And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold! the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away."—Revelation **xxi.** 2, 3, 4.

God All in All.—As a Bride Adorned for Her Husband.

GOD ALL IN ALL

"My delights were with the sons of men."
—Proverbs **viii.** 31.

THE hand of the Lord set the pendulum of time swinging when in the beginning He created the heavens and the earth. And one age of time after another has passed in which He has wrought to bring about the fulfilment of His own counsels of wisdom and love. He has been in no haste, for much had to be done. There was first the slow development of evil that reached its climax at the cross; there was the manifestation of good that triumphed over it

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there ; but in both alike we see revealed God's deep interest in men—men and not angels are the object of His solicitude, with men in view He has worked from the beginning. We are surely greatly moved when we realize that all His counsels of love are centred in men. This amazing fact is declared in Prov. viii., where, in relation to creation, when it was contemplated in eternity, but not actually brought into being, WISDOM—whom we know now to be the Son of God, our Saviour, for He is the wisdom of God—says, “ Then I was by Him, as one brought up with Him, and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him ; rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth, and my delights were with the sons of men.” Yes, it was upon men that the heart of God was set from all eternity, and when the earth was created as their residence, and the platform upon which He would display all His love to them and what that love would do, He created them, male and female, in the image and likeness of God. But not for long could God delight in man, for though He had surrounded him by countless gifts, all proving His care and goodness, he fell before the seductions and falsehoods of that old serpent, which is the devil and Satan, and while God did not cease to love him, he,

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on his part, mistrusted and hated God. The devil had triumphed in this first battle for the possession of man—what was to be done? If God could not carry out His thoughts of love in regard to him, the devil's triumph would be perpetuated for ever. But God had His resources and the devil's triumph was but temporary, and, in fact, it did but give God the opportunity of bringing His resources to light.

In passing sentence upon the deceiver, He said, "The Seed of the woman shall bruise thy head." The Seed of the woman was the Son of God, the One who was daily God's delight, before there was any serpent, or earth, or man, or woman. And in due time He came of a woman, the virgin's Son, to undo the works of the devil and bring man back again to God. And He has carried out God's will to the letter, He has done it without any thought of Himself. He is the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world, and by His obedience to God's will, obedience that led Him into death, He has made it possible for God to delight in and dwell with men. And this He will do when the pendulum of time has ceased to swing, and all things have passed into that *eternal now* for which we wait. Rev. xxi. 1-4 describes the state of blessedness that shall

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then be—it is a brief statement, but how comprehensive and illuminating ! There will be an entire absence of all that has made the world a vale of tears. God will take the place that death and sorrow and crying and pain have had in the lives of men, and He will dwell with them. He will dwell with them as the One who in great compassion has wiped away all tears from their eyes ; and they shall delight in Him for ever, and He will delight in them, and evil shall assail them no more. His eternal purpose shall then have been reached and secured through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

THE TABERNACLE OF GOD

“ As a bride adorned for her husband.”

In that scene of eternal blessedness, the church will have a distinct place from every other family in it, whether of angels or men. She is to be there as the special joy and prize of the great Redeemer, to whom the redeemed universe will owe its every joy. See how she is described. “ And I, John,” says the seer, “ saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, *prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*” That is to be her eternal distinction and glory. We have seen how she will radiate blessing to the nations of

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the earth, because she is the bride, the Lamb's wife. She will be indispensable to men during the millennial age, for no light as to God or guidance as to their lives will reach them except through her, for in her God will dwell and the Lamb will reign, and the light that does reach them through her will be enough for all their needs and joy. But in the eternal state it will be no longer what she can be as a vessel of light to men, **IT IS WHAT SHE IS TO CHRIST**—a bride adorned for her husband. She will be that for ever, for in eternity there will be no change or decay, and as she appears when eternity supersedes time, so shall she be as the ages of it roll on. Succeeding ages will unfold new and all-satisfying glories from God, who shall be all in all ; but through all those ages the church will be for Christ, adorned with heavenly grace for His eye and heart, and never shall there be for a single instant a wandering thought or desire for any pleasure, save those that He will afford her. No rival shall ever challenge His sole right to her affections ; she will receive His love into her bosom without measure and respond to it without reserve. She shall be for ever satisfied with Him.

" Yes, Jesus Lord, our hearts shall be
For ever satisfied with Thee."

CONCLUSION

"Behold I come quickly : blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this Book "
—Revelation xxii. 7.

"Behold I come quickly : and My reward is with Me, to give to every man according as his work shall be. I AM ALPHA AND OMEGA, THE BEGINNING AND THE END, THE FIRST AND THE LAST."—Revelation xxii., 12, 13.

"SURELY I COME QUICKLY."

THE knowledge of the love of Christ in this special character in which we have been considering it, is the crown of all knowledge, and it is the topmost and choicest shoot in the spiritual growth of all who possess it. Let us hold it fast if we have it, lest any man rob us of it. Hear how the Lord speaks of it to the Philadelphian church, "Behold I will make them of the synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie ; behold I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I HAVE LOVED THEE." They had no higher honour, greater treasure, or brighter crown than that.

It has been urged that occupation with

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this side of things and the “blessed hope” that goes along with it, tends to make Christians unpractical and indifferent to the welfare of others. The exact opposite is the truth. When the heart is right as to this, everything else falls into its proper place in relation to it. So that the Christian’s life becomes like a well-grown fir tree. The top-most and centre branch takes the lead and shows the way for every other branch. As it advances, so do they, but it must be first. If the tree loses that branch, it loses its completeness, beauty and symmetry. That this is so is clearly indicated in Rev. xxii., the last chapter of the Bible. When the Lord is first, the supreme object of our faith and hope and love, all that is right will fall into its natural order. We shall be a separate people, for “he that hath this hope in Him purifieth Himself even as He is pure,” and we shall not be involved in, and waste our time on, efforts to improve the world in which Christ has no place; but we shall not be an indifferent or lazy people; there will be earnest activity in two distinct circles of service. The first circle is that of His own, whom He loves; we shall begin there; and the second is that of the poor, barren, thirsty world.

The Spirit and the BRIDE say, Come, to

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Him ; this is the only true attitude of heart towards the Lord in any of His own. Here, as we have said already, "the unity of the Spirit" finds a blessed and practical expression. Here, also, is that first love that alone can satisfy the heart of the Lord. But when this response to the Lord breaks from the heart enraptured with Himself, there is the immediate call to others also, "Let him that heareth say, Come." The heart that is true to the Lord desires that every other heart that knows Him should be equally true to Him, and sets about with diligent labour to secure this. The heart that has heard the Lord saying, "I Jesus . . . am the bright and morning Star," and, "Surely I come quickly," not only desires to be ready for His coming itself, but must have others ready too.

A simple illustration will make this plain. It is necessary for a mother to leave her children for a while, and as she puts the good-bye kiss upon their lips she says, "I will come back soon," and if she has the opportunity of sending a message to them during her absence, the burden of it is, "I will come back soon." She knows well that nothing will stir the hearts of her children and please them more than that word. Yes, but in the message her own desire breaks

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out ! It is because she longs for them and yearns to see and embrace them again that she sends such a message to them. And what can cheer her more during her separation from them than to know that they are longing to see her, and echoing her own message, “ Come back soon.” Even so it is with the Lord and every true-hearted saint in Rev. xxii.

But in that little household there is Mary, the eldest of those young children. Not only is there expectation in her heart, but a sense of responsibility, too. It is love that has put both there. She loves her mother, and so she longs to see her again ; she loves her mother, and so she will not be idle, for she wants everything in the home to be ready for her return. And the love for her mother and the time she has spent in her company has made her very sensible as to what will please her, so the home is kept clean and the children are dressed and ready. Mother may come any time now, she will find them *waiting*.

But how often they go to the door and peer out of the window ; they cannot sit still—mother will soon be here, and they are eager for a sight of her, and as the day wears on they become more eager and expectant. They are a *watching*, as well as a waiting

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family, and it is their love for their mother that makes them so.

But what is Mary doing ? While she waits for her mother, she slips first into this room and then into that to make sure that nothing is out of place, and most of all she keeps her eye on the younger children ; not a speck must be on them when the mother returns. She must feed them and wash them and keep them out of mischief, and as their minds wander to other things—for an infant's pleasure is continually changing—she continually reminds them that mother is coming, to keep alive their interest in this greatest of all events to her. And so she *waits* and she *watches* like the rest, but she *works* also. She is faithful to her trust. Blessed is Mary when her mother comes. She has a two-fold happiness. Not only is her mother back again, but she has said, "Well done," to her faithful daughter. She has the joy of her mother's presence, and the satisfaction of her mother's approbation.

This surely is what we get in the Lord's words in this closing chapter of the Bible : "Behold I come quickly, and My reward is with Me to give to every man according as his work shall be." And again : "Behold I come quickly, blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this Book."

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Has the Lord's love to me affected me as the mother's love affected her daughter? Let each reader ask himself that question. If so I shall not be an unpractical and lazy Christian, I shall be watching, waiting and working, and my heart will go out to all whom He loves, and I shall not be satisfied with being ready to greet Him myself when He comes, but I shall be anxious that all His own may be ready too, because I know that thus He would have it. There is no truth in the whole of the Scripture that could have a greater effect upon us or make us labour more diligently than this. It separates from the world and evil things that hinder in the service of the Lord, but it enlarges the heart and gives an interest in all who are precious to Him, everyone of them an integral part of His church, and I one with them all, one indivisible company—the bride that cries in unison with the Spirit, “Come Lord Jesus.”

But, further, the true heart overflows to the needy world and must be evangelical. Connected with this earnest desire on the part of the Spirit and the bride for the coming of the Lord we have the last appeal of the grace of God to needy men. It comes from the heart of God, but it comes through the bride, in whom His Spirit dwells. The

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hearts that long for Christ yearn after others, even as His heart does. It is as though they said, "We have reached the fountain of living water and are satisfied—will you not come and drink also? There is enough for us and enough for you, and our joy will not be lessened but will be increased if we see you drink. Our Lord desires that you should, and if you do it will please and glorify Him, and this is our greatest wish." And the appeal widens out to the whole world: whosoever will, and wherever he may be, may take of the water of life freely. Instead of our affections being narrowed and our activities limited by this great truth we have the whole church for which we may care and the whole world to which we may appeal, and in which we may carry out our work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope.

How blessed is this invitation of grace. In chapter xxi. 6 the Lord had said, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of **THE FOUNTAIN OF THE WATER OF LIFE** freely." Not of the river, or the stream, be it noted. The river of life will flow forth in a mighty volume in the coming millennial age, but now men are invited to the Fountain. The river has been polluted;

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the opinions of men and “doctrines of devils” have been turned into it, and as the stream has flowed on the error has predominated :—

“ Some truth there is, but dashed and brew’d
with lies ;

To please the fools, and puzzle all the wise.”

It is not the stream that the Lord offers,
but THE FOUNTAIN ! There is no pollution there. There springs up the living water,
pure and fresh and free ! It is Christ !

“ O Christ, He is the Fountain,
The deep, sweet well of love.”

And if one who reads this book has not yet responded to His gracious offer, I close it with an appeal to that one. You need neither preacher nor priest to stand between you and Christ. He invites you to come to Himself, directly and at once. The work of the Holy Ghost is to call your attention to Him, and the whole purpose of the Bible is that you should take freely of the fountain of the water of life that He so freely offers ; that you should believe on Him who is the Son of God, and believing have life through His name. In Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily :—

“ The Sun of the Godhead pours His rays,
Through the crystal depths of His Manhood’s
grace.”

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And it is Himself He gives. He places Himself and all the blessedness that there is in Him at your disposal.

Whether for salvation or satisfaction, sinner and saint must turn to the Fountain, to Christ Himself. All else will fail, and every earth-born stream will run dry, but His sufficiency is inexhaustible and eternal, for He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end.

"And ah! the Master is so fair,
His smile so sweet to banished men,
That they who meet it unaware
Can never rest on earth again.
And they who see Him risen afar,
At God's right hand to welcome them,
Forgetful stand, of name and land,
Desiring fair Jerusalem."

And these are they that cry, "Amen, even so, come, Lord Jesus."

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all the saints." Amen.

SHINE FORTH, O LORD !

SHINE forth, O Lord, Thou bright and
morning star !

Come, quickly come ! Thy people waiting
are

To see Thy light dispel the deepening gloom,
Waiting the power that vanquishes the
tomb.

Shine forth, O Lord, and drive away our fears,
Fulfil our hopes, and give us joy for tears ;
Shout, shout the word that bids Thy dead
arise,
And calls Thy saints to meet Thee in the
skies.

Shine forth, O Lord, come soon for Thy
redeemed,
For those on whom Thy tender love has
beamed ;
Thy pilgrim saints oft weary in the way,
Cry out for Thee—Star of the coming day !

Shine forth, O Lord, by sorrow oft baptized,
We quit the world, and all things by it
prized,
Shake ourselves free from every earthly care,
And onward press to meet Thee in the air.