

Monergism

THE ETERNAL
Day

H O R A T I U S B O N A R

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Day

HORATIUS BONAR

The Eternal Day

by Horatius Bonar

"Ye are all the children of THE DAY."—1 THESS. 5:5.

Will it ne'er be morning? Will the promised light

Ne'er break and clear these clouds of night?

Sweet Phosphor, bring the day,

Whose conquering ray

May chase the fogs; sweet Phosphor, bring the day!

Thy light will fray

These horrid mists; sweet Phosphor, bring the day!

How sad delay

Afflicts dull hopes; sweet Phosphor, bring the day!

Haste, haste away,

Heaven's loitering lamp; sweet Phosphor, bring the day!

Light will repay

The wrongs of night; sweet Phosphor, bring the day!

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PREFACE

MEN, when travelling homeward, turn their eye in the direction in which home lies, scanning the way as it winds before them, counting the coming miles, and trying to catch a glimpse of the family mansion itself, as it stands on some sunny slope, far in the distance. When they do reach it, they delight no less in looking back upon the

road by which they have reached the dwelling of their fathers, remembering all that befell them, whether of evil or of good, as they passed along.

So is it with us. Our route is homeward; and our eye turns to the New Jerusalem. It is our joy to think of the eternal day which we are there to spend with God and with the Lamb. Ere long, we shall be within its courts, or pacing o'er its streets, in holy company. And when standing on its bright walls, we shall look backward upon the path that brought us to the kingdom, brief as it was, but very wonderful; we shall recall each struggle, each weary step, each dark or lonely turn, each rugged ascent, each Valley of Baca with its wells or pools; we shall remind ourselves of Jehovah's dealings with us by the way, as he led us, sometimes in sorrow, sometimes in joy, with sure but mysterious guidance to the "joyous city;" or we shall tell our story to others, to some angel, perhaps, or some redeemed one that left earth in infancy, and knew no such rough passage to the "rest" as that which we have to speak of; and, pointing to the different windings of the earthly path, we shall say, There, and then, and thus, I first drew near to God, and tasted that he was gracious;—there, and then, and thus, I endured that conflict, I got entangled with that snare, I lost my way, I stumbled and fell, I was overshadowed with darkness,—yet out of all the Lord delivered me.

What gladness will there be in that backward look, that recollection of the wonders of mighty grace that make up our short but strange career! What matter for happy thoughts, and marvellous recitals, and endless love and praise, will thus be furnished throughout the everlasting ages!*

Time hurries us along. The night will soon be done, and the millennial morn be dawning. And soon, too, shall that millennial glory pass off, and the unchanging DAY which lies beyond it compass us about. It is cheering to anticipate the approach of millennial light; but it is yet more cheering to look beyond even that, and think of the unchanging DAY. It comforts us to think of the darkness of our

present night giving way before the rising of the Morning Star; but it comforts us yet more to think of the beauty of that Morning Star being lost in the glory of the Eternal Sun.

KELSO, Dec. 19, 1853.

CHAPTER I

THE AGES TO COME

IT is not very far into the coming ages that we can see; nor do I write as though we thought that we could. "We know in part;" that is, our knowledge is imperfect and broken; and hence "we prophesy in part," speaking with stammering lips, and writing with a faltering pen.

"We see through a glass darkly," or, more exactly, "we see dimly by means of a mirror;" as if God's book had been set up like a mirror to catch the vision of objects within the veil, and to reflect them down to earth. All the ancient promises, and types, and rites, were mirrors in which man was to see the things of God—the things of the ages to come—reflected to his eye. And that which comes to us only by reflection, like the image of a star upon the sea, cannot be so distinct and vivid as what is seen by looking directly at the object, or the person, face to face.

Besides, our powers of vision are feeble, even though our eyes are anointed with the heavenly eye-salve (Rev. 3:18); and then we do not forget that God has set bounds to their range. Yet these very limits are in themselves wonderful; that wall which hems in our vision is in itself so goodly to look upon that we feel no desire to pass beyond. For, unlike anything else here below, our horizon is not one of clouds

but of glory. It is not an obstruction that our eye meets with, but a resting-place.

Still it is true that the range of our vision has widened amazingly since "the eyes of our understanding were enlightened, that we might know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance, in the saints" (Eph. 1:18). Hence the Apostle Peter, warning the brethren of the exceeding peril of unfruitfulness in holy deeds, says, "He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off;" as if by such an expression he would teach us that a saint ought to be a far-sighted man; and that, if he is not, it must be because he is not living the holy, fruitful life which God expects him to do, and which becomes his character, as one "purged from his old sins," and "delivered from a present evil world."

The saints in other days were far-seeing men. The "secret of the Lord was with them," and he "shewed them his covenant" (Ps. 25:14). He "did not hide from them" that which he meant to do (Gen. 18:17). He "revealed his secret" to them (Am. 3:7).

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, looked into the ages to come, and saw the Lord coming with ten thousand of his saints. Abraham saw the day of Christ afar off, and was glad. Job, even in the land of the Gentile, kept his eye upon the distant glory, and speaking as a far-seeing man, comforted himself in his sorrow with—"I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth." So was it with the saints in later ages as well; with him who said, "Behold, he cometh with clouds, and every eye shall see him;" and with him who said, "We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Near-sightedness is, then, the result of unbelief; far-sightedness, of faith. When we maintain our walk of holiness, we see into the remotest reaches which the Word of God spreads out before us; when we walk inconsistently, or break our fellowship with God, or grow sluggish in the way, we become "blind, and cannot see afar off."

A holy man is not merely a man placed upon an eminence, whence the vast view spreads out on every side, onward to Canaan itself; but he is a man gifted with keen clear vision, who can make use of that lofty position for surveying fully the kingdom of which he has been made the heir.

Our prospect, then, is a wide one. It goes far into the regions of immortal life. On every side it stretches out immeasurably, passing beyond these hills and skies of earth, which are at best but the foreground of a picture, the filling up of which embraces the whole compass of the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. Beyond the range of present hope and fear, of present joy or sadness; beyond the calms, no less than the storms, of earth; beyond the breadth of seas or the height of clouds; beyond the pole-star, or the Pleiades, or the Southern "Cross;"—beyond all these our prospect ranges, nor ends till intercepted by the glory of the heavenly Jerusalem.

When the Church's Bridegroom said, "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense" (Song 4:6), he meant that his bride should take up his words and follow him to that fragrant region whither he has gone. He went to that mountain when he ascended on high, and when he comes again he bears about him tokens of the place where he has been, for "all his garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia" (Ps. 45:8). To that same eminence he summons his bride, for he makes her by faith "to sit with him in heavenly places" (Eph. 2:6). On this mountain we sit, far above the smoke and din of earth, inhaling the rich odour, and enjoying the vast prospect, until the morning break.

Most commanding is that height on which we are thus placed; and it is no common sweep of landscape that our eye embraces. Seated there, we lose sight of the things around us, and we can for a season almost forget that we are still in our sojourn below. The sorrows, the vexations, the annoyances of this present world diminish to our view,

and seem, at most, but as a narrow stripe of darkness, beyond which spreads onward to infinity the excellency of an everlasting splendour. The breadth of that vast outer zone of light makes the inner one of shade to appear as nothing.

And how real, how certain, is that prospect, and all that it contains! It is no deceitful mirage nor picture of fancy, appearing and dissolving, then again reappearing, and again passing off. It is steady and abiding. Sometimes it may be clearer than others—more visible, more palpable—but still, in its great features and excellencies, it is always the same. The time when it puts on its steadiest and most inviting aspect is just the day of grief. For as in some showery noon the distant hills look nearer, and take on a sharper outline, so in the day of the heart's bitterness and weary suffering, the eternal hills assume an aspect of far clearer and more vivid reality; nay, seem as if so nigh—so very nigh—that, could we but cross the slender stream that winds beneath us, we should at once proceed to take possession of the goodly heritage.

On this mountain of myrrh—this hill of frankincense—it was that the saints in other days seated themselves to watch for the flight of shadows, and the eternal day-break. Here David sat and mused as he looked down upon the sin and toil of earth—"As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness" (Ps. 17:15). Here sat Solomon, and as he saw the King in his beauty, thus uttered his desire, "Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices" (Song 8:14). Here sat Paul, and, anticipating the resurrection of the just, thus calmly comforted himself: "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body;" and thus comforting himself, he exulted over death and the grave: "O death! where is thy sting? O grave! where is thy victory?" (1 Cor. 15:42, 55). It was here that Peter sat, and, vexed in his righteous soul with the scoffing and ungodliness of evil days, he called to mind the ancient hope of a renewed and holy

earth (2 Pet. 3:13). It was here that John sat—"on a great and high mountain" (Rev. 21:10), beholding the glory of the heavenly city, and as he heard the well-known voice proclaim, "Surely I come quickly," with instant eagerness breathed out the response, "Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Rev. 22:20).

True, we know but in part; "we see through a glass (in a mirror) darkly." But still what we do see and know is very glorious. The prospect, whatever may be the imperfection that hangs over it, is neither tame nor visionary. The mirror which reflects it to our eye is divine, and therefore faithful. It presents the scene to us with a warmth and a truth, such as no earthly mirror could have done. With our eye on that mirror, we ought surely to live in a very different way from what we too often do. God expects much of us.

1. He expects us to be holy.—The objects we are gazing on are purifying in their tendencies. They transform the gazer into their own likeness. "What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" The ocean takes on the blue of the sky to which it looks up, and becomes itself as purely blue: so must we become assimilated to that holy heaven on which our affections are set.

2. He expects us to be steadfast and immovable.—Objects that shift and flit impart their instability to things around. Those that are stable give forth their tenacity and strength. We, looking on the great immovable landscape of this future, ought to find it transforming us into its own steadfastness,—gradually divesting us of caprice, and fickleness, and vanity, and infusing into us a vigorous consistency of character, along with calm solemnity of deportment, which would carry weight with it, and be of itself a witness to the reality of that heaven towards which we profess to be walking. Thus a feeble life becomes strong by gazing on that which is strong, and a poor life becomes great by gazing on what is great.

4. He expects us to be separate from the world.—The prospect on which our eye is fixed is not carnal nor earthly. It belongs, indeed, in some measure, to earth, for it takes in the "new earth" as well as the "new heavens." But still it has nothing in common with that world out of which we were delivered. It is of God; and he that gazes on it is, in the very act of gazing, drawn nearer to God, and separated from all objects and scenes in which God is not. We gaze as those who are "seeking the better, even the heavenly country." We gaze as those who are not "mindful of that country whence they came out," or seeking an "opportunity to return;" and the longer that we gaze we feel more and more satisfied with the step of separation—more and more willing to be strangers upon earth, whose tie to this world is broken, but whose tie to the world to come is becoming stronger every hour.

5. He expects us to "glory in tribulation."—For sharp as the wounds are that we are receiving, they will soon be healed. The tribulation that lays us down on a sick-bed, quickens our anticipations of the land where "the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." The tribulation that robs us of a beloved face, but opens another vista into the abiding heritage. The tribulation that throws down our earthly dwelling, that gives us poverty for riches, that makes home a desert, that estranges friends, that lowers our good name—does but the more effectually disentangle us from snares which might have been fatal, and "set our feet in a large room." That tribulation that disenchants the world to us, and makes "the world to come" our all, is surely to be "gloried in."

6. He expects our faith to grow.—For just as our faith lays hold of the prospect, so does that prospect in return by hold of and increase our faith. The belief of what is false destroys faith; it eats into its very core. The belief of what is true is self-rewarding, by invigorating the very faith which receives it. There is an innate healing power in truth just as there is an inherent corrosive power in falsehood; so that the more we let our faith spread itself out over the region of the true, the more do we find that faith gaining strength and rising into maturity,

for it is itself "the substances of things hoped for." The world's faith shrivels up and becomes more and more emaciated, for it has no true future to look into: our faith ripens and strengthens in spite of the noxious gusts of earth, because it has a true future to rest on—a future to which no disappointments here can make less true, less real, and less glorious.

7. He expects our hope to brighten.—The prospect to which it points is a bright certainty, and as hope nears its object it partakes more of its hues. The world's hope is a mere pretence. It builds on nothing, and its promises, which at first, perhaps, are fair, grow feebler every hour. Our hope, going beyond earth's straitened circle, and passing forward into a region where all brightening influences abound, becomes more and more truly what God desires it to be—"a living hope," a "good hope," a hope "that maketh not ashamed," a hope which, like the morning light, "shineth more and more unto the perfect day." The bright future brightens hope. The true future makes it truer and more real. The world's poor hope is like the troubled billow of the feverish ocean, ever rising and sinking till it dashes in foam against the rock or sand that hems it in. Our hope, like the atmosphere's transparent wave, is rising ever upward, with a sure buoyancy, making its way farther and farther beyond the mists and the noises of earth, till it breaks at last upon a shore of stars.

CHAPTER II

THE STABILITY OF THE AGES TO COME

THE night of weeping passes off; the Morning-star gleams out from amid the relics of the departing storm; "the day breaks, and the shadows flee away." Peace has taken possession of earth, and joy

looks down from heaven. Creation has been delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the Sons of God. It is the May-morning of the universe.

The Church has "fought the good fight," and finished her course. As the conqueror—the more than conqueror—she has at length received the crown and throne. Having, as the "beloved of the Father," the "apple of his eye," been "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation," she has pressed onward through the rough defiles that lay between Egypt and Canaan; and, in spite of "manifold temptations," she has reached the inheritance, and been "presented faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy." The REST has been entered on at last, and she has "ceased from her labours as God did from his" (Heb. 4:10). It is no longer from the hills of Moab that she sees the goodly tents of Israel, and the land flowing with milk and honey; but, sitting peacefully under its spreading olives, or climbing its green slopes, she luxuriates amid its endless fruitfulness and beauty.

It is now singing, not weeping; for "the ransomed of the Lord have returned, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads." It is now light, not darkness, for the Day-star has risen, and the fresh burst of morning over the celestial hills has made the gloom of the long night to be forgotten, or remembered as a strange tale of other times. The time of fasting is ended, and the day of feasting has arrived; for the Bridegroom has come, and in his presence there can be nothing save song and festival.

The first hour of resurrection-glory has compensated for all their shame, and made them feel how true was the song they sung so often in the land of strangers, and by the rivers of Babylon: "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us" (Rom. 8:18). Then in their full compass they take up Israel's, or more truly Messiah's words, "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation; he hath covered

me with the robe of righteousness; as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels" (Is. 61:10).

Blessed dawn! Long-deferred, but come at last! True morning of joy, making up for the darkness of the heavy night, and realising the hope of ages! What a time of restitution! What a day of refreshing! What an earnest of yet brighter hours and skies!

"The winter is past;

The rain is over and gone;

The flowers appear on the earth;

The time of song is come,

And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.

The fig-tree putteth forth her green figs,

And the vines, with the tender grapes, give forth their fragrance."

But will the day be as fair as the dawn; or will it pass again into cloud and tempest? and is eternity to be a repetition, on a mightier scale, of the changes and reverses of time? Will the old mists revisit us, throwing their vapours across the fair heavens, or coming down upon the hills to blot out their clear outline and make their sunniest slopes look bleak, as in mornings gone by? When the Day-star has risen, will it set or put on sackcloth again? Will the azure of the new heavens grow wan, or the verdure of the new earth fall into the sere and yellow leaf? Or is not the inheritance on which we enter, in the day of our Lord's appearing, "incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading"? And of those who possess it, is it not written, "He that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still"?

There are two periods spoken of in Scripture,—“the age to come,” or millennial age (Mark 10:30); and the “ages to come,” or “ages of ages” (Eph. 2:7, & 3:21), which we call “eternity.”

In so far as those who “have part in the first resurrection” are concerned, there will be no change. Seated with Christ upon his throne, they are beyond the reach of all that is variable here. From the moment that they went up to meet their Lord in the air, they were raised above the influence of evils and reverses. Though their connexion with earth is not to cease—for they are associated with Christ as its kings, and therefore, though not actually resident in its dwellings made with hands, are yet reigning over it, dwelling in the pavilion of the Lord—still they are exempt from whatever of change may be passing beneath them.

But as to the earth itself and the dwellers on its surface, there is a change, even after the glory of the latter day has covered it. At the close of the millennial age, Satan is let loose, and the darkness once more gathers thickly over earth, as if a second fall, with its long ages of sin and death, were again threatening the restored creation. The axle of the globe has snapped again. It is a vast revolt, led on once more by him who led the first. It looks sadly ominous of evil, seeming to say, that neither grace nor power—neither wrath nor love—no, not even the presence of the King, even more gloriously than in the pillar-cloud—can keep man from sinning. As if sprung out of the ground, a mighty host pours in from the four quarters of the earth, in numbers like the sands of the sea (Rev. 20:8). Right towards the spot where, under the overhanging glory of the New Jerusalem, the rebuilt Jerusalem stands; right towards “the camp of the Saints,” and “the beloved city,” the rebel host advances, like the old array of the Armageddon multitude.

But in one hour their judgment comes. They only muster in order to be utterly swept away. Fire comes down from God out of heaven, and devours them. “The wicked are cut off from the earth, and the transgressors are rooted out of it” (Prov. 2:22). The devil that

deceived them is "cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:10). The last storm that shall ever vex the universe is hushed. The last relic of evil disappears. The last cloud passes off. The last vestige of the mighty curse is gone. The perfection of eternity has begun; "the AGE to come" is ended; and "the AGES to come" have commenced their unending courses.

From that hour when earth's last shadow took flight, all trace of night, all relics even of twilight, fled away. The Morning-star has brightened into the Sun of noon. Oh! well with earth, and well with heaven! Now have "all things been reconciled" unto God, "whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Col. 1:20). The foundation-stone of the universe is the INCARNATE WORD. The key-stone of its infinite arch is the INCARNATE WORD. The Reconciler, the "Upholder of all things" above and below,—the King of "the kingdom which cannot be moved," is Jesus of Nazareth, the wearer of the crown of thorns.

But can the night not return? No, it cannot. God's purpose has secured an eternity of day. May there not be the ebbings and flowings of evil, the fallings and rises of the races of God's creatures? May sin not enter the second paradise? No. It may not. God's mode of banishing it has made its return impossible. This is one of the great things contained in the work of the Incarnate Son, which we are too ready to overlook. It is not merely that God has purposed that evil shall not invade the new creation; nor is it that he has bound the great deceiver; nor is it that he has closed the gates of hell: but he has done a work, which of itself prevents another fall—which carries in its own bosom, as one of its directest results, the eternal stability of the new creation. God's object in that work of reconciliation was—not merely to subdue and bind the tempter—not merely to get rid of a certain amount of sin by washing away so much of it, and then shutting up the rest in hell; but to get rid of it in such a way, as to prevent even the possibility of another invasion.

The Son of God took flesh and died, "the just for the unjust," not merely to carry away a certain amount of committed sin, but to hinder its future commission; not merely to undo the past effects of the fall, but to make another fall impossible, either among those who are thus redeemed, or among any other order of beings that might in coming ages be created by God. For let it always be remembered, that we are but "the first-fruits of his creatures" (Jas. 1:18). We know not what is yet in reserve for our universe; nor with what new tribes of happy being God means to people the as yet unpeopled regions of illimitable space. Most needful is it, then, for the stability and holy integrity of all the manifold orders of future being, that the Head into which all things are gathered up, the King who is to have the sovereignty of all creaturehood committed to him, should be "the Lamb that was slain," and that the partner of his throne and "bride, the Lamb's wife," should be one bought back out of the prisons of the lost—his Church, for whom he gave himself in everlasting love.

The creation—both that which is, and that which shall be—has thus been made proof against sin in all coming ages, by the incarnation and propitiatory work of him whose designation is, "the Christ of God." So terrible has been the expiation of the sin; so costly the ransom of the sinner; so glorious has been the vindication of the dishonoured law; so infinite the display of God's hatred of sin, even when found (though but by imputation) upon the highest of Beings—his equal, his own Son; so closely has the link been fastened between the creature and its Creator, between the universe and its God, by the Son becoming "bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh,"—that the lapse of the new creation is not within the utmost range of things that might ever be. The foundation-stone of that new creation—as also of creation in general, has been too deeply and strongly laid to be shaken in time to come. The two pillars of heaven and earth—the Jachin and Boaz of the universe—rest, the one on Bethlehem, the other on Golgotha. On the one is inscribed, "The Word was made flesh," and on the other, "Christ died for our sins;" while on the arch which springs from both are these words written, "It is finished." On these two pillars, which no craft nor power of hell can undermine,

rests the stability of God's handiwork in the ages of ages. How grateful the thought, how welcome the prospect of everlasting stability—of perfection throughout these ages! For do not many of time's sadnesses arise from the uncertainties that overshadow our future, the mutabilities that toss us to and fro? We are flung from surge to surge, or from rock to rock, and find no haven but the tomb! Even the closet, with its precious solitude, is but a transient lull, a brief hour's shelter. The calm of to-day is no security against to-morrow's storm. Life is made up of changes; and unrest is the law of time. To hope, and then to fear; to meet, and then to part; to bloom, and then to fade—such is our lot: "For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the field; the grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away" (1 Pet. 1:24). It is this that so often calls up the longing—

"O that I had wings like a dove!

I would fly away and be at rest.

Lo, I would wander far off;

I would remain in the wilderness,

I would hasten my escape

From the windy storm and tempest."

But in these promised ages—these cycles of cycles—forming one everlasting chain of blessed being, there are no uncertainties. To be "careful for nothing" will be then no hard struggle for faith, for then there will be nothing to be careful for, when we know that no messenger of evil tidings can ever come to us, and that no to-morrow can bring with it anything save a new sunrise of gladness.

To be done with changings and ebbings—how comforting the very thought to the spirit even here, on this side of the unchangeable and the unebbing! To feel that the night of weeping, with its fickle

starlight and fitful gusts, shall have no successor but the unchanging day, and the unsetting, the unsmiting sun (Ps. 121:6; Rev. 7:16)—how soothing to those whose path, though onward and upward, has still been one of toil and dimness! To be assured that, whatever uncertainty may hang over the few years of our shaded future here, there rests none over the eternal life-time—how satisfying to the soul in hours of anxious thought which we may be striving in vain to banish! When entering into, or even when emerging from, some thick cloud here, have we not often said to ourselves, What if this be but the preparation for a thicker, seeing we know not what a day may bring forth? But then we shall have no such threatening reverses—no "slippery turns"—no dreaded treacheries, no faithless promises, no hollow counterfeits, no alternations of the hope and the fear, no buoyancy of sanguine confidence to be succeeded by the stagnancy of helpless depression! We shall then know what the day is to bring forth, and that its birth can be nothing but an increase of blessedness. Ought not all this to lift up the hands which hang down, and to comfort the weary spirit, burdened with care, oppressed with pent-up feelings and unspoken thoughts, pained with its "thorns in the flesh," and disquieted with its forebodings of the morrow?

Child of faith, cast your eye forward into these ages yet to come, and see your portion! It is an immutable portion, founded upon "immutable counsels." Dost thou not know that "God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the IMMUTABILITY of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath; that by two IMMUTABLE things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold on the hope set before us; which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil"? (Heb. 6:17.)

Man of earth—child of unbelief—are thy prospects bright? Is it to be well with thee in the ages to come? Would it not be well to have some certainty of hope—some stability of prospect for thy endless being? To drift upon the sea of time without ought to hold thy vessel fast, is

sad enough; but it will be far sadder to toss upon the eternal ocean, without an anchorage, and with this as thy one certainty, that no calm shall ever visit thee, nor any lull of the tempest ease thy labouring vessel.

Within the veil the Son of God has fastened the eternal anchor, and he ask-thee to moor thy vessel to that anchor. Thousands have already done so, and have ridden out the storm, and entered the inner haven. They received the divine testimony regarding that anchor, and that at once connected them with it. So do thou! Receive that testimony, and thou too shalt in a moment find thy vessel brought to anchorage—an anchorage too "sure and steadfast" to admit of being shaken or broken, till thou shalt reach the sea of glass, which no storm disturbs, and from whose shore no tidings of shipwreck can ever come.

CHAPTER III

THE ENDLESSNESS OF THE AGES TO COME

GOD has written ETERNITY on the future, both of the saved and the lost. The shame of the one is for ever, and so is the glory of the other (Dan. 12:2, 3); and just as righteousness shall mete out the shame, so shall grace mete out the glory. With the reception of the good news concerning the Son of God, there is connected an everlasting recompence of joy, just as with the rejection of these there is connected a retribution of undying woe. Indeed, if these good news be really what God represents them to be, and if it cost so much to furnish the facts on which these good news are founded, we cannot

see how the belief of them should result in less than an eternal blessing, and the disbelief of them in less than an eternal curse. Whatever these good news can do either for or against us, according as they are welcomed or refused, we cannot conceive of their issues being finite or reversible.

There are frequent words and figures in Scripture, which in many ways and under various aspects bear witness to the truth concerning the eternity of the coming ages of blessing. Faith takes these words in their simple meaning, and refuses to accept such figures as exaggerations. Assuming that the Bible cannot contain the thoughts of God unless it contains his very words; and being quite sure that God would never trust a man, even though he might understand all mysteries and all knowledge, to translate divine thoughts into human words, FAITH receives all Bible words as divine, and therefore most simply and sacredly true.

Amongst those words which it specially delights to think of as real and undeceiving, are those which tell of eternity in its joys and satisfactions.

1. It thinks of the name which God takes to himself.—He calls himself the "eternal God" (Deut. 33:27)—the "eternal King" (1 Tim. 1:17). He is said to be "from everlasting to everlasting" (Ps. 90:2). He is called "the eternity of Israel" (1 Sam. 15:29, margin). We read, "Jehovah shall endure for ever" (Ps. 9:7); and again, "Jehovah is King for ever and ever" (Ps. 10:16). Of the SON we read that he is "the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8); and to him the Father speaks, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever" (Heb. 1:8). The SPIRIT is called "the eternal Spirit" (Heb. 9:14). Such are the names in which God speaks of himself; and there is something in these which makes us feel how abiding and endless those "ages to come" must be, in which this God is "all in all." Faith loves to dwell upon the ETERNITY of the God to whom it has been linked. An eternal God implies an eternity of blessed being to all who are his. Nothing less than this can be included in such wondrous names. It is

with such feelings that faith takes up the sweet singer's words, and, looking round upon the frailty of created excellency, muses upon the endless being of the everlasting One—"They shall perish, but thou shalt endure; they shall all wax old as doth a garment: as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end" (Ps. 102:26, 27).

2. It thinks of the EVERLASTING covenant (Is. 55:3; Heb. 13:20).—This covenant goes back into the ages that are past, and forward immeasurably into the ages to come. It stretches over and covers, with its infinite provisions of grace, the whole vastness of eternity. As the atmosphere compasses the earth about, so does the "everlasting covenant" compass the Church about, to secure and to bless it. The knowledge of this covenant, in its suitability to the sinner, was that which first spoke peace to us, and made us feel that there was forgiveness with God. We received God's testimony concerning it, and so it became a resting-place for us in our weariness. Having found footing here, we looked around, and surveyed the fulness of our city of refuge. We saw its foundation to be grace. We saw that, in addition to grace that was large and free enough to receive every fallen child of Adam, if they would but come, there was a superadded sovereign grace, to lay hold of those whom the Father had given to Christ in the ancient covenant—not one of whom would have availed themselves of the grace, had they not been thus laid hold of. We saw that in the covenant there was forgiveness, and life, and joy, not only here, but hereafter. We saw that it could not grow old or out of date, for it was the covenant of the eternal God. We saw that it could not be broken, for it was sealed with blood, and so made sure by righteousness. We saw that it must abide for ever, in all its completeness, securing thereby to us, not merely a morning of joy, but an eternal day of glory.

3. It thinks of the EVERLASTING arms (Deut. 33:2).—Sometimes we read of God's "holy arm" (Ps. 98:1); of his "mighty arm" (Ps. 89:13); of his "glorious arm" (Is. 63:12); of his "high arm" (Acts 13:17); of his "stretched-out" arm (Ps. 136:12): but, in addition to all these, we read

of the "everlasting arm"—nay, the "everlasting arms." That holy arm is for eternity. That mighty arm is for eternity. That glorious arm is for eternity. That high arm is for eternity. That stretched-out arm is for eternity. All is everlasting! It is with everlasting arms that we have to do. "His right hand doth embrace us; his left hand is under our head" (Song 2:6); and that embrace—that clasping—that upholding—is for ever. To have these flung around us is all the assurance that we need for our security in the ages to come. For who shall untwine that eternal embrace, or unclasp those arms, or make them grow weary of enfolding us? It is the pressure of these arms that we feel about us when first we "taste that the Lord is gracious," and understand the meaning of the free love which the cross exhibits. Then the divine graciousness comes gently round us, like a mother's arm, and as receivers of the Father's testimony to his good-will in Christ, we are "compassed about with his favour as with a shield" (Ps. 5:12). And then it is that we learn to reprove our own unbelief in Jehovah's strength and grace—"Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?" (Is. 40:27, 28.)

4. It thinks of the EVERLASTING gospel (Rev. 14:9).—It finds "good news" written everywhere over the Word of God. His messages are "tidings of good;" for the free love which is in his infinite bosom he has embodied in these tidings; and we have found that in listening to them we are listening to what makes us glad. These good news are the very light of our earthly path, and by means of their bright shining, these desert tents of ours are lighted up even in the darkest night. But these good news run on into eternity; for the "good things to come," of which they brought us the report, are for ever. What we have heard and believed, is not the gospel of one age, but of all ages—the "everlasting gospel"—the gospel of the long ages to come, as truly as of the brief ages that are past.

5. It thinks of ETERNAL redemption (Heb. 9:12).—In thinking of such an expression, it feels the assurance given by God that one captivity shall be all that we shall have to taste. No second Egypt, or Babylon! no new "house of bondage," or land of exile! The one redemption is enough. It is a complete one, and it is an eternal one, for it is a righteous one. It did not bribe justice nor evade the law. It sought out the terms of justice, and complied with them. It took the law's claims in full, and met them all. It gave life for life—the life of the righteous for the life of the unrighteous. By death we are redeemed—the death of the Prince of Life. By blood we are bought—the blood of God (Acts 20:28). The life of Christ would have been nothing to a sinner without his death. The body of Christ would have been nothing to a guilty conscience without his shed blood; for sin claims a recompence, and until that recompence be seen to be actually paid, no guilty conscience can have rest. It is, then, by death and blood that we are redeemed, and thus our redemption is made secure. It is a buying back for ever—a redemption, the fruits of which shall never come to an end, and the joys of which shall spread out over the whole eternal day.

6. It thinks of ETERNAL salvation (Heb. 5:9).—In consenting to let the Saviour do his work in us, we became saved ones. He saved us. He reversed our lost estate. "He sent from above, he took us, he drew us out of many waters" (Ps. 18:16). The work which he thus effected was meant to be an abiding one. In its nature it was stable; and from the way in which it was done, it admitted of no reversal. He who began the good work in us gave clear tokens that he meant to "perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). He saves us in such a way as to shut out the possibility of failure. Not only "until the day of Christ," but onwards throughout all ages that follow, shall the work remain; for the apostle, in the above words, evidently means to say, that having been carried on "till the day of Christ," it must be secure for ever; that we, being once landed on the shore of the kingdom, must be safe for eternity. He makes us feel that what we get is an "eternal salvation;" so that, whatever conflicts, or sorrows, or enemies, or snares, may here throw themselves across our path,

our salvation shall not be less complete, or less eternal: for "he is able to save them to the **UTTERMOST** (not merely to the uttermost of extremity, but of time—for such is the meaning of the original word) that come unto God by him, seeing he **EVER LIVETH** to make intercession for them" (Heb. 7:25). And it is written in the prophets, "Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation; ye shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end" (Is. 45:17). To be thus "chosen to salvation" (2 Thess. 2:13)—to be saved eternally, without the very possibility of failure or of end—what joy is there in the thought! How it cheers and comforts! It takes off the edge of trial; it lifts off time's sorest pressures.—"What! shall I who am partaker of an everlasting salvation sink down under any burden, however heavy, or give way to sick-heartedness in the day of evil?"

7. It thinks of the **ETERNAL** purpose (Eph. 3:11).—That purpose of the God only wise is the sure chain which binds us inseparably to him. His purpose! his purpose from eternity!—what a resting-place for us in our tossings and changes! Of that purpose we are the objects; and that purpose is from eternity to eternity! Jehovah thought upon us personally in the immeasurable ages past, and he will continue to think upon us in the unending ages to come! To be connected with such a purpose is no common security and gladness. Having "chosen us in him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4), he will not let go his hold of us in the ages to come. "His good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself" spreads over us eternally like a curtain of heavenly light—like a rainbow of beauty and of joy.

8. It thinks of the **ETERNAL** judgment (Heb. 6:2).—In taking Christ as our substitute and advocate, we confidently anticipate acquittal in the day when we shall all stand at the judgment-seat of Christ. Faith, being "the substance of things hoped for," teaches us to fore-date the judgment, and to count upon a sentence in our favour. Strictly speaking, the sentence of justification is not given until that day; and hence our being justified by faith may be said to be our counting upon being justified by the righteous Judge, in the day of his

appearing. And so sure is the ground we rest upon—so simple is the promise of acquittal to all who will trust God for it—that we feel just as certain of our justification as if public sentence had already been pronounced. Hence faith teaches us to say even now—far on this side of judgment—"I am justified," just as it enables us to say, "I am saved." This judgment, which faith anticipates so joyfully, as being quite sure, from what it knows of God, that there can be no condemnation for any trusting one, is final and irreversible. There lies no appeal from it to any higher or more ultimate tribunal. It is eternal judgment! It is judgment whose issues and sentences determine our condition in all coming ages. There is much that is truly comforting in the thought of "eternal judgment." To be justified for ever! To have all wrongs righted for ever! To be thus lawfully acquitted, and reinstated irrevocably in the favour of the Judge, so that law and justice can never again claim us as their victims—this is security such as unfallen Adam could not have had. Our sentence of acquittal shall be to us a far greater assurance of a justified eternity, than creation in innocence could have been. That "judgment"—being an "eternal" one—shall, through all ages, stand between us and the possibility of condemnation.

9. It thinks of the EVERLASTING truth (2 John 2).—These are blessed words—"for the truth's sake, which dwelleth in us, and shall be with us for ever." There shall be no more seeking of truth, or groping after it, but a possessing of it. And if to be a "lover of truth" be a good thing, how much better to be a possessor of it, and that for ever! The imperfect knowledge of the truth which we get here "makes us free" (John 8:32); what enlargement of our liberty shall the perfection of that knowledge give us! The "belief of the truth" pours peace into the soul; how much more of that unutterable peace shall fill us in the day when our belief shall be as complete and full as the truth which we shall then possess! For it shall be all truth, and no falsehood nor error; seeing it shall have its centre in Him who is THE TRUTH. Rooted in the truth—surrounded by the truth—overshadowed by the truth—dwelt in by the truth,—we shall know

the difference between this present age of boasted enlightenment and these coming ages of everlasting truth.

10. It thinks of the EVERLASTING righteousness (Ps. 112:9; Dan. 9:24).—On righteousness the soul stands as on a sure rock; with righteousness is it clothed as with a garment; by righteousness it is protected as by a breastplate (Eph. 6:14). There is nothing more enduring than righteousness. No ages can alter or weaken it. Jehovah's own righteousness is everlasting. He cannot cease to be "the righteous God who loveth righteousness." And what less than an eternal righteousness can be theirs, who have by faith identified themselves with him who is Jehovah Zidkenu, "the Lord our Righteousness"? When the Lord would tell Israel the sure tenure by which they are to hold their heritage hereafter, so that it cannot be lost, he says, "This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their RIGHTEOUSNESS is of ME, saith the Lord" (Is. 54:17). We get the righteousness simply in being willing to take it upon God's terms—that is, freely; and having got that righteousness, we find that it not only secures our persons but our possessions also, throughout the everlasting ages. For just as God and we have become indissolubly one, so we and our heritage can never be parted. All that can be included in that word "heritage" thus becomes eternally ours—gladness within as well as glory without—for "the work of righteousness shall be peace, and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever."

11. It thinks of the EVERLASTING mercy (Ps. 103:17, & 136:1).—That the mercy of our God is "abundant," we see in the cross, and taste in our own experience. "Abundant mercy" is the name which the apostle gives to it (1 Pet. 1:3). Less than this cannot be implied in the gift of God's own Son; nor would less than this meet our case. But the continuance of this overflowing plenty is what we need to be assured of. We need not only to be able to say, "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good," but to add, "for his mercy endureth for ever." Mercy, continued in the same abundance as when it first took hold of us—flowing onward, inexhaustibly, for ever and for ever—this is what we

delight to hear of. It is with mercy that all our hopes, and joys, and consolations here, are associated; and the thought that, in the ages to come, this mercy would alter or be superseded by something else, would infuse suspicion into our expectations, and call up uncomfortable conjectures as to the future that lies before us. "Everlasting mercy" settles every doubt, and lays every fear to rest. It is with the God of mercy that we shall have to do eternally, as truly as now. The God who took pity upon us in our sins, and freely forgave them all, is the God under the shadow of whose wing we shall rest for ever. It was to him, as the God of mercy, that our hearts first went up; and all our dearest thoughts of him during our pilgrimage are connected with his wondrous manifestations of mercy: so, over all coming ages shall that same mercy stretch itself, and we shall continue to recognise, in the King of the eternal ages, the God who drew us out of the horrible pit and out of the miry clay.

12. It thinks of the EVERLASTING holiness.—"He that is holy, let him be holy still," that is, let him be holy for ever (Rev. 22:11). For ever holy! This is the word of Him who is faithful and true. From the moment that the blood was sprinkled on us, by our receiving God's testimony concerning it, we were set apart for God,—we became his "saints" or holy ones. It was to this blood alone, and not to any fitness in us, that God had respect in setting us apart; and it was this blood that removed every objection that could be raised against us on the score of unworthiness. God looked at us, and then at the blood, and forthwith proceeded to set us apart according to his eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord. We fixed our eye on that blood on which God was looking, and the whole transaction was done. That which God saw in the blood removed all his objections; and that which we saw dispelled all our difficulties and fears. These objections can never rise up again: these fears can never revisit us. That which banished these at first has banished them for ever. Our consecration is for eternity. In correspondence with this outward setting apart, the internal purifying began and proceeded; for we were "chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in

love" (Eph. 1:4). The "inward man was renewed day by day." Everything helped on the process. "All things wrought together for good" to us. Sorrow smote us only to "perfect that which concerned us," and to make us "partakers of Jehovah's holiness" (Heb. 12:10). And when we awake in the resurrection dawn, we arise to holiness, in all its completeness without and within. Our name even here was "Elect of God, holy and beloved" (Col. 3:12), "holy brethren" (Heb. 3:1); and such shall be our name for ever, for "blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection" (Rev. 20:6). We have been "called with an holy calling," even "as he who hath called us is holy" (2 Tim. 1:9; 1 Pet. 1:15). Nor shall that calling ever be reversed. We have a share in the "holy covenant" (Luke 1:72), nor shall that covenant alter or be broken; for "the Lord forsaketh not his holy ones; they are preserved for ever" (Ps. 37:28); their very death is precious to him (Ps. 116:15); and when the Lord returns, he comes "to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe" (2 Thess. 1:10). It is as his holy ones that they possess the inheritance; for it is an undefiled "inheritance" (1 Pet. 1:4); nay, the apostle's name for it is, "The inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. 1:12). It is as his saints that they are called to be "joyful in glory" (Ps. 149:5); and it is as his saints that they shall "take the kingdom and possess it for ever, even for ever and ever" (Dan. 7:18). It is as saints that they are the "habitation," the "temple of the Holy Ghost" (1 Cor. 6:10), and "holiness becometh that house for ever" (Ps. 93:5); nor will he who has once taken up his abode in them, desert the dwelling which he has chosen for himself.

Thus on all sides faith sees itself surrounded with eternity. Each promise in the divine Word speaks of eternity. Each hope points to eternity. Each pardon that we receive has eternity inscribed on it. Each token of love tells of eternity. Each day's fellowship with the Lord is inseparably linked with an eternal fellowship. The great God with whom we have to do is the everlasting one. The Son whose righteousness covers us, is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. The Holy Spirit is the "eternal Spirit." There is not one word, one

thought, one promise, one hope, one joy, that speaks of less than ETERNITY!

Feeling itself thus compassed about with eternity, how the spirit rises upward! How it gets ashamed of littleness in itself, and in others who are partakers of the same hope! How it expands its affections on every side,—passing beyond self and the things of self, and entering on other regions where it gets full play to its expanding powers! The realised glimpse of eternity takes it at once out of its contracted "beat;" and, instead of pacing round and round within a poor circle of its own, it learns that there are other interests precious, as dear to God, and as closely liked with the marvels of the ages to come, as its own could be. Getting beyond the narrowness of its own joys and sorrows, it learns somewhat to forget itself in the thought of others.

And thus occupied, not merely with one eternity, but with thousands of eternities like its own—the eternities of redeemed ones like itself—it gets above depression, and ceases to brood over its own fears and griefs. The screen has been thrown back that hemmed in its vision; it looks into the vista of immeasurable ages; it loses sight of things corruptible in the vision of the incorruptible; it learns to measure the things that are seen and temporal, by the things that are unseen and eternal.

CHAPTER IV

THE LIFE OF THE AGES TO COME

THE life that is not life is the portion of the many. The life that is life is the heritage of the few. True life, with its strange, rich secrets, both of joy and sadness, is but little known—nay, hardly so much as conceived of in this region of the dead.

Men do not think of living, but only of enjoying existence. To have life unfolded from within them by a heavenly agency, as the leaf and blossom are drawn in beauty out of the tree by the sun and air, is beyond their very widest ideas of life. Yet what is a man's true life but the developing of his powers and affections—the bringing forth of his whole being into fullest exercise by the energy of the Holy Ghost? It is not the external circumstances in which he moves, nor the points in which he comes into contact with men and things around him, that make up life, so that, in summing up his days of business, or his nights of pleasure, he might say, "I have lived," or "I live:" it is the springing, budding, blossoming of the MAN—the very man himself as God made him—that alone can be counted LIFE.

How few live, or even think of living!

Life to most is an unexplored continent. They do not know, nor do they care to know, what its features or its treasures are. They only cruise along its rocky sea-board, and think that narrow strip of sand and shells which their eye takes in to be all of life that can be known. To penetrate the vast interior, with its streams, and lakes, and woods, and groves, and vales, and fields, and happy dwellings, where the sun does not smite by day, nor the moon by night, is what they have never yet proposed to themselves, and have only shrunk from when proposed to them by others.

But though life is an undiscovered region to most, it is not so to all. Some, though few, have found and known it. They have found that, without the conscious friendship of the God that made them, there is no life. "In his favour is life." The possession of this favour is the one thing that distinguishes existence from life. The former they always had; the latter they "only began to have when they became acquainted with God."

This life came down to them freely, like the manna which Israel partook of in the desert. They did not buy nor earn it. It cost them only what the manna cost Israel—the gathering it up as it lay around.

It cost them only what their food costs the ravens; or what their clothing costs the lilies. They were labouring hard for what they thought to be life, digging into the earth and trying to wring out from it something that might at least be called life,—when, looking upward, they saw the true life, like fresh rain, coming down plentifully on every side. They saw the vanity of their toil, and were content from that moment to be receivers of the life-giving shower. They opened their parched lips to the abundant rain, and they were filled. Happy men! In toiling hard for life, they failed to get it. In ceasing to toil, and consenting to let God fill them with it, they got it at once! The unbought love of God came pouring in upon them, and they found that "in his favour was LIFE," and that "with him was the fountain of life." A "well of water springing up into everlasting life" was now opened within them; and they drank of the fountain of the water of life freely.

This life is, while here, but partial and feeble. Like all other kinds of life in this dying world, it has to maintain a ceaseless struggle with death; for neither climate nor soil are congenial, and no length of time nor care of culture can acclimatise a plant so entirely heavenly in its nature. Yet, though imperfect in some respects, it is above all price,—"far above rubies."

1. It is no empty life.—It fills and satiates the soul. It leaves no part unreplenished. It is real and true. It makes the man feel that he has reached the resting-place. He does not any longer need to crave, or to complain, or to wonder, or to guess, or to say, "Who will shew me any good?" He has found the good thing, and he is satisfied.

2. It is no uncertain life.—It roots itself within us, and there it remains. There is no fickleness nor caprice in its motions nor in its results. It is stable and unwavering, so that he who has it knows what he has, and knows that it will not change nor pass into a shadow or a vapour.

3. It is no narrow life.—It is large and wide, like him out of whose bosom it came. It diffuses itself through our whole being; nay, it expands that being, in order to get fuller room for its own unfolding. It does not straiten nor wither up the soul, but enlarges it in every part.

4. It is no selfish life.—It does not turn the soul in upon itself till it becomes wholly engrossed with its own concerns. It goes out to others liberally, desiring to make all men partakers of its health and gladness. It looks around upon the needy, hungry spirits that are feeding on the world's poor husks, and it longs to invite them to its own richer fare.

5. It is no useless life.—It is by the very necessity of its being incapable of lying idle. As the beam must shine, so must this life be useful. "He that believeth on me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." It is most actively and unweariedly communicative. Its hands are full of blessing; and it is not in its nature to be passive, or heedless, or unwilling to dispense.

6. It is no gloomy life.—"Joy unspeakable and full of glory," is the portion of those in whom it dwells. The "fountain of life" pours itself into a "river of pleasure," and there is no drying up nor discolouring of its waters. It has never saddened one human spirit; but it has gladdened multitudes that no man can number.

Yet, after all, how little of this life is tasted here! A few of the leaves of the tree have been dropped upon us from above, and we have found them full of life and healing; but the tree itself is above, and the time of our sitting under it has not yet come.

But it shall come ere long, and He who has "shewn us here the path of life," will lead us to that tree of life, that we may partake, not merely of its leaves or of its shadow, but of its fruit, on which we shall feed unhindered. "When he who is our life shall appear," then shall the fulness of the life be known. We know him as our life even now,

for through him, and on him, and in him, we live; but still all this is little; for what is the small inland lake, however clear deep, in comparison with the boundless ocean? To be able to, say, "I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God," is much; but it will be infinitely more to say, when the day has dawned at last, "In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." "He that hath the Son hath life;"—we know this, and are glad. But how much more fully shall we understand hereafter what it is to "have the Son," and to "have life!"—nay, and how much more blessed shall this make us, when we actually see as we are seen, and know as we are known—when we reach the fountain itself, and drink life out of life's deepest well! Nay more, if "the life of Christ be manifested in these mortal bodies" (2 Cor. 4:10), that is, if this life of Christ gets such full scope and vent to itself in quickening and invigorating us even here in our mortality, what will its manifestation be hereafter, when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and mortality shall be swallowed up of life! (2 Cor. 5:4.) Instead of being, as here, a continual strife between life and death, whereby life is obscured and hindered, nay oftentimes made to seem as if but halt conqueror, it shall be the complete and unchecked manifestation of glorious life, the life of the Living One—of him who has yet in reserve for us uncounted stores of life, which, in order to be seen and appreciated, will require to be spread out over a whole eternity.

All the things written of in Scripture, in connexion with this life, are everlasting. There is no change, no end, no decay.

1. There is the life itself.—It is everlasting. Many times over is this name given to it, and many are the ways in which this eternity of the life is affirmed to us, as if God would assure and re-assure us of this truth, beyond the possibility either of doubting or mistake.

2. There is He from whom it comes.—He is everlasting—the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. It is written, "In him was life" (John

1:4). Nay, he is called the eternal life itself,—“This is the true God and eternal life” (1 John 5:20). How truly, then, must our life be everlasting! He cannot die, neither can we, for he is our life.

3. There is the joy connected with this life.—It is everlasting (Ps. 16:11). The life and the joy are linked together inseparably, forming one double star of wondrous beauty. Life and joy!—who or what can sunder them? Nothing in this world: nothing in the world to come.

4. There is the crown of life.—It is everlasting. It is sometimes called the “crown of life” (Jas. 1:12), sometimes the “crown of righteousness” (2 Tim. 4:8), sometimes the “incorruptible crown” (1 Cor. 9:25), sometimes the “crown of glory” (1 Pet. 5:4). But, whatever name it gets, there is no intimation given that it shall grow dim, or fall from our head. It “fadeth not away.” The weight of its exceeding glory is “eternal” (2 Cor. 4:17). Instead of lessening, it will increase both in weight and in brightness. It will “wear well,” as men speak, even though worn for ever.

5. There is the tree of life.—It fades not throughout the ages of ages, but is eternally green, bearing its fruit every month. Under it shall we sit down with great delight, and find even its shadow blessed; and, whilst enjoying the evergreen foliage, we shall find its “fruit sweet to our taste.” Within the region where it springs, what trace of death or sickliness can be found? It fills the whole region with life and health, so that there the inhabitant shall not say, “I am sick.” Disease, whether of soul or body, shall then be impossible. Our youth, renewed like the eagle's, shall remain undecaying.

6. There is the water of life.—Sometimes it is called a “fountain,” and sometimes a “river;” but in both aspects, it is everlasting. It is “the fountain of the water of life;” it is “a pure river, clear as crystal;” it “proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb.” It is no longer merely the water from the smitten rock, following us in our desert march: it is the river whose streams make glad the city of our God, bursting forth from the celestial throne.

Such are some of the aspects in which the everlasting life is set before us. Each of them has gladness in it, and is the assurance to us, that over that land which is to be our heritage, no shadow of death shall ever hover. Life in its completeness—life in its fulness—life in its incorruptible excellency—only life is there! Yes; "the gift of God is eternal life." It is that "eternal life which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began" (Tit. 1:2).

This life is sometimes spoken of as a possession, and sometimes as a hope; for it is both. We have it; for it is written, "He that believeth hath everlasting life:" and we shall have it; for it is written that, "being justified by his grace, we are made heirs, according to the hope of eternal life" (Tit. 3:7). On the one hand, we do possess it, when we receive God's record concerning it; and on the other, we look for it as a thing yet future and unenjoyed.

And how welcome is this hope of it! for have we are beset with so many dangers, that we seem ever on the point of losing it. We know, indeed, that we cannot lose it, for we shall never perish nor be plucked out of the Deliverer's hands: but still we find such difficulty in retaining it; we have to battle so sorely each hour with death; we have to seek shelter so continually from the storm which threatens to extinguish it—that we feel at times as if it were almost gone, and can well understand why the righteous are said to be "scarcely saved." But when the hope arrives, then all this is over: the perils of the rough voyage are past, and the shore is gained. Then the eternal life is no longer a thing disputed between us and our enemies, with a hard strife to maintain for it; but a quiet and undisturbed possession. It shall compass us about with an atmosphere of health, and joy, and beauty, which shall make us feel how completely, in every sense of the figure, "death has been swallowed up of victory."

The Lord's own words respecting himself, point to something great and blessed,—"I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). His errand was not the mere relighting of the spark which our first father had quenched; it

was to be the kindling of a light such as neither earth nor heaven had seen before. His death was to be, not simply the ransom of our life, but the purchase-money of a life far nobler than that which Adam lost. It was as the "Prince of life" that he died; and the giving up of life by the "Prince of life" could not but issue in results surpassingly glorious. What wonder, then, that "more abundant life" should be the fruit of such a death?

This more abundant life is our hope. It is waiting to unfold itself; and when once the unfolding is begun, it must go on without check, or stint, or termination, throughout the unmeasured hours of the eternal day. "Our life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). Thus hidden, thus guarded, it awaits the time when it shall come forth into manifestation. Then shall we know what a treasure it was that was thus, during our day of danger, so carefully "hidden"—hidden so as to be beyond the reach of injury, either from ourselves or others; hidden "with Christ," and so, hidden "in God;"—doubly hidden, doubly safe, being hidden with him who is in the bosom of the Father.

The preparation for that time of the eternal living, is said by the apostle to be our "sowing to the Spirit" (Gal. 6:8). Just as sowing to the flesh issues in "corruption," so our sowing to the Spirit has, as its harvest, "life everlasting." With the hope of such an harvest, how anxious should be the preparation! for according to our sowing shall be our reaping. How there can be degrees in this everlasting life, so that one may have it more largely than another, we do not inquire. The apostle's statement does seem to intimate this. And what a motive to diligent sowing! How watchful should we be against sowing to the flesh! how careful in sowing to the Spirit!

When we indulge in worldliness, and immerse ourselves even in the lawful business of this world, that is sowing to the flesh. When we "live in pleasure on the earth and are wanton," that is sowing to the flesh. When we take our ease and please ourselves, instead of being self-denied and ungrudging, either in labour or in sacrifice, we sow

to the flesh. When we "love the world," and seek its friendships, and walk "according to its course," we sow to the flesh.

How often do we find ourselves doing so, thereby not only losing sight of our calling, but forgetting that "corruption" can be the only fruit of such a sowing!

Then God steps in to remind us of our folly. He smites us in a way such as rouses us, and makes us feel the evil of our flesh-pleasing. Nor does he cease, till he has made his meaning plain, and shewed us that this sin is not more hateful to him than injurious to ourselves. The vanity of this sowing to the flesh then appears, and we turn anew to the better sowing, in the assurance that the harvest shall be everlasting life.

Let us, then, take heed to our sowing. Each day's sowing tells upon the coming harvest. Shall that harvest be scanty or abundant? The question is not, Shall there be one at all? we take for granted that there shall be; but it is, Shall it be a plentiful one? Shall our barns overflow with the store? Shall we have an entrance administered unto us abundantly into the kingdom, or shall it be bare admission? Shall it be the mere gleanings of a few withered ears, or shall it be a harvest of rich plenty?

Let us sow to the Spirit, bringing forth his fruits more ripely and more bountifully, knowing that "he who soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." The connexion between such a sowing and such a reaping is no fancied one, but sure and real. Each day's living here tells upon the endless living hereafter. What diligence, what carefulness in sowing, should be ours, so that though we "go forth weeping, bearing the precious seed, we may come again with rejoicing, bringing our sheaves with us!"

Sons of God, and heirs of the life to come! Lose not sight of that eternal harvest—no, not for an hour! Grudge no toil or cost in sowing. "In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening withhold

not your hand." Redouble your diligence, your earnestness, your self-denial, as ye see the evil days surrounding you, and the coming of the Lord drawing nigh.

CHAPTER V

THE LIGHT OF THE AGES TO COME

IN receiving the Father's testimony respecting Him who is the "light of the world," we became "children of the light and of the day." That reception on our part of the record of free love altered at once our position and our prospects—our connexion with the world, and our relationship to the world to come. We were "made partakers of CHRIST" (Heb. 3:14), that is, fellow-sharers or joint proprietors with him in all that he is and has. His light became our light; nay, he himself became our light,—absorbing all our darkness, and making over to us the fulness of his infinite radiance.

Our reception of that testimony was our casting in our lot with Israel, in whose dwellings there is light (Ex. 10:23); it was our choice of Goshen, the region of light,—and our rejection of Egypt, the kingdom of "the darkness that may be felt."

We then passed out of the kingdom of darkness, breaking the bond between us and the ruler of the darkness of this world. We were "called out of darkness" into "marvellous light" (1 Pet. 2:9); or as Isaiah calls it, "great light" (9:2): and we did find it to be "great" and "marvellous," something to be wondered at, something fitted to excite our amazement as well as our joy. It was full of wonders in itself, like the natural sun's own sevenfold ray; and it shewed us vast wonders on every side, far and near—wonders which eye had not

seen nor ear heard; giving us glimpses, through the rents in the cloudy masses overhanging us, of far greater wonders yet to be let down upon us in the ages to come.

Restoring their lost transparency to the faculties of the soul, the Holy Spirit fits them for receiving the light, and then he pours it in. Each region and recess of the renewed spirit becomes pervaded with the light—a light which carries not merely gladness but healing in its wings (Mal. 4:2). "The eyes of our understanding are enlightened" (not merely opened); and by this enlightenment we are made to know that hope to which God is thus calling us, and the "riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints" (Eph. 1:18); as if one of the great objects which God had in view in enlightening our eyes, was to shew us what a "hope" there is in reserve for us, and what an inheritance of glory he has provided. One of the first uses which we make of our newly opened and enlightened eyes is, to gaze upon the glory of which we have, so undeservedly, become the heirs.

But there is yet more than this. The rays thus let in to our souls by the Holy Spirit's almighty touch, kindled a sun within us; for it is written, "God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, shined in our hearts, to give us (or others) the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). In these words the idea is not so much that of a light shining on us, or into us, as of a sun kindled within us, and giving forth to others the light of the knowledge of his glory; so that we are made, in a measure, what Christ himself is—the "light of the world" (Matt. 5:14). God has lighted us up as so many stars and suns, which, maintaining their several orbits and courses, are to light up the universe for ever with the glory of the Only-begotten of the Father, "the Christ of God." Once "we were darkness, but now we are LIGHT in the Lord" (Eph. 5:8), as if we were now as wholly made up of light, as before we were composed of darkness.

This light changes not. "It shines more and more unto the perfect day" (Prov. 4:18). It does not go out like the lamps of the foolish

virgins; nor can it be blown out by the gusts of a stormy world. "The light of the righteous rejoiceth," says Solomon, "but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out" (Prov. 13:9). This light "rejoiceth;" it exults; and it does so in the certainty of its continuance, in the confidence that it will not be "put out." Once lighted up, we cannot be extinguished. We shine for ever, dwelling in light, and diffusing light around.

"Light is sown for the righteous" (Ps. 97:11). It is deposited in the ground as seed, and after remaining for a season hidden, it springs up and blossoms all the more excellently because of this sowing process to which it has been subjected. The present dispensation is the seed-time. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." The seed is still under ground, or at most but in the bud or blade; yet still it is excellent and precious. And if its imperfect condition be so goodly, what will not its perfection be in the approaching harvest! If the bud be so fair, What will not the unfolded blossom be in the new earth, and under the new heavens! The sowing time is one of weeping, but the reaping time shall be joyous. It is still night above us. Clouds rest upon us. Grief, conflict, failing of heart, compass us about. But sunshine is coming up. Light has been sown for us—the light of Him who is light itself, and in whom is no darkness at all.

We are partakers of "the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col. 1:12), and such being our inheritance, we are "made meet for it." We are made like it. The possessors and the possession must resemble each other. The sunshine of the kingdom would not suit a child of darkness; nor could a child of light be satisfied with anything short of entire resemblance to an "inheritance in light." Of this inheritance we receive the earnest now, in that measure of light that is shed into us, or made to burn within us, when we become one with Him of whom it is said, "in him was life, and the life was the LIGHT of men" (John 1:4).

Still this is only the earnest—no more. It assures us of what is yet to come, and makes us feel how bright and how abiding it will be when

it comes. But it is only in a very poor and feeble way that it can make us to "know that which passeth knowledge," or reveal to us the fulness of a glory proceeding from no earthly sun. For, like the twilight sky of morning, we draw all our brightness from a sun which has not yet risen; and this reflected lustre, though it is the earnest of day's coming splendour, yet gives but a faint idea of what heaven and earth shall be when lighted up by the risen sun itself.

Of this coming light, for which we are waiting amid shadows and conflicts, much is spoken. Our eye is pointed forward to it, as a hope most fitted to cheer us in the hour of grief, and terror, and faintness.

1. It is called "the light of the Lord" (Is. 2:5).—It is Jehovah's own light, not only as flowing from him and kindled by him, but specially in the way of contrast to man's light—"that light of its own fire, those sparks of its own kindling," in which the world has so long been walking (Is. 50:11). In that light of Jehovah we shall walk ere long, when the world's fires and meteors have all gone out, and nothing remains but the light which is unchanging and divine. And how blessed to be done with man and man's light—man's wisdom, man's systems, man's devices—which, at the best, are all but clouded moonshine, and to go forth into a new region where Jehovah himself, in the fulness of his light, and love, and glory, is all in all! With mistakes, and misleadings, and uncertainties, and doubtings, and stumblings, as truly as with sorrows, we shall then have done. The "light of Jehovah" will make these impossible. The day has not yet broken, of which we can say, "If any man walk in the day he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world" (John 11:9). For men everywhere are "walking in the night, and stumbling because there is no light in them." But that long day is at hand, when that which is written shall be fully verified regarding him who "abideth in the light"—that there is "none occasion of stumbling in him" (1 John 2:10). We cannot indeed, even now, excuse our stumblings, or sins, or unbelief, by pleading the want of light; there is enough of light to prevent these, else the Son of God has come in

vain: but when the full light has come, then all these will become as impossible as they have always been inexcusable.

It will, too, be all reality. Other lights have gone out, or misled us, or proved but a wild flash that came and went, we knew not whence or whither; but this light of Jehovah is as real as it is undeceiving. We shall not feel, when enjoying it and looking round upon the glories which it shall light up to us, as if we were dreaming. When casting our eye around, we shall be able to say with a deeper meaning than one overcome with joy is represented as doing:—

"This is the air; that is the glorious sun;

This pearl he gave me; I do feel and see it;

And though 'tis wonder that enwraps me thus,

Yet 'tis not madness."

How true, how real, how excellent, how unchanging must that be which is called "Jehovah's light!" How much more than a recompense for the darkness of the darkest life on earth, to have that light, to walk in that light; nay, "in that light to see light!" (Ps. 36:9.)

2. It is called "the light of the living" (Ps. 56:13); not merely because it is the light coming from Him who is our life; not merely because it is light-giving life, or as the Lord calls it, "The light of life" (John 8:12); but because it is truly the light of men alive from the dead. And, without entirely restricting it to one aspect, we may say that the expression, "light of the living," mainly refers to the resurrection. For the argument, in that verse of the Psalm referred to, is manifestly this—"Thou hast delivered my soul from death." David speaks as one who has risen with Christ, and who knows that he has done so—"he that believeth on me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." But then he speaks also as one still treading a rugged path, and liable to stumble; therefore, looking back to past love, he adds, "Wilt thou not deliver my feet from falling?" for he feels assured that He who has

done the one, will do the other. And then he anticipates the glorious result of this deliverance and keeping—"that I may walk before God in the light of THE LIVING." It is to resurrection-light that he looks forward. He prays to be "kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time" (1 Pet. 1:5); and he appeals to the love and faithfulness of that God who had already done so much for him. He who quickened me from my death in trespasses and sins, will not let go his hold of me during all this dark and rugged way; nor will he fail to bring me into the light and glory of the resurrection of the just.

That which we thus look forward to, is "resurrection-light," the "light of the living." Surely that light must be "perfect light," just as the love in which these risen ones shall walk, will be "perfect love;" and as that perfect love shall cast out all fear, so shall that perfect light dispel all darkness. Now we love but in part, and know but in part, and see but in part; but when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away. Now, in these unrisen bodies, and with these dim eyes, we see in a glass darkly,—but then, face to face; now we know in part, but then shall we know even as also we are known" (1 Cor. 13:9–12).

3. It is said to be needful to the fellowship of the saints.—"If we walk in the light as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another" (1 John 1:7). Darkness, in the sense of sin at least, separates and divides. In proportion as we get quit of the darkness and become transfused with light, we are drawn towards each other, and the members of the family of light become more thoroughly one. It is the great assimilating, and, therefore, the true cementing agency. We find it to be so, even here; how much more hereafter! Our "walking in the light" promotes holy fellowship even in the midst of estrangement and forgetfulness here; how much more will it do so in the land where there is no estrangement and no forgetfulness! It will then be as if the whole innumerable company of the children of light were so penetrated with that light, as to be consolidated into one mass of living splendour; one with each other, indissolubly, and one

with the eternal Son of God, so that anything short of the closest fellowship and brotherhood becomes impossible.

4. It is holy light.—The contrast given us by an apostle (1 John 1:7, 8), between darkness and light, in connexion with sin and holiness, shews us that light is used as God's symbol of holiness. What symbol could be meeter? Light is, in truth, the freshest and the purest of all created things. We cannot soil or stain a sun-beam. It takes on no defilement of earth. Nay more, it transforms other objects into its own purity. The dingy web whitens in the sun, growing pure by being purely shone upon. So is it with the light which awaits us in the kingdom. It is not only holy in itself, but purifying in its efficacy; so that, in dwelling amid its glories, we shall be more thoroughly assimilated to its divine purity. Our present time of darkness does, no doubt, in many ways tend to our purifying, so that the hour of deepest darkness is not seldom the season of truest progress in holiness; but still the light of the world to come will be found to be as needful to the perfecting and perpetuating of that holiness, as was the darkness of this present evil world to its development and ripeness here.

5. It is the light of gladness.—May we not say that light is the most joyous thing in nature? Not only is there the very soul of joy in its fresh, kindly flush, but it is God's agent for diffusing throughout the earth, each day, a larger and more unbroken flow of gladness, than all the other elements together. Oh, what does earth owe to sunshine! What gloom can it not scatter, whether of the deep forest-shade, or the deeper recesses of a wounded spirit! "Truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun" (Eccles. 11:7). Thus God, after telling Israel of the unsetting sun which he would make to rise upon her in the latter day, adds this as its result,—"The days of thy mourning shall be ended" (Is. 60:20); and when he makes mention of one of their past deliverances, he sums up with this,—"The Jews had light, and gladness, and joy, and honour" (Esth. 8:16). In the coming day of light, when all shadows shall take flight, what joy unspeakable shall there be among the inhabitants of that

land in which light has taken up its dwelling for ever! If the natural sun-beam be so very joyous, both in itself and in its influences, what must be the light from the "Father of lights" himself (James 1:17),—from the countenance of him who is "light, and in whom is no darkness at all!" (1 John 1:5.) It must be as truly the light of joy as it is the light of holiness and love.

6. It is light altogether peculiar in its brilliance.—Of the New Jerusalem we read,—"Her light was like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal" (Rev. 21:11). What the peculiarity of this gem-like brilliance may be, we know not; but a figure such as the above evidently implies that it is light wondrously softened, even when it is intensified. All glare and hurtful keenness here disappear. It is mild and mellow, having taken on the jasper-glow, the flesh-like tinge of humanity, yet retaining its crystalline transparency of lustre. It has become the fairest thing in creation, neither too wan nor too sparkling, but perfect in its structure. This same peculiar hue ascribed to the light of the City, is elsewhere noted as belonging to Christ himself,—"He that sat (upon the throne) was, to look upon, like a jasper and a sardine stone" (Rev. 4:3). The light, then, which awaits us, is that very glory which pertains so specially to the God-man—the "Word made flesh." It is not the direct glory of Godhead, but that mingled and marvellous effulgence, in part human and in part divine—in part created and in part uncreated—in part terrestrial, in part celestial—which shall, as one of the fruits of incarnation, fill the universe, pervading all things with a glory and a beauty, which, but for the assumption of manhood by the Son of God, could not have been brought into view, nor even so much as conceived of by man. Hence, while it is said of the City, "The glory of God did lighten it," it is added, "the Lamb is the light thereof" (Rev. 21:23). No light save this would suit us, even in the kingdom. What kind of light angels that never sinned may need, we know not; but no light, save this of the Lamb, would do for the redeemed from among men. It was this light of the Lamb, first seen by us when we believed, that was found to be so needful—so suitable for pouring health and peace into our souls. It was this light of the Lamb that, during our

long night of weeping, was experienced by us as so comforting and so gladdening. It was this light of the Lamb that led us through the dark valley and shadow of death, so that we feared no evil. It is this light of the Lamb that greets us in the resurrection-morning when we awake and go up to meet our Lord in the air. It is this same light of the Lamb—the rich but mellowed sunshine of incarnate love—that shall hereafter compass us about in all its holy beauty;—a light which, though coming from the throne, reminds us of the cross—a light which, from the very turrets of the New Jerusalem, will, by its peculiar hue, carry us back irresistibly to Bethlehem, and Gethsemane, and Golgotha.

7. It is light for eternity.—Though spoken to Israel, these words of the prophet are no less true to the Church:

"The sun shall be no more thy light by day;

Neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee;

But Jehovah shall be unto thee an EVERLASTING LIGHT,

And thy God thy glory.

Thy sun shall no more go down;

Neither shall thy moon withdraw itself;

For Jehovah shall be thine EVERLASTING LIGHT,

And the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

This is no mere general promise of "light," as if it had been simply said, "Thou shalt have light for ever, and no shadow shall ever pass over thee again." The special point of the promise is, that this everlasting light is to be Jehovah himself. He shed light around us here, and he is to be our light for ever. It is not, Jehovah shall give thee light, but Jehovah shall be thy light for ever. The Lord God is

our SUN (Ps. 84:11). This Sun is an unsetting one. Once risen, it shall never go down; nor shall it be clouded or eclipsed; nor shall any other sun succeed it. The same Sun that rises on us in the morning of glory shall continue in its undimmed brightness during the ages of ages. It shall be our light for eternity; and with such an everlasting light as this, what a day will that be which is preparing to arise! The reflected gleams of it that struck through our heavy night of tribulation were much; the full burst of it at the joyous dawn will be yet more; but the prolonged radiance, diffusing everywhere eternal noon, and giving to all the blessed assurance of perpetuation for ever, shall be unspeakably more. What, in that day, shall we think of our three-score and ten years' sojourn in the tents of Kedar—our "little while" of warfare and weariness below?

O heirs of the kingdom—children of the world to come—keep in mind your hope! Look through yon cloud that overshadows your dwelling. Eternal day lies there. It is no mere "silver lining" that may vanish and leave the mass as dark as before. It is the skirt of the endless day. That day—that eternity of light—is yours. It does not become you to faint or to despond. For the joy set before you, learn to endure the cross. Forget the things that are behind, reach forth to those that are before, press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Take no counsel with flesh and blood. Grudge not the toil. Complain not of the length of the way. The night is far spent, the DAY is at hand.

O men of earth—children of this present evil world—what a future lies before you! An eternal night! The blackness of darkness for ever! How will you endure it? Will the carnal joys you are now living on, make up for the sorrow that is coming? Will a lifetime's mirth make up for the endless mourning? "Give glory to the Lord your God, before he cause darkness, and before your feet stumble upon the dark mountains, and while ye look for light, he turn it into the shadow of death, and make it gross darkness" (Jer. 13:16). "While ye have the light, believe in the light, that ye may be the children of light" (John 12:36).

CHAPTER VI

THE LOVE OF THE AGES TO COME

LOVING and being loved;—this is joy. Loving God and being loved by God;—this is joy in its fulness. There is not merely the "casting out of fear," and the consequent removal of "torment" (1 John 4:18), but there is the impartation of perfect gladness.

To love Him who is infinitely loveable cannot but be joy; for he who loves only where he ought to love, shall have neither disappointment nor self-reproach. But to be loved by this infinitely loveable One is yet fuller and deeper joy. Blessed as it is to love him, it is more blessed to be loved by him.

It is the love of GODHEAD that is our heritage,—for GOD is love. The Father is love; the Son is love; the Holy Spirit is love. This threefold love of the Triune God rests upon us in all its largeness, and is shed abroad in our hearts in all its fulness. "The lines have fallen unto us in pleasant places; yea, we have a goodly heritage."

It is through the Son that this Godhead-love gets vent to itself. He is at once its manifestation and its channel. It is he who reveals it, and it is he who brings it to us: hence it is called "the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 8:39). He did not produce that love, but he drew it out. He did not by his blood-shedding turn Godhead-hatred into Godhead-love. It is nowhere written, "God loved the world because his Son gave himself a ransom for it;" but it is written, "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son." The gift was meant to prove and pledge this love; but specially was it intended as the means for getting vent to this love in a righteous way.

Christ's death was not to alter the Father's character, and to empty his bosom of anger and vengeance, which were bent on tormenting us; it was to alter the relations of law, so that that which would previously have been impossible, because unrighteous, became not only righteous and possible, but most glorifying to God and to his law. His death, as "the just for the unjust," did not create love in God towards us, but it made the outflow of that love legal, and righteous, and honouring, which otherwise would have been illegal, unrighteous, and dishonouring.

But without dwelling on the past eternity of this love, or on the righteous way in which it has flowed down to us, through the propitiation of the Substitute, let us look at this love itself,—taking it either as the love of the Father or as the love of the Son.

It was on the love of Christ that the early Church so strongly leaned. It is to this love that we find the apostle Paul so continually turning. This was his soul's true resting-place and refuge. It was under the branches of this palm-tree that he found a shadow from the heat. This was the deep well out of which he drank his endless consolation. He needed no other. To be "able to comprehend with all saints the breadth and length, the height and depth," of this love, was his aim; and to "know that love which passeth knowledge," was the sum of his prayers.

This love is our refuge too—our true and quiet home. The knowledge of this love is perfect peace. We sit down and let this love breathe freely into us, and straightway all is calm. Each storm has gone to rest; each gust has died away. Love beyond all loves, in greatness, in freeness, and in efficacy! Gifted with strange power of soothing, and healing, and comforting! He who has possession of this love has got hold of a hidden spell, mighty to charm away all heaviness of heart, all bitterness of soul. What can withstand it?

In this love are all the loves of earth gathered up and centred. It is a father's love, yet far beyond the love of earthly father. It is a brother's

love, yet passing far above it. It is a bridegroom's love, as the Song of Solomon shews us, but tenderer than the love of mortal bridegroom. It is a husband's love, yet truer and more faithful than the love of the truest and the most faithful husband upon earth. It is a love without beginning and without end,—a love without any intermingling selfishness, or jealousy, or coldness, or forgetfulness, or weariness,—a love without intermission,—a love without fickleness,—a love without decay.

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom. 8:35.) What can untwine our mutual embracings here or hereafter? Separation is an impossibility from the first moment that we apprehended him, or rather "were apprehended of him,"—from the time that we knew him, or rather were known of him. That love is imperishable and unquenchable. The hold which we have of it, or rather which it has of us, is inseparable. Nothing can tear us asunder. Imagine all that can breed coldness or dislike—all that can lower one in the estimation of another, or tend to produce separation, or to extinguish affection,—not one of these singly, nor all of them together, can affect this love, or make it flow less freely. No time, nor change, nor adversity of circumstances, can make it less warm or less true. It is love that can survive all coldness, all fickleness in us. It is love which no meanness of earthly birth, nor poverty of condition, nor calamity of lot, can cool or lessen. It is love that can triumph over "tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword." These things cannot sunder us from a love like this; it remains the same in spite of all. They neither alter the current of this divine affection, nor diminish its volume. Rather do they augment it, and bring it down to us in fuller, swifter, mightier flow. They draw still closer around us the everlasting arms of love. Instead of tearing us from the embrace of Him who loves us, they twine and clasp it still more firmly round us, making us feel that separation is one of the greatest of all impossibilities.

This challenge of the apostle—"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?"—rests itself on certain well-known facts which he had just

been reminding us of (verse 34).

These facts were four; and in each of them we have a pledge of love—a proof that separation from that love was altogether impossible.

1. Christ died.—Who then shall separate us from the love of a dying Saviour? "Hereby perceive we the love of God, that he laid down his life for us;" as if the laying down of his life assured us, beyond mistake, of his love. For what interpretation, save that of love, can be put upon this dying for us? This is not a fact which can be misconstrued or misunderstood. You can say of some facts or deeds, they are ambiguous in their signification; but not so of this. It has but one meaning; for "greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." Our perception of the meaning of that death first drew us to the Crucified One, and fastened the link between us and his love. That that link can never be broken, this death assures us; and should the shadow of a doubt ever flit over us, or the thought arise, "How do I know that I shall never be separated from the love of Christ?" "we have but to call to mind that "Jesus died," and that will re-assure us, making us feel that this bond knit between us and Christ's love, at his cross, must endure throughout the ages to come.

2. Christ rose again.—Who then shall separate us from the love of a risen Christ? That love had led him down from heaven; it had led him up to the cross; it had led him down to the tomb. But it did not end there. It brought him up from the tomb to which it had led him down. The chill of the grave had not quenched it. In love he rose and went forth to carry on his work of love. His resurrection proves the strength and unchanging tenacity of his love. This second bond, formed at the grave of Christ, between us and his love, is, like the former, everlasting. The love of a risen Christ is a love for eternity.

3. Christ went to the right hand of God.—Who then shall separate us from the love of an ascended and exalted Saviour? It was love that led him back to heaven from this earth where he had died the death

of love. His exaltation is another pledge of love—love unquenched and unquenchable. He cannot rest till he has gone back to that heaven where alone he can complete the work which he had begun. There he has been seated in glory by the Father, "on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." And that love which had survived the shame of earth is not quenched by the glories of heaven. It pours itself out as freely in heaven as it did on earth. How strong the assurance of unchangeableness for ever in this love of the ascended Christ! Here is yet another bond, fastened at the Father's throne, between us and his love. Ah, surely that love must be for all the ages to come!

4. He maketh intercession for us.—Who then can separate us from the love of an interceding Saviour? Is not intercession the utterance of love? Do we plead for those we love not? Is not the intercession of Christ just his telling the Father how much he loves us, and how earnestly he desires our welfare? And is not this yet another bond fastened between us and his love? Does it not assure us that his love is, like himself, "without variableness"?

The promises of his second coming, so frequently repeated, are, in like manner, pledges to us of his love, as a love that cannot end or alter: for they shew us how greatly he desires re-union with us. Would he do so if he did not love? Would he do so if his love could change or grow weary? When he tells us, "I will see you again," or, "I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also," he surely gives intimation, not merely of a love that passeth knowledge, but of a love that admitted of no possibility of diminution or cessation throughout the ages to come.

As further assurance of this everlasting love, let us look at Christ's own words—"As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love" (John 15:9). Here he takes the Father's love to himself, and his own love to his people, and, placing them side by side with each other, declares the one to be the pledge, and measure, and likeness of the other. No other comparison could truly set forth

his love to us, save that of the Father to himself. When he would shew us what the state of his own heart is to us, he takes us to the Father's heart, and gives us a glimpse of the feelings in that paternal heart towards himself, as the only way of conveying a fitting representation of his love.

Of the Father's love to the Son we can have no doubt. It is infinitely certain and real. So real, so certain, and so true, is the love of Christ to us.

The Father's love to the Son is peculiar. It is a love such as he bears to no angel, to no creature. It is altogether and indescribably paternal. It cannot be conceived of nor approached. It stands alone. As is the relationship between the Father and the Son, so is the love. Both are peculiar,—peculiar in nature, in intimacy, in strength, in tenderness. Even such is the love of Christ to his own—altogether peculiar—a love liker to that love with which the Father loves him than any other love in the universe.

The Father's love to the Son is infinite; and though the Son's love to us cannot literally be so, still it is so far beyond any measurement or conception of ours, that no figure could rightly set it forth, save the love of the Father to the Son. Just as the Father's love to Christ rises inconceivably above all others, so Christ's love to us towers immeasurably above that which he bears to any other creature.

The Father's love to the Son is eternal. It cannot change, nor cease, nor cool. It must go on throughout the ages of ages. So Christ's love to us is unchangeable. It abides for ever constant. It is everlasting; nay, it cannot but be so, if it is to resemble the Father's love to him. If Christ's love to us be not thus unchangeable and eternal, what is the meaning of his life and death? Will he die for those whom he is to love only for a lifetime? Will he bear the Father's wrath for those whom he is not to love for ever? The eternity of his love is the only explanation of his agony and death. There is no accounting for one pang that he endured, save by the glorious truth that his love is

without end. This is the one key to unlock the mystery of his mighty love.

It is of this same everlasting love that the Lord speaks in another passage,—“I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it, that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them” (John 17:26). This is Christ's appeal to the Father. It is the summing up of his intercessions for his own. He speaks of himself as the declarer of the Father's name, that is, the revealer of the Father's character. He further declares his purpose of going on to declare that name—to unfold the wonders of that character, as if this were the Father's desire and purpose no less than his own. The result of this revelation was to be, that the Father's love might pour itself into them,—a love like that wherewith he loved the only begotten Son. Thus, not only does Christ compare his own love to them, to the Father's love to him; but he tells them that that very love of the Father towards himself was to be shared in by all his own.

Is not this love for the ages to come? Is it not eternal love—the love of him who is “from everlasting to everlasting God”? What must it be to be the objects of a love like this! What must it be to be “partakers of Christ,” fellow-sharers with him in the fulness of the Father's love! What must it be to have our dwelling for eternity in the bosom of the Father—the very heart and home of love! It is the dwelling of the Son; and it is to be also ours. It is his by right of being and relationship to the Father; it is ours by adoption and by relationship to the Son. To be one with him who is one with the Father, is surely security enough for our eternal possession of the heart of Godhead. It is love for evermore.

We got it, indeed, in virtue of no claim of our own. It fell upon us like the dew upon the flowers; the only apparent attraction being our repulsive unlovableness, and cold unlovingness. Like the sun, it rose freely upon our world, that its inhabitants might enjoy the radiance, though unthankful and unworthy. We were as dark as others, and as unwilling to be visited with the light; but the Holy Spirit put forth his

almighty power, and our resistance gave way. We were made to feel our need of such a love, and we opened our bosoms to receive its fulness. This is all we can say for ourselves: "We have known and believed the love which God hath to us" (1 John 4:16). We heard the report of this free love; we inquired, and found it to be true; we believed the love, and so we became sons and heirs. Once in possession of this love, we cannot lose it. It becomes our inalienable possession,—our treasure for eternity.

In writing the Roman Church, the apostle gives them this name, "Beloved of God." And is not this the name of every saint? Is not this the inscription on the forehead of the Church? It is; nor could there be any badge or title more excellent. It is the noblest and the most precious that she could wear. Her badge of royalty is nothing to this. Her badge of priesthood is nothing to this. All the names of honour and dignity with which she is encircled, as with the very jewels of heaven, are nothing to this. What adorning, what treasure, what crown, what kingdom, what splendour of dignity, can be compared to the blessedness and privilege of being the "beloved of God"?

It is the name which the Father has given to his Son,— "This is my beloved Son;" and, therefore, it becomes her whose members are sons and heirs, and whose name is "the Church of the first-born." It is a name most suitable to her who is "the Bride, the Lamb's wife," and who in early ages was addressed by the Bridegroom as "his sister, his love, his dove, his undefiled" (Song 5:2).

What a portion is this for those whose parentage, and character, and doings, entitled them only to the divine abhorrence—only to be hated, not loved by God! Yet this wondrous portion God has all along been bestowing on them. It was Israel's portion,— "Yea, he loved the people" (Deut. 33:3), and they are still "beloved for the Father's sake" (Rom. 11:28). It was specially Benjamin's portion,— "The beloved of the Lord shall dwell in safety by him" (Deut. 33:12). It was David's portion; for his name is "The Beloved." It was Solomon's portion; for his name was "Jedidiah," that is, "beloved of Jehovah" (2 Sam.

12:25); and Nehemiah writes concerning him: "Among many nations there was no king like him who was beloved of his God" (Neh. 13:26). It was Daniel's portion,— "A man greatly beloved." It was John's portion,— "The beloved disciple." Yet all these are but fragments; they are the mere shadows of the Church's privilege in her full possession of the love of God.

This love is eternal. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3). It is love before all ages that are past, and love unto all ages that are to come. The Church is chosen and loved from eternity, and the results of this choice and this love will be seen in the eternity that lies before her. This love is unchangeable. It is not fickle and impulsive. There are no ebbing tides, no wintry seasons, in this love; it abides the same. It is boundless. Its dimensions are altogether infinite; it is deeper than earth, higher than heaven. This immeasurable love surrounds us like a heavenly atmosphere—an atmosphere of light and joy. It is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. He teaches us what it is to be the "beloved of God," as well as what it is to be "chosen in Christ," and "accepted in the Beloved." Our life on earth is to be the enjoyment of this love in some poor measure—but it is our eternity that is to be the enjoyment of it to the full.

What peace should fill us! "Beloved of God"—what a sound of peace do the very words carry with them! Yes; it is peace—peace profound—peace unutterable—peace that seems like fragrance from the "mountain of myrrh, and the hill of frankincense." Nay, but it is more than peace; it is joy—joy unspeakable, and full of glory. It is the joy of being beloved by one so glorious and divine. Whoever may hate us, Jehovah loves us. Whoever may spurn us, Jehovah embraces us in his arms. We are the "beloved of God."

What consolation should be ours! Ah, this is the true healing of our wounds—the true balm of Gilead! It says to us, Fear not, weep not, mourn not, despond not; thou art beloved of thy God: what should disquiet thee, or render thee disconsolate? We might almost be led to

ask, Is it possible that we can ever have a sad spirit, or a heavy heart, or an aching head, or a shaded brow, seeing we are beloved of our God? It is the love of God to us that goes down into the very lowest depths of earthly sorrow. It carries light down with it into the deepest cell of woe. It brings us up out of our prison-house, and gives us beauty for ashes. It bears our burdens; it breaks our fetters; it dries our tears; it sweetens the wormwood of our bitterest farewells; it puts a new song into our mouth, even in our heaviest hours.

What strength should be ours! The thought, "We are beloved of our God," is full of invigoration to the soul. It nerves us for endurance; it strengthens us for labour; it animates us for conflict. When hard pressed by enemies, beset with temptations, and ready to give ground under Satan's fierce onset, we call to mind that we are "beloved of our God," and we return with fresh power and fearlessness to the struggle. Can a man "beloved of his God" be overcome?

What zeal should be ours! What should we not be willing to do, or to dare, or to endure, for one who has loved us with such a love! What boldness, what willingness to face hardships, what delight in making sacrifices, what eagerness in running in the way of holiness and service, should be seen in those who are "beloved of God!" Let us take this love with us continually, and we shall find far fewer difficulties in the way of duty; we shall grudge nothing, stumble at nothing, murmur at nothing—but press right onward, through light or through darkness—through calm or through tumult—through evil report or through good report.

What holiness should be ours! This love is holy love, and it is love for a holy purpose. It is the love of a holy being, and its influences must be most sanctifying. It loosens from the world. It destroys our relish for its pleasures. It lures us away from its vanities. It raises us above things seen. It purifies the soul. Oh, what a security, what a preservative against sin, and worldliness, and levity, is the realised love of God! Christ's friendship displaces all meaner friendships.

Fellowship with God, and walking with him in love, repels all fellowship that would come between us and him. All love has a power to mould us after the likeness of the object loving and beloved. The love of God has, above all others, this transforming, this assimilating virtue. It polishes off the angularities of character which presented the great features of unlikeness. It makes us seek completer resemblance to him, not allowing us to be satisfied unless we see the features of correspondence multiplying, and those of unlikeness diminishing day by day. It draws us closer to Him who loves, and cements the union in such a way that sin is felt to be a laceration of our very being, and every increase of nearness becomes of necessity an increase of holiness, and an advance in conformity to him who has given us this name of honour—"Beloved of God."

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God! Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:1).

Amen, and Amen! Spirit of power and love! warm these cold hearts of ours with the love of the Father and the Son, making us to feel how true, how real, how satisfying, how unchanging, is that love. Spirit of power and love! make us able to comprehend its breadth and length, its depth and height, comforting and purifying us each day by the remembrance of it, and teaching us more fully the meaning of being "beloved of God."

CHAPTER VII

THE CONSOLATION OF THE AGES TO COME

THE "Christ of God" is the "Consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:25). He was to be the great fountain-head of comfort to that broken-hearted nation;—himself at once the substance of the consolation and its dispenser. "I, even I, am he that comforteth you" (Luke 2:12). All that can cheer, and sustain, and heal, and gladden, is to be found in him. Must not even such woes as those uttered in the Book of "Lamentations" give way before the gracious words, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me"?

That which he was to be to Israel, he is as truly to the Church. Hence, writing to the Philippians, the apostle says, "If there be any consolation in Christ," meaning thereby, "since there is such abundant consolation in him." Not only does he give to God the name of "The God of consolation" (Rom. 15:5), but, referring specially to Christ, he says, "Our consolation, also aboundeth by Christ" (2 Cor. 1:5), and speaks of the "strong consolation" flowing from the gospel of Christ to the heirs of promise (Heb. 6:18). All this abundant consolation is for his saints. It is their "heritage for ever."

But the consolation is carried forward into the ages to come. It is as enduring as it is strong and abundant. "Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, who hath loved us and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work" (2 Thess. 2:16). It is "everlasting consolation" that we are thus put in possession of—consolation from the Father and from the Son. The connexion between the two parts of the above sentence is a peculiar one. The "everlasting consolation" referred to in the first part is made the ground on which we are to expect the present comfort mentioned in the second. The certainty of future comfort which we get when we receive the good news concerning him who is "the Consolation of Israel," is given as the reason why we may count upon all needed comfort here. It is as if the apostle had said, "He who hath so loved you as to put you in possession of consolation for eternity, will assuredly not deny you comfort now, but will supply your hearts abundantly with all that you need in present sorrow and darkness."

Man does not reason thus. He reasons from the present to the future, not from the future to the present; and chiefly on this ground, that he is sure of the present, but not sure of the future. But God, whose very object in sending his Son is to give us such a gospel as will, by the simple belief of it, make us sure of eternity, teaches us to reason from that eternity of which he thus makes us sure, to the present, of which we are doubtful. Our reception of the gospel placed us beyond the reach of doubt as to consolation hereafter, and the apostle would have us to infer from this the expectation of comfort here. Man would say, "Any measure of comfort you may get here you may take as a ground for anticipating consolation hereafter," reasoning from the present to the future,—taking for granted that the latter must be less certain than the former. God says, "As believers of my gospel, you are quite sure of consolation hereafter; trust me for comfort now, reasoning from the future to the present, and assuming that the former is more secure than the latter." And it was thus that the Lord taught his disciples to reason, when he said, "Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom," reminding them that the heirship of the kingdom was their guarantee for everything else, and that to allow fear to possess them was to belie their title and their hope.

This promise of "everlasting consolation" does not imply grief hereafter, any more than "eternal redemption" intimates that there shall be sin. But the consolation for past sorrow, which begins when God wipes away all tears, is a consolation that will go on for ever. Each new day in the approaching eternity will help to make up for our years of discomfort here; and we shall have an everlasting equivalent of gladness for the bitterness that has been mingled in our earthly cup. Each new joy that is then poured in upon us shall be not merely something gladsome in itself, but a joy specially meant as a compensation for past suffering, and so may truly be called "consolation."

It is as if God held ever in mind our old days of grief on earth, and kept continually supplying us with new joys in order to meet these,

and obliterate them from our memories. He did not afflict us willingly. He spared us all the sorrow that he could. He never smote us once beyond what the bare necessity of the case required. And he shews this hereafter by the nature as well as the plentifulness of the consolation. As the Father who has been compelled to chastise his child, so yearns over it that, the moment that the necessity for the infliction is over, he redoubles his caresses, as if to make up for the pain which he had been constrained to inflict; so is it with God in administering this "everlasting consolation." Though he repents not of the chastisement, still he rejoices in the occasion afforded of not only giving compensation, but of giving what will be infinitely more than compensation; nay, of making each past chastisement an opportunity for augmenting the overflow of his love, and doubling his gifts to those on whom, so unwillingly, he was compelled to lay his rod of discipline.

Truly it is an eternal equivalent that he gives us, in bestowing the "everlasting consolation." And, as if in token of the joy with which he administers this to us, he takes to himself the name of the "God of Consolation"—nay, of "the God of all comfort" (2 Cor. 1:3).

What more, then, can we need for lifting up the hands which hang down, and strengthening the feeble knees in these our days of weakness, than the assurance of consolation so eternal and divine?

From a threefold fountain comes forth this river of consolation, which is to make us glad hereafter in the city of our God. Each of the persons in the Godhead is a Comforter. The Father comforts, for his name is, "The God of Consolation:" the Son comforts, for his name is, "The Consolation of Israel:" and especially the Holy Spirit comforts, for this is his special office, and of this we get the assurance in his very name—"The Comforter."

Nor will the consolations of the Spirit cease when we pass into the kingdom where all grief is at an end. He is the "eternal Spirit" (Heb. 9:14), and, as such, remains the Comforter for ever. True, he has

work to do on earth now, which he will not have to do hereafter. But his fellowship, as the Comforter, we shall enjoy throughout the ages to come. In the absence of Christ he comforted us, making us to rejoice and praise: what will he not do in the presence of that Christ, in whose absence he so faithfully tended and cheered us! In the absence of Christ, he took of the things concerning him and shewed them to us, making our hearts to burn within us: what will he not do, when in his eternal teachings he can point to the visible Saviour on the throne, and reveal all the wonders of his glory!

Surely the Holy Spirit's office and ministry are not exhausted in his service here, however precious and wonderful that service has been. He has more to teach us hereafter than he has taught us here; for, alas! how little have we been able to bear! Do we sufficiently realise this? Do we feel towards the Spirit as towards one whose instruction, and light, and fellowship, we are to enjoy in the ages to come, no less than now? He may seem more needful now, more absolutely indispensable; but is this really the case? Shall we not, though in a different way, need him in the everlasting kingdom as truly as we do now? His work assuredly is not done when he leads us into the promised rest. That is much; but there is more to come. We may be sure that a lifetime's instructions have not exhausted his fulness, nor finished his work, nor satisfied his office.

But when we are entirely pure, and all is pure around us, how shall we need the Spirit? Was not Christ altogether pure, and yet he had the Holy Spirit without measure? Nay, and in the day of his appearing and his kingdom, this is one of the things to which our attention is specially called; for it is of that period that the Psalmist speaks, when he says, "Therefore, O God, thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Ps. 45:7). If, then, the holy Son of God is to be thus eternally filled with the Spirit without measure, need we ask why we should have this Spirit hereafter? To be associated with Christ as vessels for the reception of the Holy Spirit, is to be one of the special honours and joys of the kingdom.

Blessed thought! We are not done with the Comforter when we reach the inheritance. We are not to part with him any more than with Christ throughout the ages to come. We are to know him as the eternal Comforter, and at his hands shall drink the cup of "everlasting consolation."

Everlasting consolation! Consolation that shall never be reversed or straitened, but shall spread itself out over the endless days of the kingdom! How cheering the thought, in our sad and lonely musings here! How soothing the truth, when life's fever tosses us, and perplexity besets us, and regret frets us, and disappointment wounds us, and bereavement lays us desolate!

Everlasting consolation!—how it swallows up the sorrows of these brief hours, and makes them seem "but for a moment," as not worth the remembering or the naming! What is there here to make us shrink or hang the head, when the consummation is so blessed and so endless? Why murmur or be alarmed? Why lie in the dust and refuse to be comforted, as if sackcloth were to be our raiment for ever?

CHAPTER VIII

THE SERVICE OF THE AGES TO COME

THE Son hath made us free, and we are free indeed. We became acquainted with the truth, and the truth made us free (John 8:32). Our bondage was at an end: we were no more servants, but sons (Gal. 4:7); no more servants, but friends (John 15:15). But the ending of our bondage was the beginning of our service. We were set free that we might serve him whose service is liberty. No longer under the

law, but under grace, we went forth to do the will of our heavenly Master, and to find that obedience to that will was freedom. Not till then were the well-known words fully understood by us,—“O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thy handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds” (Ps. 116:16). By the loosing of our bonds we became his servants!

It was as the Son that Christ was the servant. So is it with us. Our sonship and our service go hand in hand. They began and they go on together. When we learned to say, “Abba, Father,” we learned also to say, “Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?”

We do not serve in order to be delivered; but we are delivered in order that we may serve. “Being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, we serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life” (Luke 1:74, 75). The deliverance comes through the simple knowledge of the Deliverer, and his delivering work upon the cross. Before this, and without this, there could be no service at all. But being thus delivered, we joyfully enter the service of our Deliverer. Having tasted that the Lord is gracious, we take up the easy yoke of that gracious Lord. “Being made free from sin [that is, being justified], we become the servants of righteousness” (Rom. 6:18). “Having yielded our members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity [i. e., to do the deeds of iniquity], we now yield our members servants to righteousness unto holiness” (i. e., to do the deeds of holiness, verse 19). “Nay, more,” adds the apostle, “being made free [justified] from sin, and become servants unto God, we have our fruit unto holiness [i. e., the result is increase in holiness], and the end everlasting life” (verse 22).

The privilege of serving, then, is that into which we are introduced in being forgiven and adopted. Our reception of the grace is the foundation of our service. Hence the apostle writes,—“We then, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have [hold fast] grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear” (Heb. 12:28). How service should be privilege—how the

place of service should be the place of honour—is a mystery to the men of this world, whose ideas of dignity are all connected, not with stooping, but with soaring and sitting on the high places of the earth. How we should be sons, yet servants,—kings, yet servants—is that which even we ourselves may sometimes wonder at. But what we know not now, we shall know hereafter. Our new life is one of service. We feel that we are servants—servants to the brethren, servants to them that are without, servants ever going forth to do the will of Him "whose we are, and whom we serve." Yes, servants and debtors! for the apostle uses both expressions, saying in one place, "I made myself servant unto all" (1 Cor. 9:19); and in another, "I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise" (Rom. 1:14).

The name of servant is one of honour. It was the Father's name for his beloved Son,— "Behold my servant" (Is. 42:1); and in him, as the true Obedient One, the great doer of his will, the Father delighted. It was Abraham's name,— "My servant Abraham" (Gen. 26:24). It was Moses' name,— "My servant Moses" (Num. 12:7); "Moses the servant of God" (1 Chron. 6:49). It was Job's name,— "My servant Job" (Job 1:8). It was Caleb's name (Num. 14:24). So was it the name of New Testament saints, applied to the apostles and to the brethren in the churches (Rev. 1:1; 7:3; Rom. 1:1; 16:1; Col. 4:12). Form first to last it is an honourable name. "Servant of God,"—who would not covet it! Who would not lift up his head with gladness at the thought that such a name was inscribed upon his forehead!

It was the "form of a servant" that the Son of God took upon him (Phil. 2:7). It was in lowly service that he delighted when here—"I am among you as he that serveth" (Luke 22:27). And it is to service such as this that he calls us—service to the Father, service to himself, service to the brethren, service to those "that are without."

As a description of this service and its rewards, he gives us the following statement:—"If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him

will my Father honour" (John 11:26). Here we have the way of service—following Christ; our only true way of serving being that of walking in his footsteps—taking him for our model in service, as in everything else—making our service an imitation of his. The result of the service will be, that we shall be where Christ is. Following him, we shall arrive at the same end of our obedience, and be with him for ever. Nay more, the reward of our service shall be glory and honour. The Father himself will honour us even as he has honoured his true Servant—his own obedient Son. With honour such as this, from the Father himself, in prospect, should not our service here be faithful and willing? Should we not with good will be doing service as to the Lord, and not unto men? There is wide room for daily service, and many calls on every side. Let us lose sight of none; let us shrink from none. He who shrinks from giving service to the Lord in any particular work, on account of its difficulty, or painfulness, or costliness, or labour, is in that case preferring to serve self or the flesh—or it may be the Evil One. He cannot be wholly idle. A master he must have, and service he must perform. Let him turn away from all carnal service, and, whatever be the toil and cost, fearlessly present himself for service in whatever work the Master may have need of him.

God expects service of us. And how often is it to quicken our languor, and shame us out of our sloth or timidity, that he smites us with his sharp, penetrating rod! Often has affliction sent us to serve, and shewed us the sin of standing all the day idle when there is such a work to do. Up and serve me in the gospel of my Son, is God's message to some. Up and serve me in the diligence of labour for my Church, is his counsel to others. Up and serve me as a witness for my truth—a testifier against all error and gainsaying! Up and serve me in seeking to win back heedless wanderers to the fold! Up and serve me in the thousand little duties and offices of daily life!

But our service is not ended here. It passes on beyond this age into the ages to come. It is everlasting service. No doubt there are parts of service carried on here which cannot be transfused into the ages of

perfection; and there will be new parts of service called for then, which we know not now. But still we may say that the service to which we were set apart, when first the blood of the covenant was sprinkled upon us, is in substance the same as shall be developed hereafter.

In describing the glories of the heavenly Jerusalem, the apostle says, "His servants shall serve him" (Rev. 22:3). This was one of the features in that scene of glory which struck his eye—the service which was rendered to this King of kings by his servants,—"Thousand thousands ministered unto him" (Dan. 7:10); or, as it is elsewhere written of them, "They serve him day and night in his temple" (Rev. 7:15).

Service hereafter as well as here,—service in the midst of the everlasting glory, is that to which we are called.

1. It is household service.—The redeemed form a family—God's family—called by his grace, gathered by his power, and named by his name. They are "the household of faith,"—a household made up of believing men—men drawn together and knit inseparably as brethren, by their recognition of one great truth or fact—the death of the Son of God as the atoning substitute. Thus, though many in number, and separated by clime and age, they form one family. As partakers of this common brotherhood, they have mutual service to render in many ways here as they are fighting their way to Canaan. They have to bear each other's burdens, to soothe each other's cares, to lift up each other's hanging hands, to guide each other's steps, to calm each other's tremblings, to wipe off each other's tears, to share each other's joys, and, by various offices of love gladly rendered and lovingly received, to shew how truly they are servants of the Lord, and servants to each other in him.

Many of the kindly offices of service performed to each other by the different members of this family will soon cease. All those that relate to sorrow and weariness and sin will end with our deliverance from

this body of death and our putting on immortality; but there will remain loving offices of service, which shall never end. As members of one family, dearly linked in everlasting brotherhood, we shall in some measure be dependent on each other, and find in these outgoings of ministering love, or loving ministry (let it be called either), the very joy of heaven. Never shall the household fall asunder like so many grains of sand, or its members cease to be needful to each other. That would be like the stoppage of the circulation, as if the heart had ceased to beat, or the pulse to respond to these beatings. Surely if—when the family is scattered and broken, not one of its members having reached their home, and most of them unknown to each other—there are so many blessed household services and family duties daily rendered, there will be thousands more, of which we have here no conception, continually performed, when that family shall be all gathered into the family mansion, and brought together, face to face, in the union of an endless brotherhood and an unobstructed fellowship. What the duties of that household service shall be we know not now, but we shall know hereafter.

2. It is citizen-service.—We are "citizens of no mean city." Our "citizenship is in heaven." We are denizens of the New Jerusalem. The freedom of the city has been conferred on us; and with the rights of citizens, the duties also have devolved upon us. These we cannot discharge here. They are reserved for the day when we shall "enter in through the gates into the city."

What they may be, I do not attempt to tell. But surely in that "joyous city" there will be the intercourse of citizenship and the mutual offices of citizenship. It cannot be without a purpose that we are to be thus placed together in one city. Kings we shall be; but also citizens. Priests we shall be; but also citizens. As such we shall serve one another. The dwellers in the Jerusalem above will not be less intimate, less helpful, less closely linked in mutual services of neighbourhood and city intercourse, than the inhabitants of the Jerusalem below.

3. It is spousal service.—Though partner of his throne and heart, the Church is not to forget that her very relationship to Christ involves duties of service. "He is thy Lord, worship thou him" (Ps. 45:11). This part of service must, of course, be rendered to himself alone—the service of the wife to the husband. It will be loving, endearing, happy service; but still it will be service—service to her Lord—service which none but a wife can render, and which none but a husband can receive—service which the world knows not of, and which too many of the saints seldom seem to think of. And though in the Song of Solomon it is enjoyment, not service, that is presented to us, yet let us keep in mind that enjoyment is not everything; it must alternate with service, else it ceases to be relished. There is the enjoyment when "the Beloved goes down into his garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies" (Song 6:2). But there is the service too, when "they rest not day nor night" in his presence, but "serve him in his heavenly temple" (Rev. 7:15).

Bride of the Lamb! thou hast in weakness and tears been trying to serve thy Lord here, in absence; but the time is at hand when thou shalt serve in the fulness of thy strength and gladness, in his immediate presence. And if to serve him here, in the midst of such hindrances, and with such a cold heart, be blessed, what will it be when thou shalt be able to serve him with a perfect heart, and with all obstruction for ever removed?

Bride of the Lamb! remember thy heavenly calling, thy mighty hopes, thy relationship to God's Son, that thou mayest be roused and cheered; yet forget not thy lowly ancestry, thy native unworthiness, thy unfitness for the honour, thy unlikeness to Him who calls thee "wife," that thou mayest be truly humbled. "He is thy Lord, worship thou him." He is thy Lord, let thy desire be to him. Forget not the reverent love that thou owest him—the adoration, the obedience, the service, that are his due. Serve him even as in his lowliness he has served thee! Count all things but loss in the performance of this service here, and hasten onward with eager gladness to the day of fuller, happier, truer service hereafter!

4. It is kingly service.—We are kings (Rev. 1:6), in virtue of our being members of Christ. Our kingship is the result of our redemption (Rev. 6:10), and follows upon our being adopted into the royal family of heaven. "As many as received him, to them gave he power [rather it should be right or privilege] to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name" (John 1:12). And then we read elsewhere, "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17). Faith, sonship, heirship, kingship—these are the steps in our promotion.

But our kingship does not interfere with our obedience and service, any more than did Christ's kingship interfere with his. He was at once servant and king. So are we: for we are "kings unto God," not to ourselves, as the kings of this world seek to be. Our royalty enables us to render royal service to him who has set us upon thrones; and thus we specially glorify him, as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

It was the ambition of ancient monarchs to be served by kings (Judges 1:7). The proud Assyrian is represented as saying, "Are not my princes altogether kings?" (Is. 10:8). Darius set over his kingdom "an hundred and twenty princes" (Dan. 6:1). And of Solomon it is written, that "he reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life. He had dominion over all kings on this side of the river" (1 Kings 4:21–24). Thus were these ancient sovereigns served by kings; and thus it is that by kings is the King of kings to be served. His servants are not merely the honourable of the earth, but kings—kings whose right of royalty is that of relationship to his own Son.

This royal service which we render is of many kinds. We serve when we come with Christ to execute the Father's long-suspended vengeance upon the ungodly (Ps. 149:9; Jude 14). This may be said to be our first act of kingship, the first forth-putting of our royal authority. We serve when we act as judges along with Christ (1 Cor. 6:2, 3; Rev. 20:4), judging the world. We serve when we reign;

having dominion over our ten or our five cities—acting as Jehovah's kings over all creation, and carrying out his purposes of righteousness throughout his far dominions. We serve when, throughout eternity, we administer under him the affairs of a blessed and holy universe. Thus do we serve in the kingdom, and, as kings upon the throne, do the will of him who has placed us there. The service which God is to get from us, is to be the service of crowned heads and sceptred hands. It is in "royal apparel" that we are to serve hereafter.

O the honour of being called to this kingly service!—to be God's vicegerents in carrying on everything relating to the coming kingdom!—to render service such as only kings can render—service befitting kings—service worthy of being rendered to the Great King himself! To convey his royal commands, or to execute his royal purposes in all parts of his infinite dominions—surely this is the very height of dignity, and power, and honour! May we not, with such a hope in view, welcome the Church's lowly estate in this evil age? May we not count all sorrow light, all poverty and low estate as nothing, all despiteful usage or down-treading as honourable badges? Is it worth our while to complain of anything we may suffer, or to be cast down because of disappointment, when we know that the kingdom is at hand, and that the blessedness of its service, even apart from the excellency of its glory, will make up for all?

4. It is priestly service.—The first end of priesthood is to provide a medium of communication between God and the sinner. Sin had broken up the direct intercourse, and an indirect one is established, by means of a middle party whose presence makes it safe for sinners to transact with God, and honourable for God to deal with sinners.

This was the truth which God taught Israel by means of their priestly ritual; and having graven this truth upon their hearts, and published it before the world, he took down the old fabric by means of which he had inculcated this truth, and substituted in its place the true medium of intercourse—his own Son, the High Priest of good things

to come. He, the Christ of God, has absorbed Israel's ritual into himself, so that it exists no more; and any attempt to imitate it is nothing short of unholy mimicry, founded on ignorance of the truth which that ceremonial embodied. All priesthood centres in him, and all the ends of priesthood meet and are fulfilled in him.

There is no priesthood upon earth now save the "royal priesthood" (1 Pet. 2:9), composed of those who have been made "kings and priests unto God" (Rev. 1:6). These are the "saints," the redeemed from among men, who have "been washed, and sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God" (1 Cor. 6:11). Other priests, whether growing up by apostolical succession, or fabricated by a new revelation, there are none upon the earth. The elect of God—they are the only priesthood. Priests of man's selection, or of man's anointing, or of self-appointment, God will not acknowledge. They are profane usurpers of an office to which none save Jehovah can set apart a man. Like the priests of Baal, they worship they know not what, and shall perish in the gainsaying of Korah.

Whatever claimants of the office or usurpers of the dignity there may be in any of the churches of Christ, there are no real priests save those whom the Father has chosen, and the Son has washed, and the Spirit has anointed for the office. The day is at hand, which shall judge between the man-chosen and the God-chosen—between the possessors of the Holy Ghost and the inheritors of a human fiction, the traders in a Satanic lie.

But the priesthood of these chosen ones is still in abeyance: it is not yet in actual exercise. They are priests-elect, as having received their priestly title; but they are no more. The "fair mitre" has not yet been set upon their head; nor the garments for glory and beauty put upon them. Their priesthood, like their kingship, is as yet a thing of faith, not to be actually entered on till the great High Priest come out from within the veil, whither he has gone to present the atoning blood. Yet their title is sure, and their claim is one which God will acknowledge

ere long. Their day of investiture and time of manifestation is at hand. Till that period arrive, they repudiate all priestly pretensions, and reject as profane usurpation the assumption of priestly honour or service, save in that sense in which the apostle says, "We beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable SERVICE" (Rom. 12:1); or in that sense in which he says, "By him let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name" (Heb. 13:15).

Our priesthood is after the order of Melchisedek. We look to the King of Salem and Priest of the Most High God as our type, or model. The Son of God himself is the true Melchisedek, and we, under him, lay claim to the name and dignity. Born from above, and unknown by the world as to our descent and parentage, we are the liker to Him who stands before us altogether without an ancestry. Our city is the New Jerusalem, even as his was the earthly Salem. Our abode is in a city of which it is said, "I saw no temple therein," even as he dwelt and held priestly office in a city without a temple. We are not of Israel, yet partakers of the same humanity, even as he was. Ours is like his, a "royal priesthood" of a far higher kind than what belonged to the earthly seed of Abraham.

As priests we are hereafter to conduct the intercourse between earth and heaven; for priesthood has ends in view beyond atonement and reconciliation. It is to secure a fitting medium of communication between God and his creatures; and hence, it may and shall exist after every stain has been washed out of creation, and every vestige of the curse swept away.

Priesthood shall exist in the ages to come, both in the person of Christ and of his redeemed ones—the members of his body. It shall be the living link between the upper and the lower world—between heaven and earth—between the Creator and the created. Christ and his risen saints,—his royal priesthood,—shall be the channel of communication between God and his universe. They shall be the

leaders of creation's choir;—gathering up from all realms and stars throughout space the various songs of praise, and carrying them to the throne of the Everlasting King. Through them worship shall go on, and supplication go up, and allegiance be presented, from all orders of the subjects of Jehovah throughout his illimitable dominions.

Our priesthood is everlasting; and the ages to come, when sin has passed away, shall widen instead of narrowing its range. And just as Christ's human nature is the great bond that links together the finite and the infinite, and the foundation on which the universe is to stand immovably, so the priesthood of Christ, carried on in that very body which was nailed to the cross, shall be the great medium of communication and communion, in all service and worship between the eternal Jehovah and the creatures whom he has made to glorify him, in all places of his universal dominion, far off or near.

Such is the "service" of the ages to come! It is blessed, and honourable, and holy service. It is not merely service compatible with freedom—but it is free—nay, it is liberty; and in that eternal service there is the enjoyment of an eternal liberty. And then, over all is spread the calm of an endless Sabbath. It is Sabbath service. It is service such as becomes the rest (or sabbatism) which remaineth for the people of God. For this Sabbath service we have waited long. Of it all our earthly Sabbaths were a type. They pointed forward to that time in which these two apparently discordant things shall be blessedly combined, service and rest;—service such as we cannot render here; rest such as has never been enjoyed on this side of the inheritance. Then that shall come to pass which is written—"They serve him day and night in his temple;" and again, "His servants shall serve him." True service, and true rest;—service without any intermingling hardship, or privation, or toil—rest without weariness or sloth; rest with God, and in God; rest throughout the ages of ages—rest which no devil shall mar, and of which no sin shall rob us.

CHAPTER IX

THE CITY OF THE AGES TO COME

LET us take our idea of a city, and of a city life, from the Bible—not from man's books. It may, in that case, differ somewhat from current conceptions, but it will not on that account be less true.

God does not think so meanly of a city as man does; nor has he taught us to associate little else save evil, and sin, and toil, with its name. God does not speak of cities as smoky prisons, hateful to look upon, and fit only to be swept away as so many Sodoms; nor does he represent innocence as dwelling in green solitudes, far from "the busy haunts of men." It is easy to glance at the bright side of the lonely village in the quiet glen, and, comparing it with the dark side of the crowded town, utter idle sentiment, and set it to song; but is such a picture true, or is it like the idea which God gives us of a city?

Rush into some city with the midnight train, and then pass along its streets, from which the crowds of day have just retired; or, better still, look down upon it from some height when its myriad lights are twinkling, and the smoke of the evening fires is going calmly up; and think of all that is contained in that narrow circle on which your eye rests. Try to count up the hopes, the joys, the loves, the sympathies, the fears, the cares, the sighs, the sorrows, the throbbings, the tremblings, that at that moment are flowing or reflowing in tens of thousands of hearts; and then ask, what must that place be where so many immortal pulses are beating, where so many thoughts are in motion, where so many energies are stirring, where so many lives are unfolding themselves, where so many hearts are giving forth their priceless treasures, and where so many eternities are ripening? In spite of din, and crime, and suffering, there are wondrous things seen, and heard, and spoken, and felt, and done in it, which fling

over it an intensity of strange and profound interest, such as no other spot can claim.

So it is with a city that God has connected the unfolding of his purposes in the past, and it is with a city that he connects these in the time to come. What is there in all Scripture story, or divine truth, that is not either more or less closely linked with Jerusalem? There is Bethany, and Bethlehem, and Emmaus, calm retreats, and full of fondest memories; yet, after all, it is round Jerusalem that the truest interest gathers; it was Jerusalem of which David sung; it was over Jerusalem that Jesus wept. And what is there in the visions of future glory which does not point to a city as the centre of its radiance—the terrestrial glory flowing out from the Jerusalem below, the celestial glory from the Jerusalem above? It was "a city" to which God pointed the eye of the patriarchs, when as yet they dwelt in tents; for of Abraham it is written, "He looked for a CITY which hath foundations;" and the apostle, in expressing his own hope, writes, "Here have we no continuing CITY, but we seek one to come."

All our hopes centre in A CITY. Nay, even paradise itself, as it shall be in the day when all things are made new, is connected with a city; for the "tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God," springs up along the banks of that river which flows through the streets of the heavenly city (Rev. 22:2.) In the ancient paradise, on the banks of that river which "went out of Eden to water the garden" (Gen. 2:10), there was no city nor dwelling for the first Adam and his spouse; but, in the centre of the future paradise, which is watered by the "pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb" (Rev. 22:1), there appears a city of surpassing magnificence, where is not only the dwelling but the throne and palace of the Second Adam and his bride. Jerusalem and paradise, which had of old been separate, have now become one; and as Solomon of old aimed at surrounding his own Jerusalem with a paradise, "planting vineyards, and making himself gardens, and orchards, and pools of water" (Eccles. 2:4, 5), so shall the true

Solomon compass the heavenly Jerusalem with a paradise more glorious than eye has seen.

That City for which we are waiting is to be the metropolis of creation. It is to contain within itself the excellency of all knowledge, and love, and brightness, and beauty. In it is to be the palace-royal, and it is itself to be the City of the Great King. Possessing within itself all glory, it is to diffuse, like a sun, that glory abroad, so that the nations of the earth shall walk in the light of it (Rev. 21:24). With His eye on such a city, yet to come, God spoke in previous ages of cities as places of honour—types of that true place of endless honour which shall ere long descend out of heaven from God.

Unlike all human cities, this city of Jehovah undergoes no change. It does not pass away like Babylon and Nineveh, nor dwindle into littleness like Athens and Rome. It is a "continuing city." It is built, not for a generation, or a century, or a millennium, but for the ages of ages. It shall be an eternal excellency—a tabernacle which shall not be taken down—a city which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.

But let us mark more minutely the description given of this city.

1. Its name.—It takes the name of "Jerusalem," not only because it is the "vision of peace," as the name implies, the city of the Prince of Peace, but because that name is associated with God and with his purposes of grace, with Messiah and his redeeming work, with all the types, and promises, and thoughts of God regarding the Church from the beginning. Round what other name do such memories gather? In what streets have such deeds been done, and such words spoken, as in those of Jerusalem? No wonder that the name should be carried forward into the ages to come, and inscribed upon the celestial city.

It is called "New Jerusalem," both because of its being in many things a contrast with the old Jerusalem, the city of Solomon, and David, and Melchisedek, and because all belonging to it is "new"—

former things having passed away, and all things above and beneath having come forth, like gold from the furnace, purified seven times, out of the hands of Him who says, "Behold, I make all things new."

It is called "holy"—the "holy Jerusalem" (chap. 22:10)—the "holy city" (chap. 22:19); for into it "nothing that defileth shall enter." "Holiness to the Lord" is written on all that it contains. They who dwell in it are holy; and all that is seen, or heard, or done in it is holy too. Sin is but a story of the past; and not a shadow of evil shall ever flit through its streets, or attempt to enter in by its gates of pearl.

It is called "heavenly" (Heb. 12:22), both because of its difference from the "earthly" city, and because in its plan, and materials, and architecture, it is of heaven, not of earth. It does not rise up out of earth like one of its mountains, but is let down like one of heaven's stars. It is not reared by human hands upon the plains of earth, like Babylon, or on the hills of earth, like Rome: its architect is divine, and it "comes down out of heaven from God" (chap. 21:10), bringing down with it the beauty and the blessedness of the land from which it comes.

It is called "the Bride, the Lamb's wife" (21:9), not, as if it were a mere symbolic picture of the Church, and not a true city; but because its inhabitants form "the Bride." The old Jerusalem was spoken of as a woman (Lam. 1:1, &c.), and a Bride (Is. 62:5), without thereby losing its reality; so the "New Jerusalem" is something more than a mere figure for the congregation of the saints. It may fitly be called the Bride, because it is the city of her habitation—the "many mansions of the Father's house," the place which the Lord went to prepare for his own (John 14:2; Heb. 11:16), the bridal city, the royal dowry which she received as her portion when she "forgot her own people and her father's house," that so "the King might greatly desire her beauty" (Ps. 45:10, 11).

2. Its foundations.—In number they are twelve, for it is "the city which hath foundations" (Heb. 11:10)—the city which cannot be

moved or overthrown. On these are written "the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (21:14), to indicate the nature of this stability and the source whence it comes—as the apostle states it, "built upon the foundation of apostles" (Eph. 2:20). These foundations are "garnished with all manner of precious stones" (21:19), to intimate the surpassing and varied glory of the city. For on earth man takes the commonest and most unsightly stones for foundations, even in his costly buildings. Even in the buildings themselves he never thinks of the jasper or sapphire. Marble is all that he can attain to, even in his mightiest palaces or temples. But here, not the walls or the buildings merely, but the foundations, are of precious stones. How excellent the beauty to those that are within or above! how gorgeous the spectacle to "the nations of the saved" looking up from below! And as, of all things known to man, these gems are the most imperishable and unfading, so must that city itself, set upon foundations such as these, be everlasting in its strength and beauty. It cannot lose its lustre, or take on any stain or dimness in the ages to come.

3. Its walls.—"It had a wall great and high" (21:12), "an hundred and forty and four cubits" (21:17). What entire security and completeness! How compact and perfect! Not as if enemies could threaten or dangers come nigh. These things have passed away. But as in the latter day the earthly Jerusalem is to have walls, which God is to call "salvation" (Is. 26:1; 60:18), though no foe is to come up against her; so the upper Jerusalem is also to have its walls of salvation and glory, for it is the city of the saved and the glorified. That wondrous wall, though not needed for defence, marks off the limits of the city, and proclaims from afar by its gorgeous lustre, "This is the holy city;" for "the building of the wall of it was of jasper" (21:18); bright, yet mild in its brightness, as if surrounded by one perpetual sunset, for the flush of translucent jasper, far surpassing what man calls "dim religious light," must be inexpressibly rich and lustrous, yet mellow to an extent of which earth's suns and sunsets can give us no conception. And the endurance equals the brilliance, for gems are not like the leaf or the flower, fading and corrupting.

They are incorruptible. Their light does not grow dim, nor their rich hues grow wan, through age. They are unchanging. What, then, must be the security, the gladness of the ransomed, when once within that city! Safe within these everlasting walls of jasper, what sorrow, what evil, what change can reach them! Safe for ever—safe in such a home—safe within such bulwarks, how they shall exult and praise! Let us try in this day of evil, even outside these glowing walls, to anticipate the joy and the praise. We shall not have to remain long outside, in this land of Meshech and in these tents of Kedar, for He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Even in this strange country let us sing the Lord's song, that we may cheer the way, and perhaps attract others by the melody. Instead of saying, as one of the olden time has done—

"How can I sing sweet Zion's songs

On this side Zion's hill?"—

let us, with Jerusalem before us, though still in the distance, take up David's pilgrim-psalm, "How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Jehovah of hosts!" foredating the time when standing within God's house we shall say, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand."

4. Its gates.—In number they are twelve (chap. 21:12), corresponding to the gates of the rebuilt Jerusalem upon earth (Ezek. 48:31–34), which is made after the pattern of the heavenly city, underneath which it is placed, so that side answers to side, and gate to gate, in the upper and in the lower city, just as if they were two spacious chambers in one vast palace, the one resting on the other, and the communication between them carried on by the ladder which Jacob saw (Gen. 28:16). Then shall heaven and earth be one, though still distinct in nature and in position, just as the tabernacle was truly one though subdivided into three;—the "holy of holies," with its rent veil, answering to the heavenly Jerusalem with its open gates; the "holy place," answering to the earthly Jerusalem with its nation of priests

(Is. 61:6), "accomplishing the service of God;" and the "outer court," answering to the residue of the earth with all its Gentile worshippers.

On the gates of the city are written "the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel" (chap. 21:12); just as on the corresponding gates beneath in the lower Jerusalem, of which it is said "the gates of the city shall be after the names of the tribes of Israel" (Ezek. 48:31–34), shewing the full sympathy, during the millennial age, between the two companies of redeemed men, and the orderly arrangements for communication between the cities.

At the gates were "twelve angels" (21:12). What shall we call them? Watchers—sentinels—"doorkeepers in the house of our God"—appointed to keep ever open these "everlasting gates"? Are they not "ministering spirits," stationed there still to minister for them who have entered into that salvation of which they were here made the heirs? And are they not standing there to minister to the King of glory, when he would go out or come in, as he himself announced, "Hereafter ye shall see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of man"? (John 1:51.) Thus shall angels in the ages to come exercise their wondrous ministry both to the redeemed sons of men, and the redeeming Son of man. On earth one of them opened the prison-gate to an apostle (Acts 12:10); another opened the rocky gates of Joseph's tomb to the rising King; and so in the heavenly mansions it is at the gates that we find them still in patient ministry of unwearied love.

These gates are of pearl—"the twelve gates were twelve pearls, every several gate was of one pearl" (21:21). It is of "carbuncles" that the gates of the earthly Jerusalem are said to be made (Is. 54:12), as if on earth the colour of the blood and fire were still to be retained, as a memorial upon the gates. But in the "heavenly places" this fiery hue passes off, and is exchanged for white; the scarlet becomes snow, the crimson wool; and the most spotless of gems is made to furnish gates for the celestial city. How perfect the picture! The varied hues of the twelve foundations, the jasper-glow of the massive wall, and then the

contrasting white of the pearly gates;—how refreshing to the eye, how rich the scene—like sunlight and moonlight giving full effect to each other's peculiar lustre! Never have we stood within such halls; never have we seen gates like these open to bid us welcome, or close behind us to tell that we had done with darkness and sorrow for ever.

These gates are never shut (21:25). That is, they are ever opening to receive the inhabitants—never barred so as to deny access, as the gates of earthly cities are (Neh. 7:3). Of the earthly city it is said, "Thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day nor night, that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought" (Is. 60:11). So of the heavenly city it is written, "And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day; for there shall be no night there; and they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it" (21:25, 26). Thus free is the access, thus abundant is the welcome. Never shall it be said of that city, "And the door was shut" (Matt. 25.) Yet, wide open as the gates are standing, "nothing that defileth shall enter;" no tempter shall have access; no curse shall steal in; no death there seek a prey. Only the voice of praise shall go and come. The tide of melody shall pass in and out: for, as of the lower so of the upper city, it may be said, "They shall call thy gates Praise" (Is. 60:18). Up from the multitudes below shall the song ascend upon the breezes of the new earth, and enter in at these gates of praise; while down from these "numbers without number" that fill the city, shall pour the descending song upon the worshippers below, finding its way through these same gates of pearl.

And as our lot on earth was "to go without the camp," that we, might share the shame of Him who "suffered without the gate" (Heb. 13:12), so shall it be our lot hereafter to be within the gates, and to be partakers of the endless glory which these gates inclose.

5. Its streets.—"And the streets of the city was pure gold, as it were transparent glass" (21:21). Our feet shall tread on gold! These feet that have trodden the desert-sand or the swampy moorland, or the flinty rock, or the cold mountain slope, shall walk on streets of gold—

gold not only pure and unalloyed, but transparent as crystal! We shall then be beyond the region where the "foot can swell" or the "shoes wax old," or the garments grow old; nor on that bright pavement shall our feet any longer need to be "kept." There will be nothing there to make us stumble or fall. Our feet still "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace," we shall move to and fro along those happy streets where the pure river flows, and where the ever-bearing tree of life flings its fragrant shadow. Like silver winding through plains of gold, that stream of life rolls onward, and we, walking upon its golden brink, shall taste the refreshment for which we so often, with homesick sighings, longed in this waste howling wilderness.

5. Its provisions.—"The tree of life is here, and the pure river of water of life, clear as crystal" (Rev. 22:1). With twelve manner of fruits that tree is laden, and every month these fruits are ripened. There is no complaining in the streets of this city. The food of immortality is here. We eat, and live for ever, sitting down under the shadow of that tree with great delight, and finding its fruit sweet to our taste. We eat and hunger no more, feeding upon more than angels' food—upon the bread of God. Restored to paradise—to more than paradise; made welcome to that tree from which our first father was thrust out—the better tree—the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God (Rev. 2:7). And then, as we shall hunger no more, so shall we not thirst any more (Rev. 7:16), for the living stream supplies us even more plentifully than the water from the rock supplied Israel. "They thirsted not when he led them through the desert" (Is. 48:21), much less shall we on the banks of the heavenly stream. The fountain-head of Israel's desert-water was a rock, but the source of the great city-stream is "the throne of God and of the Lamb" (22:1). Israel's fountain in the latter day is to be the sanctuary—"the threshold of the house whence this stream is to proceed" (Ezek. 47:1); but the Church's well of water springing up into everlasting life, is the throne—the throne of the Father and the Son. What will our first day be under these trees, and by the banks of that stream, when "led by the Lamb to the living fountains of water," and all "tears wiped away

from our eyes"—the heart's quick pulses soothed, life's contradictions reconciled, earth's wearinesses freshened, our brief day's sorrow over, this hot forehead cooled in that pure river, and the last remains of time's fever quenched in its freshness! Oh, who can tell, or think, how true will be our consolation, how perfect our joy!

6. Its light.—We are first told what is not its light,—"The city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it" (21:23); and again, "They need no candle, neither light of the sun" (22:3). Yet though there is no candle, nor sun, nor moon, "there is no night there." It is the city of light, the city whose every part—wall, and street, and gate,—is made to receive and reflect light; light such as never was known on earth. And whence comes this light? "The glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof" (21:23); and again, "The Lord God giveth them light" (22:5),—just as is said of the earthly Jerusalem, "The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory" (Is. 60:19). Directly from the glory of Jehovah, and from Him who is the brightness (the offshining, the irradiation) of that glory (Heb. 1:3), does the light come forth. It is with the fountain-head of light that the city is connected—the very centre of "the excellent glory." Jehovah and the Lamb: such is to be its twofold light—light infinite, and light finite—light uncreated, and light created—light from the eternal throne, and light from the cross of Calvary; light from the glory of Him who "dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto" (1 Tim. 6:16), and light from the face of the Incarnate Son.

For such a light the city is fitted in all its parts; and with such a light, in such a city, what will not the glory be! I know it is not the casement through which it passes, nor the gems which reflect it, that give beauty and value to the light; it is precious even here when breaking in, though faintly, upon such a dark soul as this, and upon an impure world like ours; but still, when all things around are suited to it, and made to set forth its excellency, how perfect will it be! Within the circle of that light, and in the city which that Sun of suns illumines, is to be our everlasting abode. What is there, then, on

earth that should daunt, or fret, or oppress us? Sorrowing "as those who have no hope" is indeed the sorrow of sorrows; but sorrowing with such a hope as this before us seems like an undervaluing of our inheritance. Should the "children of light" be troubled about a few hours' darkness when they are looking forward to the city of light, and to an eternal day within its courts?

7. Its privileges.—These are manifold, and, like the city to which they are attached, unchanging. We have seen that there is "no night there"—no "night of weeping"—no night of tossing, and weariness, and watching, so that we should say with Job, "When shall I arise, and the night be gone?" (Job 7:4)—no night of toil, and broken rest, and heavy dreams—no night of darkness or of tempest. All these have gone by: we now know what it is to be children of the day, not of night and darkness. But, besides this, there are other immunities enjoyed in this city.

There is no more curse (Rev. 22:3). Creation has been delivered from the bondage of corruption. It shall not again travail or groan. It waited long for the manifestation of the sons of God (Rom. 8:19), and that has come at last. Every trace of the curse is gone, for the sin which bound that curse upon the brow of creation has disappeared. Nor shall sin ever again have dominion over the new creation, for it is not under law but under grace, upheld by a better covenant, which is established upon better promises.

There shall be no more death (22:4); or, as it is more literally, "death shall be no more." It shall be "swallowed up in victory;" and, surrounded by the glories of resurrection, we shall forget that mortality was ever ours. No dread of "the king of terrors" shall disquiet us; no fear of having loved ones snatched away shall cloud our fellowships; no memorials of death shall haunt us—either the churchyard monument, or the blank which bereavement has made in our dwellings. These former things shall have passed away. And, as if to teach us the true evil of death, to prevent us misnaming it a "debt of nature," to shew us the divine estimate of its hatefulness and

terribleness, and the joy which its removal shall call up, God represents himself as speaking thus triumphantly: "I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from mine eyes" (Hos. 13:14).

There shall be no more sorrow, nor crying, nor pain (21:4). The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick (Is. 33:24); nay, God himself shall wipe away all tears from their eyes. O happy undoing of all the long ills of time! Sorrow is no more;—man's sorrow—his heavy burdens, and racking cares, and sore unrest;—woman's sorrow—her pangs of travail, her wounds of disappointed affection, with the manifold trials of her dependent lot;—childhood's trials—the ills of tender youth and feeble infancy, crosses, partings, sicknesses, so often drying up its freshness and dimming eyes "not yet ripe for tears;"—all these, with the ten thousand times ten thousand bitternesses of life, shall have passed away. The evils which have flowed over creation from the first woman's sin are all reversed! Man did his utmost to reverse them during the six thousand years when he had the lordship of earth, but in vain. Gold could not bribe his way back to paradise, nor make one of its closed flowers re-open its blossoms. Power could not restore order, nor banish lawless passions. Skill could not say to the pained head, Ache no more; nor to the fevered pulse, Be still; nor to the tortured limb, Feel not; nor to the wan cheek of consumption, Put on new bloom. Sage counsels and the experience of ages could not bind up the broken heart, nor re-fasten severed links, nor reanimate spent hopes, nor smooth life's rough realities, nor fill hollow voids, nor dry up the fountain of tears. But all this shall one day be done. God himself, with his own hand, shall do it. For the Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall lead us to the living fountains of waters, and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes.

God's throne shall be in it (22:3). It shall be the metropolis of the universe, just as the lower Jerusalem shall be the metropolis of earth; and just as of the latter it is said, "There are set thrones of judgment,

the thrones of the house of David" (Ps. 122:5), so of the former we know that there is Jehovah's throne, and the thrones of his risen saints, his "royal priesthood; "for "blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection; on such the second death hath no power: but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they shall reign with him a thousand years" (Rev. 20:6). This shall be not merely, like Gideon, "one of the royal cities" (Josh. 10:2), but THE ROYAL CITY, of which "glorious things are spoken" (Ps. 87:2). Here shall be the throne of the King of kings, in the midst of a paradise which, more truly than Asher ever did, "shall yield royal dainties" (Gen. 49:20). Here shall the "royal majesty" be bestowed on the true Solomon (1 Chron. 29:25); and here shall the true Esther be brought to the king, in raiment of needlework, in "royal apparel" (Esth. 5:1), with the "crown royal" on her head (Esth. 2:17). Here shall the true Solomon himself be crowned, "in the day of his espousals, and in the day of the gladness of his heart" (Song 3:11); and here also shall he not only crown his Egyptian Bride, but give her of his "royal bounty" (1 Kings 10:13). And at the marriage supper of the Lamb shall they drink "royal wine in abundance, according to the state of the king" (Esth. 1:7).

Here, too, "they shall see his face;" yes, look upon him face to face. "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then, FACE TO FACE." We shall see even as we are seen, and know even as also we are known. Then shall Moses get his prayer fully answered—"Shew me, I beseech thee, thy glory;" even as then, also, shall Christ's prayer for his own get its entire fulfilment—"Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may BEHOLD MY GLORY" (John 17:24). It is, however, not merely the "beatific vision" that is thus referred to when it is said, "They shall see his face." The special allusion is to the honour of standing in the royal presence, and having free access to it at all times. In the description of the royal glory of the court of the great Persian king, we read of "the seven princes [called also 'seven counsellors,' Ezra 7:14], which saw the king's face, and which sat the first in the kingdom" (Esth. 1:14). So, in correspondence with this scene of regal state, it is said, "The throne

of God shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him, and they shall see his face." Such is our glory, our preeminence, our blessedness, in the ages to come! To stand nearest the throne—servants, counsellors, princes, all in one—to see the King's face, to "be first in the kingdom"—this honour have all the saints. And to this agree the words of the vision, elsewhere in the Revelation, "Round about the THRONE were four-and-twenty THRONES, and upon the THRONES, four-and-twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment, and they had on their heads crowns of gold.... And in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, were four living ones, full of eyes before and behind" (Rev. 4:4, 6). To this agree also the words of that other vision of the white-robed, palm-bearing multitude who "stood before the throne, and before the Lamb" (7:9); and of whom it is said, "Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in the temple, and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them" (7:15). And is it not to this peculiar blessedness of "standing before God," and "seeing his face," that our Lord refers when he says, "Watch ye, therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to STAND BEFORE the Son of man"? (Luke 21:36.) Of those for whom this wondrous honour is in reserve, we may truly say with the Queen of the South, "Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee" (1 Kings 10:8).

To these, also, a "white stone" is to be given, and a "new name which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it" (Rev. 2:17). And with the "white stone"—the symbol of "no condemnation" for ever—there are to be given also the "white robes" (Rev. 3:4), the dress of triumph and bridal festivity, and kingly honour and priestly glory. They are made "pillars in the temple of God," and go no more out. They feed upon the "hidden manna," and eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.

Besides the "new name," there seems to be another inscribed upon them, "The name of my God, and the name of the city of my God" (Rev. 3:12). Nay more, Jehovah's own name is to be upon them. The

hundred and forty and four thousand that stood with the Lamb on Mount Zion had "his Father's name written on their foreheads;" and of the dwellers in the heavenly city it is said, "His name shall be in their foreheads" (22:4).

And "God himself shall be with them, and be their God" (21:3). Then shall he be seen as "Immanuel," God with us. Yes, God "himself;" he and no other: he and none but he; "his own self" who bore our sins in his own body on the tree; "that same Jesus" that went up from Olivet; he, the very Son of God who "was made flesh, and dwelt among us" for a season, shall then take up his abode with us for ever.

But more still, "They shall walk with me in white" (Rev. 3:4). It is not merely, "I with them," but it is, "they with me." Both of these imply blessedness and honour; but the latter intimates more than the former. As we read elsewhere, "I will sup with them," coming down and associating with them here at their homely meal; "they shall sup with me," going up to partake of my marriage supper above. It is much to be told by the Lord, "I will walk with them in this wilderness below;" but it is more to be told, "They shall walk with me in the paradise above." To have Christ for our guest and companion in our own home is much; but to be his guests and companions in his home above is unspeakably more. Yet this is the Church's glory and reward, "So shall we ever be WITH THE LORD."

Ye whose citizenship is in heaven, look upward, and press onward with speed and gladness. Ye are "citizens of no mean city." Ye are citizens of the "joyous city," the "perfection of beauty," the "joy not only of earth," but of heaven. Your home is in the "many mansions," and these mansions are in the "continuing city." Let not earth's mists blind you, nor earth's sorrows dim your eye, nor earth's glitter dazzle you, nor earth's cares make you hang your head. Heed not the ruggedness of the way, nor the meanness of the inn, nor the sharp inclemency of the blast; but gird up your loins—redouble your speed—press onward; the city is at hand! See its gleam yonder! Does that not cheer you? Is not that light, dim as it may be just now, better

than the world's sunshine? A few days will bring you to its gates. You will find them open to receive you, and the first step across the threshold will make you forget past years of grief, as if they had never been.

But some citizen of earth may read these lines. O man without a home for eternity, will not the glory of this everlasting city allure you to seek a dwelling in it? To be shut out of such a city, and to be "driven into darkness," that surely is no trivial loss. Will you not, then, secure the "freedom of this city," in which you may abide for ever; and so, when earthly cities pass away, you shall be "received into everlasting habitations"? The rights of citizenship are free. You may have them without money. Make immediate application for them, and you shall not fail. The Lord of the city will bid you welcome. He is too gracious either to upbraid or to deny you.

CHAPTER X

THE TEMPLE OF THE AGES TO COME

IN the vision of the heavenly city two things seem to strike the apostle's eye as new and unexpected. He saw NO TEMPLE therein, and no sun. As a Jew, he had been accustomed to a temple; but here there is none. As a dweller on the earth, he had known the brilliance of the sun in the sky; but here there is no sun!

Yet both of these apparent wants are supplied, God himself and the Lamb being both temple and sun. The great Builder of the temple has himself become the temple. The great Creator of the light of day has himself become the sun.

Let us notice first this strange want—the want of a temple, and then let us see the way in which this want is supplied.

"I saw no temple therein." The very thing which we should most have expected to find is the one thing wanting. We should naturally look for the very perfection of a temple, more glorious than Solomon's, more glorious than Ezekiel's. How strange, then, to find no temple! Why is it so? (1.) Not because God is absent or unapproachable. He is nearer now than ever—more really and consciously present; for this city on which the apostle was looking was his chosen dwelling-place. (2.) Not because there is no worship, or praise, or priestly service, such as a temple is specially associated with on earth. In that city the worship is unbroken, and the praise is never silent, and the service ceases not. There is a perpetual round of all those acts that befit the peculiar nature of a temple. (3.) Not because there is no fellowship with God or Christ. Communion there may be said to be at its height. There is the nearest, completest, most unobstructed fellowship that was ever tasted. (4.) Not because there is no priesthood. The saints are priests as well as kings. They have their censers as well as their crowns—their ephods as well as their kingly raiment. It is the royal priesthood that have their dwellings in that city; and that priesthood is eternal. Our great High Priest is after the order of Melchisedek, and that is for ever; it is an everlasting priesthood. We in this respect, as in others, are conformed to him; ours is the same Melchisedek priesthood as his; and, like his, this royal priesthood of ours shall be eternal. Not less than now shall we be hereafter "after the order of Melchisedek," when we take up our dwelling in the true city of the true Melchisedek. But as he, though the fullest type of the Great Priest, dwelt in a city without a temple, the earthly Salem, so shall we dwell and exercise our everlasting priesthood in a city without a temple—the "heavenly Jerusalem," the metropolis of creation, the "city of the great King."

There is, then, no visible structure of a temple, just because there is no need of it. The need of it shall have all passed away.

The need of a temple came in with sin. Eden had no temple, for there was no sin. Angels have no temple, for they have never fallen. It was for the sinning and the alienated that a temple was needed. For it is designed to be the visible meeting-place between the sinner and the invisible God. And, in connexion with this, it served many purposes. (1.) It taught the personality of God, protesting against the pantheistic deifying of every object in nature, and proclaiming Jehovah as the one living and true God. (2.) It taught men that God had not forsaken the earth, nor forgotten the race. (3.) It made known the approachableness of God, that men might know that access to him was not denied to them, though sinners. (4.) It laid the foundation for the effecting of that approach, by its sacrifices and services. (5.) It taught men that reconciliation with God could only be through blood, and communion with God only through priesthood. (6.) It proclaimed God's right to the creature's homage, shewing that he was not relinquishing but enforcing his claims, by the erection of a visible monument of his majesty, and the appointment of a meeting-place between himself and the sinner.

But if there be no temple, what is the substitute for it? "The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb." He whose name is Jehovah, God, Almighty (that is, Godhead, the Three-one God), and the Lamb (that is, incarnate Godhead, the man Christ Jesus—they form the temple. It is an infinite temple indeed; nothing less than the bosom of the Father—of him in whom we live, and move, and have our being. Godhead invisible is the shrine or holy of holies, in which is to be our special dwelling; Godhead visible—the Lamb slain—is the gate of entrance. Godhead visible and invisible make up the infinite temple, the wondrous sanctuary in which we are not only to exercise our priesthood and carry on our worship, but in which we are to have our blessed and eternal home. As kings, our dwelling is to be in a city—the city of the King of kings; but as priests, our dwelling is in a temple, and that temple not only perfect and glorious, but absolutely and truly divine! Men talk of nature's temple—its floor, the green earth—its roof, the bright starry firmament—its pillars, the everlasting hills; but what is all this to such a temple as this—the

Lord God Almighty and the Lamb! A temple made with hands may be sacred and glorious, but truly it has no glory at all when compared with this!

At first there was, as we have remarked, no material temple in Eden. Then, when sin came in, there was a mere spot appointed for a meeting-place—an altar. For ages this continued. Then it expanded into a tabernacle, such as that which Israel had in the wilderness. Then, when this was taken down, it stretched out into a temple, such as Solomon erected in Jerusalem. Then this was taken down, and the body of the incarnate Son of God became the only temple; as that which absorbed into itself everything belonging to a temple, everything which made a temple needful. Man destroyed this temple with rude hands; but in three days it was raised up by the power of God, and then taken beyond the reach of man to deface or destroy. Earth from that day was left without a visible temple, lest it should slight or lose sight of Him who is a spirit, and worship a locality, a structure, a mere visible shrine! And should not earth now feel its loss, its incompleteness, its desolation, and long for the re-appearance of Him who is its true and glorious temple?

When at last the New Jerusalem comes, it is seen without a temple! Not, as in the old Jerusalem, with a temple adorning it, and furnishing a centre of resort and worship to the inhabitants of the city; but without a temple! And why? Because all that was in the former Jerusalem was but the scaffolding; and now it is taken down that the true temple might be revealed—the Lamb the visible and palpable part of it, Jehovah the invisible and holy shrine—forming one glorious sanctuary, whose everlasting walls are the names and perfections of Godhead, more resplendent than jasper, or crystal, or gold; having for its entrance no longer a thickly-woven veil, to hide the interior, and hinder access, but an open gate—wondrous beyond all other gates of entrance—the incarnate Son of God, the Lamb slain! It is not, as of old, a temple in the midst of a city; it is a city in the midst of a temple! The infinite and everlasting walls of this temple compass us about, and compass about the city in which we

dwell. Our Father's house, with its many mansions, is surrounded with the glory of Jehovah as with the curtains of a pavilion, as with the walls of a temple. In that temple we are to dwell for ever. In that temple we are to serve as priests and reign as kings.

A passage such as this suggests those numerous others which speak of our "dwelling in God," such as 1 John 3:24, "He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in him, and he in him;" and 4:15, "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him and he in God;" 4:16, "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." And then in reference to Christ the statements are the same. Thus he himself speaks:—"At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you" (John 14:20). Thus, both of the Father and of the Son it is said that "we dwell in them," and that they "dwell in us." It is a mutual indwelling or inhabitation. We dwell in God, and he dwells in us. He is our temple, and we are his—for of us it is said that "we are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit;" and again, "Ye are the temple of the living God, as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (2 Cor. 6:16).

Such is the mutual relationship in which we stand—God dwelling in us and we in God! Oh, what is there like to it in all the universe! What closeness of intercourse, what vitality of union, what fulness and endlessness of intimacy and endearment, what boundlessness of mutual love, what vastness of dignity and honour! To have Jehovah for our temple, our sanctuary, our holy of holies; not only to be made pillars in the temple of our God, but to be the priestly occupants of its infinite chambers of glory—what wondrous honour is this! And then, again, to be ourselves Jehovah's temple, the sanctuary, the shrine, the holy of holies, in which he shall eternally dwell, and out of which his glory shall shine forth upon the universe—what wondrous honour is this! Faith seeks to realise it, hope brightens in the anticipation of it, love glows and kindles in the fond desire of possessing it; but the full unfolding of its splendour, the full enjoyment of its excellency, is

in reserve for us when the New Jerusalem descends. Eye sees it not; ear hears it not; the heart conceives it not; but it shall ere long be ours in the day when, as the bride adorned for her husband, arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, we shall be led in through the celestial gates to meet the Bridegroom in his beauty, and be acknowledged before earth and heaven as the daughter of the King.

If these things, then, be so, then—

1. What longing anticipations of it should there be on the part of the saints!—Should they ever be done thinking of it? Should it not be before their eyes day and night? Should they not be stretching out their hands towards it with the fondest longings of desire? Should they not, with the whole fervour of their souls, be pressing on to it? And the more fully and frequently they meditate on this promised glory in all its parts and aspects, the more will their longings be kindled within them. As you turn your eye upwards, and catch a glimpse of the celestial city, your faces will be made to shine with its radiance, and you will say to your fellow-saints around you, "Did not our hearts burn within us while we gazed through you open gate into the glory of the wondrous city?"

2. What consolation does this prospect fill us with!—It looses our bonds; it takes off our burdens; it frees us from care; it bears us up under the pressure of grief; it says to us, "Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." It was for the joy set before him that Christ endured the cross; and we have that same joy set before us, to enable us to endure it too: it was sufficient for him under all his infinite pains and burdens; it may well be sufficient for us. The glory to be revealed will in one moment swallow up all our sorrow here. It is large enough, bright enough, blessed enough, to accomplish this. Look upwards, sorrowing saint, to the New Jerusalem. Let the light which it even now, though afar off, sheds down upon you, cheer and brighten the darkness of this rugged way, along which you are passing onward to the kingdom.

3. What holiness should we be seeking to put on!—Our calling is a holy one; let us be holy too. He who called us is holy; let us be holy too. The inheritance to which we are called is a holy one; let us be holy too. The King of the city where we are to abide is holy; let us be holy too. Above all, seeing that we are to dwell eternally in God as in a temple, having the bosom of the Father for our holy of holies, let us seek to be conformed to the character of that holy habitation to which we look forward. We look for it, we gaze on it by faith, and thereby are comforted and gladdened; but that is not all. We gaze on it, and go on our way strengthened and refreshed; but that is not all. We gaze on it, and are sanctified. We gaze on it, and are separated from the world. We gaze on it, and have our affections set on things above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. We gaze on it, and are changed into its likeness, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord. The hope, the expectation, nay, the very thought, of such a glory, is fitted to purify the soul and to give it the victory over the world. Can we believe in such a glory and still cleave to the dust, still follow vanity, still court the fashion of the world, still "load ourselves with its thick clay," still mind the things that perish with the using?

4. What eagerness should there be to obtain this honour among those that as yet possess it not!—It is so unutterably precious, and we must be so poor without it, that it seems as if a necessity were laid upon us to secure it without delay—a necessity of the highest and most urgent nature—a necessity which nothing on earth can weaken or destroy. There is no necessity for us having honour, or dignity, or wealth here below; but there is the most imperious, the most overwhelming of all necessities for your securing the honour, the dignity, the wealth, of the promised heritage to come. You can do without the former, but not without the latter. Take away the former, and the worst that lies before you is a few years of poverty and shame; but take away the latter, and nought remains for you but the eternal sorrow, the endless degradation, the irrevocable banishment from the heavenly city.

What loss, then, must it be to lose that glory; what gain to win it! How terrible to come short of it; how joyful to secure it! How blessed to enter in; how sad to be shut out from such a city, and such a temple, and such a company, even were there no hell with its everlasting burnings, and no devil with his angels to be your companion for eternity!

It is worth the buying at any price, or any amount of labour and suffering,—how much more, then, does it commend itself to you, and press itself on your notice, when it is free! And of its freeness we now bring you good news, and of its unfolded gate, and of its unhindered access, and of the ready joyful welcome that awaits you from every dweller therein, and specially from the great King himself. Will not such tidings as these induce you to press in and be blest?

The bright things of earth are fading; and will you not secure the unfading? The cities of earth will soon be in ruins; and will you not make good your entrance into the city whose walls can never crumble,—the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God? The fashion of this world passeth away; and will you not secure your title to the inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away?

It is no long laborious process of entrance, such as is almost impossible for a man to discover; it is simple, and certain, and easily discoverable. You hear the voice saying, "I am the door," and that draws your eye to the entrance. You hear the same voice saying, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life," and that points out, beyond mistake, the path along which you must hasten. It is not buying, or deserving, or toiling, or waiting; it is but taking God's free promise, as it stands, and acting on it; it is but receiving the record which God hath given of his Son, and straightway all is yours,—the throne, the crown, the kingdom, the city, the temple, the eternal glory of the Lord!

CHAPTER XI

THE SONG OF THE AGES TO COME

THE word Halleluiah is literally, Praise ye Jah, or Jehovah; and the word Hallel, or praise, denotes clearness of voice or sound, as if to signify that praise ought ever to be the clearest, fullest, gladdest, utterance of man's voice, dwelling upon the wonders of Jehovah's character and mighty deeds. Hallelujah, then, is "Lift up the voice in its loudest and most expressive tones to celebrate Jehovah." Use that tongue of yours which is your "glory,"—use that voice of yours in all its variety of compass, in telling of Him whose name is Jah, the Being of beings, the I AM, out of whom all being came, visible or invisible, earthly or heavenly, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; for of him, and through him, and to him, are all things, to whom be glory and dominion now and for evermore. "Hallelujah! Praise God in his sanctuary; praise him in the firmament of his power; praise him for his mighty acts; praise him according to his excellent greatness; praise him with the sound of the trumpet; praise him with the psaltery and harp; praise him with the timbrel and dance; praise him with stringed instruments and organs; praise him with the loud cymbals; praise him upon the high sounding cymbals; let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord. Hallelujah."

Regarding this hallelujah, let us ask and answer such questions as these:—1. For what it is to be sung. 2. By whom. 3. Where. 4. How long.

1. For what it is to be sung.—For that which is in Jehovah, and which he has shewn forth, in what he has done and spoken. To utter the name of God, as the heathen do, without knowing what that name reveals, is but foolishness and mockery; it is no better than sounding

brass or a tinkling cymbal. But to speak of that name as embodying all the excellencies of greatness and goodness, of holiness and love,—this is praise—this is, of all employments, the noblest and the worthiest. And in proportion as that name is comprehended in all its infinite breadth and length, in that proportion will our praises abound, and our hallelujahs wax louder and louder. An unknown God calls forth no praise. It is the knowledge of what God is, or of what is in God, that awakens praise. Just as the sight of some object of surpassing beauty, some mountain scene, some ocean view, some far-stretching landscape, draws forth, irresistibly, our fervent expressions of admiration; so it is the sight of Jehovah, as he has revealed himself in his Word, that calls up our hallelujahs. Profoundly conscious of wants and sins past number, we are driven to our knees, and the cry of necessity goes up unceasingly; we cannot but pray. But losing sight of ourselves, and getting larger, brighter, discoveries of God, our souls fill with rapturous admiration, the utterance of want passes into that of worship, our hearts go upward, as by some irresistible attraction, prayer melts away into praise, and the unutterable groan vanishes into the more unutterable hallelujah. We see in him the great Creator—creator of heaven and earth, sea, sky, hills, plains, forests, streams; and we praise him. We see in him the perfection of wisdom, and might, and truth, and righteousness; and we praise him. We see in him the Lord God merciful and gracious,—the God who so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son,—the God of forgivenesses, and compassions, and endless bounties; and we praise him. All that is in him, and about him, spoken by him, done by him, is so infinitely perfect and excellent; his whole character is so glorious and loveable—that we wonder why there is such strange silence all around, why even one voice should be dumb; and say, as we contemplate more steadfastly and learn more fully his unsearchable riches in the person of his Incarnate Son, Who would not fear thee, who would not praise thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name!

That gospel which we preach is the proclamation of God's glorious character. It is his own testimony to himself; it is our testimony to

him. In preaching it, we bring you a good report of God, a good report of himself and of his doings; a good report of his free, rich, immeasurable love, that, hearing that good report of him, you may receive it, and give glory to the Lord your God, commencing forthwith a hallelujah which each day of your life will deepen and render more cordial and more intense.

2. By whom is the hallelujah to be sung?—It should be sung by each created thing—"Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord." Yet we know it is not so. There are voices that once sung it, that do not sing it now, and shall never sing it more. I mean the angels that kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation. There are voices that might have sung it, but shall never do so—the lost souls in the region of fire and woe. And there are voices here that might sing it; and our appeal to such is, "Oh, will ye not learn!" But, notwithstanding these, there are singers without number. There are the elect angels who, in the Book of Revelation, are represented as thus uttering praise to to Jehovah (5:11, 12). Their number is "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands," and they sing with a loud voice, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing." Thus they sing their hallelujah in the heights above; and "Praise ye Jehovah" comes forth from their lips; not merely while surveying that happy heaven from which they never wandered, but while looking downwards upon earth to see the sin-bearing Son of God (though in that sin-bearing they had no share), and to learn from the Church the manifold wisdom of God. Then there are the redeemed from among men, the great multitude that no man can number; these, standing on the sea of glass, or on the Mount Zion, or within the gates of the New Jerusalem, sing a hallelujah louder and more rapturous still: "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created;" and again, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb" (Rev. 4:11; 7:10). And then, as if this were not enough, as if these two classes, the unfallen angels and the redeemed from among men, were not

wholly comprehensive, we read, "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever" (Rev. 5:13, 14).

Thus, the number of creatures above and below, already joining in this hallelujah, is beyond our calculation or conception—thousands, and tens of thousands, and thousands of thousands, of men and angels; but who can tell the myriads more that are yet to be created, and yet to add their voices to this vast multitude?—for we are but the "first-fruits of his creatures" (Jas. 1:18). Each part of creation gives a good report of God; things living or without life, all speak well of him; each atom even of the material universe has something good to say of him; but, especially they who know him best—they who have seen the most of his wondrous character—they who read in the cross the glories of his name, the fulness of his grace—they who have thus seen what riches of being are in him, as Jehovah, the Being of beings, able not only to give being out of nothing, but to give being out of a state far lower than nothing—they who have not merely looked upon redemption as accomplished for others, but tasted it as carried out in themselves—they are, above all others, to be the chief singers in this mighty hallelujah.

There is, however, yet one voice more that is spoken of as joining in the hallelujah. It is the voice of Him who led the praises of his disciples on earth, as on that night when it is said, "When they had sung an hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives;" and that passover hymn was just one of those very hallelujahs with which the Psalms abound. It is the voice of Him who says, "In the midst of the church or congregation will I sing praise unto thee." With Him in the midst, leading the song—with his voice sounding the key-note, and leading the mighty choir of resurrection voices, in the great day of triumph, how indescribably glorious and magnificent will that hallelujah be! Ear hath not heard what shall on that day be heard,

when He who has been the minister of the Church's prayer and intercession shall become the leader of her praise!

Seeing, then, that we profess to belong to that saved multitude of praising ones, would it not be well for us to cultivate a more praising spirit? "In every thing let us give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us." By our praises let us shew what a good report we have to bring of that God who has loved us and made us his sons—what a good report we have to bring up of that goodly land, that incorruptible inheritance of which we have the assured hope, and of whose excellencies faith daily speaks to us. By our praises let us give a good report of God to men around us, that from us they may learn his love, and, in learning it, become partakers of the same sonship and hope; for what more does the most worthless man of earth need for his forgiveness and his peace, than just to learn that free love of God which our hallelujahs make known—that free love of God, in believing which we become his sons and daughters?

3. Where this hallelujah is to be sung.—It is sung, and has been sung in heaven, by those who never fell. Heaven has been always the region of hallelujahs. No discord has checked or marred these. There is no voice there untuned or untunable. And these hallelujahs have, age after age, been loudening and deepening, as more of Jehovah has been manifested, as principalities and powers have been learning from the Church more and more of the manifold wisdom of God.

It was meant to be sung on earth; but scarcely had the first song floated up from the groves of paradise, carrying up a good report of the glorious Being that had made all things very good, than the voice faltered and the notes died away. Sin silenced the song, and broke the lyre from whose strings it came. There arose no second hallelujah in Eden. But still God's purpose is that on earth it shall be sung, and sung more loudly and clearly than if it had never been silenced. Out of the broken lyre God is to construct one far sweeter and mightier—wider in its compass, and richer in its music—one which no second intruder will be able to destroy. Snatches or specimens of this

hallelujah we have in many ways. Each sinner that is delivered from a present evil world, forthwith commences his song; poor at first and lean, but increasing in its compass, and clearness, and richness, as he learns more of that free love which began it, and more of that Being of beings whom it celebrates. In the tabernacle we see God gathering his people together in the wilderness, and teaching them to sing hallelujah in his courts. In the temple we see him doing this more expressly, as we read in 2 Chron. 5:13, "It came even to pass, as the trumpeters and singers were as one, to make one sound to be heard in praising and thanking Jehovah, and when they lifted up their voice," &c. Age after age Israel was especially taught this hallelujah; and now it has passed over into the Church, and she takes up this song in the various lands of her strangership and exile. Hallelujah is the voice ascending from each ransomed lip. Hallelujah is the voice ascending each Sabbath from her innumerable congregations.

But there are various places and scenes in the midst of which hallelujahs are heard ascending. It is the burden of the song making mention of the Lord's mercies at all times (Ps. 111 and 136), but it is especially introduced into the scenes of the latter day. It ascends as the song of triumph over Babylon's downfall (Is. 25:1, 2); as Israel's song of pardon in the latter day (Is. 12:1); as Israel's song of praise in the land of Judah for their rebuilt city (Is. 26:1). It is the song of the redeemed company that are seen standing with the Lamb on Mount Zion (Rev. 14:1). It is the song of the victorious multitude on the sea of glass (Rev. 15:3). It is the song of the heavenly multitude over the ruin of the mother of harlots (19:1). It is the burden of the song at the out-pouring of the last trumpet in anticipation of millennial days (11:17). It is the song sung in expectation of the Lord's appearing (Ps. 96 and 98.) It is the song to be sung upon the new earth (Ps. 150.) Wherever Jehovah is seen manifesting Himself, shewing that he is Jah, Jehovah—and especially amid the scenes that usher in millennial days, or amid millennial scenes themselves, there the song arises, Hallelujah!

There is but one spot whence no hallelujah comes up—the lake of fire. Praise is silent there, and nothing heard to all eternity but weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. O man of God! is your soul filled with thankfulness that you shall never enter that region of woe, nor taste that second death, where there is no praise; as it is written, "The dead cannot praise thee, neither they that go down to the pit"? And, O sinner, can you bear the thought, that the only place in all the universe where there is no praise should be your home for ever? Oh, the darkness, the desolation, the wretchedness, of such a home; a home where God is not, save in his wrath; a home into which all evil things have found their way, and from which all good things have departed; a home where, instead of praise, there is lamentation, and mourning, and woe!

Yet, strange to say, even in the neighbourhood of this place of torment, a hallelujah is heard; for we read that when the smoke of the destroyed is seen ascending, a great voice of much people is heard saying, Hallelujah. The hallelujah of the heavenly host is echoed back from the very gates of hell. Can any picture be darker or more terrible than this? Wailing within, hallelujahs without! Blasphemies within, praises without! I do not say hallelujahs over the torments of the damned, but hallelujahs over the righteousness of that righteous God, that by terrible things in righteousness has at length avenged his Church's cause.

4. How long is it to be sung?—For ever, even for ever and ever; world without end, throughout the ages of ages.

There was a time when there was no hallelujah. Praise was unheard, for there were no creatures to praise. He to whom all praise belongs existed; but there were no lips to be opened in his praise.

Praise then had a beginning, but it shall have no end. The long silence has been broken, never to be resumed. There shall always be creatures, and voices, and instruments; nor shall these ever be dumb, or wax old in song. Hallelujah shall be eternal. There will be many

changes in the singers, and many variations in the tune; new voices added, and new themes continually coming up; but the hallelujah itself is for everlasting ages. An eternal hallelujah! How blessed the thought! For surely this will compensate—nay, infinitely more than compensate—for the dishonour cast upon Jehovah, and the blasphemies that have drowned the mention of his name, during these brief ages of earth. He will get enough of glory to make up for all. The profanities of time will soon be forgotten in the eternal hallelujah. It is not praise for a day, or for an age, but for ever and ever;—ages without end. God is now preparing themes, and providing instruments, and tuning voices; and when all this is accomplished, then shall that hallelujah begin, in all its fulness and compass, which shall never either flag, nor jar, nor end. How full of blessedness is the thought of an eternal hallelujah!—a hallelujah reaching as truly through endless duration as it shall do through the infinity of space.

Let us practise this hallelujah here. It will be a "song in the night" to us, and a prelude of the coming day when the ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion with songs. Let us practise the new song oftener, alone, or in concert; and let us learn even on this old sinful earth to sing that hallelujah with which we shall, ere long, make the new heavens and the new earth resound.

"Sing unto the Lord a new song!" Again and again that summons shall come forth, calling the heavenly citizens to praise. And when it is heard, like the voice of Israel's trumpets bidding Jerusalem assemble for the solemn feasts, then shall the redeemed take their harps and join in the song, and there shall be heard a voice "as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder, and the voice of harpers harping with their harps" (Rev. 14:2).

"Sing unto the Lord a new song!" How shall these words ring through the golden city! And when the summons is obeyed, and the song flows out,

"Loud as from numbers without number, sweet

As from blest voices uttering joy,"

how glad and glorious will be the burst of melody; and how will the ripples of that melody widen outward and still outward, till they break upon the farthest orb of space, or die in vacancy beyond!

As we pass through this land of strangers, let us break forth into praise, provoking one another to this, and saying, as we "go from strength to strength," "Sing aloud unto God our strength;" so that, though few in number, our voices may be heard everywhere, as the voice of unearthly harmony, making the astonished world to stay in its headlong rush of vanity, and listen, wondering and asking whence can come such sounds.

At present much of our song pertains to what is yet to come, for here we receive but the first-fruits of the Spirit, the earnest of the inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession; but even this is worthy of a new song. So many sins forgiven, and so many hopes lighted up within us to cheer the way! So many joys possessed, and so many more in reserve for us! Such fellowship now, and such assurance of fuller, closer, fellowship hereafter! Shall we not say to ourselves, "Sing, O daughter of Zion; shout, O Israel; be glad and rejoice with all the heart, O daughter of Jerusalem"? (Zeph. 3:14.)

Is it not a very little while and we shall, with "a pure lip" (Zeph. 3:9), and with an undivided heart, sing the full song which we have been aiming at so poorly here, and in which we have so often failed? The moist, cold, desert-air untunes both our voice and the strings of our harp; but when former things shall have passed away, there shall be no such complaint as to either voice or instrument; all shall be in tune. † That which is perfect shall have come, and that which is in part shall be done away. The rebuke shall be no longer—"What! could ye not watch with me one hour?—what! could ye not praise one

hour?" Weariness or satiety shall have then no place. Our eyes shall not be blinded by beholding such glory, nor our ears deafened by hearing such praises, nor our lips grow parched in singing the song of Moses and the Lamb.

Ours shall be a song which angels may listen to but cannot join in; a song which restored Israel in millennial days cannot reach to; a song such as we ourselves can hardly understand on this side of resurrection—the song of completed deliverance, and victorious battle, and heavenly citizenship, and irreversible triumph, and everlasting joy. We sing it here, to cheer our exile by the rivers of Babylon, or amid the rocks of Edom, or in sojourning for a night in some of earth's defiled cities, or in passing along its rugged highways; but we shall sing it soon in the upper Paradise, and by the banks of the pure river, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. It sounds well even here; it will sound better there. It is sweet to sing it in anticipation of the glory; but it will be sweeter to sing it in the midst of that glory. It is a song of wondrous power, and compass, and grandeur, even when sung by the scattered handfuls of the little flock in the family meeting-place, or in the sanctuary, or at the Master's table; but how inconceivably magnificent will it be—how much more wondrous in power, and compass, and grandeur—when sung in all its fulness by the whole innumerable multitude of the redeemed at once; Jesus himself leading the choir, either in the pavilion-cloud, where first they rest when caught up to meet their Lord in the air, or at the marriage supper, or within the walls of the holy City!

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