

THE
BRIDES OF SCRIPTURE;

OR,

FORESHADOWS

OF

THE COMING GLORY.

BY

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

To the natural eye the histories of the Brides of Scripture are artless tales of human love; but to the opened understanding they are full of divine truth. I have sought to show them first under the veil of their own simple narrative; and then, with the veil taken away, as full of heavenly mystery. In the one, the tale is simply beautiful; in the other it is replete with the ways and purposes of God.

I have considered the city of Rev. xxi. xxii. as the symbol or representation of *The Bride*, the Lamb's wife, who is therein set forth to John the apostle, and to us, as being beautiful and glorious, having no iniquity, no perverseness; also as the well-ordered and eternal home of all the heavenly and glorified saints.

I may add that I have never sent forth a book, looking more to the Lord for His blessing, or with more loving desire that His people may be blessed, than in sending forth this volume, with the prayer that He, whose truth I believe it is, may use it for His glory, and cause His name to be much praised through its means. (Rev. xxii. 17-21.)

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I.

The Brides.

“ Ah ! who can weigh
The mines of treasure hidden in those words :
‘ I am my Saviour’s, and the Saviour mine ’ ?
What overwhelming prospects they reveal
Through ages yet to come ! The loved of Christ
Fears not to use them, glories in their use—
My Lord, my God, my Saviour, my Beloved !
And have we not His warrant ? Said not Christ,
‘ As Me the Father loved, so loved I you ’ ?
And loved He not *unto the end* His own ?
And claims He not from them one only gift,—
That only gift their *heart* ? ”

“ Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it.”

Eph. v. 25.

WHAT we want, I have thought, as Christians, is to be lifted up, in our lives and characters, into a height much higher than the level with which too many are satisfied. But this we can never be until we realise the place which God has given us ; for we must know the place itself, and our right to be in it, ere we can cultivate the character suited to it. Even now we are “ raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” Did we estimate ourselves thus, remarks another, it would give the character of wrong to everything, however small, which did not comport with Him. That which put us into

such a place was grace, and that which keeps us before God is the same: we are kept there by the precious blood of Christ, the value of which has been placed to our account. We are kept by Christ in the very secret place of God, where our sins and our iniquities are remembered no more, and where, as before God, unblameable and in love, we are without spot or blemish, "complete in Him." That we are there is not a matter of attainment on our part; we are there by grace. But it is a matter of attainment that our life correspond therewith. There can be no failure as to our standing before God; there may be, alas! there is, as to our life.

In order practically to live a life of holiness and righteousness, we must dwell in spirit where Christ is, and by communion with Him through the Word, enjoy what He is in Himself, and what He is there doing for us. In Hebrews we are told, He appears in the presence of God for us. In John xiii. the Lord said, as if already gone to the Father, "If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with Me;" as if He had said, "If I am to have you at all, I must keep you clean; if I keep you not, you cannot be with Me." As Moses kept his flock in Midian "far removed from all the defilements and entanglements of Egypt," so in our divine Midian the Lord, in the presence of His Father, is keeping us. It is through Him our faith does not fail.

Were we to live more in spirit, with the Lord where He is, we should be holier and happier here. Moreover, our practical conduct would be such that no place would be given for the darts of the enemy to penetrate, and our love would be manifest. "I find

few," said Hewitson, "who seem to love the Lord as His redeemed ones should. Often do I feel longings for a higher sort of fellowship than I am privileged to enjoy, at least with saints." The fellowship of saints, to be of value, must come of fellowship with the Lord. Were we in company with Him more, it would soon be blessedly felt in our own souls, not only in correcting the levity natural to the heart, but in giving power for every good word and work. Such a life is felt by others; for, living in communion with Him where He is, we bring with us the blessed tone of it where we are. As ships from the balmy isles betray whence they have come by the very fragrance of the spices they bring, so should we ever, in our dealing with others, bring a savour of the scene from whence we too have consciously come.

All that helps us thus to live is of great value. It is surely helpful to trace out the moral scenery and spiritual atmosphere attending the lives of those who in earliest times had communion with the Lord. These Brides of Scripture bring us into connection with such; also with the true Bride, the heavenly Jerusalem. That city brings us into the presence of God Himself, before whom and with whom they delighted to walk. It is good to be with them; for they were in company with Him. They tell us, moreover, of ourselves. They were like ourselves, sinners in themselves; and were, as we are, believers in God. The just have ever lived, as we must do, by faith. Their joys and griefs, their conflicts and triumphs, their foes and fears, were the same as ours.

To enjoy the company of such as Abraham is to be morally elevated. His calling, along with that of

Isaac and Jacob, was a heavenly calling. Man by sin had forfeited the earth; but God not only gave back the earth to such as these, but opened to them heaven also. This was more than Adam lost.

The special form which the calling took was that of a heavenly city and a heavenly country, inclusive, doubtless, of a heavenly kingdom. In the day of the earth's glory the Lord will set His throne *in the heavens*, and His kingdom will rule over all. But the heavens will rule because the King will be there, and will sit at meat with His friends. Hence His own beautiful words: "And I say unto you that many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven" (the kingdom of kings and palaces), whilst the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out."*

We who believe carry the secret of this glory in our hearts, and of all the other glories to which we are entitled through Christ. Great is the interest which we have in them; for the Church, as being in Christ, is raised up to the same height, "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." But what was

* "The kingdom will be the Father's. The Creator had engaged His energies of old, and His works were the reflection of His eternal power and Godhead. All was then good in His sight. In all He was delighted, and in all He was glorified. But in the Sabbath of the kingdom He will survey richer and deeper reflections of Himself. All His excellences will be displayed; the works of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—of our God in His grace unto salvation, will then be the fairer and fuller witness of Him than the heavens and earth of old."

faith's secret to Abraham? The land, of course; but also a country which was heavenly, and the "city which hath foundations." And what now is faith's secret to us? It is that, as one with Christ, the Church is to share His glory, yea, all His glories, the incommunicable only excepted; and to be with Him, and like Him, for ever. The darkness of the world which surrounded Abraham was not greater than that which surrounds us. That darkness deepened around him ere Sodom was destroyed; it is fast deepening around us, previous to a greater destruction.* He looked for a city amidst it all. We look for the Son

* What we want, each one of us, is to give distinct testimony to this. There were three distinctions of persons in Sodom. They were of no real worth as to any true testimony concerning the place. A man of Sodom, or, as we may say, the real Sodomite, knew literally nothing of what was going to befall Sodom. It may be he knew science, but he did not know revelation. He did not know Lot *as a believer*. So now a man of this present evil age may know a Christian, but he does not know him *really* as to his divine knowledge: he does not know *revelation*. The judgment is coming, but he thinks only, it may be, of science or the progress of the world; he does not know what God is going to do with this world. Then, besides this Sodomite, there was Lot. He might have said, "These are awful times. The place is doomed; nobody seems to mind." But owing to his own false position in Sodom, sitting at his gate, none believed him; "he seemed as one that mocked." Lot's wife was different again. She knew nothing for certain. Even when Sodom was in flames, she looked back to see if it would be quite impossible to return. Poor testimonies these! answering to the natural worldling, and the worldly believer, and those who are connected with such in this evil day. But Abraham was full of divine intelligence; he saw all in communion with God; through the word God had spoken to him. We likewise, seeing all that God has said, ought to be in the same through *the written Word*.

from heaven. This is our express Hope, as the city was his. Abraham walked by faith regarding it. We also, relying on the divine Word simply, believe. But Abraham's hope broke all his former associations and ties with the world lying in wickedness. It is the nature of ours to do the same. I have no hesitation in applying the truths relating to such as Abraham and those of the Old Testament Scriptures to our own present use. Being heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, all things are ours. Being one with Christ, we are as He is; and as to the future, our lot will be with the Lord, and to share with Him whatever blessedness is His—that of the heavenly or earthly; that of the kingdom, or of Israel; of the nations of earth in its millennial glory, or of the heavenly Jerusalem, which will then overshadow it. The different Brides we are to consider were for the most part connected with Israel—Rebekah with Isaac, Rachel with Jacob, Asenath with Joseph, Ruth with Boaz, Abigail with David, the Shulammitte with him who is the millennial King—but the principles contained in their histories are of deep interest to us. Those Brides moreover are figures of the True Bride; and the True Bride, “the holy city,” more than anything else foreshadows as a symbol what her beauty and glory will be, not only during the earth's millennium, but onwards in the new heavens and new earth of the eternal state.

Then, besides, what is dispensational, there are precious gospel principles which find in these histories the most happy illustrations. In them we see that salvation is by grace—that righteousness is through faith, faith in God's word. Also, how faith is sufficient for salvation is so plainly seen, that he who runs may

read. In the society of the Old Testament saints, what strikes one forcibly is, that theirs pre-eminently were *promises*. They saw them—*greeted* them, as the word is—from afar. But we live on wondrous, glorious fulfilments of things but dimly seen by them.*

How different were the types as to Christ's death and resurrection, His person and work, through which they saw, compared with what we now see, which is Christ Himself—Christ incarnate, dead for our sins; raised again for our justification; ascended into heaven, there to appear in the presence of God for us; thence to come again to take us to Himself, that where He is we may be also; yea, Christ as set up by God as Head of all things to His Church, in whom we are in possession of blessings counselled to us by God before all ages—"all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

It is not only on Christ—having died for us, and risen again—but on His own eternal enjoyments as Son, that we are called upon to live,—even on "the old corn of the land," *i.e.* on His peace; His rest; the love the Father had towards Him, which was before

* Mr. McChayne once wrote to a friend: "Suppose that one to whom you were a stranger was wrapped up in a thick veil, so that you could not discern his features, still if the lineaments were pointed out to you through the folds, you could form some idea of the beauty and form of the veiled one. But suppose that some one you knew and loved, whose features you have often studied face to face, were to be veiled up in this way, how easily would you discern the features and form of this beloved one! Just so Israel looked upon a veiled Saviour, whom they had never seen unveiled. We look upon an unveiled Saviour, and, going back, can see far better than they could the features and form of the Lord Jesus the Beloved under that veil."

all dispensations. That love was beyond all else to Him. Such love is ours, not as a matter of promise, but of possession. Wonderful prayer! "that the love" (the eternal love of the Father towards the Son) "wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them."

It is the same also as to the now indwelling of the Spirit. Because we are sons, He hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, whereby we cry, "Abba, Father." The same Spirit that dwelt in Him as Son before all worlds now dwells in us, giving us to say, as He from all eternity could say, "*Abba, Father.*" But beyond and greater than all this, God has given Himself to us for an object. More than this He could not do; less would not have satisfied Him. Such indeed is our divine present portion. But we must know it if we would live in it. Let us think we can never lift another higher than where we ourselves are; and if our own level be a poor one, our service goes but for little. Oh to be lifted up into all that which we have in God!—the same place as that of His own Son, who "loved us, and gave Himself for us."

And here another thing observe—this giving of *Himself*. "It is not His life, true as that is" (I use the words of another); "it is the entire devotedness of all that He is, or that is in Him; His grace, His righteousness, His acceptance with the Father; His wisdom, the excellency of the glory of His person, the energy of divine love that can give itself—all is consecrated to the welfare of the Church." Nothing can be more wonderful than the place which the Church thus occupies in the love and purpose of God, and in the love of Christ. The language expressing it

speaks not of union with Him merely, but of *oneness* with Him, which is a higher thing. What words are these: "No man ever yet hated his own flesh; *but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church*: for we are members of His *body*, of His flesh," or rather "*being of His flesh and of His bones*." "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be *one* flesh."*

Eve I believe to be the true type of the Church. Though perfectly distinct from Adam she was not absolutely another, but was a part of Adam himself. She was his fulness; she was the complement of Adam; she was a member of his body formed out of himself, a help-meet for him, to be his joy and his delight; one with him in all that pertained to him in God, in the garden around him, and in any communion he may have had with the heavens above him.

"And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made He"—or, as the word is, *builded* He—"a woman." As the Lord afterwards said, "On this rock will I *build* My Church." God knew what rib to take from Adam. God knew His Church, *in Christ*, before all worlds. The Eve was as old as the Adam. The Church, in the thought of God, is as old as His

* The Church is here called the *Body* of Christ. We find in the Word many comparisons of the relationship of the Redeemed to Christ—a Kingdom over which He will reign as King—a Habitation in which God through the Spirit dwells—a Body of which Christ is Head—a Bride who is said to be the Wife of the Lamb. Eve was both Bride and wife of Adam. In a special way she typified both the Body and Bride of Christ. She was a portion of his body, which is a nearer and closer relationship than any other.

eternal thought of Christ as its Head; yea, as old as His eternal love for His Son. Hence, "who can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" What creature could reach or alter that which is eternal? Eve was first in Adam. Then she who was in him on his being in *a deep sleep*, was taken from him; so that she who was first *in* him, was now raised up together with him. Thus we, who in the purpose of God were first *in* Christ, on His having died—for He, like Adam, became dead for us—were raised up together *with* Him, the blest objects of His joy, and are "made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." At the creation of Adam the Lord God breathed into his nostrils, and he became a living soul; but when Eve was formed, there was no breathing again—she was of the same life as Adam. So also with Christ and the Church. Christ and His Church form together "one new man." "This is a great mystery: but I speak," says Paul, "*concerning Christ and the Church.*" And as Eve had the same life with Adam, so also she possessed the same inheritance—image of the Church's place through all eternity. For Christ's dominion will be ours; His glory will be our glory; His joy, His rest, His delight, being one with Him, will be ours also. This surely is wonderful for the Church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all. All this, then, being true, what shall we *not* possess along with Christ? Not the kingdom only, which He says "is prepared of My Father;" but all His own blessedness, that essential to His Godhead only excepted, will be ours also. The blessedness too of the Bride, that fair city of God; and the glory of the "kingdom"

—the joy alike of His espousals and of His royalties, being one with Him, will be ours. We shall share with Him all His joy, when His own joy and our joy will be full.

But I am now speaking of the Church, which is His body. Of this The Lord spake when He said to Peter, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock" (the confession which he had made) "I WILL build My Church;" and which, when completed, He will take to Himself, as He says in John xiv. 2, and 1 Thess. iv. This He will do prior to our appearing with Him when He comes to the earth in His glory. Hence, as to our proper immediate hope, we now look not for a city, not for the Bridegroom King of Matt. xxv., but for the *Son* from heaven. 1 Thess. i.

Then our hope will be consummated. Those who now sleep in Jesus, or through Jesus, will be raised; we who are alive and remain shall be changed. Heir of glory! What a hope! How near! There can be no return to this earth for judgment, or to take the kingdom, when His saints will come *with* Him, as in Zec. xiv., and as in Matt. xxv., till He has first come *for* them. Hence, whilst the Spirit who is in the Church says "come," the Bride also says "come." Oh, how blessed will be that coming, with all the many glories which will then follow! The order will be—

First, His coming for His saints "*to the air*;" that is, for all those who from the time of righteous Abel, have "died in faith," down to the last of those of our own dispensation who have "fallen asleep in Jesus;" then next, His kingdom on the earth, along with the glory in the heavens, as foretold by Zec. xiv. 5,

Rev. v. 9-10, and Rev. xxi., when we shall dwell together with Him in the city which hath foundations—in the very city, I believe, of which in these meditations we are so especially to speak.

But, in passing, let me suggest that the *question of the Church's oneness with Christ involves the most important consequences*, not only in our spiritual judgment, but also in our moral feelings and outward life; for unless we know *what we are* and *what we have*, we cannot know *how to live*. After all that is said by those who profess to believe in it, it is, I suggest, but little understood. It goes beyond all human and angelic blessedness. It was in God's purpose before all dispensations, and will, it would appear, continue when dispensations will have for ever ceased. Eph. iii. 21.

In its nature *the Church is as Christ is*. Can anything be more wonderful? It places us, as Paul says, "far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, *not only in this world (age), but also in that which is to come.*"

I know there may be a kind of interest, a hankering of the heart after the thought of a *kingdom*, or the idea of *bride*, in which there may lurk not a little of nature. Kingdom and bride are indeed dear to Christ—the purchase of His death. But in the truth of oneness, all else is lost in Christ Himself; the Church is as Christ. We shall be as Eve was with Adam, the twain without losing their identity counted as one person; so that even after being taken from him, and when raised up with him, the Lord called *their* names ADAM, just as Christ and His members are said to be "THE CHRIST," which they are—THE MYSTICAL CHRIST.

There are few, I believe, who see it thus. The path of wisdom respecting it is a narrow one. What we desire here so especially, is rightly to divide the Word of Truth. Let us dwell for a moment on the wonderful thought what we are thus in Him; yea, of being one with Him from all eternity; and on all those rich blessings in John xvii., and in Colossians and Ephesians, which language fails to describe; and then think of what a kingdom is. A kingdom is not one with him who is over it; but the Church being as Christ is, yea, one with Christ, will reign with Him over it.

Phil. iii. 21, 1 Thess. iv. 17, John iii. 3, and Col. iii., all show that we are to be with the Lord, and like Him; and that when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we shall appear with Him in glory. All which is in accordance with the glorious mystery so specially made known to us in Ephesians and Colossians, and so grandly depicted in Rom. viii. 17, which speaks of our being glorified together with Christ, which will be when the sons of God are manifested, and for which the earnest expectation of the creature now waits. Hence there can be no rest for the creature, no Sabbath of the earth, no city of glory over it till then. Alas! how many speak of all this, not as God's truth, but as something they may or may not believe! But surely, if the eyes of our understanding are enlightened, we shall know so as to distinguish the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

We need again and again to appeal to believers on the ground of this their position of oneness with Christ. It was a real blessing in those days, of revival, when believers realised that they need never

covet to be as angels; for that, as redeemed ones bought with the precious blood of Christ, they were infinitely higher! it was a still greater blessing when the Lord's coming for His people, as in John xiv., became a generally received truth. And it will, I believe, be a still greater blessing when we realise as distinct from, and as having been before all dispensations, that very highest blessedness in which we now are in our oneness thus with Christ; yea, now and for ever the same. For *now* He is our life—that eternal life which was with the Father; and *now* are we the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be. To the world it cannot appear. To us in measure it does appear what the kingdom will be, and what the millennial earth will be, and what the bridal City will be. Have we not, as we shall see, the magnificent description of her—of her glory—in Rev. xxi.? But being one with Christ, language fails to express what *we* shall be—we who are Heirs of God! Joint-Heirs with Christ! Truly may you say, "If these truths had full sway on our hearts, what would become of us? The world would be as an idle nothing!" But we wait His coming to know as we are known. Our one immediate hope is to be *with* Him, and *like* Him.

Hence *our* hope is John xiv. 3, Col. iii. 4, 1 Thess. iv. 13-17, all which must take place before the city of the heavenly Salem of Rev. xxi. can come upon the scene. We must be presented first as *children* in the Father's House, and then the property, the glory; for the order is, "If children, then *heirs*." But in this hope of John xiv. 3 we have before us, so to speak, an immeasurableness and an almost immediateness of blessedness.

II.

Rebekah.

“ As once the pleased Rebekah trod
A desert wild and drear,
While Abram’s wealth and Isaac’s love
Rang in her raptured ear ;

“ So traverse we this wilderness,
While our blest Guide makes known
The Father’s house, the Son’s rich love,
And all He has our own.

“ Blest thought ! our hearts are with Him there !
We see our glorious home
Made ready for the bridal day :
Lord Jesus, quickly come ! ”

“ And I asked her, and said, Whose daughter art thou ? And she said, The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor’s son, whom Milcah bare unto him : and I put the ear-ring upon her face, and the bracelets upon her hands.”—*Gen.* xxiv. 47.

I PROPOSE a few meditations on some of the more prominent brides of Scripture, beginning with Rebekah, as seen in *Gen.* xxiv. There is a charm indescribable in every line of this history. At the very outset the call of Rebekah is associated with “blessing”—the blessing of God which was with Abraham. Twice in this narrative is special mention made of it. In

verse 1 it is said, "And the Lord had *blessed* Abraham in all things." In verse 35, "And the Lord hath *blessed* my master greatly." The gold and the silver, and the other precious things which the servant had brought, are mentioned, but the blessing was the chief thing. How far the thoughts of Rebekah may have travelled into what was included in her association with Isaac as heir of the promises we may not know; but we do know something of the way which has been opened up to our own thoughts; how they can travel into the deep things of God Himself, and of His beloved Son, and of ourselves, who are eternally associated with Him.

We do wrong to Rebekah—shall I say to the truth—when we associate her call merely with the riches. She was made willing in the day of a power which brought her soul within view, for itself, of the blessing which rested on Isaac. She saw that the Lord *had* blessed him, and she foresaw herself as blessed *with him*—joint-possessor with him of whatever the Lord had made him. Faith comes by hearing; and as the ear listened to the story of her call, the heart fed; not indeed on the riches, but on Isaac. And there was nothing to obstruct, but everything to set her at rest, in her heart being occupied with Isaac—Abraham himself, his mind, Isaac, Eliezer, all intelligible, and all for her. This was what gave confidence to Rebekah. And this it is which gives such confidence to us, that all is made intelligible as to God and our salvation in the Word. There is much indeed in these days in the teachings of men that is mystical and unreal. "For years," writes a friend, "God Himself, His own eternal love in relation to Christ, His love

in giving Him to die for us who are sinners, the Holy Ghost speaking through the Word to us, and our being called on simply to believe; these were things which, in the instructions I received, were wholly left out. But now the triune God has been revealed to me, and the unsearchable riches of Christ have all become mine—made known to me *through the Word*, a blessed reality.”

What Eliezer did was to unveil the mind of his master concerning Isaac. In the gospel the veil is drawn aside, and with open face we look at God as He really is, manifested for us in Christ, who is our salvation. There we see that it was God Himself who gave Christ for us; that it was Christ on the cross who, in dying for us, so satisfied the righteousness of God, that the love which He hath divinely toward us may be gratified.

The effect on the mind of Rebekah was knowledge, also *love*; a love which at once occupied itself with Isaac. Thus has it ever been with us who believe. We, as Rebekah, have simply *believed*; and, as a result, our affections are found instantly around Christ.

It was thus that Isaac at once became the true hope of this daughter of faith. She had indeed a home without travelling any desert. She had, in her father's house, her own prospects of earthly possessions; but she could leave all, as Abraham had done. She could forget, as it were, her own people and her father's house; and all for one whom through this one visit of Eliezer she had come to know. Such is the *power of a person!* What else is it that makes us willing to leave all that is here? Is it heaven merely as a place? No, indeed! Crowns, palms, dignities? Ah

no, not these! It is Christ Himself. What a word is that, "*Present with the Lord!*" as we sing—

“ That blessed interview, how sweet !
To fall transported at His feet ;
Raised in His arms, to see His face
Through the full beamings of His grace ! ”

“ *Present with the Lord* ” is blessed indeed for a true child of God, but dreadful for a mere professor! For if on dying a man has no *Christ*, no *Person* to desire or to enjoy in heaven, what has he? Alas, what forfeits in the day of death will such professors suffer! Their idea of heaven, it may be, is rest, knowledge, exemption from sorrow. The heaven of their natural mind is one perhaps of mere sentiment, of melody, of ease or pleasure; but apart from the knowledge of and love for the Lord Himself there is no heaven.

Now, just as the report through Eliezer won the heart of this daughter of Laban for Isaac, so the Word, through the Spirit, wins our hearts for Christ, who died for us, and who brings us into God. Oh, what a chain it all is! reaching from God to Christ, from Christ to the sinner, and from the sinner again to God; and thus on and on with Him, for ever and ever!

I have said that Isaac was blessed with Abraham; as it is written, “ In Isaac shall thy seed be called.” Abraham had asked for an “ heir ” before he possessed the inheritance. Beautiful example of faith! So sure was he of the one, that he asks for the other.

Rebekah, so to speak, was the gift of Abraham to Isaac; for it was Abraham, and not Isaac, who had laid the plan of her being separated to a joint posses-

sion with him who was heir of the promises. For this, in lowliness of faith, she is to cross the wilderness. Abraham had crossed the same before her; she could tread, as it were, in his steps—that is, in his footsteps of faith. We talk of the wilderness being untrodden, and surely in a sense it is. It was so to Abraham; none had ever trodden it as he. It was not so, in such absolute sense, to Rebekah. The one had left the land of the house of Bethuel before the other; and his footmarks, so to speak, were left to be followed by the calm, meditative eye of Rebekah. Truly, the desert is drear enough, too little frequented by heavenly travellers. But let us not forget *Him* who trod it for us as none other ever did. Let us consider Him, lest we be wearied and faint in our minds; and let us remember too that cloud of witnesses of whom we sing—

“Loved ones in Jesus have passed on before :
Resting in glory, they weary are no more.”

How I delight in those lines by Toplady—

“Happy the souls released from fear,
And safely landed there ;
Some of their number once I knew,
And travelled with them here.”

And these—

“Loved while on earth, nor less beloved though gone,
Think not I envy you your crown :
No ! if I could, I would not call you down.”

The just in all ages have lived by faith. It was by faith, through the testimony of Eliezer, that Rebekah

got to know the blessing upon Abraham. God had carried His own report to Abraham; He appeared to Him as "the God of glory." Abraham believed God. But now his servant is the messenger. Abraham said, "I will make thee swear by the Lord, the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, that thou shalt not take a wife unto my son of the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell: but thou shalt go unto my country, and to my kindred, and take a wife unto my son Isaac."

You will observe it is not, as with us, of "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" that Abraham speaks, but "the God of *heaven*, and the God of the *earth*." There was deep meaning in this. Abraham's own special hope was of a city, "*the city*," as the word is, which hath foundations, a *heavenly* city. He also looked to possess the *earth*—yea, the very land on which he trod. His seed, in connection with both, would be innumerable—the one part (the heavenly) as the stars of heaven; the other (the earthly) as the sands of the sea. Isaac and Rebekah are spoken of in relation to both. Isaac looked for a city, even a heavenly; and the blessing in our chapter pronounced on Rebekah, on her departure for Isaac, was, "Be thou the mother of thousands of millions, and let thy seed possess the gate of those which hate them."

It was in this name, the name of the God of heaven, and the God of the earth, so divinely associated with all manner of future blessing, that Eliezer was made to swear. There was to be a deep certainty about it; no peradventure, no perchance. The whole founded upon promise, and upon oath. Thus is it with all the purposes of God. God does nothing without a pur-

pose. Every drop of dew has its own appointed grass-let or leaflet on which to fall; every star its own orbit in which to shine; each zephyr or storm its own assigned mission for life or for death. We who are His children are called according to a purpose. That purpose, how great! Angels are called to *be* angels, to serve. Saints are called to be children of God, sons, heirs! We are all pre-known by the divine mind. "Predestinated," Paul says, "unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." And again, "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world." Such is but the first link in that wondrous chain which binds the church to God; that of which, as to its actual existence, the Lord said to Peter, "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church."

Foreknown in the past, unchangeably safe for the future! Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, and therefore not dependent on what *we* are! The particular frames or feelings in Rebekah had no place, and were as nothing as a ground for her having been called to be the bride of Isaac. No; it was *the purpose first*, not in her mind, but in Abraham's. This is the gospel. It is not the gospel to tell men that "God is standing by, looking upon the large field of His intelligent creatures, waiting till they shall manifest some good disposition, or make some good move towards Him." *No, this is not the gospel!* The gospel tells us that God comes to meet every necessity in man *who is ill-disposed to acknowledge Him at all*. "I AM FOUND," He says, "OF THEM THAT SOUGHT ME NOT." It was not, then, that Rebekah was first of all

prepared, or improved, or made meet for her position, and then called. No, she did not work for Isaac. It was the calling first. Thus also with us. In Rom. viii. we read, "Whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified." "Am I *in* this?" is often the question with sincere and anxious minds; when the question the rather ought to be, "Have I believed the gospel?" It is not believing in predestination, but believing the gospel, which saves. Both are blessed, as seen in the Word. Predestination is said to carry terror to some minds. Their conversion, it may be, has not been plain and evident; and doubts and fears have thrown them back from the gospel to election. But did the call of Rebekah convey any terror to her mind, because it was founded on election? Certainly not. Her mind was first occupied with the report. Did she believe it? On believing it she saw how it linked her in with the foreknowledge and purpose of Abraham. I am not first to take the place of the *elect*. I am told to take the place of a *sinner*. "God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were *yet sinners*, Christ died for the *ungodly*." Taking the place of a sinner, seeing God's love towards me as a sinner, believing in Jesus, who, as a manifestation of that love, died for the sinner, I am not only saved, but led on to see all that I have been to God, and yet shall be through all eternity. But Rebekah might have said, "Why *me*? Why was *I* the object of such love?" Ah, no, there is no terror, but a sweet delight, in our souls as we sing—

" Why was *I* made to hear His voice,
And enter while there's room ? "

or again, that never-wearying song—

“ Jesus sought me, when a stranger,
Wandering from the fold of God ;”

or better still, as we have it in that sweet divine word,
“ I am found of them that sought Me not.”

Mark, then, the vast landmarks—glorious boundaries, shall I say—of our position as seen from the eternal years. “ Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate ” (but for what?) “ to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called: and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified.” In His own eternal thought all settled, and all in Christ. He is the great repository of all the purposes, and thoughts, and love, and grace of God towards us. As none need fear as to the place which this daughter of faith had in her joint-heirship with Isaac, so none need fear the place the Church has in Christ. It was safe before all worlds. It never was in danger. Can anything alter it? The gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

“ They cannot mar its hidden strength,
Or reach its truest life—
The life deep hid with Christ in God—
Beyond the reach of strife.”

But “ all the goods of his master were in his hands.” Mark well that word, “ *all the goods*,” including the “ silver,” and the “ gold,” and the “ raiment,” and the “ precious things.” Imagine ten camels’ loads! mere samples; or, shall I say, “ the mere earnest.” Grand

evangelist! He would use all for his master to gain a wife for his son Isaac. Ah yes; all conceivable riches are in the hands of the blessed Spirit, to be used by Him for us! All heaven! and glory! yea, God Himself! revealed in and through His Son. How precious! All a gift through Him to us! Oh, there is nothing so hard for us to understand as *grace*! We deserve nothing, and in our enmity to God expected nothing. It would have grieved this faithful servant if any claim had been put in on the ground of personal right. It pleased him, when all was understood as the simple gift of his master. It was Abraham who was seen in all. It is *God*, beloved, who is seen in all the riches of His grace and love, laid open to us for our possession by the Spirit. To be filled with these, with God, with Christ, through the truth, is to be filled with the Spirit. Abraham was satisfied with Isaac, would give all to him, and to Rebekah along with him. God is satisfied with His Son, is satisfied with what He has done, and would give all to Him, and to us along with Him.

Did I say all was in the hands of the Spirit? Blessedly in ours also. Some speak of the gospel messenger as being "*only* or *merely* an evangelist." What! when his office is to place at the sinner's feet all those infinite riches of God's grace and glory in Christ Jesus! Oh, did I as an evangelist know all the rooms, all the vast innumerable storehouses of the unsearchable riches of Christ, I could put them all down at the sinner's feet for an immediate acceptance; he is entitled through faith to not heaven only, but God Himself! And God delights in our knowing this. One atom of such true knowledge in the mind of a

sinner is more to God than all He ever saw in highest angel. Not for the angels was His kiss of love; the best robe; the ring which, like the love, had no beginning and no ending; that fatted calf; that music and dancing; that special assemblage of His friends. No; there is joy "over *one sinner* that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, who need no repentance."

Blessed is the work of a pastor whose place is inside with the ninety and nine, feeding the sheep, feeding the lambs; blessed too the work of the teacher, who takes up some one great truth, or line of truth, and unfolds it to the saved; and indispensable also the work of the ruler. But all these are with the ninety and nine who are saved. The evangelist goes out to the world. He stands between the world and all the riches of grace. He is not sent to some limited few, but to every creature under the whole heavens, placing all the unsearchable riches before the open doorway of the sinner's heart. And it is not a scant gospel which he is to preach. No! he is the best preacher who knows God best; who best preaches Christ; who speaks as if he had come from God and from heaven, where God is, as Eliezer had spoken from Abraham and from Canaan, where Abraham was. But telling of Canaan would not have done if Isaac had been left out. Preaching heaven merely will not do. It must be Christ, *Christ*, God's beloved Son, whom He has given to take the judgment against sin; so that the sinner, the moment he understands and believes, is no longer lost, but saved, no longer an enemy, but a friend of God—yea, a child, a son. Behold what manner of love, that we should be called the sons of

God! *God Himself* must be preached. The gospel or the good news of *God* is not "*only* this or that;" it is all we can tell of *God*, all we can tell of *Christ*; this is its true scope, and burden. It is immense—infinite! But "who is sufficient for these things?" Do we not pray—

" Ah, Lord! enlarge our scanty thought,
To know the wonders Thou hast wrought;
Unloose our stammering tongue, to tell,
Thy love, *immense, unsearchable.*"

But we have here the *where* as well as the *what* to preach: "*I, being in the way.*" How beautiful! In what way? It was God's way. He was in the way where the object of his desire was! he was doing the exact will of him who had sent him. It is not working merely, or speaking merely, but it is doing these according to the will of God; not the work only, but the way, *the place*, "*being in the way,*" the way of God's presence, in the secret of His mind. Ah, what a waste of all his toil and trouble if this faithful servant had gone any other way! Some one else must have gone for Rebekah; for the purposes of God must stand. Hence if any worker miss his way, step aside from the presence of God, God must work without him. Every branch in the tree of service that beareth not fruit He taketh away—away from that use. Many own Christ as Saviour who deny Him as Lord. They do not look to Him as *Master*; they act according to their mere liking, their own will. How happy if we can say as did Elijah, "As the Lord God of Israel liveth, *before whom I stand.*" *That* was his place, standing in the presence of God, the place of power;

of nearness to God; of communion. And how happy to be always in the knowledge of His will! My soul is often subdued and instructed by the remembrance of those words of the excellent Lady Powerscourt: "Alas! I have always seemed to live according to my own will, unless indeed the Lord has made His will my own. When young, like Peter, we gird ourselves, and walk where *we will*. We are long before we learn to stretch forth our hands (so expressive of leaving ourselves to another), and let *Him* gird us and carry us wherever *He would*."

But where did Eliezer go? He stood where at evening "the daughters of the men of the city came out to draw water." They were coming for supplies. See how he prays! mingles communion with service, saying, "O Lord God of my master Abraham!" Truly blessed is this habitude. Sweet attendant upon labour is this fellowship with God. He asks for a sign: "Behold, I stand here by the well of water, and the daughters of the men of the city come out to draw water: and let it come to pass, that the damsel" (little did she know!) "to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be she *Thou hast appointed* for Thy servant Isaac." The Lord gave this sign. See, now she stands before him! *He* says, "Give me to drink." *She* answers, "And I will draw water for thy camels also!" The man wondered, and held his peace. What *could* he say? What do, but wonder, worship, and adore? as he did. He attributes all to God. He worships *Him*, adores *Him*. How all this applies we understand. We ask for souls—souls with signs, and

souls are given us, blessed be His name! We ask, as he, "Whose daughter art thou?" As we might say, "Who are you? from what ways of ignorance or sin are you come?" In answer to such questions, how often, like Eliezer, have we too looked on upon the seeking ones, only to worship our God and adore! "I have been praying," might he have said, "and here is the result; the very one I needed." Thus his prayer had connection with God, God with Rebekah. We in communion have connection with God, God with the sinner. In preaching, have we not felt the resources of God, so to speak, in our hands. And when there, we can present them; there is evident connection between God and us. God connects Himself through us with the sinner. Thus if all the lamps in this scene had no connection with the supply, there would be no light; so if our own souls are not with God, we feel we have no power, we expect no blessing. When our souls are in grace, and we have hold on the fulness of God in preaching, and see that fulness flowing into the souls of others, how easy, how precious, to attribute all to God! Saying, these are *Thy* ways, blessed Spirit! "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto Thy name be the glory."

And now he puts upon her his treasures, first-fruits, as I may say. "He took a golden ear-ring"—or, as the margin reads, a jewel for the *forehead*—"of half a shekel weight." It was to be worn where Isaac could see it; like the names in the New Jerusalem, to be written on our foreheads. "And two bracelets for her hands of ten shekels weight of gold." With what costliness was she adorned! These treasures she wore through all her journey; first-fruits of that abundance

of wealth she was soon to enjoy in her own home. They were not given her that she may settle down in the wilderness, but to quicken her in her way out of it, telling her what was yet beyond. They were immediate possessions, read and known of all; just as the jailor in Acts xvi., no sooner was he saved than he had the first-fruit, even the Spirit, all evident, as if on his forehead or his hands. The fruit of the Spirit is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness," etc. Mark, it is the "fruit" (singular); *works* of the flesh, but *fruit* of the Spirit. They are all one—stand or fall together—love, joy, peace. The jailor had all these *at once*; that which gave one gave all. A few hours before he had *thrust* the apostles into the inner prison, *made fast* their feet in the stocks! Now he washes their stripes. Here is gentleness. At midnight he was miserable, afraid; but now he is in peace and at rest; and all was evident. Precious fruit, a first-fruit of the inheritance, "incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away!"

To the question, "Whose daughter art thou?" she could tell she was the daughter of Bethuel, of the very house described by Abraham. And are we not the very class described by God, to whom the message of His grace is sent—sinners subjects of His love? Yes, sinner is our name; and it is a work of God in us when we can answer to our name. "And the damsel ran, and told them of her mother's house all these things." Not the words only, but how she came by the jewel, and bracelets, and the gold; just as the jailor could tell how he came by his peace, and his love, and his joy. Laban had seen the jewel and bracelets upon his sister's hands, and had said to him

who had given them, "Come in, thou blessed of the Lord." Hence now the camels are ungirded, and they rest awhile. Eliezer had water to wash his feet, and the men's feet that were with him. The men, like David's men, whom Abigail cared for from her love to David, were all valued in virtue of him who was the "blessed of the Lord." Moreover meat was set before him to eat. But no; he said, "I will not eat, till I have told my errand." We count nothing done till we have accomplished our object. The Lord had meat to eat that others knew nothing of. That meat was to do the will of Him that sent Him. That will was the salvation of the poor lost one of Samaria. The Spirit of God will never rest until the work given Him to do is done. Oh that He may work now! For what a moment is the present, when through the truth, peace, life, heaven, glory, all may come through believing in Jesus!

And now it is just here that there is such special mention of blessing. "*The Lord hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great:* and He hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses. And Sarah my master's wife bare a son to my master when she was old" (life out of death): "*and unto him hath he given all that he hath.*" What wealth! What riches! Elsewhere we find his trained servants fit for war with the kings in the vale of Siddim were *three hundred*. It is not the mere absence of all these that can make a pilgrim; nor can their possession of necessity prevent from being one. A man may be without food and yet a lover of the world; he may be a prince and yet a pilgrim. No; it is having a higher thing

than the world can give which begets in us the spirit of true strangership on earth. All these were as nothing to Abraham compared with the God of glory and the heavenly city; the sight of *such* a God, *such* a city, made all else appear dim. It was the sight of Christ's riches, yea, of Christ Himself, which at the first so weaned us from all present perishable things.

For, as we have said, there was more than the riches with Rebekah. There was Isaac himself, his person, his place in the divine ways. Did Rebekah know as Abigail knew? Abigail knew that David was the Lord's anointed, the "beloved of the Lord;" she knew him as one who would possess the kingdom, and whose glory would be great. It was David *himself*, the *Lord's anointed one*, whom Abigail, as a child of faith, knew and loved.

Was there nothing answering to this in Rebekah? Was her heart occupied with Isaac as one blessed of God? Did she understand him as son and heir in his own house? Did she know him as type of the very rank and blessedness of the Son of God Himself? Did she understand any dispensational secret shown by Him who had set her apart as the "mother of thousands of millions"? Perhaps not. But we know as to ourselves in connection with Him of whom Isaac was a type;—"Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, to conceive the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But *God hath revealed them to us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God.*" That we should be one with Christ, or that we should share with Him His inheritance, or that we should reign with Him, be as He is,

and for ever with Him, exalted to a height far above all principalities, are "deep things" indeed.

But now, as has been said by another, there are no enjoyments like those of the *heart*. This daughter of faith, do we not seem to see her? She needs no reasoning to persuade her to *give her heart to Isaac!* The report had done its work. Believing the report, *her heart was no more her own. It had already gone! Isaac had taken it.* Nor did she need to be told of any two ways of believing the report; she knew but one; but that even did not engage her mind. Just as in looking up at the stars we are not occupied with our eyes, but are unconscious, it may be, that we have any eyes. No; Rebekah's faith was where her heart was. It was occupied with Isaac. He who had described Isaac to her, did not describe faith; it was *Isaac* he described. In spirit Rebekah was already joined to Isaac; he was now her heart's rest, and she saw herself heir together with him of all that was his.

Oh matchless Saviour! divine Suitor! This is how He comes in the glass of His word, and presents Himself at the door of our poor hearts. Dying love, personal glories, millennial kingdom, resurrection glories, golden city, eternal glories, all crowd into the picture. All at once, as told us by the Spirit in the Word they are ours; all at once do they engage the mind and win the heart for Christ. Ah, no indeed, it is not describing *faith*, it is describing *Christ*, that draws forth the heart; it is not seeing faith, it is seeing *Christ*, that gives peace. I once had been a whole day preaching, and had forgotten to take food; the moment, late in the evening, I saw bread, I was

hungry. Thus it is with the sinner. All his life long he may fail to know—yea, fail to think of—a Saviour, but show him Jesus, the matchless Saviour, and all at once he sees and knows he needs Him.

How one loves to trace out the principles, if we cannot indeed understand the whole moral contained in this story of Rebekah. The fact is, there was a full manifestation of Isaac, and there must be a full manifestation of Christ—a full Christ; Christ dead for us, Christ risen—with sin, death, hell, all left behind. Ourselves as Christ, dead and risen with Him; sin, death, and hell, all gone in His death. Ourselves one with Him, to be like Him, to sit on His throne with Him. But who can manifest Christ, and leave God unnoticed? Yet many preach a kind of Christ with no true notice of God. God is love. Mark that word *love*. But not love for the sinner? Yes, love for the sinner; in and through Christ He has shown it. This is a deep well; whosoever drinks of it lives—is saved.

I often think, Did the father love the prodigal more ere he left home than *whilst lost*? Were our own child lost, it would call out the deep yearnings of love in a way quite unknown before. *Love is eternal in God*. Love and God are one; God is love. Love was before the cross. The cross was the manifestation, not the cause of it. God's love is a righteous love; it cannot allow *sin*. "Who then can be saved?" With man it is *impossible*; but with God all things are possible. God gave His Son to bear our sins; He, in love to Him and to us, came into our sin-state, took our place, died to make atonement for us—to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Oh! to know

this is to know God, and to know *God* is to know and to have salvation.

Did you ever notice that word in Mark ix. 22: "If Thou *canst* do anything, *have compassion* on us, and help us." Jesus answered, the "if thou *canst*" is not with *Me*, but with *you*. It is not If *I* can but if *thou* canst *believe*, all things are possible to him that believeth. Therefore it is not, Can *I* have compassion, but, *Canst thou believe*. God *has had* compassion. Christ dying for us is God *having compassion*, at the same time punishing our sin, vindicating Himself. Imagine the son in the far country sending home the cry, "Father, if thou *canst* have compassion!" Ah no, no, he *had* compassion, he had never changed. To know *that* was what assured the prodigal of a welcome on his return. Does the anxious sinner understand? There was no laboured effort on the part of Rebekah to understand. She heard, she believed. We hear, we believe, we are saved! "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, *and thou shalt be saved*."

But observe another truth here. The Spirit of God strives with groaning against all the hindrances of the flesh. Blessed are such groans when they tell us that we *have* the Spirit—that we *are* the children of God. The Spirit cannot rest where any hindrances are allowed. Our full rest awaits us only when He will have brought us into the eternal enjoyment of all that for which He leads and guides us in the wilderness.

The house of Laban was to Rebekah what the flesh with all its hindrances is to us. "Let her abide with us a few days," they say. "*Send me away* that I may go to my master," is the urgent demand of Eliezer. Alas! circumstances within and without hinder us.

Our affections turn off to the creature. We, through the Spirit, would be wholly Christ's; but all these are against us. But he who had come for Rebekah will not rest. The Holy Ghost will never rest without completing His full errand; He will not retrace the wilderness without us. And we who have the spirit have *the earnest*, and cannot stay behind. "I will go," said Rebekah. Why? Her heart had already gone. Her affections were with Isaac. *No* words could express what the bride in the song felt when she said, "*I am sick of love.*"

The going to Isaac was just the needful relief to her heart. As in Ps. lxiii., when God is possessed, all else is "a dry and thirsty land, where no water is." Before Christ is known, the world is good enough. We drink of its so-called pleasures; we plunge into its poor ways; but all these *now* are as a dry and thirsty land. This is all the difference between one who has Christ, and one who has Him not. If no *Christ*, you will try to satisfy yourself with the world's ways and with the world's pleasures. But to the new nature these ways are corrupt. The raven *can* feed on death; the dove will not so much as touch it. If our souls were always abiding in Christ, we should never want anything else. Sin, and our fleshly nature, would be silenced by His voice, all displaced as to their energy in us. The sweet monotony of that name—Jesus, Jesus, Jesus—ever sounding in our ears, would leave us deaf to all other sounds. Rebekah remain satisfied in her old home when her heart was with Isaac? Impossible. The bride at rest without her beloved? Impossible.

"Hence Rebekah arose, and her damsels, and they

rode upon camels, and followed the man." Their journey lay from the land of the Euphrates to the land of Canaan.* An old writer has said, "Nothing more crooked or uneasy than the back of a camel." Yes; truly this journey of ours through the world is jolting enough. We have to tread weary ways before we get to the rest which remaineth; yea, rough places ere we reach our promised home. But though in the wilderness, we have that "other Comforter." He helps our infirmities by putting us in communion with Jesus. He gives us in the midst of all weariness to realise His love. He reveals to us the Son and the Father; He abides with us all the way; He is the earnest of our inheritance; He is God's seal that we are His. "In whom, on believing, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise." He teaches us; He brings all to our remembrance; He leads us, shows us our sonship. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they *are* the sons of God." He shows us that we are joint-heirs with Him who is Son over His own house. The result is, the inheritance is brought near to us—heaven and not earth is seen to be our home.

* It is remarkable to think that the land thus left by Rebekah, the land where the God of glory appeared to Abraham, is just now drawing to itself the eyes of all nations. It was in the land of the *Euphrates*, river of Babylon, that the first Empires of the world had their rise and fall. The same language spoken by Abraham, the Chaldaic, is spoken there, we are told, in its purity still. The battles lately fought there for the dismemberment of the great Ottoman Empire may result in Palestine being restored, and the land given to Abraham restored to its people Israel, as it yet certainly will be, and Jerusalem become a joy and a praise in the whole heart.

But now what of Isaac? He had been all this while simply passive—waiting the result; like our coming Lord, who all these centuries has been in the presence of the Father waiting the result. When the divine Eliezer, the Spirit who is the great soul-gatherer, has done His present work, Christ will come. This now is where our divine tale deepens in interest; for the “day breaks, and the shadows flee away.” Isaac has come; he is free, at sweetest leisure simply meditating. It was not in his home that he first met her, nor was it in that which she had left. Their place of meeting was in the quiet field, and in the quiet hour of even—suited to the scene. Isaac had come from the well *Lahai-roi*, that is, “the *presence of Him that liveth and seeth.*” He came alone, as if he would have undisturbed joy in meeting with her who he knew had left all for him. He came at evening-time, near the world’s night; but to *her* it was as a morning of joy. She had a veil, and had covered herself—self-hidden in the presence of Christ. And now see! she alights from the camel. You understand: there is no more desert-ruggedness now! No more dangerous steps and weary ways now! The time of her rest and joy has come, the longed-for moment has come. What a meeting! what a taking to each other! For Isaac now “took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother’s death.” How suggestive is all this! For it is the world’s evening now, but our “night is far spent, and the day is at hand”—“for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.” And what reality it gives to our hopes when we know that He who was once a Saviour for us here, will come again

to us—as He said, “I will come again, and receive you unto myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.” What a home-taking will that be! He will then be seen not, in His own Home, or down here in the wilderness where we now are, but in these lower heavens as the Morning Star, to herald the departure of this the long night of our separation and death. The *Morning Star* is that peaceful luminary which always precedes the rising of the sun; its scene is just above the horizon, but below the higher heavens. Thus, in like manner, the Lord when He comes will *descend* from heaven *to the air*, and we who are alive and remain, together with those who sleep in Jesus, will be *caught up* to meet Him in the air. Thence He will take us to the Father’s house, thence again to reign over His kingdom. We shall be for ever with the Lord. And then we too shall alight from all our care, from all suffering, and from sin; and from ourselves, as having within us this present evil root of sin, and this evil heart of unbelief. We shall alight from the last grief, the last pain, and the last sorrow.

Thus lovely, beautiful, is the light which shines upon the story of this daughter of faith. It is the same which shines upon us now, all through our own path below, until we see Him as He is.

III.

Rachel.

“ The lights of God, which sweetly dawn
In earliest books divine,
As morning hours to noonday lead,
Along the volume shine.

“ 'Tis but the same, tho' bright'ning sun,
Which clearer, warmer glows ;
The clouds, which veiled his rising beam,
Fly ere the evening close.”

“ And Jacob served seven years for Rachel ; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her.”

Gen. xxix. 20.

RACHEL'S story has its own peculiar charm in the midst of the brides of Scripture. She links our thoughts with Jacob, who brings up the whole question of God's love to Israel. No one can understand Scripture properly who does not see God's special relationship with Israel. All through Scripture we see how from the first God's heart was set upon that people. What words are these ! how they tell of that Bridal relationship with Israel which in all Scripture is seen to exist between the Lord and them : “ *I am married unto you.*” And these : “ *Thou shalt call Me thy Husband ; and I will betroth thee unto Me for ever ; I will even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness.*” It is through the sweet lattices of such promises as

these that we see God's special love to them. Three times repeated are the words, "*I will betroth thee,*" showing with what tenderness His heart was set upon the seed of Jacob. And how He loved to tell it; and how assured they might be of it. It was not only in righteousness He did this—His own, of course, for they had none; they were and are a sinful people—but it was "*for ever.*" The engagement into which the Lord entered was not only unconditional and unchanging, but eternal. Many read the Word as if the story of Israel were only of the past; but indeed it is not ended yet, yea, never will end. Israel are hidden only for a while; we shall see them again soon.

The principle on which the Lord betrothed Israel to Himself was one suited to them as sinners; it was unconditional on their part. *For His own sake He would do it, because of His own pleasure, and for His own glory.* "I will do it," he says, "in faithfulness," without which, because of Israel's unfaithfulness, it could never be accomplished. Other blessings promised to Israel were conditional, and were lost. Any engagements into which they ever entered were as the morning cloud and early dew that quickly goeth away. "All that the Lord hath said, we will do," was their bold, unadvised declaration at Sinai. But it was worthless as bold; for already at the foot of that mount was the engagement broken—"at Horeb they made a calf!" Yet no failure on the part of Israel (blessed truth! for it is the same with us) can alter the engagement which God entered into with Himself. He will be *God* in spite of all—perfect, true to His own love and purpose, whatever we may be. The children may forsake His laws, and their iniquities

be visited with stripes, which stripes surely are being inflicted on them now; "nevertheless" (sweet word!), "My loving-kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor alter the thing . . . gone out of My lips." No; Israel may fail, may be among exacting creditors of the earth; but He can say, Which of my creditors is it to whom *I* have sold you? *I* have not sold you. *I* have not been unfaithful. On the contrary—oh, words of tenderness!—"The Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth when thou wast refused." "Turn, O backsliding children; *for I am married unto you.*"

Thus this engagement is absolute and abiding, because it was entered into *in grace* by God Himself, and for *His own sake*; and because, being in grace, subject to no conditions, there can be no failure.

This is the sure, blessed principle on which God betrothed Israel to Himself, and on which our souls are saved. It is this which gives God's dealings with Israel such deep moral value to our own hearts; for, in like manner as to our own salvation, it is independent of what we are in ourselves, and therefore not merited by us, and can never be forfeited. But this grace is according to righteousness. Christ by His obedience unto death has righteously met all that God had against us. Any claims, therefore, that may come on us we can, through grace, refer to Him,—blessed be His name! Oh, what a rock of certainty, of security, and of unchangeableness we have in God, who for *His own sake* hath saved us, and who has declared, "I have done it *in faithfulness!*" It was only for Israel to know God's thoughts as disclosed to them, and they saw that He was their divine "Ishi "

—their unchanging Lover. This relationship can never be given up, can never be forfeited. Hosea ii. 16, Isa. lxvi. 22, Rev. xxi. all beautifully agree. And, notwithstanding present appearance, God will have His blessedness with Israel yet. In Isa. lxv. 17 it is said: "Behold, I create new heavens, and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind," or "upon the heart," as the word is, ever more to disturb or grieve it. "For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before Me, saith the Lord, so shall *your seed* and *your name* [the name of Israel] *remain*." Thus unconditional and unchanging are the glories associated with Israel, as also are all those counselled by God to us who during Israel's failure are partakers of "the root and fatness of the olive tree." How one loves to link in *Jacob* and *Isaac* also with the promises which are heavenly! Of Abraham it is said "he looked for a city," lit. he was *awaiting the city* "which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God." With many Abraham may indeed have part in a calling which is *heavenly*; but for *Jacob (Israel)* those made to them, it is said, are bounded by this earth. To possess the goodly land on the earth, it is affirmed, will be the fulfilment of what is promised to them. But no; it is said of *them*—Jacob and Isaac, as well as Abraham—that "*they* desire a better country, that is a *heavenly*: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, but HATH PREPARED FOR THEM A CITY."

And although Jacob, along with Israel and Abraham, had promise of what is heavenly, he as father of the tribes stands at the head of all that vast dispensation

which in the latter day will fill the *earth* also with its glory. In anticipation of that day, and ere he died, he could tell his patriarch son, "The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors, *unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills.*" Isaac himself had said to Jacob: "And God Almighty bless thee, and make thee fruitful and multiply thee, that thou mayest be a multitude of people." And the Lord had said: "I am the God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac; *the land* whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread forth" ("break forth," as the word is) "to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south; and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." To Abraham God had said, "I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heavens"—the stars as well as the sand of the sea and the dust of the earth; *i.e.*, the heavenly as well as the earthly. Thus there is one glory which is celestial, and another glory which is terrestrial.

As to the terrestrial none can properly understand Scripture who do not understand dispensations. All nations, the nations of the Earth, will call the seed of Jacob blessed; all nations will be blessed in *them*. *They* will inherit the earth. In *their* day, the days of Israel's glory, the earth will be the Lord's and the fulness thereof. *They* will be of a world whose King and Lord will be the Deliverer out of Zion. The riches of the Gentiles will belong to them, according to the promises made to the estranged one in service and sorrow in Padan-aram.

I do not now give an account of the many and great failures and sins of Jacob. They remind us that he was taken up by God for His own sake, a vessel of His love. Nor am I looking at Jacob as a type of God's dealings towards us in the kingdom of His grace (that he was such is evident); I am looking upon him now as the repository of all those great promises, the fulfilment of which will fill the whole earth with glory. The ladder set up on the earth, but which reached unto heaven, was a magnificent expression of that glory; also of the accomplishment of the promises made to him, that HEAVEN and EARTH in the latter days would be blessedly united. Our own calling is different as its place is different, as we have seen elsewhere. For the present we are "blessed with all *spiritual* blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Our birth, our place, our hope, according to our calling, are all heavenly; not merely so, we are one with Him who is in heaven, the heavenly One; as in 1 Cor. xv., we read, "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." How different this reads from anything ever said to Jacob, or any of the patriarchs!

But when He who is the heavenly One, as Son of man, comes in His glory to take possession of the earth, then we and they also, I believe, will come with Him, and shall reign with Him; as Christ said, "sit with Me on My throne." The Church being one with Him, we shall possess all things. Being heirs with Him, all that which He will have as Son of man and Son of Abraham, and Son of David, we shall have. "The glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given them." This He said to His disciples, and through them to us.

And the promises, as to the earth, made to Jacob are different from any ever made to us. Moreover they are not yet. We *are* blessed with all spiritual blessings; not so Israel; for what and where are they now? And as to the future: a long night of trouble first—"Jacob's trouble;" then the morning without clouds; then a heavenly city will break forth in magnificent glory, overshadowing the Salem of the millennial earth, when all nations will be blessed; at which time we who have now suffered with Him and all who have "died in faith" shall reign with Him.

But, how did Israel, as a nation, once seem on the eve of its full earthly glory! How near in the days of David! nearer still in those of Solomon! for how had they spread abroad "as the dust of the earth!" and how, in Solomon's reign of peace, were "all the nations of the earth blessed!" and how did the riches of the Gentiles belong to him! Truly one loves to linger over those few pages of the Word which show that the blessings of his reign had prevailed above the blessings of his progenitors, unto the utmost bounds of the everlasting hills! What a Zion was that which then mantled the hills of Salem! What a temple which he had made! How gorgeous! how glorious! And what a time was it when the ark in that day entered into its abiding-place! There was nothing in it then but the tables of the covenant. There was no manna in it, for all the once *hidden mercies* were made manifest; and there was no Aaron's rod, that told of power in reserve, and wilderness failure, which God did not wish to have in remembrance. But what fulness of Christ's was there in the thousands and tens of thousands of offerings which king Solomon offered!

What glory was there in that presence of the Lord in His holy temple, when "the priests could not attend to minister by reason of the cloud!" The one feature of the hour was, that "the prayers of David the son of Jesse were ended;" that is, they all seemed as if answered—the longing of his soul were all met. The earth was at rest and quiet under him who ruled in Solyma. All nations called him blessed.

And yet all this greatness was but *typical* greatness. the glory was *but a figure* of that to come. As has been said: "That day of Solomon ended in darkness. God ceased; men ceased to call Him blessed. After Solomon, darkness began steadily to settle in; Israel was swept away. Christianity followed; *that* has similarly failed. And now the black night of anti-christian apostasy is drawing nigh." And thus, so far, the prophecies beginning with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob have not yet been fulfilled. Israel is as dead. Yea, buried among the nations. Jerusalem is in heaps, trodden down of the nations until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled. How sadly appropriate are the following mournful lines—

" Oh weep for those that wept by Babel's stream,
Whose shrines are desolate, whose land's a dream !
Weep for the harp of Judah's broken sheH !
Mourn—where God once dwelt the godless dwell !

" And where shall Israel lave her bleeding feet ?
And where shall Zion's songs again seem sweet ?
And Judah's melody once more rejoice
The hearts that leaped before its heavenly voice ?

" Tribes of the wandering foot, the weary breast,
How shall ye flee away, and be at rest ?
The wild dove has her nest, the fox his cave,
Mankind his country—Israel but a grave ! "

Truthfully and sorrowfully may we sing with our Christian bard (and the song is a kind of landing-stage in the progress of our theme)—

“ The Lord hath afflicted His Zion,
The city He loved so well :
Where He deigned, like a crouching lion,
In glory and strength to dwell.
But why hath Jehovah forsaken
The place of His ancient throne ?
His vine from the wilderness taken
To flourish for Him alone ?

“ Ah, deem not the Holy One cruel !
Had Solyma loved His will,
She had sparkled the costliest jewel,
The beauty of nations still.
The Lord had been still her defender,
And she, the queen of the earth,
In holiness, freedom, and splendour,
Had gloried in Shiloh's birth.

“ But she fell ! and her crown of glory
Was struck from her rebel brow ;
And with feet all wounded and gory
She wanders in exile now.
Yet, sad one, distrust not our pity ;
Though some would wring out thy tears,
We will weep for the holy city,
And sorrow o'er former years.

“ Thou art stricken, dethroned, and lowly,
Bereft of a home on earth ;
Yet still to our heart thou art holy,
Thou land of Messiah's birth.
He sprung from thy chosen of daughters ;
His star o'er thy hills arose ;
He bathed in thy soft flowing waters,
And wept o'er thy coming woes.

“ He wept, who in secret yet lingers
With yearnings of heart o’er thee ;
He—He—whom thy blood-sprinkled fingers
Once nailed to the cursed tree.
Dark deed ! It was thine to afflict Him,
Yet longs His soul for the day
When thou in the blood of thy victim
Shalt wash thy deep stains away.

“ Thou land of the cross and the glory,
Whose brightness at last will shine
Afar through the earth, what a story
Of darkness and light is thine.
He died as a lamb—as a lion
He spares thee—nor can forget
His desolate exile of Zion ;
He waits to be gracious yet.”

This surely is true ; and the time is near when the Solomon season of glory will have come. Meanwhile, the church of this day comes in between the time of Messiah’s rejection and that season of His reign. The Lord, as Son, is now in heaven, whilst by the Holy Ghost, through the gospel, He is gathering on earth (for He is the great soul-gatherer) all those who are one with Him, even those who form the mystery hid from the beginning of the world, and who are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. The middle wall which separated Jew and Gentile is broken down, and both are now one in a new creation, which new creation is not by natural birth, as with Israel in the past, but by a divine and heavenly birth.

The Holy Ghost is gathering out of the nations a people for God. That work completed, the Lord will come to His Zion and to the earth ; and then all that Jacob was promised will be accomplished. The earth

will not go on indefinitely. The Son of David will yet have His place in it, and His glory too, as its Monarch and Ruler. And the world will then be altered. "None shall hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain."

For it is then that the earth will enjoy her long, bright millennium. It is then the heavenly city containing ourselves, yea, all the resurrection and glorified saints, will pay her visit to the earth. Then Israel will be saved, and all nations will call the Messiah blessed.

The whole circle of Israel's history, is it not with sufficient clearness told by that prophet who more than any other speaks of her coming glory? By him her sins, sorrows, repentance, and accomplished blessedness are all minutely described.*

Oh, what a history, reaching throughout all vicissitudes and changes, and issuing in the full accomplishment of the promises of glory made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! But the Lord will not be alone in reigning over the earth in that day. There will be an innumerable company of joint-heirs who will come with Him, having the glory of God, and will reign with Him in that city over the Jerusalem of the land of Israel; and they will be a magnificent display to the whole universe of what redemption is, and along with Him minister glory to the earth. They of the city, and nation also, will minister deepest love to His own heart. They will know Him and love Him and adore Him as the once slain Lamb. Especially will they know Him as having once served and suffered for them. Think of the nation looking on their Messiah

* Isa. xxviii. xl. xlii.

not to reject Him, but to own and love Him as their own! and think of the redeemed in the city of the glory looking at their Bridegroom-Lamb; the same Lamb, the same Christ—the hands, the feet, the side, with the marks of His sufferings unworn away by the glory, speaking of His sorrows, and telling how He loved them. It is thus here among the Brides of Scripture that the truth concerning Rachel so beautifully appears.

For Rachel is different from all others. David was not humbled for Abigail; Isaac never sorrowed for Rebekah, nor Joseph for Asenath.

It is Rachel who takes up the tale in this one aspect of it. It was through the *humbling* of himself that Jacob obtained Rachel; it is in the glass of his deep *sorrows* that we can see the love he had for her. We need not say of what she is the image. She surely reminds us of what will be the feelings of the saved at the marriage of the Lamb, when He who was humbled for us here will be all made known to our satisfied hearts, when we shall feast on the love of Him who was rich, but for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich.

It is by Christ's humbling Himself as a servant and as sufferer for us that we see His love. The order was—first, love; next, suffering; then possession. But the love was first. It is in the story before us that we see this.

We have the sweet, natural scene of Jacob's love, with all that it morally suggests in Genesis xxix., where our thoughts now are. And this is another landing-stage in our inquiry into the story of Rachel: Jacob "looked," we are told, "and behold a well in

the field, and flocks lying by it." The flocks were *lying* there; for they are restful in presence of the fountain. So will it be with us for ever; we shall rest where He rests. But the stone is on its mouth, and must be rolled away ere they can drink. All obstacles must be removed, which they were at the cross, ere we could drink as now from "the fountain of the water of life freely." How have we seen souls drink as they have never drank before, when, through the Word, the obstacles have been shown as all taken out of the way.

But there can be no drinking or feeding till the flocks are *assembled*. It was to show His delight in our communion, our fellowship one with another, that He said, "Where two or three are gathered in" (or by) "My name, there am I in the midst." Coldness, deadness, loss of communion, all vanish as He is revealed. The sweet visions of His grace, at His table for example, draw all to lie down in green pastures beside the still waters.

It was while Jacob was speaking to his brethren that Rachel came. When he saw her, he rolled away the stone from the well's mouth, and watered the flocks of Laban, his mother's brother. Nothing is so commanding as love. "And Jacob kissed Rachel, and lifted up his voice, and wept"—sweet owning of relationship. Such is our glimpse of this first love of his, which proved itself by long years of service and sorrow. Picture of him who said, "I love *my wife and children*;" and of Him who would serve for us for ever.

It was from this time that "Jacob loved Rachel, and said, I will serve for Rachel seven years." And

then, as the seven years wore away, and there were seven years more, "they seemed unto him but a few days for the love he had to her." But who that saw Jacob as humbled by Laban could have supposed that such promises were his? He was, as the blessed Lord Himself, unknown to those not in divine knowledge, and passed as a stranger in the land. Did Rachel, we wonder, know the true value placed on him by God? She loved him, we cannot doubt as many now, without much intelligence, love the greater than Jacob; but was she in the secret of the promises? Was she a daughter of faith? Was she a daughter of Abraham, and able to foresee the time when the full inheritance of the heavenly country would befall him, and when she herself, as to this earth, like Rebekah, would be the "mother of thousands of millions?"

How beautiful her first knowledge of him! Jacob claims relationship, on which he founds the rights and intimacies of sweetest love; she is of his own people; she is the daughter of Laban, his mother's brother. The eye that saw her looked on relationship. Jacob was to her as a mysterious one, whose grace drew to himself; yea, drew from Rachel a love corresponding to his own. No sooner does love exist than it asserts itself. It cannot rest until it is satisfied. It was thus, while in estrangement, far from any possession of the promises, that Jacob loved Rachel. What follows is that, through toil and disappointment, he finds his way to her possession. Though evil treated, nothing is an obstacle. Laban would have given *wages*, but Jacob wants no wages; he wants *Rachel*, for whom he will willingly suffer. He accordingly serves for

her seven years. These passed, he put in his claim. By stratagem the elder sister is substituted in her place. He is told he must serve other seven years. Fraud, disappointment, toil, all are as nothing to his love for Rachel. It is this one point of light in the history of Jacob which makes it so clear to our mind how he had set his love upon Rachel, reminding us of Him who had set His love upon us. We are told (Isa. liii. 7-9—Bishop Lowth's version) "*it was exacted. And He was made answerable; and He opened not His mouth.*"

We seek no fanciful or self-derived interpretation of this Scripture, but what may be doubted as a type may be accepted as an expression of precious truth concerning Christ and His Church; as one has said, "He saw the Church in the glass of the divine purpose, and so loved it that He could give up all, even life, to possess it." This was before the foundation of the world; but even in these early ages of time does one love to see how He had His delights with the sons of men, His rejoicing in the habitable parts of the earth! In such as Isaac, David, and Jacob He saw Himself as Bridegroom; in their brides also He saw those to whom in His time He will say, "I am married unto thee; I have betrothed thee unto Me for ever." It is because of this we so loved these histories. They are fragrant of God's love to Israel, of Christ's love to His Church. It is, under the teaching of the Holy Ghost, that in these Old Testament writings so much of Christ is discovered. We read of Jacob, Isaac, Boaz, David, Joseph, but it is not their names so much we see as the Name of names, that Name above every name, "which is as ointment poured forth.

His garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia." It is said of the vases of Egypt, three thousand years old, that they are still odoriferous with the precious ointment which they once contained. The fragrance of Jesus poured into such histories as these will grow with the growth of divine knowledge, and will be present to our redeemed memories through the everlasting ages of ages. The order, thus, with Him, as with Jacob, was first, love; next, suffering, and then possession; for though His love is eternal, the full possession is not yet.

There was a difference between Isaac and Jacob. Isaac tells of Him who was in the bosom of the Father, and, as *Son*, never left it even in the hour of deepest sorrow. It was not as Son with the Father, but as man with God, that He had to say, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" Jacob tells of the same Person, but in His character as the Son of *man*. He was "despised, rejected, a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief." Both set forth Christ; and we need both. Looking at Christ as man only is the error of the Humanitarian and of the Unitarian. Looking to Him, as Son, yet denying His Sonship to be eternal, is the error of the Socinian. But who can deny His Godhead with such words as John i. 1, 14, where it is said, "the Word was God;" not the Word was from God, or like God, but was God. And to identify the Word with Christ it is added—"and the Word was made flesh, and DWELT AMONG US"? A death-blow to all such denial of His Godhead are such words as these. Also that word in John xiv. 9: "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father." But how is this? Why, in that human

body dwelt, as treasure in a vessel, ALL THE FULNESS OF THE GODHEAD. Accordingly the Father was there; the Son was there; the Holy Ghost was there. Hence he who knows Jesus, knows the Father and the Son—knows God. This is blessed, especially in view of that day when, absent from the body, we are present with the Lord—with Him whom as Man, as Son, as Saviour, we have, thus, down here known and loved, and whom we shall find to be the same there.

How has He spread out, as it were, a mirror for Himself in all those we are considering, and into whom He Himself has been pleased to look, leaving there, for us to ponder, His own blessed image. Thus we see Him first rejected, and then reigning as Messiah-King. Joseph shows Him as Lord of the earth, Israel and the nations subject to Him. Isaac shows Him as Son. Jacob, in his turn, takes up features of the image unknown to others. He shows Him humbled—a man of sorrows, of promise truly, but not in possession. Jacob had only “a burying-place,” like Him of whom we sing—

“ Who found on earth no resting place,
Save only in the grave.”

Promised *all*, but received nothing. Blessed Lord! How one seems to see Thee in these Thy ways in the olden time. It was love—grace—that made Thee serve for us poor sinners. But had there been no sorrow, no humbling unto death, there had been no salvation.

It was that He might die for us He became man, and also that He might show us the Father; for “they were *human* lips that told us of the Father”—the

inmost secrets of His bosom. And the lips by which He now speaks, and by which He will speak to us for ever, are *human* lips. The whole vessel is human. The treasure is different. But whether, as Son here, declaring to us the secrets of the Father, or as a suffering, dying victim for us on the tree, the source of all is love—deep, unchanging love, the love of Him who “so loved us that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

Our souls would yet further linger over this image of Christ's service. The man in Ex. xxi. could have gone out free, but then he would have gone out alone. But he said, “I love my master, I love my wife and my children; I will not go out free.” He would rather be in bonds *with* them, than at liberty *without* them. Psalm xl. 6 shows how this applies to Christ. He would rather be in humiliation and death down here, and have His Church, than remain free in heaven for ever without it. For the joy set before Him He endured all. So with the seven years' servitude of Jacob—they “were but as a few days, for the love which Jacob had to her.” Speak we of love? it is different to mere hire. Service from love carries with it its own reward. It is in service that love finds its sweetest exercise. Paul speaks of eye-service; that is, service done only when the eye of another is on us, but ceasing when the eye is withdrawn. Witness or no witness, it was all the same with Jacob. He loved Rachel, and cared only for *Rachel*. Moreover, such love can endure suffering, reminding us of how Christ came where we were, and how, as the Good Shepherd, He gave His life for His sheep. In His

deepest, darkest hour, when God had forsaken Him, His thought was of His redeemed ones—His “darling,” or, as in the margin, His “only one.” *We* were with Him. No sorrows could be deeper; who can think of them but with awe? He was left by God; but though *God* left Him, *faith* had not left Him, and His faith was still with us; hence He could still say, “Deliver My darling, My only one, from the power of the dog.” Who can doubt that this was His redeemed? And who can doubt that the power of the dog means the power of hell? It was love that made Him suffer thus; and that love which was stronger than death had fellowship with His own, even whilst tasting its greatest bitterness, saying, “*My* darling, *My* only one.”

But now as Isaac and Jacob are different, so also are Rebekah and Rachel. The call of Rebekah to be the bride of Isaac was founded on oath and promise, the result of previous plan and purpose. In the call of Rachel there was no mention of any such purpose. Her being Jacob’s was because of herself. She was beautiful to sight. Seeing her was to love her; like the word in the psalm, “So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty.” Nothing is said of Rebekah thus. Costly gifts adorn her. There were no such costly gift here; it was *herself* simply, reminding us of how God saw in us poor, unadorned ones in the far country that which He loved. Moreover, Eliezer it was who went in quest of Rebekah; but Jacob went himself for Rachel, reminding us how Christ came where we were. The Good Shepherd goeth after His sheep *until* He finds, as the word is, *it*, which He surely always, definitely, *does*.

Then again it was Eliezer all along the desert journey who was representative for Abraham, informing the mind of Rebekah concerning Isaac. He had come for her; nay, was to be with her even to the end of the journey, when, having completed his mission, he would deliver her up to Isaac. He had already adorned her and otherwise prepared her for the moment when he would present her to Isaac. He would then have accomplished the will of him who sent him. Isaac having come, the guide was no more needed. There was no such provision for Rachel. Like those in the latter day who will unexpectedly see the Lord Himself, will see Him as He is, not needing, as we do now, first of all to see as in a glass darkly. How beautiful it all is! But it is the Spirit, the Comforter, that other Paraclete, who now, in the absence of the Son from heaven, engages *our* minds and exercises *our* affections. "Whom having not seen, we love." But in a new age the saved people, like Rachel, will see Him "who," like Jacob, "had not where to lay His head;" and seeing and possessing Him, will be happy in His love: they themselves in a special way the reward of His soul's travail.

One pleasant thought more. Sweet was the "I will" of Rebekah. It came in answer to the question, "Wilt thou go with this man?" But there was no "I will" with Rachel. There was no distance for the heart to traverse. Jacob had come; and it was not faith, but sight. Jacob was there; and to whom could she go? Jacob loved Rachel, and at once that love secured the same in her, which nothing could hinder; she was at once his own. How natural! how lovely! And surely we have a heart for all this, and are

helped in our souls thus in our knowledge of Christ in these precious stories—human, yet divine. How they tell of mysteries far deeper and dearer than their own. And how they benefit our own love! Oh, do we not long to know yet more of the love of Christ which “passeth knowledge”?—that dying love of His—yea, that love which, notwithstanding delay, a delay extending through all the ages of the promises, and that age now transpiring, will issue in the glorious consummation, when Israel’s night, now dark indeed, will be for ever overpast; and when our own night will be lost amid the glory of our coming day. The one night—our own—will end with “*the morning star* ;” i.e., when Christ comes *to the air* ; the other, as a subsequent event, with *the Sun of Righteousness*, who will rise over Israel and the earth with healing in His wings, which he will do at His second coming *to the world*. Surely for both, the night is far spent, and the day is at hand.

IV.

Asenath.

“ I love to ponder o’er the various ways of grace ;
The blessed features it presents my heart delights to trace.
We need this exercise to soothe the sorrows of the way,
Till glory crowns the work of grace in heaven’s unclouded day.”

“ And Pharaoh called Joseph’s name Zaphnath-paaneah ;* and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest† of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt.”

Gen. xli. 45.

WE can never know Asenath unless we know Joseph, to whom she was united. It is by the charm which is thrown over him—his sufferings and his dignities—that we can see the place which was given to her. The materials of Joseph’s history are all simple—lovely as a dream. Truly we may say, no child, even, can read them without tears—the injuries he endured, the veiling of himself before his brethren, and then the unveiling of himself. The tears *he* wept; the trials and tears of *his brethren*; the means he used to bring on their repentance; his own self-denial in not as yet hastening the moment of forgiveness for which his

* Hebrew, “ Revealers of secrets;” Egyptian, “ Saviour of the world.”

† Prince.

soul must have yearned; the deep love of his heart towards his own; and then, following upon his sufferings, the glory—his own glory and that of Asenath, who at the time of the glory comes to be united to him—are they not all of deepest interest as setting forth divine mysteries made good in their great original, in His special relation to ourselves, to Israel, and the nations?

Asenath comes in after the sufferings have passed away; she owns him lord, and knows only the sweetness of espousals, and the glory of his rule. A mirror truly in which to see the glory which will yet follow the sufferings of Christ! Surely none ever reflected Him as did Joseph.

First, as beloved by his father. In Gen. xxxvii. we read: "Israel *loved* Joseph more than all his children." Was not Christ the true beloved of His Father? At the Jordan, on His baptism, was there not a voice from heaven, saying "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"? Was not Joseph sent by his father to inquire after the welfare of his brethren? and did they not despise and reject him? Yea, was there not a spirit of envy and murder raised in their hearts against him? reminding us of Him, the sent of the Father, who "came unto His own, and His own received Him not." And why was he rejected? He had dreamed two dreams. These we find in chapter xxxvii., where the sheaves made obeisance to his sheaf, which stood upright; and the sun, and the moon, and the eleven stars made their obeisance to him; all other luminaries revolved round him. We are told his brethren envied him, "they could not speak peaceably unto him." Thus was it

with the blessed Lord. He said He was the Son of God; He said He was the Christ, the promised One whom all nations were to call blessed; He said He was a King; therefore they hated Him.

And was not Joseph cast into a pit, and did not his brethren stand by and see the anguish of his soul? In vain he besought them; for they would not hear. It was his *soul* that was in anguish, reminding us again of Him who said, "Now is My soul troubled," and who, "with strong crying and tears," prayed unto Him who "was able to save Him from death."

And what was it that sustained him? Did he think of his dreams? And were his dreams equal to prophecy? It was the certainty of the joy that was set before Christ which led Him to endure the cross and despise the shame.

Jew and Egyptian alike displayed their hatred to Joseph; both shot their arrows, and pierced him. "He was sorely hit by the archers," wounded in the house of his friends. Both Jew and Gentile crucified Christ. Cæsar crucified Him; Pontius Pilate crucified Him; His own kindred crucified Him.

It was not until as one raised from the dead that Joseph showed himself to his brethren. It was then a day of grace, so that, notwithstanding their sin, they could come to him. It is just the same now. There is nothing to hinder us from coming to be saved. and to be fed by Christ, risen from the dead, as were these sinful brethren.

In his first interview we have the hidden, reserved love of Joseph's heart yearning over his brethren. How would he gather them as a hen gathereth her brood under her wings! But the time is not come;

they have not as yet really returned. They are under guilt, but they do not know it.

But sin will work a conscience in them yet, as it will in Israel in the latter day. Genesis xlii. 21 is a touching story. "We are verily guilty concerning our brother," say these men, self-convicted! Mark their language to each other as they call to mind the anguish of their brother—how that in his soul's agony he besought, and they refused to hear. But Joseph himself is still hidden from them. They little thought that he who was now before them was their brother. Mark the tenderness of Reuben as he rehearsed his words to them, uttered on that day, the event of which, they said, was the cause of their present distress. "Therefore his blood be upon us." It is well to have a conscience of sin, miserable though it be.

Thus was Joseph reminded of his sorrow; but was it the remembrance of *his own* sorrow that made him turn from them and weep? Verily no; it was *their* sorrow, the sight he now had of *them*, their deep contrition, when he heard the heartfelt confession of their sinfulness, "We are verily guilty." Oh, inimitable picture! let us turn with him for a moment as he withdraws into an anti-room, and see him there letting out the pent-up feelings of his full heart. See that outburst of tender compassionating tears. He could not but weep; he was touched with the feeling of their sorrows; the tears of his deep love *would* come; and "he turned himself about from them and wept."

Have we not here another of those lattices of Scripture through which we see a greater than Joseph? How that "God commendeth His love towards us that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us"?

Now as these brethren will yet look upon Joseph when he reveals himself with mingled sorrow and joy, saying, "I am Joseph," so Israel in the latter day will look upon Him whom they have pierced, and hear Him say, "Fear not; I am Jesus whom ye crucified."

In Genesis xliii. 27 Joseph asks, "Is your father well, the old man of whom ye spake? Is he yet alive?" How nature comes out; he could not forget his father. For how had they loved! Years of separation had passed since the one had seen the other; Joseph was as good as dead to Jacob, and Jacob as good as dead to Joseph; but love was not dead. One of Joseph's first words to his brethren was for his father's welfare. What a picture! He had heard them rehearse how that their father had mourned for him many days, and his whole soul was set yearning as he said, "Is he yet alive?" See how the sheaves are bending! "Thy servant, our father," they say. See how the stars are making obeisance. What! "*Thy servant* our father is in good health, he is yet alive." And they bowed their heads, and did homage to the lord of Egypt.

We should never doubt a single word of God. Joseph dreamed; and his dreams, as we have seen, were equal to prophecy, and were fulfilled.

Jacob's lamentation over Joseph's supposed death tells of his great love for his son. Oh, if we loved our heavenly Father as we feel our children ought to love us,—because of our love to them, our love would be great indeed! Jairus, in his earnest resort to Jesus for his one only daughter at the point of death, and the Syrophœnician woman in her entreaty for her daughter, both tell what the heart of a parent is to-

wards a child. God has revealed Himself in the endearing relationship of Father; and I have found it sweet to think, if we feel, as we do inexpressibly, for our children, how much more, in depth of tenderness and compassion and love does He feel for His.

In verse 29 we read: "He lifted up his eyes, and saw Benjamin, his mother's son." The sight was too much for him; he yearned over him; and, making haste, he sought again where to weep. Touching scene! God bless thee, my son! were his words. Benjamin was the only one not guilty of his blood; reminding us of the ten tribes who were not in the land, and therefore not with those who crucified Christ, and did not utter, "His blood be on us and on our children," but who will be revealed in that day when all Israel will be saved, and when His love for them will show itself, as Joseph's did for Benjamin, to have been a deep, unchanging love.

And what is so interesting is, that these brethren, all the while of their sin and their separation, though ignorant of it, were in the love of Joseph. As sinners we were ever in the love of God, and we knew it not. He loved, without our knowledge or our sense of His love. Blessed gospel this—that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son" to die for us! But what a time was it ere some of us knew this. Yet God gave us to know it even as these brethren got to know the unchanged love of Joseph. "And Joseph could not refrain himself; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me." He wanted nothing to come between him and his brethren; no reserve, nothing to hinder a full unburdening of their sin and of his love.

Matchless Saviour! This is how it was in the unveiling of Thyself to us! Ours were the sins; Thine the love. And there were none with us; we were alone with Thee to tell what never was, and never will be, told to another. We had the blessedness of those in whose spirit there was no reserve, nothing kept back or excused, but mourned over and confessed. How precious! Thus in Ps. xxxii.: "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered," and to "whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile." God requires a full disclosure of our guilt, that, having confessed all, He may forgive all, and forget all. Forgiven and forgotten. This is what God says. Blessed thought! With not a cloud between God who judged our sins, and Christ who bore them; not one between us and God. As children of God, do we understand this? At the cross God showed Christ *our sins*; He now shows us *Christ's death*, which has put them away. What a making of Himself known to the sinner is this. How sweet is dying love; how full and final our forgiveness.

Angels have no such intimacies; only poor repenting sinners have such errands. "And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known to his brethren. And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard." But the perfect love had not as yet cast out fear. They were troubled at his presence, "terrified" as the word is. He had said, "I am Joseph; be not grieved nor angry with yourselves." Still their fear will be cast out. Isaiah liii. is the language of Israel in the latter days, typified by these brethren. Truly they will say, "He is

despised and rejected of men ; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief : we hid as it were our faces from Him ; we esteemed Him not." They will own that He had "done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth." "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities." And, as Joseph said, "God did send me before you to preserve life." God sent me "to save your lives by a great deliverance"; so the prophet concerning Christ, "It pleased *the Lord* to bruise Him." The Lord it was who "put Him to grief," who made "His soul an offering for sin;" and truly He, as Joseph, "shall *see His seed*, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand."

That pleasure will be the salvation of all Israel, and that in their own true "Goshen" of the millennial age, in which they and the nations will reap the fruit and own the glory of the King and Lord of all the earth.

Compare this picture with the preceding ones. Then there was reserve—and sorrow ; a veil was over his love ; he hid himself from their knowledge. But here sorrow fades away before his unveiled love ! There he wept alone ; here he wept on his brethren. Nothing to interrupt communion ; no distance between them ; no stranger to mar the joy of this his deep love to his own. Thus is it with us, on having confessed our sin—the blessedness of restored communion. But we cannot have this blessedness if sin be on our consciences. When confessed, it is gone. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

Mark, there is no need for an interpreter now, for

perfect love has cast out fear. What a moment for these sons of Jacob—in the embrace of him whom they had despised and hated, and acknowledging him lord! They are at rest now; and he is at rest. Rest will be the eternal lot of redeemed sinners. “He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied.” Satisfied at the joy, the glory, emanating from that day when He was in the pit, crucified and slain. Satisfied when He has “divided His portion with the great, and His spoil with the strong;” and when He shall “see His seed, and prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.”

In chap. xlv. 29 we read, “Joseph went to meet Israel, and he fell on his neck and wept a good while.” No marvel! It was no cold love this which he had for his father. The fact is, Joseph, who in time past was as good as dead to Jacob, was now meeting him again, as if in resurrection! Surely there will be joy in heaven over those whom we have loved, and in our ignorance or fear mourned over as dead in sins. What wonder and what joy should we see such again, living and glorious, amidst the surprise of the resurrection! However, it may be with such we know there will be a mutual recognition of the redeemed when in their heavenly glory. Luther said: “Eve being known at once by Adam on his awakening from sleep, shows with what knowledge we shall awake and arise on the morning from the dead.” David, speaking of his child, comforts himself thus: “I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me.” Notably the Lord gave the son whom He had raised from the dead at Nain to *his mother*. Suggestive as to how He may restore to us our loved ones in the resurrection. On

the holy mount the disciples *knew* Moses and Elias, those whom they had not previously seen, who appeared in glory. The Lord Himself has said that we are to sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of His Father. Sit down with them of course as knowing them. Paul, writing to his beloved Thessalonians, asks, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?" Thus the apostle foresaw the joy that would be his to know those whom the Lord had given him in the gospel. Not to know would imply an imperfection of our joy, and of that faculty whose special office it is to remember.

I do believe that the light of the glory will dissipate the fears and griefs of many who now mourn over some who seem to them as lost, and who are dear to them as Joseph was to Jacob. Even now faith in God (for He is faithful who hath promised) is what should sustain us in the darkest day of unanswered prayers. "Thou and thy house" was what was said to the jailor at Philippi. "Thou and thy house" is what the Lord is now saying to us. Similar comfort shines from that word, "Train up a child in the way he *should* go: and *when he is old*, he will not depart from it." May the Lord give obedience and faith and comfort to the heart of any one who is saying with tears, "Oh that my children may live before Thee!"

But now, in chap. xlix. 29, quite a different scene opens. We have seen, as it were, resurrection; but here it is death. Joseph kisses his father. It is the time of Jacob's death; an evening without the mists

and clouds which had attended his long vicissitous day. The sun setting in his western dominions, lighting up with glory those very clouds which in the day had hindered his brightness, is the fitting image of this sweet close of Jacob's earthly life. The serving and the sorrowing, the fearing and the sinning, are all over; and full of blessings and dignities he passes away in faith, waiting for the salvation of God. Night dews fall not more softly, or worn-out winds retire more gently, than sank to rest his heaven-born spirit.

Jacob died in the sure and certain hope of a glorious resurrection unto eternal life. I have often thought how much sweeter it is to read of the death-bed departures of the saints in Scripture than of those of the biographer now. "I have waited for Thy salvation"—how beautiful! Nothing of mere excitement—divine faith being uppermost. Uniformly calm were the leave-takings of all the patriarchs; of Stephen also, and of Simeon, and all those whose end is recorded in the Word.

Chap. I. shows us Joseph weeping over his dead. He kisses his father, and weeps. Some would chide these tears—would even sing, and not sorrow. I have never thought singing the natural expression of the heart at the death-bed or the grave. Devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made "*lamentation*." What a loss to the eleventh of John were there no tears in it! It is at once a "*Bochim*" and an "*Achor*;" a valley of tears, and a door of hope—of life and resurrection. No, we need refrain no tears when we are in sorrow. The Patriarchs wept; "Jesus wept." How He adorned those sorrows of His on Olivet and in Bethany by His consecrated tears! There was

reason truly. Sin, death, and the enemy were all seen as doing their strange work. The marred Countenance never perhaps had such charm of sympathy with our woes as when beheld in Bethany. What a mockery death made of Bethany; for Bethany means house of song. But soon from deepest sorrow it was turned into the joy of resurrection.

Theology, as I have said, would put death first, and resurrection after. It is over Jacob in death we now see the sorrows of Joseph. There is no return affection here as in the last scene we witnessed, when the twain were reunited; no words of mutual joy now; no sweet responsive kiss; no look of love. No; nothing remains of Jacob now but the closed eyes, the still cold lip, the chill face and lifeless form of the servant of Padan-aram—the prince with God. Our God is not the God of the dead, but of the living; and we shall meet with Jacob again, sitting down with Abraham, and with Isaac in the kingdom of the Father in the heavens. Oh hope of Israel! hope of glorious Christianity! divine hope of the Church! to be for ever with such, and like Him who is the resurrection and the life. What, instead of this, has infidelity to offer?

But to return to his brethren. Alas! they are not yet established in grace. No. They know, indeed, their sin, but they do not know grace. "And when Joseph's brethren saw their father was dead, they said, Joseph peradventure will hate us, and will certainly requite us all the evil which we did unto him." Thus, if we look only on our sins, or the sin that is in us, we shall be still in fear of judgment; but if we look at sin as having been once *on Christ* who bore

it for us, our souls may well be established in grace. It will never assure our hearts to tell us there *is* no sin in us, for we find enough; but what will assure our hearts is to know that, since Christ took it away, there is no more sin *on* us. Joseph had dealt with them in grace; and with the full knowledge of what they were. "Grace in God begins at the very lowest point." It takes up man *as he is* (vile, sinful from first to last), and deals with him in the full intelligence of what, in all his sinfulness, he is. It is of the utmost importance to understand this feature of grace at one's first starting; it enables us to bear with steadiness of heart the after discoveries of personal vileness which so frequently shake the confidence and disturb the peace of the children of God.

These brethren reasoned from what *they* were, and not from what *Joseph* was. They were in bondage to themselves. But whatever *they* were, he was only grace, only love.

Alas, how soon may we lose the sweet sense of the grace in which we stand! Our hearts must be occupied *not with what we are, but with what Christ is*, or we shall never be long happy. God has taken up all our sins—past, present, and future, and has made an end of them in Christ. "Your sins and your iniquities," He says, "will I remember no more for ever." Dark or bright with us, it is still *I* will remember "*no more.*"

But the rebuke which Joseph gave them, did it put them at any greater distance from him? No, indeed. Thus with a greater than Joseph. Rebuke with Him did not mean denial. It was after Simon's rebuke, Peter, James, and John went up the hill of glory with

Jesus. The disciples had all been rebuked when He said to His Father in the 17th of John's gospel, "They have kept thy word." No; Joseph took his rebuked ones, and made them rich in the land of Goshen. Truly, it is grace which humbles us. It was grace which humbled them. They fell down before his face, and said, "Behold, we be thy servants." As we have been reminded, it was not so much the *forgiveness* as the *graciousness* of the heart of Joseph that affected these brethren. It was that which overwhelmed and comforted them. He never upbraided them. He never seems to have told Pharaoh or any of the Egyptians of their sin. Hence it is just here that we feel so in company with a greater than Joseph! In that long "for ever" with Him and each other, it will not be the forgivenesses we had so often experienced that will be most precious to remember, though we shall remember them, but the character of that heart of His which we shall adore and love as being so gracious.

All this may find a counterpart in Israel in the latter day; they will know and feel their sins. And when He whom they had crucified shows them He knew all, and had dealt with all their sins in righteousness, that He may deal in graciousness, then they will rest before Him, and will say, "He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed."

But why do we dwell thus on Joseph, but that knowing him we may know Asenath, who is now a sharer with him of his great honour and glory. She was already daughter of a Prince, but is now united

to one to whom Jew and Gentile must bow the knee. For it is here, in the midst of his glory, and not in his sorrow, that her relationship with him appears. Their joy surely was something of Eden-joy. It seemed to say—

“ The voice that breathed o’er Eden,
That earliest wedding-day,
The primal marriage blessing,
It hath not passed away.”

Already had Pharaoh put on him the name of Zaphnath-paaneah, which we are told in the ancient Egyptian signifies “Saviour of the world;” but in Hebrew, “revealer of secrets.” Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand and put it on Joseph’s hand, and arrayed him in a vesture of fine linen, and put a chain of gold about his neck. Can we conceive of more special honour? It is in the light of this we see how favoured was Asenath. And they cried before him, “Bow the knee.” Joseph is lord of all. Jew and Gentile bow to him. He and his brethren are the centre of blessing.

Thus in Psalm lxxiii., *after* the glory, or on the ascension of Messiah to His glory, will Israel be received. And as with Israel in Goshen, so will it be in the latter day with Israel and the earth under the divine Joseph, who with those glorified with Him, will reign over them. In that day Israel will be the centre of blessing, as in Ezek. xxxiv. How the Lord will receive them we read in Jer. xxxi. 3, 4: “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee. Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt

go forth in the dances of them that make merry." And again: "He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd does his flock. For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. Therefore they come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord, for wheat, and for wine, and for oil, and for the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all." Also Hosea ii. 21, 22: "And it shall come to pass in *that day*, I will hear, saith the Lord, I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and the wine, and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel."

As we have seen it was all sufferings once with Joseph. It is all glory with Asenath, who foreshadows what will be the glory of Christ and His own in the day of their espousals. The true Bride of Christ will never undergo, she will only remember, as Asenath from the glory, the sufferings which He bore,—that once suffering but glorified Lamb! She will be received not immediately after the sufferings, but after there has come the glory.

It will be then, amid the glory, she will see in Him eyes that will weep no more, a head and brow to droop no more, hands and feet to be pierced no more. She will see the earthly nation in the millennial Goshen as sheaves bowing to Him, the great sheaf. She will enjoy with Him the riches of the earth. She will see Him Lord and King. She will not be *the nation*, as Asenath was not the nation; the glory of the terrestrial is one, but the glory of the celestial is

another. She will reign with Him over the nation, and will share with Him the full glory of all the nations of the earth. Her first knowledge of Him in her espousals will be that of glory. But the celestial, the glory, will be first; then the terrestrial—her Lord having come from Heaven to His full inheritance amid abounding millennial blessedness on earth. The sunny season, the age of millennial brightness, will have come, and the sorrows, all the preceding trials answering to the fig leaves of Matt. xxiv. issuing in the brightness, will have been forgotten.

Hence Ephraim and Manasseh were the children of the espousals. Their names, “forgetfulness and fruitfulness,” suggestively point to the long eternal time in which God will have wiped away all tears from off all faces; and when the Tree of Life in the midst of the eternal Salem will bear its fruit, the leaves thereof shall be for the healing of the nations.

But the welcome at the palaces of Egypt, with the constant access to the groves and gardens of Goshen; the streets where the knee was bowed to Joseph, and the presence-chamber of his more private joys, are images of those palaces of splendour and homes of love to be enjoyed in the heavenly city of the Lamb, or in the Jerusalem of the millennial Israel. Here we find it needful again to remind ourselves that the Church, as one with Christ, will be always with Him and like Him for ever. This is our great hope, to be “for ever” with Him. What is all else compared with this hope, and in prospect of this city of the Lamb, and its connection with a redeemed earth? In the midst of earth’s greatest millennial splendour, or heaven’s greatest eternal glory, it is ours to be as

He is—one with Him in His inheritance—one with Him in His joys, His rest and His glory for ever.

Let us note, ere we bid farewell to this history of Joseph, that in all his sufferings no murmuring word ever escaped him. This is of present value truly. “Grace was poured into his lips.” What an example for us in this age, when pride in Christians allows of so little of confession when obviously wrong, or of forgiveness when wronged!—so unlike Him of whom Joseph in this respect was a type, as in his glory he was so striking a foreshadow!

“What grace, O Lord, and beauty shone
Around Thy steps below!
What patient love was seen in all
Thy life and death of woe!

“Thy foes might hate, despise, revile,
Thy friends unfaithful prove—
Unwearied in forgiveness still,
Thy heart could only love.

“Oh give us hearts to love like Thee,
Like Thee, O Lord, to grieve
Far more for others’ sins than all
The wrongs that we receive!”

V.

Ruth.

“ Be not satisfied with gleanings
Scanty measures for thy soul,
When His pastures smile with blossoms,
And thou mayst enjoy the whole.

“ Be not satisfied with sipping
From the wayside rill of love ;
Oh, drink freely from the fountain !
This thy happiness will prove.

“ Take and use Him to the utmost,
Never want when food is nigh ;
Thou canst not exhaust its sweetness,
Nor hold back a fresh supply.”

“ When thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink.”

Ruth ii. 9.

THIS narrative of Ruth finds its root in Naomi, who had been dwelling away from Israel, in the Moabitish land, “the far country,” as we may say. Naomi signifies “my delight, my pleasure;” but now, having lost all, she calls herself Mara, which signifies “bitterness.” Boaz signifies “strength;” Ruth, “satisfied.” As with Naomi, so with Ruth, in coming up out of Moab they came up out of bitterness; after which they find Boaz, which is “strength.” Then are then “satisfied.” How beautiful the chain, each link of it—“bitterness, strength, satisfied !” What is the uniform

history of God's children? Abraham for example, and Daniel and David, Joseph also, and many others. Did it not begin with bitterness, with sore trouble? And God, who is "strength," saved from it, and being saved they were "satisfied." Is it not our own history? Bitterness, strength, satisfied;—bitterness for sin, strength in Him who died for us, satisfied with Him. Our history as believers is according to all these. Flesh trying to meet the demands of the law is bitterness; the flesh in us trying to be satisfied with itself is bitterness; going down to the world, to Moab, losing our communion, is bitterness; grieving the Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed unto the day of redemption, is bitterness; quenching the Spirit, not walking according to the Spirit, but according to the flesh—what is it all but bitterness? Christ having met the demands of the law is strength; Christ for us, and the believer on Christ before God, is strength; the answer of a good conscience in Christ having died for us is strength. Satisfaction made, what more do we require? This is strength. Christ Himself made sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him, is strength; yea, is a fountain that can never run dry—a living fountain of life and vigour for the soul. The offices of Christ, the glories of those offices and of His Person, and those which are His reward—these passing before our faith satisfy and sustain our hearts. Fully satisfied we shall be when we see Him as He is, awaking up in His likeness. "I shall be satisfied, when I awake with Thy likeness."

The land of Moab was to Naomi a land of death. Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died; her sons also.

Moab had been to Naomi what the "far country" was to the prodigal—the land of sorrow and of the shadow of death; so that her very name was no more pleasant to her. She thought of the land of Israel, where the wings of Jehovah had spread themselves over her in her youth. Accordingly she arose, with her daughters-in-law (the widows of Mahlon and Chilion), that she might return from the country of Moab, for the Lord had given His people bread. Her daughters would fain go with her to her own land; but so low was she in her soul, that she wished them to return to their own people, and to their idols. Never can we lift others higher than our own level. If not in communion ourselves, we are poor helps to one who is low in spiritual life, or who is a backslider. Think of Naomi enjoining it on Ruth to go back to her idols!

What Ruth wanted was not idols, but provision—rest for her heart. Could an idol satisfy the heart? As we have said, if we are not in grace ourselves, we can never testify to others as we ought. Solemn thought! There may be clearness of the letter without the power of the Spirit; but if no power of the Spirit, there will be no suitable result.

Thus one may be in full intelligence of God, and being in His love can show it to others; another may give clear statements of truth, but, his own heart not being at rest, souls are not saved, and the weary get no rest. The one great qualification for an evangelist is to know the love of God—a love with which his own heart, being in communion, overflows. It is a question if any can be unmoved under the power of such an overflow.

How interesting to think that the want of which we speak was in Ruth whilst she was still in Moab, and that the supply suited to that want was in one to whom she was as yet an utter stranger. How sweet, in our dealings with sinners, to think with ourselves thus: "Ah! they are in want—full of longing; but they do not know what they want, or what there is for them in God!" And how sweet when we can say, "But through His message they *shall know!*" Naomi was but a sorry evangelist; she did not understand her privilege—her work. Yet *her* lack did not hinder the longing of *Ruth*. She tenderly besought: "Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried."

Ah! what is life? what is all else if no blessing? "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." As we sing—

" Lord, from Thy love I cannot part,
Nor canst Thou part with mine."

Hence "where *Thou* diest." Where did Christ die? He died on the cross, and we have died in Him. And are "made free from sin," Rom. vi. 22, with our load of guilt gone as we sing—

" O Christ, what burdens bowed Thy head !
Our load was laid on Thee !
Thou stoodest in the sinner's stead
To bear all ill for me.
A victim led, Thy blood was shed ;
Now there's *no* load for me.

“ For me, Lord Jesus, Thou hast died,
And I have died in Thee ;
Thou’rt risen, my bands are all untied ;
And now Thou liv’st in me :
The Father’s face, of radiant grace,
Shines now in light on me.”

Hence we can say with Paul, “ I am crucified with Christ ;” also buried with Him ; and where He was buried we have been buried ; nay, *are* buried—for there should be no disinterment of ourselves—“ buried with Him by baptism into death.” “ And where Thou lodgest, I will lodge.” Where is He ? In heavenly places ? He has ascended up far above all principalities and powers, and is, for us, in the very presence of God, and we are made nigh in Him. Ruth said “ thy God shall be my God.” Christ’s God is our God. He said : “ My Father and your Father, My God and your God.” And oh, what a God is *His* God ! what a people are His people ! But do we, indeed, realise, as we ought, that sweet fellowship and communion which we are privileged to have with Him in this, viz.—that God is *His* God and *our* God ; and that His redeemed people are *all* dear to God, *all* bought with a price, all the habitation of God through the Spirit, and all with Him to enjoy the same home and to have the same blessedness for ever ?

“ So they two went until they came to Bethlehem ” (house of bread). To go back to the land of Israel, or, as we may say, back to God, was the only true way for Naomi. The prodigal must go back to his father ; the more the delay, the more the misery. The same with ourselves. It was *God* who made us happy at first ; He alone can make us happy now. We have

failed, but grace is the same, the precious blood is the same; that blood tells of sin, of its evil truly—we see it in the cross, and feel it in our folly—but it tells us also of sin put away.

It is well for the child of God to think there may be affliction, sore chastening, for backsliding, but not *wrath*. . . . Ah! no; the wrath of God abideth on him that believeth *not*; but never on a child of God. “We have little idea,” remarks another, “what wrath, is, or the atonement which has met and for ever put it away for those who believe. We have never had experience of wrath; we never can have it. If we have felt the bitterness of remorse for sin, we may then, as it were, have learnt a little of the character of it. But it will never again be experienced by any, save by the lost in the second death. For us it has been met once and for ever by Jesus on the cross. This was the end of His life—to know in His own Person the wrath of God. Having put away sin, He entered into the sanctuary, there to appear in the presence of God for us. There is our home; there is our rest. Every evil of our natural heart deserves wrath; not one thought or feeling that does not. And these things remain in one who believes; in him are found all those things against which the wrath of God is revealed. God looks upon us in His Son; and we can say that all that His eye sees there, all that He delights in, is for us. Until we know the sanctuary aright, we shall never know true peace. Is it not often the case when we feel we have gone astray we become weak, and are cast down? But is there not a cloud? Do we say we must seek to confess, to pray, so that the dark cloud may be removed and

peace restored? We must take heed what we do when there is this consciousness of sin and distance from God in the soul. All such thoughts come from Satan, and set aside the priestly ministrations of the Lord Jesus, and the efficacy of His blood. When we turn back to God, we find the sanctuary the same unchanged place of blessing. *No*; when my child has fallen into the mire, I may chastise him (as he ought to be disciplined); but that does not alter my relationship or my love for the child. What is most to be dreaded is, that there should not be this chastisement, this discipline from God." As another has said—"God's grace in restoring gets the greatest victory over the enemy. When the conscience is soiled, and carries with it the remembrance of sin, then to be able to cast oneself still on the unfailing love of God, this is victory of the highest order. It shone in Peter when in spite of his recent denial he could throw himself into the sea to meet the Lord alone. And in the 23rd Ps., as one has observed, the soul restored *before* it walks again in righteousness. The value *herein* is this—that there is a natural tendency in the heart to reach restoration through a renewed walk in righteousness. God's restoring grace is blessed; for the result is holiness, just as the result with Naomi was blessing.

"So Naomi returned, and Ruth with her: and they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley harvest." The prodigal could not go to the heart of his father without that heart being full for him. When a soul comes to God, it is always, as it were, the "beginning of barley harvest."

Ruth said, "Let me now go to the field, and glean

ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace." Some of you know what this is—how you have gone after those who, in these days of blessing to souls, have been scattering broadcast in the pathway of sinners the golden grain of divine truth. He who preaches Christ scatters precious grain; and how many have loved to gather up the treasure.

And she "came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers; and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz. . . . Then said Boaz unto his servant, Whose damsel is this?"—a natural question, Who are you? Where do you come from? answering to the Holy Ghost finding us out. Like Eliezer, in Gen. xxiv. 23, seeking Rebekah, "Whose daughter art thou?" Ah! who *was* Ruth? She was a poor Moabite, who had left all in which she once delighted in Moab for the land of Israel, and who is saying, "Let me glean, and gather after the reapers **AMONG THE SHEAVES.**" Bold request!—"among the sheaves." The supply lies thickly around. "And Boaz answered, Go not to glean in another field . . . let thine eyes be on the field." Often, alas! is the seeking soul tempted to glean in *another* field, to seek for rest outside of Christ, to cast another look on the vain world, its society, its so-called pleasures. The Lord would have you abide fast in His field; He would indulge you with a place deep down amid the weighty grain of His truth, down among the sheaves of His grace and love, even now, as many a Moabitish one will doubtless have amidst the harvest of that kingdom which in the latter day will be glory.

"And when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and drink of that which the young men have drawn."

"If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink."
"The water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." Freely does it flow from Him to us, springing up to its own level. Where is that? Heaven! yea, to God, who is there. Like Simeon, when he saw *Jesus*, he saw God's *salvation*; the life in him at once sought the level of "Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation."

Here now is Ruth among the sheaves. She has much, but there is more. She knows Boaz by name, as in chap. ii., but she does not know her own relationship to him. She does nothing as yet but *receive* from his hands. Like many a newly-saved one who thinks only of what he has received *from* Christ, and does not know that Christ Himself is his, with all that that involves through the long heaven of a never-ending eternity! But she abides fast by his maidens until the end of the barley harvest. Still she only knew him by name. Naomi had never mentioned him all the while she was in Moab; yet all this while he is the same "*near of kin*," this "mighty man of wealth." She was as a new-born one whom Naomi would instruct. "When thou art athirst, go unto the vessels and drink of that which the young men have drawn," for He does give blessings through others.

Now all this is our own history—every stage of it, as sings our Olney bard—

"I thirst, but not as once I did;
The vain delights of earth to share;
Thy wounds, Immanuel, all forbid
That I should seek my pleasure there.

“ It was the sight of Thy dear cross
 First weaned my soul from earthly things,
 And taught me to esteem as dross
 The mirth of fools, the pomp of kings.

“ Great fountain of delight unknown !
 No longer sink beneath the brim ;
 But overflow, and pour me down
 A living and life-giving stream !

“ For sure of all the plants that share
 The notice of Thy Father’s eye,
 None proves less grateful to His care,
 Or yields Him meaner fruit than I.”

We ourselves have learned from those whom God had taught before us. How often have we been refreshed and strengthened by some who are now in heaven. They were vessels bearing to our souls divine treasure—blessed vessels from His hands! To say we can do without such vessels is to deny the arrangements and gifts of God. But where they are not, the solitary ones who never see the face of their teacher have a special promise: “When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.”

Ruth said: “Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of *me*, seeing *I* am a stranger?” The “*why*” is easily told. He loved the stranger! Christ loved the Church. This is like our own “*why*”—

“ Why was I made to hear Thy voice,
 And enter while there’s room ? ”

The effect of the grace of Boaz was to humble Ruth. That Christian will manifest most lowliness

who, knowing his place in His deep love, is living nearest the Person of the Lord.

“ The more Thy glories strike mine eyes
The humbler I shall lie.”

Boaz answers: “ It hath fully been shewed me.” Ah, yes; “ fully.” The divine Being knows *all* about us. Away in the far country we lingered long, feeding among the husks, and He knew how dissatisfied we were. He knew how the heart had sought to be satisfied apart from Him. He knew how wretched and miserable we became, and how emptied at last we were of all we held dear. Yes, it is fully known to Him how we have left the land of our wretchedness, and have come to the house of bread, and are seated at His table.

How one loves to follow in the footsteps of this child of faith, richly provided for now, but soon to be more rich and more happy with him who owned the field! Soon to be satisfied! Oh, how *satisfied* then!

And now this “ sufficed ” of Ruth is a sort of landing-place in our history. Up to this point she has been one of the gleaners. Now Naomi leads her to something far better and additional. She seeks for her *rest*, not the rest of *food* only, but rest founded on *relationship*. “ My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee? And now is not Boaz of our *kindred*, with whose maidens thou wast?” Mark the word “ our kindred.” Naomi herself is restored; she knows the occupations, the ways of Boaz. “ Behold he winnoweth barley to-night.” He was separating the precious from the vile, doing

it himself. "Night and day work," as one has said, "with Him who searches the hearts and tries the reins of the children of men." Boaz himself could not rest; what both needed was rest for the heart. Unless the heart be satisfied there is no rest. Boaz gives her six measures of barley. Before, when she had gleaned all day, there was only an ephah! Thus abundantly more do we receive whilst in communion. Up to this Ruth was but to receive at the hand of Boaz. Like John iv., "If thou knewest the gift of God, thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." It was only to know to receive. This is the gospel. But now she is to dwell near his person, to be clothed with his garment, having perfect rest. "He shall rest in His love; He shall joy over thee with joy." Such privilege have all His saints. Boaz exercises his right of relationship, for he is her true kinsman. Only One *could* redeem us. The law could not. The ten witnesses summoned by Boaz were evidence that none but Boaz exercised the right. But for the Son of God who loved us there had been no sinner saved. He is our great kinsman. Because the children were flesh and blood, He Himself likewise took part of the same. He took not on Him the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. *Then* redemption, redemption through the shedding of His own precious blood.

And now the day of their espousals has come; being his bride Ruth becomes joint-proprietor with him of all that he has. The field in which she had gleaned became her own. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." In the latter day His saints (the meek) will possess the earth. Especially will the

land which is Immanuel's land be theirs to delight in, and to enjoy with Him—the land in which they once merely gleaned.

What a change for Ruth! No more to glean. She had more than her necessary food. Boaz himself was hers. And what a change will it be for us! How opulent of glory shall we yet be along with Him who will possess the heavens and the earth!

Boaz sets forth the earthly riches of Him who in His own time will be Lord and owner of the earth. Jacob was in possession of no goodly estates. Isaac was son in his own house. David sets forth rejection, and afterwards kingship, the putting down of all rule and authority, as opposed to the kingdom. Boaz possesses the field.

Yet the field itself was not what Boaz mostly prized. As before Eve had been formed in the garden, the garden itself—Eden, with all its fruitfulness and beauty, had no provision for the heart. And as with Boaz so also with Ruth. She first gleaned in the field of Boaz; then lay at his feet; then fed from his table; but these were not enough; she became one with Boaz himself. Boaz took account of her desire for himself, in that he called her “blessed,” saying, “Blessed be thou of the Lord, my daughter.” She had not gone after others—not even after those who had been the means of supplying her need, as when they let the “handfuls fall on purpose for her.” No; the means, the truth, the Word even are not the Lord. Is not this also in accordance with the breathings of our own hearts, as we sometimes sing—

All truth and all labours, and even the Word,
How blessed soever, they are not *the Lord*.

And now, in conclusion, is it not just here that this daughter of faith answers to her name, which is "Satisfied"? She is joint-owner with Boaz of the field in which she had gleaned. She is satisfied with Boaz; and satisfied, she is at rest, for Boaz had given her rest, reminding of Him who has said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," short word, but of infinite sweetness and fulness. What rest will there be in that day when with the Lord we shall possess the earth! The earth itself will be at rest, and singing. What rest, too, shall we have on high in that heavenly city reigning over the earth. It will be one Sabbath of earth and skies! God Himself will rest in His new creation. Our rest will be perfect like His. We have had our gleaning-time, not only of the world, but of the Church. We have had our time of feasting—not the world's merely, as in the days of our unregeneracy, but in the days of rich truth displayed by those vessels whom God used for our good. The remembrances do not satisfy. How strange! even our sweetest things here often awaken memories, the echoes of which fall upon our ear only to lead us to long for the time when we shall be satisfied, awaking in His likeness. Then we shall have perfect rest, not only in the bright eternal present, but in the understanding of many a doubtful past—of which now the slightest thing may painfully remind us.

ECHOES OF MEMORY.

" ONE little breath of perfume,
One little note or song,
One little chord of music,
Will haunt us—ah, how long !—

And then lie down in silence
 Within the heart's deep cell,
 Until some thoughtless whisper
 Shall wake them—ah, too well !

“ Too well ! those flowers have perished ;
 Too well ! that song is gone ;
 Those chords, so fondly cherished,
 Have changed or *lost their tone*.
 Then leave them in their coffer,
 Buried in silent sleep,
 And waken not the slumbers
 This quiet heart would keep.

“ Would keep until the morning
 When waking is complete,
 And memories long buried
 Shall rise in rapture sweet ;
 Not like some startled infant,
 Who falls asleep in pain,
 His waking first-thought sorrow,
 While tears spring fast again.

“ But like some wearied dreamer,
 Who *knows* the past a *dream* ;
 That things which seemed most painful
 Are far from what they seem ;
 The dirge of earth's sweet music,
 Not as a broken strain,
 But links of heavenly sweetness
 Yet to be heard again.

“ Heard, with a deeper meaning,
 Heard, in a fuller tone,
 Heard, when earth's mournful echoes
 Are gone—for *ever gone*.
 Then leave them in their garner,
 Buried in silent sleep,
 And waken not the slumbers
 This quiet heart would keep.”

L. T.

VI.

Abigail.

“ They suffer with their Lord below,
They reign with Him above ;
Their profit and their joy to know
The mystery of His love.”

“ And David sent and communed with Abigail.”—1 *Sam.* xxv. 39.

THIS whole picture of Abigail shows how God hides things from the wise and prudent, and reveals them unto babes. How else did she know that David was the Lord's anointed, that the anointing oil had been poured upon his head? To all outward appearance David was despised and rejected, in sore want in the wilderness, without a home, and without a kingdom. How did she know that his house was “a sure house,” and that though now in rejection he was yet to reign in a kingdom of his own? Even David himself, it would seem, kept it a secret. Some vessels, as another has said, have to *hide* as well as to *hold* their treasure, as Joseph did before he made himself known to his brethren, and as the Lord now does before a world ignorant of Him. David seems to have veiled his glory till this daughter of Israel, by faith, had owned it. But well did she know it, and by faith treasured it up in her heart. She believed in the Lord's anointed one. She knew that after his present sufferings there would be the glory. And how do *we* know but as God hath revealed to us by His Spirit?

“for the Spirit searcheth all things, even the deep things of God.” Blessed knowledge—the knowledge of God, of Christ! Oh, to what a height of wonder are we raised when *God’s own* knowledge, His *own* exhaustless mind, has been communicated to us! Vessels are we of His ways, His thoughts. How has He disclosed to us the secrets of coming days—His judgments on the earth, His purposes in Christ, of grace here, of glory hereafter.

But let us now, for a little, pursue this history. “David was in the wilderness”—cut off for the present from receiving anything as to his kingdom—“when he heard that Nabal did shear his sheep.” Nabal signifies “folly,” or “fool”—suggestive of his character, which answered to his name; for though his was a wealthy place, he was mean and selfish, and knew not his true interest, as indicated by his reply to the messengers of David.

How different was it with Abigail!—her name signifying “gift of the father,” which truly she was. For who gave her to David? and at such a time when, as we shall see, she was beyond all price to him; for was she not his solace in trouble, yea, partner with him of his sorrows, and then exalted to reign with him in his kingdom, and to share his glory? Suggestively, we are the “gift of the Father.” You remember Him who hath said, “Those whom Thou gavest Me have I kept.” Ah! who of us can tell the value of the Church to Christ, and at such a time when in His foreknowledge He saw His rejection, yea, saw that as Messiah He was cut off, and, as to His kingdom, received nothing. Crucified, cut off from the kingdom by men, but received by God into

heaven, He is there our Head; and we who own Him in this the day of His rejection are members together of His body, being of His flesh and of His bones. Say, do we, as believers, enter into our place thus? Are we happy in that love of His in which we specially are, and from which nothing can separate?

But Abigail, moreover, we are told, was a woman of "good understanding;" she had *divine* knowledge. She knew David was the Lord's anointed; and although for the present it was all dark, yet that he would have the morning without clouds—that soon he would ascend to honour, happy and blessed, coming in his kingdom.

"We," suggestively again, "have the mind of Christ." We know who and what He is. We know Him as one who is despised by the world, but loved by the Father. The long night which hangs over His path as Messiah does not prevent our seeing the day which is at hand. We know His purposes; we know His patient, long-suffering grace; we know His plans. Are they not all here in His Word? And are we not thereby made partakers with Him of *His* knowledge, having the anointing, an unction from the Holy One, whereby we know all things.

But besides this, Abigail "was of a beautiful countenance." For the most part all the brides of Scripture are represented as beautiful. Fair, lovely is she of the Canticles. Rebekah "was fair, comely to look upon." Lovely beyond all telling is that golden Salem—New Jerusalem, the Lamb's Wife, the True Bride. The Church in the glory will be all perfectness; for the Lord will present us to Himself without spot or wrinkle. There will be no spot; that

is, there will be no sin, no assilment, no tears. And there will be no wrinkle; that is, there will be no mark of age, no decay. The angel on the morning of the resurrection, sitting in the tomb of Jesus, seen by the disciples as "a *young* man," was doubtless ages of ages old! How significant of our own wondrous, eternal life amid the eternal years! Beautiful! glorious!—undecaying life! undecaying strength! No marvel, forecasting such a state, He who loves us is not ashamed to call us brethren. And why not ashamed? Is it that He condescends to what is poor or mean? No indeed! it is because He who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one. We shall be invested with His own perfectness, conformed to His own image; with nothing more for Him to desire, nothing more to be added, all being according to His own wisdom, His own love. Say, Do we indeed understand this? Are we in the sweet sanctifying power of this? Do we, sometimes at least, look at our *true selves* as from all eternity Christ has seen us in and like Himself? Do we forecast the happy, glorious consummation? For all, as to our *personal* glory, will be consummated in *resurrection*, when we who have borne the image of the earthy, shall also bear the image of the heavenly!

" Then we shall be what we should be ;
Then we shall be where we would be ;
Things which are not now, nor could be,
Then will be our own.

Truly there was a sweetness, a preciousness, in such knowledge as Abigail's. And there is a sweetness and preciousness in our knowledge of the Lord's Anointed. She had come to know the value of David. Often

might she have said, her soul being in fellowship with the Lord's mind, "*Others do not know, but I know.*" She knew that his house would be a sure house. How or by what means she knew is not said. Had she been among the daughters who sang "Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands"? or did she know, through a personal intercourse with the prophet Samuel. David had no attractions for Nabal. Few knew as Abigail knew. Her heart, doubtless, was with those who were with him in the wilderness. These few had cast in their lot with David, and preferred being homeless, in a mere cave with him, than being with Saul in his palace. They would rather suffer with him than reign without him. How it all personates the greater than David, who is rejected, despised, and for the present distant from His kingdom, having gone to a far country to receive it, and whose glory accordingly is not yet! David, as we have said, veiled his glory until this daughter of faith had owned it. Till then she had locked it up as a treasure in her heart, even as a jewel in a casket, which, when revealed to David, was, to change the figure, a cup of joy, refreshing to his lips. I must repeat it, there was a sweetness, a preciousness, in such knowledge as Abigail's! Favoured Abigail! Yea, favoured thus are all His saints. Blessed Christ! the world knoweth Thee not, but we know Thee. Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. Oh, how sweet to His heart, which beats with deepest love to us, to know that thus "the secret of the Lord" (His own secret) "is with them that fear Him!"

You will observe, Abigail does not open this treasured casket to *Nabal*. What was treasure to her

was, in his esteem, fit only to be despised. She could have no fellowship with him as to the Lord's anointed. There can be no fellowship between Christ and Belial; for whatsoever is not of the Father is of the world. She could readily reveal all to David; she could tell all to him. Think what a solace such an one was to David. Think of her faith and joy in forecasting the hour of his coming glory; the letting out, so to speak, the secret of her heart to him, telling him of the "sure house," and his being ruler over Israel. Oh, how one covets this heart for the Lord which Abigail had for David!—the keeping of the secret for the time, when being told out was greatest joy conceivable, as it gave promise of greatest glory to David. Observe how he held her in his heart ever after; nay, how it was the way for her to his heart, to his home, and to his throne. Who told her? he might have said; how did she know? "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him."

How all this is applicable to us, we understand; for of such secret is our communion with Him whose glory is not yet. Often is it a cup of joy to Him, the forecasting in our hearts the time when He will reign, the time when His house will be the one great reigning house, to rule over all, blessed for evermore. Abigail was, as to Nabal's house, in the scene of abundance and of worldly greatness; but whenever she thought of David it was of one who for the present was rejected of men. And even after Nabal's death, in being outwardly joined to David, she had to leave her position in the wealthy place, and go down with him into the wilderness. But whether in her wealthy place, or when with David in the wilderness, the secret of her heart was what *David* liked.

See now how different as to this picture is it between David and Nabal. "And David sent out ten young men; and David said unto the young men, Get you up to Carmel, and go to Nabal, and greet him in my name: and thus shall ye say to him, . . . Peace be both to thee, and peace be to thine house, and peace be unto all that thou hast. And now I have heard that thou hast shearers: now thy shepherds which were with us, we hurt them not, neither was there ought missing unto them, all the while they were in Carmel. Ask the young men, and they will shew thee. Wherefore let the young men find favour in thine eyes; for we come in a good day: give, I pray thee, whatsoever cometh to thine hand unto thy servants, and to thy son David."

What a day was this for Nabal! a day of no ordinary opportunity, a day for laying up a good foundation for the time of David's glory. It was a day meet for one who was a descendant of the house of Caleb, which Nabal was. But he knew not David; he knew not the anointed one. He had to ask, "Who is David? and who is the son of Jesse? there be many servants now-a-days that break away every man from his master." Thus he rejected David; he rejected his message; he rejected the messengers. Their way of peace and the time of his opportunity were alike hidden from his eyes. He knew not the time of his visitation. Alas for Nabal! alas for all who reject the gospel!

For this is the way the gospel comes to the sinner, and is presented for his acceptance, "Peace be to thee." And it is God who presents peace; not God as a Judge, but God as a Saviour. Yet in a sense

even as a Judge can He speak peace. For how wonderful—I often meditate how since the cross we can rest as well in His justice as in His grace. And why? Because as Judge He has nothing more to judge or to impute to us. He passed the punishment due to us upon Christ. So as Judge He says, I have no more charge. Sin *has been* punished; sins *are* put away; nay, are forgotten, no more to be remembered for ever! As a righteous Judge, He can receive all who believe. What grace! what love! Instead of judgment, peace. He loved the sinner, would have the sinner in His presence, saved, happy, holy, blessed there. But he could not have him in his sins; these were all judged in Christ, and instead of sins, *peace*. But alas! how often, Nabal-like, does the sinner reject this peace! Note, if Nabal had but *received* peace at the hand of the young men, and *ministered* to David in his rejection, he might have sat with him in his kingdom. Like Nabal, man still rejects the only opportunity he will ever have of ministering to Him who is now despised and rejected; but who, by and by, will come and inherit the kingdom. Oh, who does not take a melancholy interest in Nabal? And who with a love for souls does not take the same in the Christ-rejecting sinner? It wanted the anointed eye to see what Nabal did not see, but which Abigail saw, and kept as a jewel of preciousness in the casket of her believing heart; namely, that David was the anointed of the Lord.

To the sinner we can say, the gospel now comes to you just as these ten men came to Nabal. Eternal happiness is presented in Christ Jesus. One look at *Him*, one confiding look, and pardon, peace, life,

light, and Heaven, are yours! See that you reject not this gospel as Nabal did the messengers of David! The Lord bring you to a knowledge of yourself, a condemned, lost *sinner*! And the Lord bring you to a knowledge of *Him*, who is love—God is love—and of Christ, who died for you; so that *you* need not die, need not be lost. How happy thus to know God, to know Christ, for this is life eternal, to know Him the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent.”

But the world does not know. Just as Nabal answered, “Who is David?” so the world is ignorant of Christ, blind as to His beauty, saying, “What’s the good?” turning their back madly upon that which alone can satisfy the heart and save from everlasting misery. And yet (for this is of present moment) how *near* is the knowledge of God to every one of us. If Nabal had only gone to Abigail, he might have known even as she did; and from how much would he have been delivered. But he remained ignorant of David; and being ignorant, rejected his messengers.

And now mark the selfishness of the world, the selfishness which characterised Nabal through all his history, when he speaks of “*my* bread, *my* water, *my* flesh, *my* shearers.” All self, self, self. Thus is it with man. Self his centre, self his aim, self his end. God is not in all his thoughts. It is all self.

What shall I eat, or what shall I drink, or where-withal shall I be clothed? It is not God, not Christ, he wants, but the indulgence of self, the world, its desires and its pleasures. And alas! with what result, for here indeed the true darkness of this picture now begins.

“So David’s young men turned, and went again, and told David also those sayings.”

Let us mark that word! They *turned*, they *went again*; but not as they had come. They came with a message; they went back rejected. Oh, I repeat it, what a lost opportunity, and how dreadful! how dreadful for sinners! how dreadful for the world! for we know that Christ will yet reign. But He will judge first, when those who refused Him must give an account. At the now despised name of Jesus, when this day of grace is past, every knee shall bow; every eye shall gaze on Him whom they have pierced. Now are His saints a wall of protection to the world, a wall which keeps back the tide of desolation, that which “lets” and hinders the coming indignation. These men were a wall of protection to Nabal. As long as they were with him, there was no sudden destruction. Thus in this present time the Church is the light of the world; once taken away, the world will be left in darkness. The Church too is the salt of the earth; but take away the salt, and all will culminate in corruption; and “then cometh the end,” yea, “sudden destruction cometh upon them, and they shall not escape.” Meanwhile Abigail intercedes. There is yet a space in which God can be dealt with in behalf of the world before destruction.

“Then Abigail made haste, and took two hundred loaves, and two bottles of wine, and five sheep ready dressed, and five measures of parched corn, and an hundred clusters of raisins, and two hundred cakes of figs, and laid them on asses. And she said unto her servants, Go on before me; behold, I come after you. But she told not her husband Nabal.” As we

have already said, no fellowship could she have with him. He knew not the value of David; his eye was not on the coming glory of the Lord's anointed; he was ignorant of what was the treasure of Abigail's heart. Nabal was churlish, and evil, and rejectful in his doings.

And now Abigail meets David. "And, behold, David and his men came down against her; and she met them." Like as it was with Rebecca and Isaac, you can never go out to meet your beloved Lord, but he comes to meet you. "And when Abigail saw David, she hasted, and lighted off the ass, and fell before David on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and fell at his feet, and said, Upon me, my lord, upon me let this iniquity be; and let thine handmaid speak in thine audience, and hear the words of thine handmaid." Mark how she approaches him, and calls him "my lord." What! David a fugitive, an outcast, and yet "my lord"? She had long since known him as lord, and now her eye seeth him. See how precious she shows her estimate of him! "This blessing," she says, "which thine handmaid hath brought unto my lord, let it even be given to the young men which follow my lord." "The blessing" must be "for the young men that *follow him*." Her love for *them* was great, because of her love for *him*? We know Him who hath said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, ye have done it unto Me."

And now mark how the treasure is being unfolded, and how she revealed David to himself. She showed that the long, long night which hung over his pathway had not prevented her from discerning in him

one whom the Lord had chosen. Taught by him, she was not of the night, but of the day, and saw clearly that the time was at hand, and the morning for him would be without clouds. Ah, willingly, how one lingers over and over again upon this! She had made him, in her own retirement, the deep theme of her meditative heart. It was only such as Abigail could understand David. And it is only a Christian indeed, an anointed one, who can understand the true David. It is only one taught by the Word who can know the secret of His long rejection, or, by the eye of faith, penetrate into the day of His coming glory.

But imagine David needing an intercessor, such an one as Abigail. No type can ever be as the anti-type. She was as a babe in her own estimation, yet how timely are her words! How they "fall as oil on the troubled and revengeful heart of David!" She reminded him that a day of vengeance would assuredly come; but that grace now became him as one whom the Lord has so signally blessed." She told him that the souls of his enemies should finally be slung out as in the middle of a sling, but that his soul should be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord his God. How beautiful, how timely are her words, "And it shall come to pass, when the Lord shall have done to my lord according to all the good that He hath spoken concerning thee, and shall have appointed thee ruler over Israel, that this shall be no grief unto thee, nor offence of heart unto my lord, either that thou hast shed blood causeless, or that my lord hath avenged himself; but when the Lord shall have dealt well with my lord, *then remember thine handmaid!*" One can almost hear, from the lips that uttered these

words, the rehearsal of that sweet utterance on the cross, "Lord *remember me when thou comest in Thy kingdom.*" For she knew he had a kingdom. She knew he would come to that kingdom. She knew that then his joy would be full. And what faith she exercised in her own connection with that joy—"When the Lord shall have dealt well with my lord, *then remember thine handmaid!*" And do you not see that as the utterance on the cross was a cup of joy to the Lord in the moment of His rejection and death, so these words, spoken by this daughter of faith, must have been a solace to the rejected one of Israel?

Little did she know *how* he would remember her; how that already her words had made a way for her into his heart—into the joy of him whose kingdom it was. And now as David heard her words, anger faded from his mind. He said: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, which sent thee this day to meet me: and blessed be thy advice, and blessed be thou, which hast kept me this day from coming to shed blood, and from avenging myself with mine own hands." How beautiful! this woman of meekness taking the place of counsellor, and now getting such recompense for her faith. Truly, "the meek will He teach His way." Here indeed was reward for Abigail, a recompense of blessing, to be ever after a solace in her heart of sorrow. How true is it that "provision for the *heart* is the dearest thought we can entertain;" and this provision lies deep down in our own hearts now. Jesus is now the rejected One, and it is sweet to own Him, sweet to tell of Him! But this same Jesus is soon coming in glory. He is not long to be without His kingdom. Oh, how we shall love to own

Him as Kings of kings, and Lord of lords! Then every eye shall see Him. We shall be "eye-witnesses of His majesty," and one with Him in His glory! We shall reign with Him, yea, sit down with Him on His throne, as He is now seated on the Father's throne. Bright, glorious moment of manifestation when our Lord Jesus shall be owned by all, seen by all, loved by all, when there will be no more death, but this "corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, and the saying shall be brought to pass which is written, *Death is swallowed up in victory!*"

And now note here especially how the charm of David's character was, that he left all with God. Blessed example for Christians! to whom is the word, "*Avenge not yourselves.*" He did not avenge himself of Saul. To have done so with Nabal would have been a blot on his name. It was to prevent this that Abigail interposed.

"So David received of her hand that which she had brought him, and said unto her, Go up in peace to thine house: see, I have hearkened to thy voice, and have accepted thy person." Having ministered in her intercession to David, fruit of her love to him, and because she knew the secret of him which had been hid from others, she now retires to the place of her sorrows again. But for all her ministry David had ministered blessing in return. Sweet words! How they lingered on her ears—"Go up in peace!" David had hearkened to her voice, had accepted her person, and had spoken to her of peace. Precious truth! when the sinner owns Jesus as *Lord*, the person is accepted, the countenance comely; he is "accepted in the Beloved," and truly this is peace.

But judgment, though long in coming, would be sure. "And Abigail came to Nabal; and, behold, he held a feast in his house, like the feast of a king; and Nabal's heart was merry within him, for he was very drunken: wherefore she told him nothing, less or more, *until the morning light*." Dark and dreadful is the shadow which falls upon our history here. The night of the feast had passed, and the day come, when Abigail must tell him of David. To find that the rejected *David* is both lord and judge, was anguish to Nabal. The whirl of pleasure was now past. Well do we know that its joy gives no satisfaction, it only intoxicates! Nabal *was* merry—he *was* "very drunken." Soon the night of the world's intoxication will be past! soon its pleasures will be gone—gone for ever! Its last glow-worm glimmer will go out as the day of eternity breaks over the lost. *Awake*, O sleeper! the night is far spent; surely it is *high time* for *thee* to *awake*! Eternity cometh! The soul and conscience will then be laid bare before the all-searching, all-seeing eye. When that wonderful "morning without clouds" shall arise, and others shall give thanks for their great deliverance, every Nabal-like heart will quail and perish for ever. There is no wine in hell! no cheerfulness, no surfeiting in hell! Alas for the sinner! there will be no loss of reason, no forgetfulness in hell! What a future! Oh that men would consider, ere it be too late, and the cry is heard, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and I am not saved!" Think ye worldlings, the night of your pleasures will soon be at an end, and then the first glimpse of the Son of man in His majesty and glory will take hold upon you as pain upon a woman

with child, and you shall not escape; your hearts, like the heart of Nabal, will become as a stone! For "*his heart died within him, and he became as a stone . . . the Lord smote Nabal that he died*"—smote him where he was, and just as he was. It will be *living* beings on this earth, when the Lord comes, who will go down as they are, alive, into hell. Those who have not trusted Jesus, but have rejected Him, will be cast into that lake of fire alive. "This world will be caught in its living action by the appearance of Christ, caught in its advancement and progress, saying, 'Peace, peace!' Men will be arrested by the coming of Christ whilst *in* their occupations, their pursuits, their vices, their sins; and when once the thunders of His approach roll around this world, there will be no hope, no gospel, no escape for those who have heard of Jesus, have had their Bibles and neglected them, saying, 'To-morrow, to-morrow, to-morrow! A little more of the world, a little more of self-indulgence, a little more present things!'" Oh, terrible manifestation! dreadful day! There will be no deception then. It will be sudden destruction! It will be wrath and fiery indignation—it will be the wrath of God; yea, the dreadful and eternal wrath of the Lamb!

Suggestively, it will be after the day of vengeance that He will comfort those that mourn. It was after Nabal was dead that now Abigail becomes united to David. Suggestively again, it is when the world, and self, and our own wills, and our vile flesh, have all, as it were, died—lie in abeyance, mortified—that our souls find such rest in Jesus. Here begins the true blessedness of Abigail. She is become David's bride; to be with him over that "sure house" of which she

had so beautifully spoken. In this he told out to her the measure of his love, and in this we see the joy of relationship which, as in the Song of Solomon, entitles to fullest love. She has no longer to say, "Oh that he were my brother!" He is more. He is her beloved. She is now his beloved—a partner first of his sorrows, and then subsequently with him on his throne. But her sorrows were those she had never known, but for David. Her joys too, in like manner, were because of him. Abigail can now leave all for David. A change had come over her lot, her affections, as with Paul when he could count all as dross for Christ; and as with those now who can sing—

" Sweet hope ! we leave without a sigh
A blighted world like this,
To bear the cross, despise the shame,
For all that weight of bliss.

" There Jesus on His heavenly throne
Our wondering eyes shall see,
While we the blest associates there
Of all His joys shall be."

And if we suffer with Him, we shall reign with Him; if we suffer with Him, we shall be glorified together. Co-sufferers, co-heirs, co-glorified, are the wondrous words by which we are designated in Paul's letter to the Romans. Thus in principle was it with this child of faith. Hence it was that she could count all her own loss in leaving her wealthy place in the house of Nabal as nothing, compared with her gain. She could join herself to David while in his rejection. And she would take the lowest place. What! his spouse, his beloved, does she speak of herself thus?

"Behold," she says, "let thine handmaid be *a servant* to wash the feet of the *servants* of my lord." Love can do anything for its object. The Lord Himself, in His love, is as one who serves. Though it seems the lowest, it is the very highest place a child of God can take; "for whosoever among you would be chiefest, let him be servant of all." Thus the thoughts of her heart were not on *herself*, but *on David*. And yet how little she knew, though *he* knew, what would be her glory, and how all this would be seen when seated with him in his kingdom; like as it was with another, the half had not been told her. Such honour have all His saints. It ought to teach us that these hearts of ours should be jealous, not for our own, but for *His* glory. Now the desires of her heart, all her foreknowledge of David, all her delight in his person, character, and ways were met; yea, far more than met, when, like another Rebekah, she hasted, and "went after the messengers of David, and became his wife." The sweet thought drawn from the love of David comes to my mind in the words of one, who is now with the Lord: "God's capabilities of patience are seen not so much in His abstaining from ridding Himself of His enemies as in keeping silence as to the revelation of His love. Should not we, if we loved any one with the infinitesimal part of His love for us, desire, yea, long, to disclose to its object the passion of our heart? What a moment will that be, when, robed in honour and glory, worthy of Himself and His house, the long-loved ones will be His for ever! What a moment when He will present us faultless in the presence of His glory with exceeding joy!"

Blessed-portion have we with Him by and by. Our cup of love will be full from His own hand, a cup of love from His own lips; for every sight of His love in those wounds which will remain unworn away throughout that bright and long "for ever," will inspire afresh our own. And then we shall be for ever holy, for ever restful, for ever happy, for ever satisfied. How free then from the evil and restless will! how free from the vile flesh, from what Bunyan calls this "villain self!" Oh for more and more of that sweet value of the *Person* of Jesus, with Abigail had for David; then what a surprise! How his grace overwhelmed her!

" Marvel not that Christ in glory
All my inmost heart hath won;
Not a star to cheer my darkness,
But a light beyond the sun.

" I have seen the face of Jesus,
Tell me not of aught beside;
I have heard the voice of Jesus,
All my soul is satisfied.

" In the radiance of the glory,
First I saw His blessed face;
And for ever shall that glory
Be my home, my dwelling-place.

" From the lowest depths of evil,
To the throne in heaven above;
Thus in me He told the measure
Of His free unbounded love."

VII.

The Shulamite.

“ The love, the love that I bespeak,
Works wonders in the soul ;
For when I'm whole it makes me sick,
When sick it makes me whole.

“ I'm overcome, I faint, I fail
Till love shall love relieve ;
More love divine the wound can heal,
Which love divine did give.”

“ Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth : for thy love is better than wine.”—*Song of Solomon* i. 2.

THE Song of Solomon is a song of loves, especially of that love which is the right of relationship.

We have had before us some few characters, illustrative of such love—a love leading the heart to forsake all for its object.

Thus, Abigail could leave all for David ; also Rebekah, who, as we have seen, could forget all else, even her father's house, for the love of her heart to Isaac.

The same with Rachel. And Ruth also, the poor Moabitish one, who, having found that Boaz could not rest until he had finished that redemption which would put her down co-inheritor of his greatness, yielded herself as the loved object of his affection. The favoured one of Psalm xlv. enjoys a relationship precious in nature. “Hearken, O *daughter*,” is the language of Him who is King—the King who in His

beauty will own her as such. It is as *daughter* whose covering is of wrought gold, and who, in her mind, her heart, her affections, is all glorious within, that she is addressed, whose beauty the King greatly desired.

Though the bride in this Song is doubtless a type of her who will share with the true Solomon the glories of the throne of David, yet the experiences recorded, and the vicissitudes felt, find a present, and oftentimes painful, fulfilment in our own lives.

The bride in the Song tells of deep inward feelings which are not expressed by any of those whose histories we have recorded. Over and over again she is in deep sorrow of heart till she can enjoy her Beloved. It is not that established love which is natural to the Church. And such exercises, often painful, can never have place in the heart of the Lamb's bride in the day of her espousals to the true Solomon. Mirror is it all now of the cravings of many, alas! who are too content to let slip that sense of the love of Christ which they once enjoyed.

The bride is distressed unless in communion with her beloved. But it is blessed that, however altered *she* may be, whether in or out of her enjoyment of Him, *He is always the same, unchangeable*. When low in soul, it is in the thought of *His* love that we find so sweet a restorative power. "I change; He changes not," is one of the sweetest notes in our own song of love. He is always the same, as well when we are cold in love, or "strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might."

Why, then, are we not always happy? especially with such a Beloved, and with such provision as God has for us in Him; the very same, in fact, as that

which He has for Himself. Hence true *communion* is that which is common to God and to us; it signifies joint-proprietorship which we have along with God in Christ, also along with Christ in God. It is expressed in the words, "*My* Father and *your* Father, *My* God and *your* God." We accordingly, strictly speaking, can never lose the communion itself; we may, and, alas! do, lose our enjoyment of it. Oh, how happy when the soul enjoys all in God and in the Beloved! for He is the manifestation of God and of the Father. "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

I am now on the question of our affections. Some are full of truth, who never seem to have the affections engaged. It is not so much truth that many of us need as to have the heart benefited—made alive to what we have in Christ. "Knowledge puffeth up, but charity, *i.e.* love, edifieth."

The love of Christ dwelling in our hearts would be productive of all manner of holy blessedness in our lives. Apart from that love, all our controversies about the truth are cold and barren. A real love of heart towards Christ knows no bounds. It lays aside all weights, and longs after the true perfection; viz., *to be with Christ, to be like Him, to see Him as He is.* It is thus now that the righteousness of the law which required, but never could produce, holiness, is fulfilled in us who, filled with Christ, walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. Those who have no love to Christ have no true obedience, no righteousness of life, and have never yet taken the first practical step towards cleansing themselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. He who loves fulfils the law.

But there are diversities of love. For example, this love of relationship. Singular the words—not surely normal to the Christian—not the words of those who *are as He is*, in closest relationship, being “members of His body. Such have not to say, “*Oh that thou wert as my brother!*” It is, in fact, a longing *for* relationship; it is a longing of love which wants the right which pertains to relationship, as much as to say, “If he were my brother, I should have a right to closest intimacies; I should have a right to dearest love; I should love him as I list.” It is the natural expression of—

“ A bowing, burdened head,
That only asks to rest
Unquestioning, upon a loving breast.”

Are we longing for this right? In a sense, “Oh that thou wert as my brother!” is a happy longing we should like to see in many a child of God; and “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth.” But Ephesian truth goes higher. There Christ is more than brother; and His love is always the same. There it is not “draw me;” for we are one with Him, and can never be nearer. Nor is it “look not upon me.” How can He fail to see Himself? We are as He is. Nor is it “tell me where thou feedest.” For we know where He is! He went as far as Bethany, and thence into heaven. We can still, as it were, see the cloud which received Him, and the blue sky into which He entered. We know He is in heaven; and where He is, is our rest. No; being made nigh where God is, and one with Christ, we are in the very highest of all relationships, and are entitled to the

enjoyment of the deepest love. But the Shulamite was craving for such portion as in nature belongs only to brother with sister, or sister with brother, or friend with friend. Hence, elsewhere knowing now her relationship, she longs for some expression of it. "Let Him kiss me," she says, "with the kisses of His mouth." Mark the pronoun. There is no need to name her Beloved; it is simply "*Him*." Like Mary at the sepulchre: "Tell me where thou hast laid Him." She was so occupied with her Beloved, that to distinguish Him seemed unneeded.

And why does she long for this expression of His love? Let me ask another question: Why did the Lord ask Peter, "Lovest thou Me?" Plainly He knew the fact of his love; but He liked to be told it. "Swear to me again," said Jonathan to David; for he loved him as he loved his own soul, and liked to hear its declaration again and again. Remember also Simon. Did not the Lord say "Thou gavest Me no water for My feet, thou gavest Me no kiss: but this woman"? etc. He well knew her love, and He delighted in these the expressions of it. Thus with the Shulamite. She knew the love of her Beloved, but she desired an expression of it; and she had dearest warrant to expect it being His spouse.

Yet how evident it is that relationship itself is not enough. It does not of necessity insure its corresponding experience. The heart, notwithstanding its right, may wander from its enjoyment. Hapless Shulamite! Though in relationship, see her wandering at dead of night in quest of her Beloved. How could He be absent, and she happy? Apart from Christ, nothing can make us happy; not any present

or future blessing here. We shall never be fully satisfied until we awake with His likeness.

"Satisfied" is a word of rest; words fail to express it. It is infinite, never to be less; eternal, never to end.

Observe the manner of her communion. "His left hand is under my head, and His right hand doth embrace me." The head is the seat of the mind; and her mind could rest there upon the once pierced One, *upon His pierced hand*; nothing to interrupt communion between her and that left hand which was under her head. How deep the fellowship! How precious His love, the knowledge of His thoughts! "His right hand," which is the symbol of power, she says, "*doth embrace me*;" securely sheltered by the power of that which had been made bare for salvation.

What a hand is that *pierced* hand! The print of the nail never to be erased through the ages of ages. The glory will leave it just the same for ever. He will be seen a Lamb as it had been slain. First-born among many brethren, He will be distinguished by the glory radiant on His riven side, or streaming through His hands and feet, each telling of His once suffering love. This is no mere fancy of the mind, but a reality. Christ both suffered and died for us. The Son of God, in love, died accursed for us, on a tree. Are we living in communion with such love? His hand under our head; that hand ready, while we are yet in the wilderness, to minister to us; if hungry to feed; if weary to refresh; if weak to support; if burdened to rest; if bereaved to console; even now, in a sense, "He wipes the tear from every eye." Do we know this? Alas! many have the doctrine; but

the heart is not benefited. His right hand embracing us, who can pluck us thence? Safely resting there, possessed of His thoughts of love from the eternal ages of the past to the ages of ages to come, and the Father's thoughts concerning Him, can we say, "O Lord, Thy hand which is under me was pierced for me, fruit of Thy love. Thou hast died that Thou mightest rejoice over me, as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride. Having invested me with Thine own holiness and perfectness, Thou mayest indeed say to me, '*Thou art My beloved; thou art fair, My love*'"—My *companion*, as the word is.

For fair she is. In her perfectness in Him, she is as a lily among thorns, perfect and spotless in His sight, though here below in the midst of the unfruitful and pain-inflicting thorns of the world.

But where did He find her? Under the apple-tree. That apple-tree is Christ. "As the apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved." The apple-tree is distinguished for its floral beauty in the spring-tide of the year, and for its fruit in its season; easily distinguished from all the trees of the wood. So Christ is chief among ten thousand, and altogether lovely. Scars in His hands? yes; and in His feet and side? yes; still "ALTOGETHER lovely." The apple-tree is full of refreshing to the eye, and, moreover, refreshing as a shade. The image is full of Christ. It is in Him we possess our fruit; pardon, righteousness, peace, light, life, holiness, are all in Him. Oh to dwell ever beneath the boughs, enjoying the rich clusters of His fruit, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption! But the bride is found *under* the apple-tree. This is

not the highest place. We, as Eve, were found *in* Christ; as in Ephesians, chosen *in* Him, accepted *in* Him. "According as He hath chosen us *in* Him before the foundation of the world" (before the eternal times). "*In* whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace; . . . having made known unto us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself. . . . *In* whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own will: . . . the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality: . . . and hath quickened us together with Christ, . . . and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." This is the Church's place—in Christ.

It is all "*in Him*," and all according to the working of His power, who raised up *Christ*, and so us also, from the dead.

But here mark another thing. Who that knows Christ thus never ought to have communion with Him disturbed. Nothing is so sensitive as the ear, specially the ear of the roe or of the hind. When at rest, the merest whisper of the wind, or the falling of a leaf, may disturb it. Hence the bride charges the

daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes and by the hinds of the field, that they stir not up, nor awaken her Beloved, till He please. Mark that word, "Till *He* please!" If a change is ever to be effected, let Him make it; anything that *He* may please. It is all Himself! her Beloved! Her cup of happiness is full when she is with Him. And she fears lest the least thing should disturb Him. Thus the slightest thought, the merest mention of evil, may disturb our enjoyed communion. Oh for that loved and long communion which knows no disturbance, which has no limit, and no end!

The question is asked, "*Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness?*" As we may say, What sinner is this claiming such a relationship? Elsewhere she tells of herself, "I am black, but comely," as it were, "two armies;" *i.e.* of a twofold nature—the one black and the other comely. She was looking on herself when she said, "I am black;" she was looking on her Beloved when she said, "I am comely." But how did she know she was comely? This is blessed. He Himself had told her, and she believed. He had shown her that which He had made her for Himself. He had told her, "Thou art *all fair*, my love; there is *no spot* in thee." She consents to this. What else could she do? Oh, thus it is when *God* tells me I am holy, I must believe it! I say, how wonderful! what joy! And though it is all different from what *I* should have thought—so sinful, so unholy, that is, in myself—yet am I to deny Him? He tells me that I am "*made* the righteousness of God in Him;" that I *am* "washed, and sanctified, and justified" in Christ. I believe it. Can I deny it? But though thus comely,

she adds, "I am black." Let me linger a little over this; for it is just now of greatest interest. Through all dispensations the Adam-heart is the same sinful, corrupt thing; nothing has ever changed or improved it. After the flood, as before, it was the same. During the millennium the stony heart will be *taken away* as a special blessing promised to Israel, and a heart of flesh given in its stead; so that, for that term of blessedness on the earth, there will be, among the saved, no old nature and no old enemy. Glorious relief! Satan will be chained; the heart changed! But *man*, after the millennium, will show he is still the same.

It was when the sun looked upon our Shulamite that she saw she was black. It was when the patriarch saw *God*, he said, "I abhor myself." Also the prophet who exclaimed, "Woe is me!" But when it was said, "Thine iniquity is purged," then was the prophet, as God saw him, comely. These words, "black, but comely," are full of divine truth; the old nature and the new, the flesh and the Spirit, self and Christ, the law in the members and the law of the mind, are all there. The one comprehends all that which, as a child of Adam, I am in myself; the other all that which I am in Christ. The history of the world, with all its sins and ills, is in the one; the history of the new creation, with all its bliss, is in the other.

How far Solomon or his Shulamite knew their import we cannot say. The Spirit of truth has now come, and we know the things which are freely given to us of God. But how many do not know. To learn the doctrine is one thing, to know it for one's own soul is another. To the late Mr. Haldane a

student remarked, "I have found original sin in the Bible." "Well," replied the latter, "have you found it in your own heart?" Few know the many hells of evil which lie in the abysses of their own heart. Sometimes they are exposed to view as the candle of the Lord is let down into them. Then what abhorrence! But God's abhorrence is seen at the cross. It was because of our vileness that He poured out His wrath on His Son. Hence the deeper my sense of what God did with sin at the cross, the more shall I see its vileness. But it is one thing to see what vileness is, and quite another to see release. Many, professedly holding to the cross, practically deny its power. They say they are *vile*, that "in their flesh dwells no good thing." But they do not see that on believing in Christ they are comely; neither do they see that they have power over it as in Rom. viii. 3, 4. They are still working, as did the woman with the issue of blood, and waiting for a better, a less defiled heart. But, unlike her, they have not found the value of a simple touch of Christ, who has judicially *on the cross* put away the "vileness." Alas! the holiest can say, "I carry a dark plague in my heart." But to one intelligent in the truth, instead of that plague driving to despair, it causes to look to Christ who took its doom on the tree. Such can say, "I have a vile heart, a heart which never knows peace; (for *does* God ever give *that* heart peace?) but I have another heart, a new heart, a heart to know Christ, and to know that Christ did not come to get holiness out of the sinful Adam-heart, or to make *it* whiter than snow, but to *condemn* it, and to *make atonement for its guilt*." What meets the case is not mending

or washing, or dreaming that it is clean gone because lost to our own consciousness, *but death*. Can I by any effort of mine effect this? No; it was *judicially* effected when Christ died. The "*I am black*," the "*I am vile*," *came to its judicial doom* on the cross. Christ dying on the cross took all on Himself, and endured the penalty of all, as we sing—

“ Our sins, our guilt, in love divine
Confessed and borne by Thee,
The gall, the curse, the wrath were Thine,
To set Thy members free.”

“ Free ” not from the presence of the flesh, or from sin in the flesh, but from our guilt, and the judgment due to us. We are saved not from *the presence*, but from the *doom* and power over us of our own sinful nature, and have now a new nature, another life than that which we have by nature. In Christ God condemned sin in the flesh. Our connection now, by faith, is with Christ after He has done with sin. We have died with Christ, and are risen with Christ, and are not counted by God as being in the flesh though the flesh is still in us. “ Christ is now my life ” may the believer say, “ and I am responsible to live the life I have in Him. If I abide in Him, I shall not sin, shall not practise sin. It is looking at Christ, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, that I am changed into the same image.” Thus for the child of God, as another has said, “ *there is power in Christ to subdue the evil by engaging the heart with Christ.* ” The very evil he finds in himself becomes an occasion of communion with Him who has borne its judgment, that he may be delivered from its dominion. He keeps his eye on

Christ, and lives by another; thus the evil which would spring up if his eye were averted is subdued, and the power of Christ rests upon his weakness, and he can therefore glory in it. He "walks in the Spirit," and does not fulfil "the lusts of the flesh."

We have ever to remember that if the flesh is not kept in subjection by the power of the Holy Ghost, or is vainly supposed to have gone, it will cut out plenty of sorrowful work for us. But, blessed be God, Jesus ever liveth. Here is our strength and comfort in all our conflict and exercise of heart. We can count on Him, and find Him amply sufficient for the need of every hour.

As to Rom. viii. 13 the apostle states the great broad truth: that to live after the flesh is the way of death, and to live after the Spirit is the way of life. That is, living after the flesh, we are, as the word is, "*about* to die;" but living after the Spirit, we are not *about* to live, but we *shall* live. In John iv. 47 the nobleman's son was "at the point of death"—the same form of expression as "ye shall die," or are about to die.

In Gal. v. 19, 21, the apostle sets forth the moral features of the flesh, and declares that those who are characterised thereby shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the Christian is not so characterised, though surely, if not watchful, he will exhibit some of these hideous features. May we be kept ever looking off unto Jesus, that we may not walk after the flesh, or manifest its fruits! Our God has graciously given us wholesome words of exhortation and warning, and we should never try to take off their edge by any system of interpretation that might tend to make

out an easy way for the flesh, or imagine there can be any perfection of *it*. Every true lover of holiness will delight in the pungency and power of the Spirit's admonitions, not forgetting that "there hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it."

Appropriate to the two natures there is a striking dividing of this truth, quite in itself a Bible study, in Rom. iii., taken in connection with chap. iv. of our Song. In the one we see what we are in ourselves; in the other what grace has made us. Over the one you might inscribe "black;" over the other "comely."

In Rom. iii. we are "in the flesh;" nay, we *are* "flesh"—sinful, corrupt. In the Song quite another nature, the nature of the dove, is ascribed to us.

There the bride has "dove's eyes." The dove is remarkable for seeing her cot from far-off distances. As Noah's dove knew the ark, keeping it in view, knowing amidst the wilderness of waters where it was, so do we through grace ever keep Christ in view, tempest-tossed though we be. It is our one life-act as Christians, however much at times we may fail.

In the Epistle the "*mouth full of cursing;*" the "poison of asps" is under their lips. In the Song they are as "a thread of scarlet," reminding us of how we were redeemed. Moreover, they "*drop as the honeycomb:* honey and milk are under thy tongue."

In the Epistle we are altogether "*unprofitable;*" in the Song we are altogether "*fair.*"

The way of the sinner in the Epistle is *hard* and

destructive, and the way of peace he has not known. The true way for the bride is only PLEASANTNESS.

These truths indicate two natures, two fountains, else how could the one fountain send forth bitter and sweet. Blessed well of water hath the bride now springing up in her when she can say, "My Beloved is mine, and I am His!" Blessed experience truly these two things! In the one, "My Beloved is mine" —her cup is full; in the other, "I am my Beloved's" —it runs over. Our knowledge of Christ, that He is our Beloved, is one thing; but to know and enjoy His thought of us, that we are *His* Beloved, is another. Sweet indeed to own Him as *our* Beloved; but sweeter to know that we are *His* beloved, and that we have found our place as those dearly loved by Him—never out of Him, but always in Him, in the love and purpose of God, from all ages.

Chapters ii. 16 and iv. 6, 7, 8 are another landing-stage in this subject, and should be read in connection. Sweet is the voice of the bride, "*He feedeth among the lilies!*" She herself is a lily; as a lily among thorns, so is she among the daughters. He feeds on the confidence and love of those for whom He died. We remember how with one such at the well of Jacob, He had food to eat of which others knew not. He was manifesting grace suited to our need; was receiving the confidence and love of a poor city sinner, and thus was doing the will of His Father. This is a day of grace; but how long is the day to continue? Until He come—"until the day break, and the shadows flee away." What then? Why, wait and watch for His coming. "I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense." Is this the sense you

have of Christ? We desire Him; He will come. What height and depth of blessedness is this!

In chapter iv. He calls her "*My garden*"—"A garden inclosed is My sister, My spouse; a spring shut up; a fountain sealed." Mark, the garden is enclosed; it is all for Himself, all for His own enjoyment, as we find in chapter v. 1, where He says, "*I am come into My garden.*" She had said—and He hears the merest breathing of our desire—"Let Him come;" not "*let Him*" in the sense of being indifferent to His coming. Ah, no! nothing on her part hinders. She is waiting; she is longing. But no sooner asked than He *does* come; comes, shall I say, to receive—comes to feast on His garden-fruits. He does not *send* to gather the fruit, but says, "*I have gathered My myrrh with My spice.*" He considers everything in His garden as His own, and says, "*My honeycomb, My honey, My wine, My milk.*" It is all "*My, My.*" Precious truth! we are not our own, we are bought with a price. The gardener, indeed, may and does come—but to labour; not so with the owner, who comes to eat, to feast on the fruits of the garden, to see the beauty and inhale the fragrance of its fruits and its blossoms. Ah! it is thus that the Beloved comes more to receive than to give. When Abraham had spread for the Lord a feast at Mamre, knowing the secret of his heart, he said "*For therefore art Thou come.*" The Lord had come for that very end. Oh, it is thus He comes now! He does bestow, but His delight is to receive, and all we can give is welcome. Not the honey merely, but the honeycomb! as if He would have all. When Jonathan ate the honey his eyes were enlightened. The Word is honey to our

taste, and the word of Christ is to dwell richly in us in all wisdom. Thus He receives of His own. In Christ "the Beloved" our whole selves are accepted. He hath redeemed all; the spirit is the Lord's, the soul is the Lord's, and the body is the Lord's. Let the afflicted in body think of this. Poor and weak the body may be, in torment of suffering even; it is all His. He can do with His own as He pleases, drawing forth our love, our trust, and confidence in the darkest trial. The same with all else. All we are and have are His. Ah, it is as if He had said, I am come for what I have before enjoyed—your love, your confidence, your memories of Me, of My death; all are precious—as if He had said, I have eaten, I have drunk; I have often come, and I am come again, knowing of a certainty I shall receive.

Oh, saints of the Lord, if you will look at self, look at it thus. Look at yourselves as He looks at you, specially at such times of communion as you enjoy at His table. He says, *I* am in your midst; *I* am come down into My garden. Give *Me* your memories of *My* love, of *My* sorrows, of *My* death. Remember how *I* have suffered; remember *Me* as still absent; remember that I am coming again. "Eat, O friends, drink, O beloved; do this in remembrance of *Me*." Such then is the spouse of Christ, a garden, a fountain of gardens, that which satisfies Christ.

Applying it to ourselves, poor creatures that we are, who have fallen so low, well may the wondering universe exclaim, "Who is this?" And none may wonder more than ourselves at the grace in which we stand—we, who in ourselves are but vile, miserable sinners, once living at enmity with God, but now

Christ's beloved, His garden, His friends, His love. The secret of all is, His own love. God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son; and Christ so loved His Church, that He gave Himself. God is love. He has, so to speak, saved us *on* His love, in righteousness through Christ, who hath redeemed us unto Himself. We are set as a seal upon His heart, and as a seal upon His arm, where none can perish, neither can any be plucked away. We are near His love—near His power. What is worn on Christ's heart and arm is the image, not of a crown or a star as with kings and princes, but of *a sinner*, the dearest object of His love. A seal shows possession. The Shulamite is as a seal on His heart; she owns His affections, has a right to His love; she can say, "*My Beloved.*" Moreover she is as a seal upon His arm; *she has His power.* All power is His in heaven and earth; and none can break the seal in presence of such an arm. The seal is *on* His arm. Thus she says, "My Beloved is mine." The love which made Him such was His own love.

And His love is strong as death; it hath a most vehement flame, which many waters cannot quench, many floods cannot drown. He went down in death lower than our sins, lower than the curse, lower than the deepest wrath. All the floods passed over Him, but His love for us sustained Him—it had a vehement flame—in the midst of it all, and remained unquenched. Our sins did not alter it; Satan could not. Death and the grave made no difference; it was strong as death and the grave. Oh, how strong is death! In the past human world it has laid hold of all the generations of men, putting them in the dust of the earth. Till

the Lord comes, "every man who dies," Job says, "shall draw after him as there are innumerable before him." Its bill of mortality, how great! Who can stand against death? If the blessed Lord should tarry, we too shall have to succumb to its power; if He wait, "the grave will be our house." Thus, as none can keep us out of the power of death, or disentangle the ashes of the departed from the dust of the grave, so is it sweet to think that, once in the power of Christ's love, none can separate.

No condemnation!—blessed is the word!

No separation!—for ever with the Lord.

This sweet Song now changes. "Solomon had a vineyard." The singer looks out upon glorious times—the sunny season of the millennial earth. For the most part all the Brides of Scripture do this. This is our thought in dealing with them. What glory in the latter day! What riches! For in the day of the Solomon-glory the earth will be the Lord's, with the fulness thereof; the mountains dropping wine; the cattle upon a thousand hills. And others will share the inheritance. Hence, "My vineyard, which is mine, is before me: thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred." Always chief in her affections, the Bridegroom must have the thousand. In the millennial earth the Lamb's Bride will have her part, but in all things He will have the pre-eminence.

And when He who is greater than Solomon has His vineyard, and the marriage of the Lamb has come, the Nazarite vow being no longer needed, He will drink the wine with her new in His kingdom.

Sweet to forecast this glory yet to come! but its delights and enjoyments are all arranged. "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father has appointed unto Me; that ye may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel." The Lord will then drink of the fruit of the vine in His kingdom in token of His joy, and we shall eat and drink at His table in His kingdom with Him.

Surely there will be the joy unspeakable and full of glory then--the joy of the heavens filled with the glorious millions once on earth, but now as Bride or guest at the marriage supper of the Lamb, or in the golden city over the earth—and joy on the earth through the long term of its millennial blessedness, in which nothing shall "hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain," saith the Lord. The Bride longs for this joy. The Spirit in us says, "Come," and the Bride long waiting says, "Come." Hence the words, "Make haste, my Beloved"—"flee away!" as the word is, *bound*! How beautiful! It is *He* who is to make haste. Truly how beautiful! For *she* has no need (oh, would that it were always so with us!) to make haste, or get herself ready; she *is* in haste (this is our normal state), she *is* ready, her heart *is* engaged and *is* longing, and *would* bound away to Him at any moment. She who at the beginning longed for the relationship of sister, that she might indulge her heart's affections, cannot be unwilling, cannot be unready, nay, is willing and ready, now that He calls her His beloved, His fair one, and comes to claim her with whom He has chosen to enjoy an eternal relationship better than that of son or daughter; so that

through His own will, His own death for her, it will be hers to say, as the Bride of His heart for ever, "I AM MY BELOVED'S, AND MY BELOVED IS MINE." Oh! is it not in knowing this that the soul is humbled, subdued, satisfied. Drinking from such a cup, we shall never thirst. To be what He has made us—to be His beloved—this for ever is enough!

Reluctantly we now part with this beautiful song. May the affections of our hearts correspond with those of the bride, which tell us how the love of Christ in us can express itself whilst communing with its soul-satisfying, soul-ravishing, object.

VIII.

The Marriage of the Lamb.

“ Long, long deferred, now come at last,
The Lamb’s glad wedding day.
The guests are gathering to the feast,
The seats in heavenly order placed,
The royal throne above the rest—
How bright the new array !

“ Sorrow and sighing are no more,
The weeping hours are past.
To-night the waiting will be done,
To-night the wedding robe put on,
The glory and the joy begun—
The crown has come at last.”

“ 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. 7.*

AFTER the destruction of the mystical Babylon, and before the reign of Christ on earth, there will come, descending out of heaven from God, the bride, the Lamb’s wife, that great city, the holy Jerusalem. But prior to this there will be the marriage of the Lamb in heaven. Hence the bride of the Lamb, at that time, prior to Christ’s millennial reign, is seen to be there. This is most important, as showing the *pre-millennial resurrection and glorification* of all those who are the wife of the Lamb. And inasmuch as they come with Christ immediately upon the marriage in

heaven, and before the thousand years of the millenium, that coming of Christ with His saints cannot be, as some imagine, post-millennial, or at the end of the world.

The bridal city, as we shall see, is to come down from Heaven and take up her station, not *on*, but over the millennial earth, and will be the means of ministering glory to it at that especial time. The leaves of its tree of life are for the healing of the nations, shewing that it will have real connection with the earth whilst it is still the abode of nations, and that the nations which are upon the earth will stand in need of healing.

As to who they are who will be in this heavenly pre-millennial glory the Word is explicit. In 1 Cor. xv. 23 we read of "Christ the first fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at His coming." In 1 Thess. iv. we read of "the dead in Christ;" and of "*them also which sleep in Jesus*." These passages, I believe, include (1) all the Old Testament saints who died in faith of a coming Saviour, and (2) all of our own dispensation who believed in Jesus—those who during these eighteen hundred years have owned Him, in this the time of His rejection, and who are spoken of as "*them which sleep in Jesus*." These all will be in this heavenly pre-millennial glory.

But not these alone. There will be those who will not have needed resurrection, because they were privileged not to die. Paul had said in 1 Cor. xv., "Behold I show you a mystery." Was it Resurrection? No. Such passages as Matt. xxii. 30, Luke xx. 36, John v. 29, xi. 24, showing that resurrection was not the mystery.

The mystery was that there would be some who would be alive and remain at the coming of the Lord. "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed"—"Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them (who have fallen asleep) in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." All these then, that is, all "*the dead in Christ*," and all those *living at His coming*, will be with Him in this pre-millennial heavenly glory. They, that is, those who died in faith of a coming glory, but who have not yet received the promises, could not be perfected apart from us.

Concerning the bride, prior to this marriage of the Lamb, the sound of the trumpet will be to her as the marriage bells on the nuptial morning. She will rise hearing the Bridegroom's voice, saying, "Haste, Beloved; come away!" Then her hope will be consummated, her goal reached. The bride greatly rejoiceth because of the Bridegroom's voice, and the friends of the Bridegroom rejoice. He is altogether lovely; and she is prepared as a bride for her husband.

One of the earliest scenes in this glory is "*the marriage supper*," at which the Lamb feasts His bride, also the invited guests. The bride has made herself ready. She is arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints. A feast is for joy. It is moreover a time for fellowship. A *marriage* feast always supposes others besides the bridegroom and the bride. It indicates the absence of all toil and sorrow—the sweet prevalence of happiness, yea of love—on the bride and bridegroom's part, of love in possession of its object, love satisfied. But what tender moral associations are suggested here!

For the bride is called the wife of *the Lamb*, whose sufferings as such were portrayed all through, from the sacrifice of righteous Abel down to the time when Christ offered up Himself—the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world. Blessed scene is this marriage supper of the Lamb! What grace and consolation does it imply! What love! What joy! A joy expressed in holiest ways, and in the midst of greatest delights. It is then that the bridal song is sung amidst the thousand splendours of the bridal hall.

But seated at the bridal board are those who are "*called to the marriage.*" In Rev. xix. 9 we read, "Write, Blessed are they which are *called* unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." The seer, you will observe, is to write it. It is to be noted for himself and for us as of deep interest and solemnity; also of unutterable joy. Especially as there is a peculiar blessedness for those who are called; that is, for those favoured ones who are invited to participate in it all. They are not the bride, but are "*called to the marriage*" as those who are the friends of the Bridegroom, and are "*blessed.*" Oh, what unutterable delights have we thus in those heavens of heavens which are before us! How varied! how glorious!

The distinction is significant. For there is obviously a difference in persons. But they are all of them risen and glorified saints, equally redeemed, equally with Christ, but known in different relationships; and being heavenly, are all distinguished from those who will occupy, not heaven, but the earth, during the season of its millennial blessedness. We know that even now the Word shows the relationship of bride with Bridegroom, and body with Head. When we speak of the

saved being the bride, or the body of Christ, we mean not that they will be absolutely a body or a bride, but that they will possess a blessedness corresponding to such relationships. The relationships apply to the redeemed, but suggest different considerations. We have seen that nothing can be nearer than *oneness with Christ*. Paul in Eph. v. 30, where he treats of our *mystic* union with Christ, does not leave it open to any doubt as to what the Church is, viz., "the *body* of Christ." And the exhortation is that a man should love his wife (not because she is his bride, for that would be no argument at all), but because she is *his own flesh*, and no man ever yet hated his own flesh, though a man may hate his own wife. The argument goes on to say even as Christ loved the Church, and we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. THIS is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church.

As to who and what the wife of the Lamb really is, we read in Rev. xx., that she is seen under the symbol of a city; itself called *the* bride, yet the abode of glorified beings. Here the word is most explicit. It is said of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that "God was not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city," and that "they looked for a city;" or, as the word is, "*the* city;" that is the city *par excellence*—"a *heavenly* city, whose builder and maker is God." "Doubtless," says Dean Alford, "this same *New Jerusalem*." Notably thus we find three distinct groups of saints whose histories we have in the Word—(1) Those from Adam to Abraham; (2) those from Abraham to Christ; (3) those from Christ crucified and ascended into Heaven to His

coming again. These all differ from each other in the character of their dispensation and hope. Adam, Abel, Seth, Enoch, etc., knew nothing of the special promises of the earth and of the heavenly city, made to Abraham and his seed. And Abraham and his seed knew nothing of *the body of Christ*, the mystery so long hidden, but now revealed to us. But these all will have their place at the coming glory, and answer, I would suggest to the three groups spoken of in Heb. xii. 22, 23—viz., “The spirits of the just men made perfect, the heavenly Jerusalem, and the church of the first-born.” If this be so we may ask, can they who thus inherit the city be excluded from the privileges implied by its name—“the Bride, the Lamb’s Wife?” That Abraham will have a special place and portion in the heavens in the day of the glory cannot be denied. Several Scriptures indicate this. But that the Church of God, *as now called out*, was the object before his faith when upon the earth, and what he looked for, as that which was signified by the promises made to him, is what the Scriptures nowhere teach. Still, though not looking for the Church *as now called out*, he was looking either for a place in Paradise, as we do now, or for this heavenly City on high which eclipsed the Canaan before his eyes, and which, as I have said, is to be viewed not only as the scene and home of future and eternal glory, but as the symbol of all those heavenly and glorified saints, myriads of such, it may be, who are singled out by God for this especial joy, bearing relationship of *bride*, even as, in another symbol, the Church is represented as being related to Christ as *body* with the Head. It is not so much oneness that is expressed by this emblem of

bride as deep intimacy of love. That the city thus a symbol, will also be the scene and home of future glory we know from what is said that God and the Lamb are in it. Moreover, those called to the marriage, the *friends* of the Bridegroom, are also there, as we sing—

“ God and the Lamb shall there,
The light and temple be ;
*And radiant hosts for ever share
The unveiled mystery.*”

And just as the idolatrous city of chapter xvii. is portrayed as a *woman*, a *mother* of abominations, while she is yet the *abode* of demons, and will have on her the associated judgments not only of apostate Rome, but of idolatrous Babylon of old, and even of Babel itself; so this glorious city, whilst called the Lamb's wife—the bride, and whilst the scene and centre of all blessedness, will be, as we shall show, the glorious and final abode of all those who in all ages were redeemed through the blood of the Lamb, and who in their risen and glorified bodies will dwell with Christ, first over the millennial earth, and then, after the first heavens and the first earth have passed away, in the new heavens and the new earth of the eternal state. We would not go beyond the light God has given us; but I would suggest that if all the risen, glorified, and heavenly saints are not in this relationship of bride, which many assert they are not, then that relationship must be viewed with special reference to those who in past ages died in faith of it, to whom the Lord in His grace and love made it so precious and familiar,

even whilst they were pilgrims and sufferers here;* and that the Church, as the now *called-out* assembly which is *His body*, who have owned Him in His present rejection and humiliation, being *one with Him*, will be as He is in that blessed heavenly Salem, the light, the centre, and the glory of it all. I do not dogmatically say that it is so; but that so it appears to me in the Word. Certain it is that there are many aspects of blessedness in the glory—one aspect of glory of the body, another of the bride, and another of those called to the marriage—the friends of the Bridegroom. But whilst one will differ from another in the glory, all will be glorious, being glorified together with Christ. Yet what the splendour of this marriage of the Lamb will be, and what the bliss indicated by this marriage scene, with all the friends in sympathy and joy assembled, we must wait to know. But some of the lineaments of the bride we shall consider when treating of the bride herself—"that great city, *the Holy Jerusalem*."

* It is singular that these are nowhere in the Old Testament Scriptures spoken of as *the body* of Christ, even as the Church is nowhere in the epistles spoken of as the bride, though written expressly for the Church as now called out. Ep. v. speaks of a relationship which already exists, and never needs to be repeated. The Old Testament Scriptures constantly refer, not to our mystical oneness with Christ which was a mystery hid, but to a bridal union which was already revealed. See Isa. liv. 5, 6; lxvi. 22; Jer. iii. 14; Hosea ii. 16, 19, 20; Song of Solomon; Ps. xlv. Is. xxvi. 19 is supposed by some to refer to "the body," but Bishop Lowth's translation reads not "*my body*" but *my deceased*. All the ancient versions render it in the *plural*; they read "my dead bodies." Syrian and Chaldean read "*their* dead bodies."

IX.

The Bride, the Lamb's Wife.

“ Bathed in unfallen sunlight,
Itself a sun-born gem,
Fair gleams the glorious city,
The new Jerusalem.
City fairest,
Splendour rarest,
Let me gaze on thee !

“ Calm in her queenly glory
She sits, all joy and light,
Pure in her bridal beauty,
Her raiment festal-white.
Home of gladness,
Free from sadness,
Let me dwell in thee !”

“ 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, the holy Jerusalem.”
—*Rev.* xxi. 9, 10.

OF the glory of this city there is no question. It is the city of Jehovah's love. Who can tell it? Perfection of all perfections! Union of all glories and the reunion of all the glorified! The consummation of all the purposes and counsels of God from everlasting, even of Him who is the Eternal and Infinite One, and who has purposed and planned all for His own happiness and glory! What words of attractive beauty are those by which it is described! How they ravish the heart! “*The Bride*,” “*the Holy City*,” “*the New Jerusalem*.” And who that reads the description of all its beauty and glory could be satisfied with any hope of less? The prayer of our souls is, “Lord, keep this glorious city near our

hearts; make us in spirit meet for its blessedness; and, though here, let us live as those who have already imbibed its spirit, and breathed its atmosphere."

"Come hither," or "hither!" as the word is, the angel said to John, and "I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife." (v. 9.) Safe guide truly for John and for us. Accordingly, in chapter xxi., from verse 9 to chapter xxii., he describes the city as coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God; but the scene of it there, I believe, is not in the new heavens and new earth, as in chap. xxi. 1-7, but *over* the millennial earth, with which it will have glorious connection during the thousand years of the earthly blessedness. It will belong thus first to this time-state, and not, as afterwards, exclusively to eternity. We know this from the fact that during the millennium the leaves of the tree of life in its midst will be for the healing of the nations. There are no nations, as such, in the eternal state; and if there were, none of them would need healing.*

To meet the Lord in the air, according to 1 Thess. iv. is our immediate hope. To be for ever with Him in this city is our eternal portion. What a long reach

* The first eight verses of Rev. xxi. refer, I believe, only to the eternal state, when in the new heavens and new earth the city or tabernacle of God will be with men; but from verse 9 and onwards we have a description of the same city in its relation to the millennial earth, when it will reign over both Jew and Gentile, and be the bearer of light and healing to the nations. In other words, the seer, having described in the first eight verses the glory of our final state, goes back to a minute and full description of that millennial state which will precede it. It is often in this book of Revelation that the reader is thus led back to take a *retrospective view*, ere going on to consider what is immediately before him.

of eternal blessedness! and how far back the first notices of it! "At the first," as has been said, "the garden was the limit of Adam's inheritance and enjoyments. Adam knew heaven only as he saw it above him, and by its lights dividing his day and his night. But he had no thought that linked him personally with it." Since then, as through a long and ever-brightening vestibule of divine knowledge, redemption has been unfolded; heavenly glory opened to us, disclosing a far richer inheritance than the garden, or all else that Adam lost. Abel, in dying, is present with the Lord. Enoch and Elijah, without dying, are translated to heaven. "In the translation of Elijah," remarks Archbishop Trench, "the lineaments of the ascension of Christ appear—the ascension of Him who, not rapt in a chariot of fire, nor needing the cleansing of that fiery baptism, in the far sublimer calmness of His own indwelling power, rose from the earth, and with His human body passed into heavenly places."* Since Elijah's day the Son of God has come, and has shown us the way to the Father. He died for us here, and has gone again into heaven to prepare mansions for us. The heavens have received Him, whence now we look for Him again. Ephesians i. and 1 Peter i. both tell us of our interest in His death and resurrection and ascension into heaven; how that we are "begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance" (not like that of Eden or Canaan, but) "*incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.*"

* Hulsean Lectures.

Many, who appear to envy Adam in the garden, and would be satisfied with it, seem to forget how limited were his hopes compared with ours. How different from the first knowledge of Adam, in the mere creature innocency and perfectness of his condition in the garden, are such notices as these: "Wherein are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature;" "A *better* country, that is, an *heavenly*;" "A city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God;"* Our citizenship is in heaven; "from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself;"† "The *New Jerusalem*;" "The *Holy Jerusalem*, coming down from God;"‡ also John xiv.: "I go to prepare a *place* for you. *I will come again and receive you unto Myself*; that where I am, there ye may be also." Thus have we been growing in our knowledge of the heavens; nor less have we grown in our knowledge of the earth. Innocency was lost, the garden was lost, and man was cast out on the earth to toil upon it, and to be buried in it; but as by the sin of one we were lost, so by the righteousness of One, all has become changed again.§

* Hebrews xi. 10, 16.

† Phil. iii. 20, 24.

‡ Rev. xxi. 2, 10.; John xiv. 2, 3.

§ In Psalm lxix. 4 we read: "I restored that which I took not away." Our nature of innocency was lost through sin; but we are through Christ partakers of a divine nature. Our Eden-rank was taken away by the same; but through Christ we are heirs with Him, not of the earth only, which is brought back, never again in the glorious issue to be lost, but of the heavens also.

What will be the future glory of the earth, and of Israel as a nation, and of the nations of the millennial earth, we have seen in our meditations on Jacob. The day is coming when "in the dispensation of the fulness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth; even in Him;" and this will be, not by the departure of the spirits of just men made perfect *to heaven*, as in the past, or by those who sleep in Jesus being "present with the Lord," as now, but by the descent in glorified form of all those from heaven who will come with Christ to or over the earth, as we shall now see in our contemplation of this holy city.*

It will be in that city, on its descent over the earth that the glorified saints—all of them, I believe—will reign over the earth. This is important to know. For many who do not believe in the pre-millennial

* Strange that the *pre-millennial* advent of Christ should be thought a doctrine of mere modern invention. It was held by the early Christians, as testified to by Gibbon. (Vol. i. pp. 532, 534.) Also by the reformers Luther, Calvin, and Knox, who believed that the Lord's coming would be *personal* when Israel would be saved, and Christ would reign *over a restored earth*. To show that he considered it "old," and not "new," Toplady says, "I am one of those old-fashioned people who believe in the doctrine of a *millennium*. . . . In a glorious interval of a thousand years, Christ, I apprehend, will reign in person over the kingdom of the just." (*Works*, vol. iii. p. 470.) John Bunyan, too, speaking of the two resurrections, says, concerning those of the first, "They will have the glory and the sweetness, and will rise *from* the dead; that is, in their rising *they leave the reprobate dead behind them*. The saints will sit upon the throne with Christ as kings and princes, with Him to judge the world." I add a modern testimony. Dr. Chalmers, writing to Dr. Bonar, says, "It is not of your prophetic, but of

advent of the Lord with His redeemed say, "What! are you not carnal, earthly? After having been *in* heaven you want to bring us back to the earth again, for which our resurrection and glorified bodies will be totally unfitted!" Moreover, they add, "the absurdity is obvious, inasmuch as the earth could never contain all who then would have to dwell upon it; and if it could, how incongruous that glorified beings could be happy where evil will again break out, as it will at the close of the earth's millennium." Our answer to all this is, that it will not be *on* the earth at all. The glorified saints during the millennium will have their abode in the heavenly Jerusalem *above* the earth, distinct from it, yet connected with it, where they dwell and reign with Christ a thousand years. Still they will visit and re-visit this earth as angels now do, but

your theological views that I now speak, though to the former also I approximate much nearer than I did in my younger days." (*Correspondence*, p. 306.) Again, on Psalm l. he writes: "I am inclined more to the literal interpretation of this psalm than to that which would restrict it to the mere preaching of the gospel in the days of the apostles. It looks far more like the descent of the Son of man on the Mount of Olives, *with all the accompaniments of a Jewish conversion, and a first resurrection, and a destruction of the assembled hosts of Anti-christ.*" (Vol. iii. p. 51.) Also in Ps. lxxviii. 18-35: "His people will see Him whom they pierced, perhaps when His feet shall stand on the mount of Olives, and Jerusalem will again become the great central sanctuary, by becoming the metropolis of the Christian world." (Vol. iii. p. 69.) In an interesting book by an American writer, the author traces the *post-millennial* return of Christ to be *the modern doctrine*, and with good reason shows it was brought in largely through the means of Dr. Whitby, the Unitarian commentator. The title of the book is *Maranatha; or, The Lord Cometh.* By J. H. Brookes.

who do not live here. They belong to a heavenly abode, and yet come down upon ministrations of mercy, as we sing—

“ Angels elect are sent down
To serve the elect of mankind.”

But “unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world,” or age, “to come, whereof we speak.” That will be the prerogative of the risen glorified saints. They will occupy themselves in millennial work. “What gospel messengers,” writes the late Mr. Soltau, “we shall be as risen saints! What a gospel we shall tell far and wide! Men upon the earth will see the gospel in the risen saints! they do not see it now as they might in us. They will see it then, and say, ‘Here is salvation; now we understand what salvation is.’” The risen saints will be in their glory, but the inhabitants of the earth will be still in their bodies of flesh. It is perfectly in accordance with what has occurred in the past human world, that there should be intercourse between the one and the other.

“While the earth was undefiled,” remarks an eminent writer,* “the Lord God walked in the garden; and afterwards, though He was in some sense estranged from the earth, yet He was ever ready to visit it—to visit it in the behalf of His elect, as in the histories of Abraham, Joshua, Gideon, and others. So that bright and memorable hour, when Jesus was transfigured in company with Moses and Elias, in the sight of Peter, James, and John; so the occasional appearances of Christ to His disciples after He had risen;

* *The Heavens and the Earth.* By J. G. Bellett.

and so the vision of the descending and ascending sheet. The heavenly things at such moments unfold themselves to the eye of man, and give sweet notice of their nearness to us. We do not as yet perceive their nearness; for the glory is not yet in its millennial place over the city of the Jews; but in the millennial kingdom all this will be to sight. The heavenly glory, or glory of the golden city, will shine over the land of Israel; the one Jerusalem above the other;" that is, over the Jerusalem of the land of Israel. Nothing can be plainer than that the Jerusalem now trodden down of men is to be rebuilt; and the people of Israel will be the great metropolitan people of the millennial earth. "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the city shall be built to the Lord. . . . It shall be holy unto the Lord; *it shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down any more for ever.*" The city will be the metropolis of all the families of Israel; and Israel the means of blessing to the whole earth. How beautiful the promise: "He that (now) scatters Israel will *gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd doth his flock.* . . . *They shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord,* their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all." (See the whole of Jer. xxxi; also Jer. xxxiii. 7-9.) Also Heb. viii. 10: "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people. And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know Me, from the least

to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

Such will be, as it were, the foot of the ladder on earth, whose top will reach to heaven, telling of the glory above; yea, uniting Israel and the earth with the glory-bearing city in the heavens. On all her habitations the glory will be a covering. The ladder will be erected with its head in the heavens, and its foot on the earth. The same blessed Lord will be the centre of all things; and, as in the different parts of one temple, the services of praise and joy will be celebrated, every tongue confessing that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Equally plain are the words that tell of the moral happiness which will be enjoyed by reason of this intercourse. The following is interesting on this: "The pure moral happiness that will be enjoyed by reason of this intercourse is sweetly pictured in different types and prophecies. As at the meeting of Jethro and Moses, of Solomon and the Queen of the South; as in Isaiah lx., or on the holy Mount, or in the holy Jerusalem. What right affections do we find in all these intercourses! What pure social pleasures are, as I have said, pictured before us! All these shadowy expressions of the social delights of millennial days will be deeply prized by us, if we love the exercise of pure unselfish affections.

"But in this coming intercourse of the heavens with the earth thus, when the people of the heavens go up and down the mystic or millennial ladder, I have thought that Scripture leads us to judge that there will be a certain veiling of their proper glory, when

they come down and have communion with the earth beneath and under them.

“The expression of this we get in the Lord’s appearance after He rose from the dead; for then He could assume any veil which suited the business He had to do, whether that of the gardener to Mary, that of a companion to the two going to Emmaus, or that of a courteous stranger on the banks of the lake to the fishermen.”

Blessed, favoured inmates of such a scene! Yet not all who are redeemed will be *in* the city. The land and nation of Israel, both restored, will bask beneath its glory, and the nations that are saved will walk in the light of it. But Moses and Elias on the holy Mount prefigure the glory of those who will be in it. The patriarchs were the first to know any promise of a heavenly city. They “looked for a city” —*the* city, a heavenly one—“which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.” Its very name tells of those who died in faith. The materials which adorn the city are the same as those which adorned both the tabernacle and temple of old. The names of the *twelve sons of Israel* are on its gates; those of the twelve apostles on its foundations. Not the names of “*apostles* and prophets,” as in Ephesians, but of *patriarchs* and apostles, those apostles being the apostles of *the circumcision*. Often did the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Hosea, tell in their day, for the joy and consolation of those who believed, of *bridal relationship*.

Moreover, those martyred under the coming anti-christ will doubtless live and reign with Christ over the earth in this city of the glory. Having died, they

will have resurrection, and so will reign; otherwise, they would simply have been reigned over. Therefore, the word "*henceforth*," *i.e.*, from that time of tribulation for Christ, "blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." Those, with all of our own dispensation and those of the past dispensation, who have died in faith will have their place in this coming glory. Look at Heb. xi. 39, 40, "And these all"—the Old Testament saints, "having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect." Thus the saints of the Old Testament dispensation are waiting for the pre-millennial resurrection of the just; that then, with the saints of the present dispensation, they may be gathered from the grave, and enter into their glory.

If so, when do they enter upon their inheritance? In Dan. xii. 13 we read, "But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days." "I do not apprehend (I quote from another) that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Daniel will each have a little plot of land in Palestine when raised from the dead. I believe that they will have a sphere in the heavenly glory of the resurrection; and my belief is that they will fully enjoy their blessing on earth also, and see the promises of God fulfilled, and, having a body capable of dwelling in heaven or earth, will be as the angels of God ascending and descending, as it was with the vision of Jacob's ladder; heaven will be opened, and a communication between heaven and earth established."

How one loves to think of them! and already to have fellowship with them! But without us they could

not be perfect. That there are many glories, and one glory differing from another, Paul shows us in Heb. xii. 22, 23 where, speaking to Christians (to ourselves), he says, "ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect." Many make mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, and the Church of the first-born to be all one and the same; but the copulative "and" shows that they are distinct. Mount Zion (a glorious height) will, I believe, some day adorn the brows of the earthly Salem of the land of Israel. The city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, is that of which we are now speaking, the name "heavenly" making it distinct from the Jerusalem of the earth. See also Gal. iv. 26.

The name "assembly," or "Church of the first-born," carries with it its own meaning, the "Church" (as in Ephesians) forming a distinct place in the love and purpose of God. Whatever they all are, however blessed and glorious, we shall lose nothing, for "we," says the apostle, are come to them all. Not come to them as a matter of experience, though the knowledge of them gives blessed experience; but we are come to them by faith in the plan and purpose of God. Just as in Rom. viii. 30 it is said, "Whom He justified, them He also glorified," the one in the purpose of God as much as the other. So in the mind and purpose of God, to the eye of faith we are come to all these; but we are to come to them in fact—to mount Sion, and to the holy Jerusalem, and to all else to which

Christ Himself has come. They are all ours. The Church being one with Christ, all things are ours.

But now let us fix our eye on the city itself—on the blessedness it represents. And here we must stand with the beloved apostle, or rather with the angel who describes it for us, leaving the apostle and us to supply the sweet moral lessons which it suggests.

1. The city is as “a bride adorned for her husband.” Words of life-like beauty! ravishing the heart! I have thought that any lengthened exposition but hinders rather than aids our contemplation of them. She is “a bride”—a “bride adorned for her husband.” If ever there is attractive loveliness and perfectness, it is with such. No earthly raiment is more taintless or faultless than the wedding garb; and never are sympathies more unselfish or benevolent than those of the friends of the bride, and which are sure to be awakened by the sight of her when she comes forth adorned for her husband. If ever heavenly glories will appear more attractive or more fresh at one time than another, it will be when the redeemed thus come forth, as the bride of the Lamb—perfect and beautiful and glorious, and are ready for the marriage, all blessed on their part, and all suited to His own delight. Oh think of what will be their beauty, their adorning! and what the lavishment of His love and His joy upon them. His joy and theirs! who can measure?

2. The scene whence the city comes is from God out of heaven. Hence no one spot of sin, with nothing that defileth, but “having the glory of God.” It is now with Israel “the gloomy night of Ichabod;” for the glory once in their midst has departed. It was oftentimes disturbed, and looked forth only to

judge, when in the cloud of old. But now without any such disturbance it will come again. And this city, or shall I say these glorified beings, will be the favoured bearers of it to this poor, benighted earth. For long ages there has been no more any pillar of cloud by day, or of fire by night, as at the Red Sea; no Shekinah of glory, as in the tabernacle and temple of old. We see in Ezekiel how reluctantly, as it were, the glory departed from the earth. We in our dispensation have seen the glory of the only-begotten of the Father. We all with open face beholding as in a glass, or reflecting the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. But this heavenly city will bring the glory near to the earth, the glory of God and the glory of the Lamb. Before that glory all other glories will hide themselves; sun, moon, and stars shall hide their light amid a greater effulgence than their own.

3. "The light of the city is most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal." Thus the glory will shine as light to lighten those on the earth; it will take up a visible position. Hence, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." The jasper stone is the elect stone to show forth the glory of God. This will be the mission of the city, as she takes up her station over the earth, to give to the earth the light of the glory of God. That glory will shine from Christ; for it will be the glory of Christ, *the* stone, that will be reflected in and shine through all the other stones. Divested of figure, the glory will radiate through the jasper walls or the *outer* glories, on and over the redeemed earth, just as the glory of the Transfiguration shone through

the human tabernacle of the Glorified One upon the disciples on the holy Mount, so that His very "raiment was white and glistening." Are we not reminded that it is now as Christians that Christ dwelling in us should shine forth through us. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give" (or rather, as the word is, to "give *out*") "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Hence the exhortation "Shine ye as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life." Christ Himself will be in the midst of the city. Thus the city is the medium through which Christ and His Church will shine forth to all creation. There will be no longer need for the vessel containing the treasure to be marred or broken in order to show the light, as with Gideon's pitchers and our earthen vessels; it will be Christ's glory in its own elect home, making itself felt through His redeemed over the earth, yea, over all creation, in its own natural, perfect, and unhindered way. Oh that now, in our own souls, His light may be so perfectly there, that we may indeed let it shine before men, that they may glorify our Father who is in heaven!

4. The city had "a wall great and high." The wall was of jasper, the same elect stone for glory and for beauty. And besides this we have the idea of security. Israel had only a hedge, which has long since been broken down. We, as we now are, have no absolute security against evil; good, alas! may leave us, and evil may come in; our hearts well know this. But here is a wall which secures all to God Himself. How blessed! Nothing that defileth will ever enter. The evil nature that is in us, and the

Evil One, will have no place there. How sweet to let the heart free, and never to fear that it may relapse again into evil.

5. "And at the gates twelve angels." Around the Palace of the King of kings will be seen the palaces of His saints—each one a king and priest. Angels are at the gates. Angels are unwearied of their employment now. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" So that I have thought it blessed to feel that for every devil seeking our downfall there may be an angel guarding us. But in the day of this glory angels will be doorkeepers in the house of our God. Unselfish is their ministry. They were passed by as to their nature being taken when the Lord of glory became incarnate, yet they sang over the event with joy. And when we are repentant they rejoice over us and minister to us; and when finally we are inside the glorious city, yea one with Him who is the glory, they will joy in seeing and knowing their charge eternally secure. Mark here, the relative nearness of saints and angels to Christ and His Church the centre. Next, glorified beings corresponding to transparent walls and gates of pearl. The angels are at the gates. It is to all these we have come, as in Heb. xii. 23.

6. "The city hath foundations." We have nothing settled here. All is changing! yea, how much *has* changed! We have no continuing city. Job says: "Thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away." What a contrast is Psalm xc. and Ephesians i. In the psalm we are in the ruin of the first Adam; "the days of our years" are all limited, and death and the grave are at their end. In the epistle

chronology has no place; we are in Christ before the eternal times. Years have nothing to say to our life there, or the life that we now have, which is *eternal*. Death and the tomb have no place in it. It will be in this scene that the Church will enjoy its true life, its long eternal bliss. Being one with Christ, wherever *He is*, it is ours to be for ever with Him in the same glory. What a rest for the heart! We have a life and a lot which are established, the same as His, unchanging and unchangeable, for ever.

7. "And the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones." Here we have beauty and stability combined. The first foundation was jasper; the second, sapphire; the third, a chalcedony; the fourth, an emerald; the fifth, sardonyx; the sixth, sardius; the seventh, chrysolyte; the eighth, beryl; the ninth, a topaz; the tenth, a chrysoprasus; the eleventh, a jacinth; the twelfth, an amethyst." That is, the glory is varied; broken up into beauteous, distinctive hues, answering to the varied and holy loveliness of the redeemed, such as David and Daniel, Joseph and Solomon, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and countless others, who yet have a common likeness, being one as to their salvation, equally dear to God, and equally redeemed by the precious blood of Christ. Thus the onyx stones on the shoulders of Aaron were all the same. Those on his breast were all varied. Those on the one were borne up high before God, looking up, as it were, into His face. The others were on the breast, as if close to the heart of love.

8. "And the twelve gates were twelve pearls; every several gate was of one pearl: and the street of the

city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass." No shadows can be equal to the glorious substance; but I have found it a happy exercise to compare 1 Kings vi. 30 and Rev. xxi. respecting the floorings of the tabernacle, temple, and the New Jerusalem city. In the tabernacle there was no floor, only the bare earth; or more correctly, the sandy desert. But looking around and above, all was gorgeous and glorious—gold, purple, blue, and scarlet, along with purest white, reminding Aaron of the divine and the heavenly; but looking *down*, all was mere earth, reminding him of the wilderness, and how in holiest worship or service the path, here, was still the desert.

In Solomon's temple it was different. All was pure gold. Every inch of flooring was of gold. Not a particle of dust to remind any more of the wilderness. There will be no such wilderness as now, in the day of the true Solomon glory. Outside, indeed, of the Temple of old, was the laver. Why it was there we shall see presently.

But in our heavenly abode, this holy Jerusalem, there is no such temple. It is all a glorious home and house of our God. Every street is gold. And what is so interesting, is to view these three places in connection with the provisions of the laver and sea of glass. On the way to the holiest in the tabernacle was the *laver*. Aaron could not go in to the service without its use. He must die if not perfectly clean, and this he could not be without his hands and feet being cleansed by the water of the laver. We are perfect before God in Christ. We should die if we were there otherwise; but we have daily, hourly keeping by our High Priest, who is in the presence of God for us, and who says unless I wash you, you have no part with Me.

In Solomon's temple, though it was all gold inside, yet outside the streets were not gold. It was not wilderness; yet it was not heaven. So we find a *sea*, a vast laver of brass, was provided for the cleansing of those who ministered. But in the New Jerusalem it is all gold. The *streets* are gold. That on which men walk will be only perfectness, and will never cause soiling. There is no coming from any part of it but over what is pure. Hence, instead of a laver, there is a "sea of glass;" not for washing, but for reflecting. After millions of ages, it will show our feet as clean as on the first day we were there. Unsullied cleanness, eternal perfectness, will be reflected by it. No need of washing; none of being kept. It is all gold, pure gold; divine, perfect; and because perfect blessed for evermore!

9. The gates have on them the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel; the foundations those of the twelve apostles of the Lamb—the apostles of the circumcision. These surely tell the character of the city—that it is "the Jerusalem which is above, is free, which is the mother of us all," literally, "which is our mother, and not therefore ourselves." Galatians iv. 26 assuredly points to those who of the past dispensation were faithful, and had promise of this city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

10. "The city is of pure gold, like unto clear glass." Not only the streets of the city, but even the city itself. Men think much of gold now; but, as we have seen, it is all gold in our heavenly home, this representing the divine. Is not this golden city a representation of how God has formed His redeemed ones out of Himself? All one as to their nature with Himself,

in a glory and excellence surpassing all else that He has made. The gold, we are told, is like "transparent glass;" as another has said, "Holiness fixed without a flaw." What a contrast to that on which we walk here! Oh to breathe more freely the air of this city now! Alas! here, if we do not watch and pray, or our hearts are worn in watching, and we contract the soil, we weary with ourselves the more. Yet is there, even now, a blessed provision. The office of the priest was to separate that which was unclean from the offering. So our great High Priest presents us perfect, undefiled before the Father, He Himself having purified us.

Oh, what rest will be ours in this home in the skies! What relief to want no more conscience there! everything we come into contact with being suited to God, and suited to the nature He has caused to spring up in our hearts. It will surely be a heaven in heaven even to think of such a heaven.

II. "I saw no temple therein." Because it is all temple. There is no more any one favoured spot like that of the holiest, or like that which the priests occupied in the temple of Solomon. None will need, as then, to withdraw for worship; none need to seek for the presence of God; His presence will be always with us. Down here we have no temple, but we are all priests before God above, made nigh in the very holiest, where all is rest to our souls. We are "made nigh by the blood of Christ." This is what in spirit, by faith, we are now enjoying; but in glorified bodies, with unveiled faces, we shall worship and adore in this heavenly city, where the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple.

The great object in the earthly Jerusalem was a temple; and, as Ezekiel unfolds, it will be so again for the worshipper in the land of Israel, when its people will be all righteous. It has been observed how strikingly fitted is each instrument God uses in the ministration or revelation of His thoughts. His vessels are chosen happily and well for the work they have to do. "Who would be the most fitting instrument to unfold the great Gentile empires in their rise and fall? Of course a prime minister. Therefore we have a Daniel, 'greatly beloved,' doing his work well. The *capability of the vessel is recognised and employed*, but kept from human infirmity by God's over-ruling hand; while it never loses its identity on the moral features, even in the things of God. See the herdsman Amos! Who could better use the figures he does? Who could so speak of the cow going out of the breach that was before her? or of Jehovah pressing the place of His people, as a cart is pressed under sheaves? or of the impossibility of ploughing on a rock with oxen? or of the sifting of corn in a sieve? etc. Ezekiel, too, the priest, is the man chosen of God to tell us of the temple in the earthly city, of the day of glory when the Lord will be there. We might also instance Paul, Peter, and John, in their respective lines in the New Testament. But to proceed—

Are we wearied with the very opulence of this description? If our hearts are suitably affected we are not.

12. "The city had no need of the sun." There were no windows in the tabernacle of old. All material light, from the sun, moon, and stars, was carefully excluded. It had no need of it. There was the

glorious Shekinah in the holiest, and the golden shaft, with its seven lamps, in the holy place. The heavenly reality of all this is in us *now*; for no light of reason or nature ever led us to God. The knowledge we have is supernatural. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." This, God by His Spirit through the truth has done now, but the more manifested reality we shall see in this city of the glory.

"The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the Light thereof." Is there not here again a representation of Christ and His Church? who will dwell as *one* in this city of the skies—the greatest expression ever given of the glory of God. The glory of God will be seen for ever in Him, and in His Church, which will be to the praise of His glory; also a mirror to the whole universe of the exceeding riches of His grace. Oh, sweet indeed is the part of prophecy which describes for us such a home, and such glory, for the saints!

"The Lamb's blest home, with four-square jasper wall,
Jerusalem;
Built of pure gold, redemption's bridal hall,
Jerusalem.
No night is there; no lamp, or sun, or moon
Can shine amid its own unchanging noon."

13. But further, and still beautiful and blessed, "The gates of it shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there."

Night is the symbol of sin, of death, and of hell.

Satan is the prince of darkness. And night is not in heaven. No sin, no death, no grave are there. Gates are shut at night. Pleasant is the simple confidence which bolts no door at night. Yet here there is no night, and therefore no shutting of gates. "A *shut* door," it is said, "is suggestive that evil *may* approach." The gates are not shut at all by day; and if not, never; for all is day. Uncertainty, insecurity, fears, and even darkness of soul, are felt here; but there they are unknown. Nor is this all. Instead of fear they of the city will have irresistible power. They shall reign over the nations, and shall rule the ungodly with a rod of iron. The Empire of Satan shall be broken, the reign of sin shall be swept away—the boasting of infidel science shall be silenced in darkness, and all power, knowledge, dignity, and wealth shall be transferred from the man of the world to the man of God. During this reign from the heavens the whole course of things shall be inverted; the worldly man shall serve where once he ruled. The nations of the earth looking up to the Heavenly City and gazing with wonder upon its ineffable beauty, shall exclaim with a different tone than that of formal repetition—"Thou art the King of glory, O Christ!"

14. "The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it." Thus there is one glory of the earthly, and another glory of the heavenly—Israel and the nations *on the earth*, basking in the light of the New Jerusalem *in the heavens*. The earth will own that the heavens do rule.

15. "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomi-

nation, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." O what relief to the soul in this! Have we not hated ourselves when we have known the defilement that is in us? But that very hatred shows we are fitted in sympathy for the place. That we hate the sin that so easily besets us and mourn over the evil that is still in us, is one of those sure elements which quickens our footsteps in the heavenly race.

16. "And He shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. 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." This distinctly shows it is not the eternal state; for there are no nations there, none needing to be healed. Admit this city as over the millennial earth, and all is easy to understand; for there will be nations on earth needing the healing in millennial times. The tree of life will be in the city. Those in the city will eat immediately from it; receive immediately from Christ.*

* As to what will be the condition of the earth during its connection thus with the heavens, it must not be supposed that it will be perfect. There will be nations that will need the healing of the leaves of the tree of life, which will have conveyance from the heavenly city. Sin and death will be in the earth. We are told, "the child shall die an hundred years old; but the sinner, being an hundred years old, shall be accursed." Ezekiel xi. 19, 20 applies to Israel, so that they will possess no old nature, and during the thousand years there will be on the earth no old serpent. (See *Papers for the Present Time*. "The Millennium—What is it?")

How inexhaustible all this imagery is—the pure river of the water of life, clear as crystal; and the Throne of God and the Lamb whence it proceeds; and then in the street, on either side of it, is the tree of life! Inexhaustible I say—for it is Christ Himself we see in these. But there will be no eating of the tree of life unless we now, by faith, have the Lord of life, who died for us.

17. “They shall see His face”—the face of the man of Sychar, the man of Calvary! How sweet once, to me, were the parting words of a dying friend, one truly eminent in the Church of God. He said, “I have been thinking how you and I are to see the face of the Man of Sychar together.” Oh, the sight of that face, what bliss it will be! So different from the days of His sorrows when “many were astonished—His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.” That head once in the dust of death we shall see crowned with glory and honour.

18. “And His name shall be in their foreheads.” The reflection of looking upon Him will be that His name will be in our foreheads. It will be where He Himself will for ever see it—in our foreheads. Ah, what brows of beauty and of glory then! Unlike those of the wilderness care, or of the dying couch. How perfect, how glorious! None of the lines of sorrow or of suffering left; weeping days are all passed by; as we sing—

“ We’ve seen those faces in days of yore,
When the dust was on their brow,
And the scalding tear upon their cheek;
Let us look at the labourers now !

“ We think of the life-long sorrow,
Of the wilderness days of care ;
We try to trace the tear-drops,
But no scars of grief are there.

“ The long waiting days are over,
They’ve received their wages now ;
For they’ve gazed upon their Master,
And His name is on their brow !”

Such will be this heavenly abode during the earth’s millennium, and such will be its connection with the earth then in its glory.

But now as we have seen *the glory of the heavenly*, let us look for a little upon the earth, at the city and country over which that glory will shine. This will form another landing-stage in our meditations on this fruitful theme. The New Jerusalem will have intimate connection with the land of Israel. The nation will have been restored, according to the words given by God to Moses in the far wilderness days of Deut. xxx. 1-4, where it says: “ And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath driven thee, . . . that then the Lord thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, *and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the Lord thy God hath scattered thee. If any of thine be driven out unto the utmost parts of heaven, from thence will the Lord thy God gather thee, and from thence will He fetch thee.*” No one will doubt that Israel has endured the curse which the Lord had set before them. But shall the curse befall them, and shall they not have the blessings

also? It was on the ground of sin that they received the one. It is on the ground of grace that God will yet bestow the other. He had a secret in reserve by which, notwithstanding their sinfulness, He could minister the blessings. That secret, shall I say, was Christ, on the ground of whose death (for He died for the nation) He will yet bestow them.

And their hearts will be suited to the grace. "And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul." Blessed condition over which the Lord will rejoice! "For," it is said, "the Lord will again rejoice over thee for good, as He rejoiced over thy fathers."

After such words as these, who can doubt God's delight in His people Israel, or their return to their own land? And who, with the words of the prophet Ezekiel before him (chap. xl. to the end), can doubt the glory which will adorn their city, when rebuilt; or the beauty and riches of their land, when restored?

The seer is set upon "a very high mountain," from which he sees the "frame of a city on the south;" also its temple of vast dimensions, to be the resort of all nations. Its chambers are described; its measurements and its ornaments; the ordinances of its altar, and the ordinances of its priests; its laws of worship, and its system of justice; the glory which fills it, and the fountain of water which will issue direct from it. The glory which the seer beholds as returning to it is the same as he had seen departing, when prophesying concerning the destruction of the city. That destruction, we know, was literally accomplished, and the glory literally departed. Can we reasonably doubt

that the restoration will be literal, or that the return of the glory will be literal?

The seer next gives us the suburbs of the temple set apart for the Lord Himself, along with all the borders and divisions of the land, all laid out by the wondrous hand of God. The returned tribes, moreover, are appointed to their possessions by Him. The boundaries of the possessions also are marked out; not indeed according to the land's present limits, but according to those foretold to Abraham, reaching "from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates."

Both Ezekiel and Zechariah tell of grand beneficent physical lineaments of the land which had never previously existed: a luxuriant valley, and a river, or rivers, flowing through it to the sea. These are to occur when the Lord shall again stand on the Mount of Olives. That mount, as if to spread itself in honour at His feet, divides itself in twain. The result is, that a new and luxuriant valley, beautiful as Eden, is created, extending in its course as far as Azal. "And half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south." This valley is to be the scene of broad flowing rivers, connecting, it would appear, Jerusalem itself with the waters of the ocean. This truly is of deep interest in the light of Jerusalem becoming the metropolis of the whole earth.

"This Azal" (writes the author of *Palestine Re-peopled*) "has been conjectured to be Ascalon, on the Mediterranean; and to some it has seemed that the formation of this valley to Jerusalem will be with a view to admit the ocean waters to the Dead Sea.

These, it has been supposed, will overflow by the southern end of the lake, and sweep away the sand-drift that now in the Wady-Arabah alone obstructs the progress of the waters, so completing the Straits of Azal into the Red Sea. Thus would Jerusalem be made at once the centre of the earth, and become the emporium of commerce to the East and West; for the water transit, now so imperfectly provided by the Suez Canal, would be amply afforded by this natural arm of the ocean."

I welcome here the testimony of another. "Deliverance," he says, "comes not to Israel till the Lord's feet shall stand upon the Mount of Olives, and the tribes, in deep contrition, recognise Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, the King of Israel. The Mount of Olives shall be cleft asunder, into a deep and far-extending valley. The same convulsion of nature shall cause a deep and inexhaustible fountain to burst forth in Jerusalem, swelling into a mighty river as it flows westward to the Mediterranean, and eastward into the Dead Sea, purifying its waters, fertilising the contiguous desert, and probably continuing its beneficent course as far as the Persian Gulf.* Jerusalem will become geographically and commercially the metropolis of the earth. Then 'Israel shall blossom and bud, and fill the face of the world with fruit.'"

But whatever will be the course these waters may take, however they may peacefully meander beneath the glory in the heavens, lovely beyond all precedent is the description given of their fertilising influence. They cause beauty and healing wherever they come.

* Zech. xiv. 8; Ezek. xlvii. ; Joel iii. 18; Isa. xxxv.

On their banks "grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new" (principal) "fruit according to his months, because their waters they issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine."

Through their healing, that sea, which for ages has been called "*Dead*," will be no longer such. "Fishers shall stand upon it from Engedi; they shall be a place to spread forth nets; their fish shall be according to their kind as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many."*

Now is fulfilled the promise which the Lord had made of the land: "*I lifted up Mine hand to give it unto your fathers. And this land shall fall unto you for inheritance.*"† That inheritance will be the well-ordered and long-promised *Immanuel's land*. "Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth." Ps. xlviii. 2. Matchless Promiser! Glorious land of Palestina! Who can tell with what interest it will be seen and known in these the days of heaven on the earth? In looking back, with what wondrous interest will be remembered the promises made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob! And how will all the prophets of the olden time be called to mind! And the Incarnate One Himself, where He trod in humiliation, and died His atoning death; and where now He will be seen King of kings, and Lord of lords. Besides the associations of the past will be the marvels of the present—the wonderful phenomenon of the Holy City, seen from the city on the earth, peacefully situated in the heavens,

* Ezek. xlvii. 10-12.

† Ezek. xlvii. 14.

the one in intimate connection with the other; so intimate that "the nations of them that are saved shall walk in the light of it."

That special visits will be made to Israel by the nations Zech. viii. shows: "Many people and strong nations shall come and seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem to pray before the Lord." Ch. xiv. shows: "That every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem, shall even go up from year to year to worship the King the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles." Should any lightly esteem this privilege, God will put His mark of disapprobation visibly on them: "On their land there shall be no rain." This is said with special reference to Egypt, that ancient land for which, because of its connection with Israel, the Lord has blessing in reserve.

How different is all this from the Jerusalem that now is, with its melancholy inhabitants of only about fourteen thousand, the abode of degradation and humiliation, especially as seen amidst the remains of its temple, where poor Jews meet to bewail the desolations of Zion. Concerning which they say: "Is this the city that men call The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?" Its dark walls, and the glance you get of the narrow, slippery streets, with ill-built houses, and a poor, ill-clad population, suggest no idea of the magnificence of former days.

The same also with the Dead Sea, now the dreariest solitude, surrounded by arid, burning deserts, with no pleasant thing or living creature upon its waters, or upon its borders, to cheer the eye, corresponding with kindred dreary hills and valleys, the scene of no health-

ful vegetation, but sadly characteristic of a hopeless broken-hearted land.

What a burst of splendour after long ages of misery—those ages beginning with the disastrous collapse and ignominy brought upon the nation by the sin of Rehoboam, will this glorious restoration be!

But amidst this burst of splendour, it is interesting to think how the ancient foe of Israel will have come to her doom. Some suppose that the site on which Babylon stood was where the flowers of the garden bloomed: certain it seems that the "Euphrates and Hiddekel or Tigris (remarks an ancient writer) were rivers of Eden," and that "though the flood may have effaced many other features of the antideluvian earth, still we find these two rivers again. These two rivers were identified with the powers that were to be the ruin of Israel and Judah respectively. Nineveh, city of the Tigris, was the capital of Assyria, which carried the great mass of the tribes of Israel into captivity. Babylon was the power afterwards used by God for the captivity of that which seemed to stand firm for God, no less than for David's house, but which afterwards fell into greater unfaithfulness than backsliding Israel." In its first rise and long subsequent history, Babylon has become the symbol of all that dark mystery of iniquity which in the Word bears its name.

"Babylon," remarks the author of "Earth's Morning," "stood upon Euphrates. It was the great enemy of Jehovah and his people, as well as the representative of their enemy, through all ages."

Hard by Paradise, it may be on the very spot, was Satan permitted to rear his mighty citadel. He had driven man from that happy seat; he had blighted

its beauty; and now, as if in defiance of God and man, he rears his city upon the faded flowers of Eden. One has asked—

“ Having waste ground enough
Shall we desire to raze the sanctuary
And pitch our evils there?”

So was it with Satan, whether we regard Babylon as actually reared on the site of Paradise or merely in some corner of the wider circle of Eden. God's garden and Satan's city close by each other, as if the latter were triumphing over the former! The emblem of the heavenly Paradise and the symbol of the great city, mother of harlots, side by side with each other! The earthly pattern of heavenly things passing away, and replaced by the abode of darkness, the cage of unclean beasts, the counterpart of Satan's own dark dwelling below! But now instead of the emblem merely, which had faded, we have in our city above the heavenly Paradise itself. And on earth, instead of Babylon, in whom was found the blood of the prophets and saints, and all the slain upon earth, we have “the land that was desolate, whose people were scattered in the cloudy and dark day, become like the garden of the Lord,” and instead of waste and desolate cities “I, the Lord, build the ruined places and plant that that was desolate.” Ezekiel xxxvi. 36.

As to Jerusalem it will be the crown of cities. Who that reads Isaiah lx. but must see this? No longer in heaps, but in perfected magnificence, it will be told to “Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. . . . Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.” We need no speculation as to what the light

and the brightness will be; for in their presence the light of the sun will be hidden by day, and the moon and stars by night. "The sun shall be no more thy light by day: neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but THE LORD shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and THY GOD thy glory."

Fertility and natural loveliness will bask beneath this effulgence. The heavenly city being over the earth may produce the change to take place in its CLIMATE. No longer arid, and barren of verdure, "there shall be upon every high mountain, and upon every high hill, rivers and streams of waters." Think of its plenty as incalculable: "The mountains shall drop down new wine, and the hills shall flow with milk. The floors shall be full of wheat, and the fats shall overflow with wine and oil." This is no mere figure. Lands elevated or low—it will be all the same. "Lebanon," with its ten thousand feet of elevation, and on which rests the snows of ages, "shall be turned into a fruitful field, and the fruitful field shall be esteemed as a forest." The waste places even will yield to this munificent change: "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose."

Remains of Eden we now have—beauty of the earth that yet lingers. How often has one thought, when some scene of natural loveliness and sublimity has burst upon the view, What will it be when the curse is utterly rolled away, and the covering cast over all nations; not an insect, not a fly even, remaining to hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain! At that time death will be swallowed up in victory. That which now is a vast vortex, swallowing up the genera-

tions of men, from Adam downwards, will itself be swallowed up; for the Lord will plant a mightier vortex around death. We rejoice, now, that his sting, which is sin, has been taken on the cross; but then the enemy himself will be gone. All this, objectively for the heart, by faith to dwell upon is blessed; but it will be all literally enjoyed in the most exquisite scenes of the more than Paradise restored, which the land of Israel will yet be. Truly the Lord "will comfort all her waste places, and He will (thus) make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord."

As to how long these "days of heaven on earth" will last, we read of *a thousand years*. What a harvest of grace and glory will then be reaped by Him who endured the cross, despising the shame; and in the very scene where now He will see His seed, and prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. Think of the innumerable company of His redeemed, when, through a thousand years of the earth's glory, there will, for the righteous, be no more death, and when all nations will call the Redeemer blessed, during which glorious time the six thousand years of its present sin and ruin would appear as nothing.

How delightful will it be then to look back on the days of Deut. xxviii., when Israel was promised by God to be "SET ON HIGH ABOVE ALL THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH," and to see, after the lapse of ages, by grace their city and land, "a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord," lifted, it would seem, to an eminence physically, to bask in the new light of the heavenly city. From that eminence she

gives forth blessing to all nations. "Gentiles come to her light, and kings to the brightness of her rising." The isles, as if in attendance, wait upon her. "The ships of Tarshish first, to bring her sons from far, their silver and their gold with them." Men shall call her "The city of the Lord, The Zion of the Holy One of Israel." No marvel, when all the nations of the world are thus to be blessed through Israel, that more than one half of the Bible is taken up with its long, interesting, and eventful history! It is significant as marking the difference between the earthly and the heavenly in the day of this glory; that in the heavenly there is no temple, and no thought of evil, and no infliction of forfeits, as with those who come not up to worship. On the earth there is the temple, and the worship is according to the ordinances of former dispensations (Eze. xlv. xlv.), ordinances known in the wilderness days of Moses and Joshua; and in the land as in the days of David and Solomon, of Josiah and Hezekiah.

But these ordinances will be retrospective. As in the Lord's supper, now, we look back upon the cross, remembering the Lord not so much as He *is*, but as He *was*, so those millions of worshippers in the feast of tabernacles will look back with wonder at how their fathers dwelt in booths or tabernacles in the desert. In the burnt-offerings they will see the type with marvel, how it sets forth the perfectness and acceptance of Him who is Lord in their midst, and whom they will see—the King in His beauty.

In the sin-offering and offerings for sins, they will see how sin was condemned on the tree, and how all their sins and iniquities were put away by the sacrifice

of Himself. These great truths will be explained, and told in true, vast, intelligent ritual before all nations, who will call the Redeemer blessed.

And all this will be as on an earthly pedestal to show forth to the whole world God's truth and grace. At the time of the earthquake the land, we are told, shall be "LIFTED UP," and shall (being lifted up) "ABIDE IN HER PLACE" (see margin) "from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses. And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be" (LIE, as the word is, amidst all her glorious suburbs and environs,) "SAFELY INHABITED." Zech. xiv. 10. This being *lifted up* "*in her place*" would seem to be a material elevation. The spiritual blessings are clearly told. The people shall all be righteous. "Trees of righteousness" they shall be called. They will be holiness to the Lord—a crown of glory, spiritually and physically to die no more. Death to them will be swallowed up in victory. The sinner only will die. As to the city itself, its name indicates its character, which is *Jehovah-shammah*, "*The Lord is there.*"

The connection between the heavenly and earthly in the day of the earth's millennium has already been noticed as prefigured by Jacob's ladder and the associated happiness of the earthly with the heavenly, on the holy mount.

The Lord will reign on Mount Zion, but His throne will be in the heavens. It is not improbable that mount Zion, in its new elevation, may reach to, or even penetrate into, the glory of the heavenly; so, like

Jacob's ladder, there may not only be a connection, but a positive contact, the one with the other. Ezekiel, prophesying of these days, speaks of "A VERY HIGH MOUNTAIN;" and Isaiah says that in the last days, "THE MOUNTAIN OF THE HOUSE OF THE LORD SHALL BE ESTABLISHED IN THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAINS, AND IT SHALL BE EXALTED ABOVE THE HILLS." That no such elevations exist now is plain; but how easily they may be produced Zechariah xiv. shows, as it is said, "THE LAND SHALL BE LIFTED UP, AND INHABITED IN HER PLACE."

Of the social intercourse which will exist during the millennium between these glorious scenes of the heavenly and the earthly we have already remarked. Blessed, however, as this state will then be—and it will be blessed—its duration will not be eternal. Other scenes will follow, and another age will come; the eternal one will at length succeed when all other ages and dispensations shall for ever have passed away. But Calvary and Golgotha will bear their greatest fruit on the earth in these days, when the New Jerusalem shall come down out of heaven from God, and shall reign over the earth, and all nations shall call the Redeemer blessed. Truly wonderful it all is. Well may we ask, What is man, that thus God's mind should centre in Him who is the Son of man, and in us as associated with Him? We have seen as to the order of things in the coming glory. 1. The first resurrection. 2. The marriage of the Lamb in Heaven. 3. The descent of the city, the heavenly Jerusalem over the earth. 4. The reign of Christ with His saints. 5. The millennium—Jerusalem having been rebuilt, and Israel restored. The earth, too, made glorious

and fruitful, its seasons doubtless altered owing to the great physical changes described in Zec. xiv., and to its nearness to the heavenly city which will be over it, giving it light beyond that of the sun, in which all who share in the first resurrection will live and reign with Christ a thousand years. Truly wonderful, I repeat, it all is.

But here, ere we close, let me add that after the millennium, without affecting the happiness of the redeemed, there will yet be on the earth during its post-millennial state the last manifestation of evil.

"Those who would share eternal blessings, even in the millennium," remarks Mr. Soltau, "must be born again." The solemn words of Jesus to Nicodemus, "Ye must be born again," will be true then as now. Nothing can benefit a man but birth from above. Though men during the millennium may live under a risen Christ, in the midst of all the blessedness of a partly-renewed earth, with the devil gone shut up in the bottomless pit for a thousand years, yet if not born again, they will still be corrupt, evil, and unchanged. Through all the dispensations of God there has been a climax, and then declension. So in the thousand years, people will be born under the blessing: children will be born in the habit of looking upon the living Christ, of seeing risen saints. They will get accustomed to it, and they will not believe and be saved. Look at the hardening effect at the present time of being accustomed to the gospel without receiving the gospel. This is an important lesson for our souls. Were we to find an unregenerate man in heaven, he would not be the better for being there. How false the thought that some people have

when they say, "I wish I could live my life over again. If so, you would live it worse. The experience you have got up to this time would make your life worse if you were not "born again."

At the end of the thousand years Satan, let loose from his prison, will lead to a last rebellion against the Jerusalem on earth. But this will eventuate in his final overthrow, and the final overthrow of all those in league with him. He who is in the heavens will take note of his designs, will meet him in judgment, give him his last defeat, and consign him to his final doom. He will be cast *alive* into a lake of fire, where the beast and false prophet were cast a thousand years before. And then comes the closing history of this present earth. It is swept away before the presence of the Lamb. "No place is found for it;" and instead of the heavens and the earth, one vast white throne, one vast white object of purity, of righteousness, fills the site of earth and heaven. It is the one object of the gaze of every human individual that has ever lived. The assembled multitudes of earth who have lived in their sins are raised. What an assembly! Antediluvians, that vast company of men, buried in the flood, raised; men of note, conquerors, nobles, raised; men that have been worshipped by men, whose writings have been handed down as wonderful, raised; small and great, young and old, raised to stand before that great white Throne.

The great white Throne will have upon it the Lamb that had been slain; multitudes will be gathered before it; all who have lived ever since creation *there!* What a company! How varied! How different one from the other! No two alike; but yet, alas! too much

alike ; sinners in their sins, unsaved ; each having his own sad, sad tale of rebellion against God ; each having his sad memories of salvation disregarded, of mercy despised ; each having the gnawing worm in his bosom, which is never to die. They are judged out of the books ; and if their name is not found written in the book of life, the sinner is cast into a "lake of fire ;" also death and hell are cast into a lake of fire, which is the second death. Then a new heavens and a new earth ; then the holy city—New Jerusalem—comes down, *re-descends* from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband ; then a voice is heard saying, "The Tabernacle of God is with men." This, you will observe, is all in *God's eternity*, when the long ages of the whole of man's time will have for ever ceased. The city will remain a scene of glory through the eternal years of the new heavens and the new earth, and will be the glorious and eternal home assigned to us by infinite grace and love, to be enjoyed with Himself in His own heavens. What a home ! What a duration !

And now Rev. xxi. 1-5 is all that is said of what is final and eternal—a few words—few compared with those which described the first heavens and the first earth, and few compared with those which describe the millennial earth, or the golden city over it.

But *what* words ! "THE TABERNACLE OF GOD IS WITH MEN ; GOD WILL DWELL AMONG THEM." Mark, the city will not be simply over the earth as during the millennium, but on the earth during its perfected and eternal state. Dispensations as now, will be overpast. Those on the earth are no longer spoken of as Jews or Gentiles as during former ages, but as

"men"—in keeping with the first notice in the garden that God made *man* in His own likeness, so now God will be all in all, dwelling in the midst of *men*. Thus we have a hope beyond the resurrection, *after* we have been raised with Christ. That hope, the new heavens and the new earth; no remainder of the former heavens and the former earth; all new. And God all in all, His tabernacle will be with men. Doubtless this same city—"heavenly Jerusalem"—is that in which God will specially and eternally dwell with men.

"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" (how precious! how comprehensive!): "FOR THE FORMER THINGS" (all these ages of evils and changes, and the succeeding ages of earth's glory) "ARE PASSED AWAY."

Truly blessed it all is! But how distant it seems! Paradise is near; only to die, and we enter it. And resurrection too is near; only Paradise, or the Lord's return, between us and it. The Father's house too will be reached when He comes to take us to Himself. But this city lies beyond it all—beyond Paradise, beyond resurrection, beyond the judgments to befall this earth, beyond the removal of the Church! It shines *over*, and is seen again *beyond* the thousand years of the earth's millennium. Its final and eternal scene is the new heavens and the new earth.

Still though it seems far to us, yet how precious is our hope respecting it! We shall be there; for our portion is to be "ever with the Lord." And in our

glorified bodies we shall be like Him ; we shall share with Him His millennial glory, and be one with Him in the eternal state amid the ages of ages, when all the streams of dispensational blessedness will have flowed back to their source, and God Himself will be all in all. May the thought of it influence our souls to live the life suited to so vast a hope !

REST OF THE SAINTS ABOVE.

- “ Rest of the saints above,
Jerusalem of God !
Who in thy palaces of love,
Thy golden streets have trod,
- “ To me thy joys to tell ;
Those courts secure from ill,
Where God Himself vouchsafes to dwell,
And every bosom fill ?
- “ Who shall to me that joy
Of saint-thronged courts declare ;
Tell of that constant sweet employ
My spirit longs to share ?
- “ That rest, secure from ill,
No cloud of grief e'er stains ;
Unfailing praise each heart doth fill,
And love eternal reigns.
- “ The Lamb is there, my soul ;
There God Himself doth rest,
In love divine, diffused through all,
With Him supremely blest.
- “ God and the Lamb—'tis well !
I know that source divine
Of joy and love, no tongue can tell,
Yet know that all is mine.

- “ And see, the Spirit’s power
Has op’ed the heavenly door ;
Has brought me to that favoured hour
When toil shall all be o’er.
- “ There on the hidden bread
Of Christ—once humbled here,
God’s treasured store—for ever fed,
His love my soul shall cheer.
- “ Called by that secret name
Of undisclosed delight,
(Blest answer to reproach and shame)
'Graved on the stone of white.
- “ There in effulgence bright,
Saviour and Guide, with *Thee*
I’ll walk ! and in Thy heavenly light
Whiter my robe shall be.
- “ There in unsullied ray,
Which His own hand hath drest,
My feet press on, where brightest day
Shines forth on all the rest.
- “ But who that glorious blaze
Of perfect light shall tell ?
Where all His brightness God displays,
And the Lamb’s glories dwell.
- “ There only to adore,
My soul her strength may find.
Its life, its joy, for evermore
By sight nor sense defined.
- “ God and the Lamb shall there
The light and temple be ;
And radiant hosts for ever share
The unveiled mystery.”

X.

The Rewards of the City :

OR

PRESENT RESPONSIBILITY.

“ The palace gates uplifted,
The Bride shall enter in,
With wealth of beauty gifted,
‘ All glorious ’ now within.

“ Among ten thousand fairest
No beauty is like Thine ;
And Thou for me preparest
A glory all divine.”

“ To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna,
and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name
written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”—
Rev. ii. 17.

WE may take salvation freely, ever so freely, without money and without price. So, as to payment, *we* must be nothing in it, simply because we had nothing to pay. Christ has paid it all. We are bought with a price, “not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ.” Salvation, therefore, is free and unconditional.

But it is not so with rewards, which depend on our conduct, and are therefore conditional. How many, alas! are reckoning upon being saved who are

living carelessly as to their rewards. I believe there are those who will have special rewards in our home in the heavens—

“Foremost ’mongst the sons of light,
’Midst the bright ones, doubly bright.”

The promises to the seven churches are made to those whose conduct has been such that they have “overcome,” and are therefore conditional.

It is at the judgment-seat of Christ we shall receive such promises. We shall not be there for judgment. Christ has taken the judgment due to our sins; so that we are no more to come into judgment. In a risen Christ we have passed from the death we deserved, but which He took, into the life we now have, because He died. Thus we shall never be put before a bar on trial *for salvation*; but we shall be manifested as to the deeds done in the body. Hence we must all be manifested, as the word is, before the tribunal of Christ—a first thing, it would seem, after our being taken up to meet the Lord in the air, and before we are presented in the Father’s house. But before that tribunal has been set up, we shall have been raised from the grave; or if alive at the coming of Christ, we shall have been changed; we shall therefore appear in our glorified bodies, in company with the Lord Himself. In such bodies it could not be a question, Am I *saved*? The love that God hath toward us, which in Christ redeemed us, and which has made us like Him, and given us to be for ever with Him, *such* love will cast out fear; nay, we shall have *boldness* in the day of judgment, “because as He is, so are we in this world.” Ought I, then, to be afraid of this tribunal? No. Christ, who

is made unto us righteousness, will be our "righteous Judge," as Paul tells us. I like that word "*righteous Judge*." Many would have said *merciful*; but no, it will be as a righteous Judge that He will give the crown of righteousness, having through His own death settled all claims, so that we are the righteousness of God in Him. *God* was our Judge at the cross, and He exacted the penalty due to Him by us from Christ, who paid the uttermost farthing. We have for ever, since the cross, done with the judgment on our sins as before God, and that because Christ has done with it. *He* will die no more; and because He lives, we shall live also. How vast, and yet how simple is this! Oh to have our hearts more in keeping with so great a salvation—obedient, peaceful, grateful!

But although we are not to be judged as sinners, our works are to be made manifest. We shall indeed know what we have done, as the Lord gave Peter to know what in denying Him he alas! had done. His settling his denial of Him, before sending him out for service, may give us an idea of how He may deal with us ere we go with Him into the glory. This surely is sufficiently solemn, and should lead us to maintain a purged conscience, to walk a guarded walk, and uphold a faithful service—doing all for Christ, and not for self. 1 Cor. iv. 1-6 shows that we have to give an account; that the Lord will "examine," as the word is, the secrets of all hearts. We shall be examined for our stewardship; we shall be examined for our conduct. We know not the manner of it, but the result will be, that all that is of ourselves will be burned up, and all that is according to God will receive its reward. Sweet will it be to have done with the more than worthless

ways and memories of the past, the evils of the flesh, the sins we have so deeply deplored, and to have His approval for the things of His own creation in us by His Spirit who dwells within us! But surely such a tribunal should have a present power over us. The very *thought* of it should give life to our conscience, and keep us from many a by-path and sinful way, as those already made manifest to God, and who are to be manifested before the tribunal of Christ. With our eye constantly on Him who died for us, and prospectively on the tribunal to which He will bring us, how ought our prayer to be according to Phil. ii. 15, 16, and 1 Thess. v. 23.

I want, now, to show that there will be those who through grace have overcome, whose rewards will have connection with the Holy city, the New Jerusalem, of which we have been speaking.

In *the sevenfold overcoming of evil* (spoken of in Rev. ii., iii.), with the rewards assigned to those who overcome, we see the value of our conduct, as insuring special blessedness to be enjoyed in that city. I love to think of our heaven thus. Those who overcome in Ephesus as to first love, will eat of the tree of life. But where is the tree of life? It is in the midst of the street of it, and on either side, is there the tree of life, bearing twelve manner of fruits, and yielding her fruit every month: and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. The same also with Philadelphia. Those who overcome, will have written on them "the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of Heaven from My God." Such blessedness, whatever it may be, will be for those who overcome,

and will be associated with the heavenly city. Well may we fear, lest any of us should seem to come short.

Let us take a glance at these churches: the evil of each was different. Morally, we ourselves may be in all the evils which are enumerated, and our conflicts may be many, according to the evils. The evils may be those which in their order have marked the whole Church during its now long continuance here, from the first even to the end: many believe that it is so.

At the first, as in the church at Ephesus, there was great love—"first love." Soon in the early Church there was the loss of that love; then followed persecution, death for the truth's sake; religious corruption; afterwards deeper corruption; then, in the middle ages, the revival of the truth of God; followed by failure, neither hot nor cold; then the solemn act of God spueing out of His mouth the outwardly professing church, no longer to be owned by Him in any corporate way; and lastly, after corporate failure, individual responsibility, "if *any man* hear My voice;" the Lord wants to sup with such. The evils named have been spread over more than 1800 years; but any one or more of them in principle may be in us, or may have been overcome. What the Ephesian saints lost was "first love."

The Ephesians had been a favoured, happy fellowship. Paul's letter shows this. What a letter! It is in that letter Paul so blessedly reveals the mystery of the Church, the gospel of the glory, and our being one with Christ. It has been remarked that the epistle to the Ephesians is distinguished from his other epistles in that there is no notice contained in it of the Lord's return.

Paul largely dwells upon this in Philippians and in Thessalonians, but not in Ephesians. And why? Because that line of truth would, as to the Lord and His Church, have implied distance, absence, and one separated from the other, whereas in that epistle he is occupied with the Head and the members being all *one*, all in the same blessed scene, all in the same heavenly standing and acceptance before God—so *one* are they (in Him). In the first chapter the Church is seen in Christ—Chosen *in Him*, Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. In chapter ii. we have the same thing; the Church is described as being *with Him*; yea, as already quickened together *with Him*, raised up together *with Him*, seated together in heavenly places *in Christ Jesus*.

All this is now ours—inside where Christ is. made nigh through the blood of Christ. Any thought therefore of the *Lord's coming for us* though not *contrary*, would not have been in the exact line of the Ephesian truth. That He *will come* is our blessed hope; but that we are now in spirit where He is, and as members of His body one with Him, and as He is, righteous and accepted before God, is also true.

This is what Paul had entrusted, as a deep mystery, to his own mind by God, and which he committed to the minds of his beloved Ephesian disciples. They were the chosen repository of this most blessed fruit of divine love—God's love to His Son, Christ's love to His Church; Christ and His Church forming one new man. Any thought of separation therefore would have seemed as not in keeping with the picture of this blessedness, which, as he says, goes beyond *all* know-

ledge. He had been brought to bow his knees that they might be able to comprehend the "breadth and length, the depth and height," of such love. What! was not such prayer for them answered? Doubtless, yes; but then afterwards, alas! they had let it slip. This wonderful love of Christ to His Church, that is, their sense of it in their own souls, some had lost. Others, favoured ones among them, had overcome in their dealings with the state of things which was inimical to its possession. They would indeed be blest. Ah, yes; who does not wish to have always kept it! We ourselves have known a little of it; but have we kept it? or, having lost it, have we regained it? or, looking to the Lord, could we say, Lord, *could* I be satisfied without it?

" No ; for Thy love so tender,
So changeless and so true ,
My life in sweet surrender
I gladly offer too "

Blessed word! "To him that overcometh will I give to *eat of the tree of life.*" Such will have immediate access to the tree itself; will take it for themselves. Nations, as we have seen, during the earth's millennial will have its leaves; others will have the fruit gathered, as it were, for them; but these are to pluck down the fruit for themselves. Are we to do this, to eat immediately from Christ—know Him, love Him with the greatest nearness of intimacy in the glory? Say, have we overcome in not losing "first love," or in gaining it again? Not our *own*, but *His*—His love of us, and for us.

And then the "faithful unto death," and the promise of a "*crown of life.*" Smyrna was in deep trouble,

tribulation, martyrdom; and those who counted not their lives dear to them for Christ were to have a crown of life. The Word speaks of many crowns. There is the crown of glory, which is for the pastoral care of Christ's sheep; and there is the crown of righteousness for all those who love His appearing, which surely is for all believers; loving His appearing being the normal feeling ascribed to them by God. Then there is this crown of life for the martyr, for those who are faithful unto death. Can all believers have this crown? *Can* we have it, not being martyrs as were those saints? Witnesses we may be, but not sufferers to death as they were. Alas! so compromised is the Church with the world, that the more some do as professed witnesses, the more are they not martyred but applauded. Nothing shows more, how changed a thing a Christian has become; a *Christian*, I say, not Christ, not Christianity, but those who profess to believe in Christ. Such are not like the first Christians, who could not fail to bring upon them the hatred, the scorn, and not the smile or applause and good opinion, of this world lying in the wicked one.

The condition of Pergamos was one of *religious corruption*, in overcoming which they were to receive "a white stone," and eat "hidden manna." In the stone was a new name written, which no man knoweth save he that receiveth it. Is there a white stone for us? hidden manna for us? Are we, knowing and feeling our responsibility as to holding the truth in these evil days, willing to suffer rather than not be faithful? What forfeits in the day of Christ's tribunal will many suffer! Is there nothing in the very thought of this secret owning, this disclosure of the Lord's special love

to those who are faithful, to lead us to long for such blessedness; yea, to look to ourselves?

Sardis had a name to live, but was dead. A few had not defiled their garments; they were to "walk in white"—beautiful promise!

Mark the words, "walk *with Me* in white." Oh, who can tell what such walk will be—its honour, its fellowship, and its raiment suited to the company. White is the image of purity, and of conquest, for white robes not infrequently adorned those who were conquerors in the past human world. But these are more than conquerors. Their robes will be white for ever. No more garments soiled by the enemy; no sin to defile! no moth to corrupt. Oh glorious issue! "walk *WITH ME* in white," and on those streets of gold! and whithersoever He goeth. What intimacy! what height of honour and reward! Moreover, their names are not to be blotted out of the Book of life; but the Lord will praise them before the Father, and before His angels. To those who have a name only, and are dead, He will come upon *them*, just as He will upon all the world, as a thief, suddenly, causing alarm and trembling. Let us think, How stand we as to this? A name to live! No persecution, else with many the name itself would soon be dispensed with; *i.e.* the *form* of godliness. Few indeed, compared with the many, would keep the name, if it entailed death. Say, are our lives such in these evil days that we may count on this special secret owning of the Lord, and also upon this public owning, nay, this praise, before His Father and before His angels,

In Philadelphia was a bright, loving remnant who had kept His word, and had not denied His name.

They (favoured ones!) are to be "pillars" known and established in the temple of God, to go no more out. They are to have written on them "the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God; and I will write upon him (each one) My new name," thus linking in the keeping of His word, in dark and cloudy days (which days indeed are now) with some bright and specially visible place, or service, in the bridal city—the city of Messiah's love. Have we not seen enough of this city to covet such a place as the Lord may delight to give, or such service there, as He may bestow? How will it be as to this special promise? Are we to be passive observers, as it were, of such blessedness in others, or actual possessors of it ourselves? Or, have we in prospect our own place as pillars, manifesting His glory therein?

In Laodicea all is dark—corruption is at its height. The professing church, neither cold nor hot, is fit only, as that which God abhors, to be spued out of His mouth—their testimony and deeds being not only contrary to God, but contrary one towards another. This surely is what has come upon us in these evil days. Were the Church taught only by the one Spirit its testimony would be uniformly one, and not, as it is now, contradictory. The opposites as to truth taught in these days cannot be equally right; nor the divisions into which the Church has fallen. All corporate union is gone. The Lord meanwhile is knocking at the door of each one of His own. Individual responsibility is that in which we are placed. "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: *if any man hear My voice* (not "the Spirit unto *the Churches*" but "*any man*")

“and open the door, I will come in *to him*, and will sup *with him*, and *he with Me*.” This is what He is now saying to believers; and this is how He would find us, even all the children of God, *when He comes*,—At supper with Him, our heads, like John’s, on His bosom, restful, in communion with Him, the toils of self past, and the fellowship at the table sweet. In this attitude we shall not be ashamed at His coming. He does, of course, seek sinners to the last; but that is not the meaning here. Let us think, Are we hearing this divine Suitor knocking at the door. Do we indeed know that love of Christ which passeth knowledge? Are we supping with Him, that Man of Bethany! in divine rest and joy, as Lazarus after his resurrection, notwithstanding the spite of those around him? It is He, if we have lost it, who seeks for restored communion. “*I stand at the door.*” Oh, what grace! And if we open to Him, if we overcome in giving Him the request of His heart, what a reward! They shall “sit with Me” (not at supper only, but) “*in My Throne.*”

Let us then ask, Have we maintained our communion with Him thus? or, losing it, through our unfaithfulness or sin, have we overcome in its being renewed again? Have we opened to Him? Has He come in to us? Does He abide (mansion) with us as promised in John xiv. 23?

See you not how all these promises link us in with the New Jerusalem? For His Throne will be set in the heavens—in the city of His glory; and the crown of life and the tree of life will be there. The going “no more out” will be there; the hidden manna, that feeding from His secret love, will be there; the white stone having the name of His private owning, telling

of individual love more precious than public owning, will be there; the walking with Him in white will be there—as we may say, speciality of meetness and of beauteousness; it will all be there.

Yet it will not be these delights themselves so much, as the grace which will bestow them, that will be so blessed to our souls. It will not be the gifts, but the joy, the surprise, created by the love and grace of the Giver, that will most astonish us. And on what principle will He proceed? He will give, I believe, not merely according to any one failure or act of ours, but according as His grace and love may have put a value upon our one continuous life-act. How else do we understand such words as these: "Whosoever shall be ashamed of Me, and of My words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed?" Elsewhere, "if we deny Him, He also will deny us." In that one act of his Peter *was* ashamed of Him, and *denied* Him. Will Christ deny him before His Father? None can think so. Judged by the one act, Peter would be wanting; judged by his life-act, which was one grand acknowledgment of the Lord, he will not. No! Peter will never meet denial before the Father. Grace, abounding now, will show itself to be boundless in that day, when the trial of Peter's faith will be found unto honour, and praise, and glory, at His appearing.

The same principle appears in Luke xxii. 28, 29, where the Lord said, "Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations. And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me." Wonderful! For *had* they continued with Him? Judged by sad, solitary acts, they forsook Him, practically denied Him. On the holy mount, not

being equal to the glory, they slept. In the garden, unable to bear suffering, they slept again. At the judgment-hall of Pilate, and at the cross, being unequal to death, they all forsook Him, and fled. Tried by separate acts, they would fail of having the kingdom, and would not eat and drink at His table, or sit on the throne, judging the twelve tribes; but tried by their life-long love to Him, their continuous faithful service, they were indeed with Him—they lived for Him, they died for Him. All this bears upon our present theme. To him that overcometh will He give to eat of the tree of life. As to "first love," we shall be judged by the life-long way in which, though we who have had it may have let it slip, we yet have regained it, and our uniform desire to have it stronger and more intensified in our souls.

How happy will it be, thus, in the eternal home of our joy and rest, where His work for and in us will leave us for ever as the result, shining in His own likeness, partakers of His glory, yea, like Him and with Him for ever. What a hope, heir of glory, for you! for me!

No thought of rewards can possibly go beyond this. "Not on the crown He giveth, but on His pierced hand." It is the Lord *Himself*—

" The Lamb is all the glory
In Immanuel's land."

Yet are the rewards to be thought of; they are associated with our present responsibility: many of the elements in our cup of glory will be according to what we now are—our obedience, our work, and our association with others.

Paul owns to this when he speaks of *his* joy, and *his* crown of rejoicing in the day of Christ Jesus. Daniel too, where he says: "They that be *wise*" (are *teachers*, see margin) "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and *they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.*" In 1 Cor. xv. one star differeth from another star in glory; accordingly our position may be varied as the rewards may vary. Some will be rulers during the millennial earth over two, or five, or ten cities. Saints will be, as angels are now, ministers to those who shall be heirs of salvation. "For unto the angels hath He not put in subjection the world" (or age) "to come." Our worship too will be not only according to what He is in Himself, but to what He has been to us down here.

Sweetly varied to His ear and to His heart will be our songs. There will be wondrous variety, and glorious unity, but no monotony. Think of only a few voices, how grateful to the ear! But the heavenly orchestra, who can tell what *it* will be? Like the voice of many waters, and harpers harping with their harps. In the day of the Holy Jerusalem what different notes and varieties of praise there will be. The music will be going on and on amid the whole heavens. The angels will have their ascriptions of praise; then those whose voice is as the voice of harpers, will have a song which no man could learn but the hundred and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth. We read, beside these, of the "harps of God," divine instruments in the hands of redeemed sinners, even those who sing "the song of Moses, the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb." Moreover, the "just men made perfect," and those who in after

times had fallen asleep in Jesus, all now in resurrection—the bride of the Lamb, the Church which is His body—these all will have ascriptions of praise distinctively their own. Still above and beyond all will be *the* ONE who hath said, “In the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto Thee.” The Lord Himself will lead the song of the redeemed, the notes of which will tell of Bethlehem and of Calvary; of earth and of heaven; of the sufferings and of the glory. What a chorus the mighty whole! What a song to the name of Jesus! Each one having a heaven as it were in heaven, according to the place given to each in the eternal grace and purpose of God, in which the redeemed will see themselves as He saw them from all eternity. How wonderful it all is—passing knowledge! And the rewards will surely be manifest and enjoyed as the songs are sung; each note sung will correspond to the eternal favours which through grace have been conferred. But it will be ours to praise Him as no angel ever could, the Church being one with Himself, the Church which is His body, “the fullness of Him that filleth all in all.”

Yet “wonderful as all this is, we have seen the most wonderful thing already. Christ lifted up upon the cross exceeds all God’s other marvels. That crucified Christ upon the tree, and that risen Christ upon the Throne, are the eternal wonders that shall occupy our hearts and thoughts for ever.” This is indeed a meet consideration with which to draw to a conclusion. “If you read the book of God, and startle at a miracle, and say, ‘How can this be?’ turn your eyes to the cross of Christ, and say, ‘*There* is something which exceeds every other action of God, and outstrips all His other

ways in wonder and miracle; everything else is comparatively small.' Yes; even the great white Throne with millions and millions of men around it, will be small compared with the lifting up of Christ on the cross.

"We live in a wonderful age, because God will never exceed what He has already done. We have seen the greatest exhibition of the love of God. He placed His Son upon that cross. But here is our responsibility, our difficulty, even to learn the love of God. We are slow to receive it; we are slow to believe it. If you can see a height or depth of evil that that love cannot reach; if you can find something in your heart, a wickedness that that love cannot pardon, God has got no other Christ, no other sacrifice.

"But no. This gift of Christ has manifested to the full, has, if we may so say, exhausted the love of God. The rolling ages of glory are only an expression of that grace which comes from the cross. Let that love of God sweep over all that you are as a sinner, all that you have done as a sinner, and raise you up in blessedness with Christ in glory. Believe in Christ. Trust the love of God in the gift of His Son. Heaven will be wonderful. The great white throne will be wonderful: we may read and marvel. But turn back and marvel at one single cross, lifted up outside a poor degraded city. One Man lifted there, naked, stripped, scoffed at, buffeted, with stripes upon His back, a crown of thorns upon His brow, nailed hand and foot to the tree. *There* is the miracle of God's love."

Thus of all the wonderful things to occupy us, nothing can be more wonderful than what has already

occurred. And it will be in our heavenly city that we shall see the Lamb that was slain. It will be in the same city in its eternal state, that the God whose love gave Him to die for us will be *all* and *in all*.

TELL ME WHAT MY HEAVEN WILL BE.

The Church which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."
Eph. i. 22, 23.

Tell me what my heaven will be
'Mid the eternal ecstasy ;
Tell me from the Word, and show,
For my spirit longs to know.

God hath many ways of joy
For his own divine employ ;
One with Jesus now in heaven,
Highest place to thee is given.

Not as spirits of the just,
Those long sleeping in the dust,
Their bright numbers thou shalt see ;
Thine a different history.

Not as those of Zion's hill,
Soon the earth with light to fill—
City of the living God
Freed from the usurper's rod.

Not as e'en the angels are ;
Sons of morning, bright and fair ;
They their services fulfil ;
Thine a higher glory still.

Not as having place on earth ;
Thine a hope of heavenly birth ;
Not as Israel's glorious day,
When this age hath passed away.

List, oh list ! the unerring Word—
Blessèd answer doth afford ;
Highest place is thine, as one
With the everlasting Son.

As the Body with the Head,
One with Him who once was dead,
So each member there will be
Same in matchless joy as He ;

Same in glory 'mid the air,
Same in incorruption there ;
Same in reigning o'er the earth
At creation's second birth ;

Same in New Jerusalem,
Shining o'er the abodes of men ;
One with Him whose light is there ;
Thou wilt all its glories share.

Holy city of the skies !
Where Jehovah's treasure lies ;
Vessel of His plighted love,
Bride of His own heart above—

Sweetest wonders will be there,
Treasures infinitely fair ;
Dearest light from God will shine ;
But the glories all are thine.

New Jerusalem will be
The Messiah's ecstasy ;
But the sweetness of her love
Thou wilt know with Him above.

All His pleasures are thine own ;
One with Him upon His Throne ;
None can know such place beside,
'Mid millennial summer-tide.

Heir with Christ thou art above,
Fruit of His eternal love ;
“ Heir of God ” thou art and “ son,”
Though a sinner once undone.

The Church is as the Lord to be
Through one long eternity ;
Hence the greatness of its right,
Called to share the Infinite.

This is wondrous mystery,
Kings and prophets ne’er could see,
Hid through all the ages past ;
God’s best wine reserved for last.

Soul, enough ! ’tis all of grace,
None but God could give such place ;
All things thine through Him who died
Thy Lord, thy Life—the Crucified !

XI.

Practical Conclusion.

High time, now, to awake !
With hope of bliss so dear ;
High time, with Earth's dark night so spent,
And Heaven's bright morn so near !

“ And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep : for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.”—*Rom.* xiii. 11.

WHAT we want, in conclusion, is, that the truths we have considered should have power over our lives.

Many, alas ! have the truth in their minds, who possess no corresponding inward holiness, and exhibit no adequate outward graces.

How glorious is Christianity in the world ! yet how wretchedly is it manifested in those who profess it !

Is there any truth concerning doctrine, standing, dispensations, or phophecy, which many do not know ? But the fruit natural to such knowledge, where is it adequately seen ? I say natural to it, for surely, if we want more faith, it is in learning more of Christ that believing will spring up. And if we want more holiness—separation unto God—is it not by allowing the attraction of heavenly things to wean us from earth, bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Alas! it is in the midst of abounding knowledge that so many are asleep. "Christians," writes John Berridge, "do not go to sleep in fire, or water, but grow drowsy in the sunshine."

Were we rightly affected, the air we have been breathing, the society we have seen in the heavenly country, and the sweet scenes we have beheld in the revealed future of this earth, would invigorate our hope, and add a divine value to our lives.

But many—and oh for the tongue of an angel in these last days to proclaim it!—many seem to know the Word only in its letter, and are joined to the Lord only by profession. Their service accordingly is not the service of the life. Yet truly, unless we serve God with our *lives*, service is a mockery. It was *Himself* that Christ gave for us; not something He had, or something He could get, but Himself. And it is nothing short of ourselves we must give to Christ.

It is a solemn thing to be joined, in profession even, to the people of God. God dwells among His people; and, as another has said, "He cannot endure evil where He dwells, less than where He does not dwell." It was in the midst of His people, and not outside in the world, that Ananias "wished to have credit for devotedness;" but God could not endure what His Spirit had not created, and the result was, the awful manifestation of His power against it.

I would not lower the importance of knowing the letter of the truth. If we would learn the truth subjectively (experimentally), the letter of it must be seen and understood *in the written Word of God*. The truth in the word to the Thessalonians was, that *the Son was coming from Heaven*; the truth in their lives was,

that *they were waiting for Him*. They turned to God from idols, and became servants of the living God.

Thus when we read of all the magnificent displays of glories, earthly and heavenly, which we have been considering, they ought to subject us to themselves. They are not glories for the head or the imagination only, but for the heart and life.

Knowledge learnt when out of communion only injures. It is love which profiteth. But then some again, sincerely enough, are ever on the question, "*Do I love?*" and are all their lives examining the foundations of faith, and accordingly have little heart for the enjoyment of the faith itself.

What is the cure for this? There is only one cure—that of keeping the eye on the Lord Jesus on the cross, and on the Lord Jesus in the glory. These are the means. But there must be an honest effort in the use of them, and trust in God for success. If Christ, through the Spirit which dwells within us, does not yield the needed enjoyment of God, or form us for holiness and righteousness and true service, nothing else will; no earnest urging, no mere reasoning, will do it. The Lord must do it. He only, who saved Israel, could bring them into the land. There were indeed means, sometimes awful means. Still He loved the people; He engaged their minds with His pity which He had toward them, showed them His love, dealt with them in grace, and revealed to them His holiness and His patience. For if they had believed Him, and not lusted after Egypt, they would have been in the land forty years before. Solemn, truly, were His governmental dealings, yet grace was uppermost, reigning through righteousness. We read: "He led him

about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye. As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: *so the Lord alone did lead him, and there was*" (as the result) "no strange god with him."

What tongue can tell the value of knowing the truth of God—of knowing God as seen in Christ? Such knowledge is quite outside the unassisted reason of man. Man may study science, and yet never, by searching, find out God. But the youngest child in the school of Christ can find Him out. What marvels he at once sees in the Word! God in the past, God in the present, God in the future; man in the past, man as he is, and man as he will be for ever; creation as it was, creation as it is, and creation as it will be—all these will he see in the Word. Not one line independent of the Word is needed to teach who God is, or how creation or man came, or how and when death came, or how man has been redeemed.

Our greatest scientists, if ignorant of God, what are they, compared with such? None who know what it is but must value true science; but the veriest absurdities are being taught in its name. A singular discovery just made is, that the "first breath of life on this earth might have been caused by a stray meteoric stone!" Such is the so-called "advanced thought" of this nineteenth century. Formerly it would be called "*infidelity*."

Oh, Christian, how happy is it that not one word do you need from man in order to prepare for the school of God! A peasant, a child, may read at once and know. The Bible does not begin, as does human

science, with a world of "definitions," needful to be known ere the science itself can be known. The Word presents itself with, "What think ye?"—the question which the Lord asked as He revealed His love for the one sheep that went astray, the one world, as we may say, that was lost. Grand sight the Word presents to us of God, who is Love, and in that one God-man wearing our nature now in heaven! What a hope it gives to our being united to Him for ever! And that word "forever," who can speak of it as the Christian?

"I have been writing," said a late historian, "with the year 2,000 and even 3,000 in my mind. This was in reference," he adds, "to temporary fashion in thought and style."* This, to man, looks long as to time; but the simple believer sees Christ before and beyond all earthly chronology. He can look into eternities past, and eternities to come of glory with Him. The year 3,000 may seem far off; but when it comes it may have something more to occupy itself with than "the temporary fashion of thought." Christ may have come. The judgment-day may have come. Heaven or hell, to how many, will have come!

Men tell us of Bible disclosures—that they do not understand them. Were it not so the Bible would not be true. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: *neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.*" Hence "the preaching of the cross is foolishness to them that perish;" and hence again God asks, "Where is the wise?—for after that in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew

* Lord Macaulay.

not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe." How singular the admission, in keeping with this, is the following from one who in these days stands eminent in science: "We do not say there is no God; what we say is, that science cannot find Him." Though unintentionally, how in accord with what the Word says, "Canst thou by searching find out God." It is all above nature. The discovery God makes of Himself to the soul is through His truth, which alone is able to make wise unto salvation.

The fact is, in order to know there must be a nature capable of knowing, and that nature must be *by creation, or by birth*—"created anew in Christ Jesus." "*Ye must be born again.*" "*That which is born of the Spirit is spirit,*" is of the nature of Him who begets us. "*Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God.*" Hence the moment I, by the Holy Ghost, can see and understand and enjoy God in His ways, as seen in His Word, revealed through Christ who died for me, I am born again.

But when man does come to understand God in the Word, what does he say? We know what was said by a competent witness—a man above his fellows in intellect and education, but who became as a little child in the school of Christ*—"That one line of Scripture, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,' is worth more to me than all that I have ever read or known in the writings of men." "Speak to me one word of Scripture without note or comment," said another well-known witness† when

* Sir James Mackintosh.

† Dr. Chalmers.

nearing the close of his life. It showed the value felt in the dying hour of the only infallible resort. Yes; ineffably precious in life or death is the sure foundation for peace and happiness, here and hereafter, as seen in the written Word of God. In comparison of this word, what uncertainties are there in the findings of a merely human wisdom. That wisdom tells of what certain phenomena will be ages hence; but should the Being who made the world come to it again, as He will, to burn it up for its unbelief, what of all the so-called "formations and effects" that are declared will exist millions of billions of ages to come.

The coming of the Son of God will make short work of the calculations made in the name of such wisdom. Let us value the sure word of God. Let us live in the power of the salvation and redemption it reveals; yea, let us live as those who are alive unto God, and as if already beholding our heavenly destiny, and fitted for fellowship with all those holy and blessed beings who will be our associates in the eternal country of which we have been speaking.

And let us seek to bring there those who know it not. Even Christians do not value this day of salvation for others, because they do not deeply feel the doom there is for rejecting it. That there is such a day now is a glorious fact; but that there is a night of terror to befall the world for rejecting it, no careful reader of the Word can deny.

Beyond all precedent will be the world's wickedness, approaching its doom. Its light and its salt will have gone. The seeds of long and sinful ages will have come to their full vintage—ripe for destruction. Heaven will open from above, and "the great Dragon

called the Devil and Satan," with his angels, will be cast down upon the earth; the abysses of hell will be opened from beneath, and countless numbers of the lost will issue forth to turn the hell of man into the hell of demons. The sun and the air will be darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit whence they come.

Such, alas! will be this age when near its doom. Let any one read Rev. ix., xii., xiii., and see to what a pass human iniquity will have brought it, to be visited, mediately or immediately, with God's impending judgments. And as to the doom itself when it falls, how sudden! how unexpected! See 2 Thess. i. 8.

This is the deeply-practical side of our subject, but how little felt by many who believe in the coming of the Lord. They have but little love for souls, and join in no direct attack along the lines of the enemy, who leads men at his will on the downward way to destruction—men concerning whom the Lord hath said He is not willing that any should perish. I want to press these practical bearings of truth home upon our souls. Alas! much that goes by the name of Christianity is utterly hollow, and cannot be distinguished from the world. Hence how true the words of another: "When I look for the Church I cannot find it, for it is in the world, and when I look for the world I cannot find it, for it is in the Church." This likeness alas! is true. The handwriting has long since been on the wall for the Church's warning, "Thou art weighed in the balances, and art found wanting."

Prophecy tells us the time we are now in. It shows us where, in the purpose and love of God, we are

now placed—in an accepted time, soon to end. It shows us moreover what our feelings ought to be towards those who are not saved.

But prophecy is not all pleasure; it involves solemn responsibility. Take for example our own judicial relation with the Lord Jesus Christ in His judgments. Saved or lost will be the lot of every human being; and if we do not see those we know and love saved, we must join in the sentence of their destruction from the presence of the Lord. “Do ye not know,” says the apostle, “that the saints shall judge the world? Know ye not that we shall judge angels?” This is sufficiently solemn, and will lead no one to hold in unrighteousness the truth of the Lord’s coming.

Some speak of the destruction of Babylon as if they were glad; but the god of this world, who blinds Babylon for her dreadful doom, is the one who in the days of our own unregeneracy held us also in his grasp: only grace hath made us to differ. Besides, though we may not be in Babylon, yet something of Babylon may be in us. We do not here say what Babylon represents; but that some of God’s children are *in* her is evident from the fact that God is saying, “Come out of her, My people.” It may simplify our views, and show what our feelings ought to be, if we consider how the coming of Christ to the world is invariably associated with judgment, and so should move us to fear, as it did with Noah; but that His coming to the air for His saints is associated with blessing and salvation, and so should move us to hope, as it did the apostles and first Christians. Take as examples of the first Rev. i. 7; Mal. iii. 2; 2 Thess. i. 7. 8; Matt. xxiv. 30; Jude 14, 15—all

judicial. Take for example of the second John xiv. 1, 3; Acts i. 11.; Phil. iii. 20, 21; 1 Thess. iv.; 1 John iii. 1-3; Rev. xxii. 12—all associated with blessing; no judgments, no sorrow.

Singular the little importance which many attach to the coming of Christ. Not so the Word. Only a chapter or two tells of the creation of the world, whilst, besides general notices all through the Bible, nearly the whole book of Revelation is taken up with its sad and awful judgment.

It surely solemnises our minds to think that thus Christ's coming to the earth is associated with judgment, and that we are to be assessors, judges with Him in that judgment; that we must judge those not saved, were it our own nearest and dearest. Not practical, *such* a doctrine! Ah! what would make us solemn and earnest, if not this, that we may have to pass judgment on our own?

Prophecy is history *pre-written*. Who that wants to see the future of the world or of man, let him read prophecy. But with what effect! Not practical! Leads to carelessness of living! Has an Antinomian tendency! No, no! I give it, in my own soul, a deeply-felt *No!* What saith the Word of God? "Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure." If the effort at purity does not follow, the hope is not in him. And "seeing ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

And now what more shall I say, but that it is a great thing to be a Christian? He is no longer merely a natural man, a child of Adam, as he once was, but a child of the living God, possessed of a divine nature,

inhabited by the Holy Ghost; in fact, a *supernatural* being; one who by grace has been taken up out of sin, out of the doom due to sin, and out of this present evil age, that he may be no longer of it, or in it, but a witness for God to it, and the means of lifting others out of it.

Such is God's purpose for the Christian. Alas, how few think of themselves thus! Few are a representation of Christ in the world, or live as those who are looking for such things. And here, with a valedictory word, I close, praying that the Lord may make these meditations a blessing to some; that those who read may live in the power of the truths we have considered, and in the brightness of that future we have sought to pourtray. It would surely light up many a weary hour of toil and suffering to think how this earth and these heavens are to be rescued from sin and death, and made bright and glorious, as we have seen, the abode of Him who hath redeemed us to Himself, that we may sit with Him on His Throne and enjoy visions of His glory; yea, that we may be with Him and like Him for ever.

What the "Shining Ones" said to "Christian," on his entering the city, is what the Truth in our meditations has been saying to us; for the talk, Bunyan says, which they had with him was about the glory of the place, the beauty and glory of which were inexpressible. Thus we have been talking of the Mount Zion, the heavenly Jerusalem, the innumerable company of angels, the spirits of just men made perfect, and, above all, of the glorified ONE Himself. The effect on our souls should be joy unspeakable and full of glory; yea, a joy full of all those glories with which we are

to be glorified together with Him who hath said, "the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them."

And not joy only, but separation. For as the ties which united the Brides we have considered, to the new objects of their affections, separated them from those which held them before; and as Abraham's hope of the city dissolved all his former associations with the world lying in wickedness, so may the glories soon to break upon us, even now, eclipse the things present to us—that all else may become dim, leaving us, as the result, like unto the patriarchs, who confessed they were strangers on the earth, and who declared plainly that they sought a country; or like to those in early Christian times who "turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come." Their hope and ours will come at last. Yea, it will surely come. Though it tarry, it will come. Ah, then what a change from the present scene of sin and death; then truly the joy unspeakable and full of glory! For the glory itself will have come *at last!*

AT LAST!

"AT last!

The night is at an end:
The dawn comes softly up,
Clear as its own clear dew;
And weeping has gone out,
To let in only songs
And everlasting joy,
At last! Amen.

“ At last !

The Prince of Life has come :
The Church is glorified ;
The sleepers have awoke,
The living have been changed ;
Death has at last been slain,
And the grave spoiled for ever !
At last ! Amen.

“ At last !

The curse is swept away,
The serpent-trail effaced.
The desert smiles with green,
And blossoms like the rose :
'Tis more than Eden now—
Earth has become as heaven,
At last ! Amen.

“ At last !

Satan is bound in chains :
The Church's ancient foe,
Old enemy of Christ,
Has fallen, with all his hosts ;
And Babylon the Great
Has sunk to rise no more !
At last ! Amen.

“ At last !

Israel sits down in peace :
Jerusalem awakes ;
Her King at length has come.
Messiah reigns in power ;
The heavens rejoice and sing,
And earth once more is free !
At last ! Amen.”

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