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GREEN PASTURES  
AND  
STILL WATERS

BY  
*J. DENHAM SMITH.*







**GREEN PASTURES**  
**AND**  
**STILL WATERS.**



# GREEN PASTURES

AND

## STILL WATERS.

PSALM xxiii.

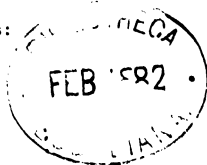
BY

J. DENHAM SMITH.

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"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:  
He leadeth me beside the still waters."

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**" Jesus, my Shepherd, Saviour, Friend,  
My Prophet, Priest, and King,  
My Lord, my Life, my Way, my End,  
Accept the praise I bring.**

**' Weak is the effort of my heart,  
And cold my warmest thought ;  
But when I see Thee as Thou art,  
I 'll praise Thee as I ought."**

## PREFATORY NOTE.

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THIS volume has not been written to gratify mere taste, or to please the fancy, but to present to the mind of the reader meditations by means of which he may enjoy conscious fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ—*the Good Shepherd*.

It has been written simply and plainly, because intended, not only for the ordinary reader, but for the sick-room and the lonely couch. The Psalm of which it treats is pervaded by a gospel which meets the questionings of any heart anxious about sin, or needing the assurance of a personal salvation.

To the young, whose path in life is all before them ; to the aged, who can tell of goodness and mercy having followed them ; and to the bereaved and sorrowing, who, though tried and, it may be, desolate, are yet entitled to say, "Thou art with

me ; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me"—these meditations are especially commended.

It has been well said that there are few pages in history more instructive than those which display the attitude of men when facing death. Contrast the experience of those who die without hope with that of the Psalmist in this Psalm. How different !—how sad the one and how blessed the other !

May He, whose truth I believe it to be, use this volume for His praise, instructing and benefiting the souls of those in whose hands He may place it !

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I.

## **General Description.**

**B**

## THE TWENTY-THIRD PSALM.

---

" HERE in the blest repose of faith  
The soul delights to see—  
Not only one who fully loves,  
But Love itself in Thee :

" Not one alone who feels for all,  
But knows the wondrous art  
Of meeting all the sympathies  
Of every loving heart."

—SIR E. DENNY.

## First Part.

### GENERAL DESCRIPTION.

OF all the examples in Scripture of faith and divine confidence, this TWENTY-THIRD PSALM is assuredly one of the sweetest. It is a casket of gems, radiant with beauteous lustre, each one shining with distinctive brilliancy; it gleams with the truth of God, telling of the wonderful things He will do for His people.

Its writer was a shepherd. None of his productions display more the ardour of his piety, or the poetic beauty of his lyre; though divinely inspired, and foreshadowing a greater than David, yet its imagery plainly portrays what was his own occupation, and what the rich character of his mind.

As to its place in the Word, like the garden which formed the centre of the unfallen earth, this psalm is laid in the very heart of the Bible. The central *verse* is said to be Psalm lxxxv. 11. A glorious one, truly!—where the great attributes of God are seen as if in council over the redemption



of man, the result of which has been described as "a double marriage in heaven." "*Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.*" We can scarcely open our Bible without alighting on the Psalms. But it is because of its own intrinsic worth that, from our very childhood, this twenty-third is so familiar to us.

Its place in relation to the truth lies between the cross of suffering, as described in Psalm xxii., and the hill of glory, as told in Psalm xxiv. It is nearly nineteen hundred years since the cross, and the glory to follow the sufferings is not yet. This psalm, as often noticed, is the psalm for the wilderness which lies between both. It is because of the atoning sufferings of Psalm xxii. that Psalm xxiii. is so precious, and Psalm xxiv. is made so blessed as foretelling the manifested glory yet to come. These three psalms together spread themselves over all eternity and futurity. They constitute the "yesterday, to-day, and for ever" of the divine ways. The "yesterday" of God's vast purpose as to the cross, and of the cross itself, is past; the "for ever" of the glory is to come; the "to-day" of the present is that in which we now live by faith. From the standpoint of this psalm we look back to the cross as the foundation of our hope, and forward to the glory as its blessed consummation.

As to its order (for it has a sweet, moral order),

it divides itself into two parts. The first speaks *of* the Lord, the second *to* Him. Thus in verse 1 we read, "*The Lord* is my Shepherd." In verse 2, "*He* maketh me to lie down in green pastures : *He* leadeth me beside the still waters." In verse 3, "*He* restoreth my soul : *He* leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake." But in the fourth verse the pronoun changes. There it is as if speaking of Him was not natural, or possible even, without speaking to Him, which indeed is according to the experience of every child of God. Hence it is, "*Thou* art with me ; *Thy* rod and *Thy* staff they comfort me."

The great characteristic of the psalm is, that it is full of Christ. For although the psalmist is speaking of himself, and has in his mind the green pastures of nature, and the still waters which rest in their midst, yet the Lord, and the Lord only, Jehovah-Jesus, is the one object before him.

Thus is it with us. We see the imagery to be beautiful, yet Christ is all, and in all. We need no interpreter to tell us He is there ; we see His face ; we hear His voice. His love, His tenderness, and His care, are all present to our hearts. Like the golden city of the new Jerusalem, the psalm has "no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it : for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Glorious

Shepherd ! in Thy light we see light, and "reflecting as in a mirror Thy glory, we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, as from the Lord the Spirit."

The lovers of this psalm are countless. It has been sung by myriads in the past, as in the wonderful times of David and Solomon, in the great revival days of Josiah and Hezekiah, and in subsequent New Testament times. Tenderly associated with our own bye-past happiest years, it has come down to us one of the sweetest songs in the house of our pilgrimage. Who can tell what hearts have been benefited by it, and what tears have bedewed it? Not a few whom we have known and loved, and who are now where their eyes weep no more, have had their dying couch lightened up with the sweet asseverations, "*The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want;*" and "*Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me.*" Peace to their memories! We seem in company with them when in company with this psalm.

As to its contents, what pen could write them? What tongue could tell all that might be said of Him who is the Shepherd? or of those who are the sheep of His fold, of whom the Good Shepherd says, "*Thine they were, and Thou gavest them me*"?

(John x.) The soul, in going through each verse, should be lost in admiration, love, and praise. It is a sanctuary of rest, a vast storehouse containing many departments of the unsearchable riches of Christ. The one whose experience it all is—and what more could we say?—has no want and no fear, and will never, in the blessedness of his being, have an end; for he will “dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”

But the question is, Are our own souls filled with its truths? and are we in the enjoyment of their blessedness? If so, what knowledge is ours!—the knowledge of Jehovah the Good Shepherd; the knowledge that He is mine, and that I am His; the knowledge of God through Christ, who reveals Him to us. For as we know the several objects in creation only through the sun which reveals them to our senses, without which sun none of them could be seen, and there could be no light and no life, so we can know God only through Christ. He alone it is who plainly manifests Him. He is the light of that world into which grace has brought us, and which is not of this world. So writes Paul the apostle: “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined into our hearts to give”—or that we may *give out*—“the light of the knowledge, the glory of God” (His character, His love, His righteousness, His counselled pur-

poses in the past, His promised glories for the future—all), “in the face of Jesus Christ.” Truly this is divine and ineffable knowledge—a knowledge which, as an infinite treasure, he has committed to us, who in ourselves are but earthen vessels, children of clay.

And what assurance! Who can measure this word, “The Lord *is* my Shepherd”? not He has been, or may be, or will be, but *is*, is now, and will be unchangeably so for ever. Who can tell the blessings innumerable indicated by “I shall not want,” a word which spreads itself over not only the whole of the life that now is, but that which is to come. He can never be poor in time or in eternity who has Jehovah for His Shepherd, who has so provided for him that he shall not want.

And what courage is ours!—“I will fear no evil!” Not a vain or a false, but a true and a holy courage, based on God Himself, on what He is in Himself, on what He is in relation to His sheep, and on what He has promised. How blessed never to fear! Daniel, Jeremiah, David, Paul, and an innumerable company of others in like danger with themselves, could tell us something of this.

Moreover, what rest!—“*Thou art with me*”—rest in the Lord, on His work, and on His word; rest in God through Him; rest in the conscience; rest

in the inner man, in life, and in death—rest. Yea, this is rest, truly and intelligently, to say, “Thou art with me.” *The Lord*, Jehovah-Jesus, who is my Shepherd, He is with me. I know Him as mine. And I know Him present with me.

And then, how personal! There are no less than seven “*mes*” in this brief portion of the Word—seven links of a golden chain of appropriated happiness. How sweet their sound! “He maketh *me*, He leadeth *me*.” Again, “He leadeth *me*.” Then, in verses 4, 5, and 6, it is still “*me*”—“Thou art with *me*; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort *me*; Thou preparest a table before *me*; goodness and mercy shall follow *me*.” A short yet great word of God truly is this which makes all so personal; and blessed is it to spell it out to one’s own soul, saying, “He maketh *me* to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth *me* beside the still waters.”

And then there is the glorious hope!—a hope which lifts our eyes up to the Father’s house, with its many mansions, and to the bright journey we are soon to take with the Lord thither, when He shall come again. A chain of marvellous sweetness is this—“I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and take you to myself, that where I am there ye may be also.” Oh, the unspeakable

satisfaction of being able to say, "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever!"

Let anyone think what this psalm means, and what are all these hopes therein contained, and what the goal, or what all the prospects which it places before us, and then ask what can time or earth give in comparison with these? We talk of the land of the blest, and we visit it by faith, but what will it be to DWELL IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD FOR EVER? Oh, it is not to tarry for a little, as we tarry now with a child or a friend! It is not as a stranger or a guest, not as a servant merely, or a friend, but we are to be there as sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty, each one in the Father's house, each one a child at home!

A thought of beauty and joy is this of the Father's house! The love of the Lord Jesus to His disciples might have betrayed it to them before, but never was it fully disclosed until John xiv. "In my Father's house are many mansions; I go to prepare a place for you." As the appointed children for that house we are as yet outside; we do not occupy, and we need many things. Therefore He says, "If ye ask anything in my name, I will do it." This is our family position. How beautiful is the account of the home and the asking! How natural! It is as every child acts who is absent

from home and knows his position. He knows and feels his wants; he refers them to his home. He asks; he receives. He receives as wisdom and love see fit. Soon the home itself will be disclosed. 'Sweet home!' may each child anticipatively say, Nay, sweetest home! How perfect and how perpetual its love and its rest! What surprises will it give as we catch the first glimpses of its glories! What untold joy and satisfaction will it yield! By faith looking up to Him who is there we can each one of us say, "I shall be satisfied when I awake with Thy likeness." We shall then be "for ever with the Lord"—

"Where no shade nor stain can enter,  
Nor the gold be dim."

And we may add; for this is the crown of our hope—

"In that holiness unsullied  
I shall dwell with Him.

"He and I in that bright glory  
One deep joy shall share;  
Mine, to be for ever with Him;  
His, that I am there."

Blessed Lord, Thou art near us in this psalm! It is a stream from the fountain, the fountain being in Thee. Thou hast said, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst, but the water that I shall give him shall be in him"



(or *become in him*) “a well of water springing up unto eternal life.” Lord, we would drink of Thee from out this psalm, Thou blessed Shepherd and Bishop of our souls! Like the Emmaus disciples, may our hearts burn within us whilst we talk to Thee by the way, and Thou openest to us this Scripture. It was in their sorrow Thou didst come to them.

“From darkness here and dreariness  
We ask not full repose,  
Only be Thou at hand to bless  
Our trial-hour of woes.  
Is not the pilgrim’s toil o’erpaid  
By the clear rill and palmy shade?  
And see we not, up earth’s dark glade,  
The gate of Heaven unclosed?”

—KEBLE.

II.

**The Good Shepherd.**

## THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

---

“O gentle Shepherd, guided by Thy hand,  
My soul hath found her everlasting rest ;  
Thou leadest me towards my Fatherland,  
And on the way Thy presence makes me blest.

“Sadly and wearily I went along,  
Tumult and vain unrest on every hand ;  
But Thou didst draw me from the noisy throng,  
And brought me to a quiet pasture-land !”

—THOLUCK.

## Second Part.

### THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

“The Lord is my Shepherd.”

BEAUTIFUL and commanding is the figure under which the Lord, in John x., designates Himself, saying, “*I am the Good Shepherd*,” and the work He assigns to Himself only God could do. The words, “I give unto my sheep eternal life,” are unanswerable, as expressive of His Godhead. It were blasphemy for a creature to assume that he could bestow eternal life. The Good Shepherd of John x., and the Jehovah of Ps. xxiii., are one and the same person. When He speaks of Himself as the *Good Shepherd* it is in relation to atonement. He lays down His life for His sheep, and along with that life the sins of His whole church. He takes it up again, which He has power to do, but not the sins; they get no resurrection, no place again in connection with Him, or with the redeemed, whose they were. When He is spoken of as the *Great*

Shepherd it is in relation to His resurrection. St. Peter speaks of Him as "that Great Shepherd of His sheep" whom God, in token of His accepted work as our Substitute and Saviour, "brought again from the dead." When He is called the *Chief* Shepherd, it is in prospect of, and as having connection with, a coming glory. To the elders it is said, "When the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory which shall never pass away." (1 Peter v. 4.)

There is grandeur as well as tenderness in the words, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me." They, too, tell of His Godhead; for who but One, who is omnipresent, omniscient, and infinite in knowledge, could from first to last be acquainted with each and all the millions of His people, their joys and sorrows, their wants and ways? Who but a divine Being could so place His fulness in relation to them that they through Him should never want, never fear, and never cease to be?

Oh, precious it is thus to identify *His person*!—as Jehovah-Jesus, the Angel of the covenant, who had carried Israel even as an eagle her young; who could say, "Before Abraham was *I am*." "*I am that I am*"—the *incommunicable name*! The prophet Micah says of Him, "His goings were of old;" that is, *from eternity*. It was He who at

the first made man in His own image, so qualifying him to have fellowship with Him; for none not like Him can have fellowship with Him. When we see Him, and are like Him, our power for fellowship will be completed. It was He who, from the earliest time, walked with our first parents in the garden, who appeared to Abraham as the God of glory, who carried Joseph like a flock, whose dwelling was under the wings or feathers of the cherubims. 'The "*I am*" of the Old Testament is the "*I am* the Good Shepherd" of the New.

But next to His person is *the greatness of His work*—a work which was indicated by His name: "Thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins."

Joshua was a type of Him thus. His original name was "Oshua." But when God wanted to perform His great wonders of saving His people, of bringing them through the opened Jordan, and causing them to tread on the necks of the kings of Canaan, He added the letter "J" to his name," that which represents Himself, so that "Oshua" the ordinary man became Joshua the leader and the saviour of the people. Thus in Jesus the divine Shepherd, that He might be able to save, is the incommunicable nature. "In Him," for that glorious end, "are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." (Col. ii. 3.) "For it pleased the

Father that in Him should all fulness dwell" (Col. i. 19); or more correctly, for "Father" is not in the text, "The whole fulness of God was pleased to dwell in Him." (*Revised version.*) *The Father* had blessedly to say to His work as a Shepherd. "It is perhaps," remarks another, "one of the sweetest things in the parable of John x." We there learn the mind of *the Father* towards the flock. For the Lord says, "As the Father knoweth Me, so know I the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep," letting us know that one of the deepest secrets of the Father's heart was His love and care for His Church. The flock indeed was the Father's before it was ever committed to Christ the Shepherd. "*Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me.*" They lay in the Father's hand before they were put into Christ's hand. They were the Father's by election before the world was, and became Christ's by the gift of the Father and by the purchase of His blood. And all the tenderness and diligent care of the Shepherd do but express the mind of the Owner towards the flock. The Shepherd and the Owner of the flock are one—one, it is true, in glory, but one also in their love and carefulness about the poor flock of redeemed sinners. Here then the poor of the flock feed and lie down. When here it was only a remnant that heard His voice. Who can hear the voice of a

Saviour but a sinner? The whole need not a Physician (the sick surely do, and thankfully betake themselves to him). Israel, who saw no beauty in Him that they should desire Him, received Him not. He refuses (for the present) to feed them any more. (Zech. xi. 9.)

His course here began by dwelling as a man amongst men, but without sin, fulfilling the law as we ought to have fulfilled it if we were to merit by our works eternal life. Then He placed Himself between God and us upon the cross. On Him falls the heavy blow which our sins had rendered inevitable; and by this at once our conduct is condemned, the law is satisfied, and yet, wonder of wonders! we are acquitted. For the Mediator remains not in the tomb; He rises from it on the third day, and God thereby declares that He acknowledges Him to be His Son, and accepts His sacrifice in expiation of our sins. Thence He ascends to heaven, where He sits on the right hand of God, and watches over those whom He has purchased by His death. This is the work which as Mediator He accomplished between God and man; as it is written, "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them. For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who know no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."



O Calvary! how precious are my thoughts of thee! From thee it is this river of salvation flows, and thy righteousness is plenteous and continuous as the waves of the sea. But the work on the cross, is it not told with sufficient clearness and tenderness by Himself in the psalm which precedes this? There He is "a worm, and no man." God has heard others, but does not hear Him. He cries, but no response. He was a reproach, hated of man." \* See also Psalm lxix.

In these psalms it is not, as in the gospels, others taking note of His sufferings and death, giving us historically the story of what they heard and saw; but it is the Lord Himself, the Shepherd, telling how the sword had entered Him, as when He cried, "I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing." What He endured, and what He felt, He tells us. It is there He makes His confession. No priest can confess our sins. He alone knew them all and confessed all. On the cross, suffering under them, He says, "Mine iniquities have taken hold on me." Ah! not *His own*, excepting as having taken our place; really yours and mine. And again, "*My sins* are not hid from thee." He knew them each one, and told them out to Him who had laid them on Him. Bearing our sins was

\* The Jews commonly called Him "*the hanged one*," and said that "His judgment was *perdition*."

the secret of His agony. But for such utterances as these we should never have known as we do what that agony was. If we read only the New Testament, all in His life and for the most part His death, appears to be peaceful. On the cross even what leisure of mind He seemed to have when He could converse as He did with the poor robber at His side, and with John concerning his mother, and with His Father respecting His murderers. All this was outward, and known to those who were spectators of the scene ; and seemed as if only peace reigned. But these Psalms tell of woes unutterable, which in their nature were quite unseen by men. In our own little measure, at a far distance it is true, it is ours, in service and in our dealings with others, to be outwardly peaceful, whilst within there may be sore conflicts, deep and dark exercises of soul, of which those around us are in utter ignorance. Oh, sweet to have this much, little though it be, which reminds us of the peacefulness of our blessed Lord, while yet His soul was troubled, as when being in an agony He prayed more fervently !

But to how many, alas ! is the secret of His agony quite unknown. It was not from fear of death simply that he was burdened with such sorrow.

What was said by Valdés, the Spanish reformer

of the sixteenth century, may be addressed to many in our own day who are ill-informed on the sufferings of Christ. "Having," he says (Valdés himself, emerging from the darkness in which he had lived), "frequently heard men speaking of the agony, the fear, the horror, and the sorrows, which Jesus Christ our Lord felt in His passion and death, by persons who pretended to show the cause why Christ felt His sufferings and death so intensely; many having suffered and died, some of them without evincing much feeling, and others not having shown any; whilst others apparently rejoiced and delighted in suffering, and even in death; and never having been satisfied in my own mind either in what I heard them say, or with what I read in books, that I came to the conclusion that God, having laid all our sins upon Christ, in order to chastise them all in Him, and He, having taken them all upon Himself, and having known them all in general and particularly, felt for each one of them that confusion, that shame, and that grief which He would have felt had He committed them all. Seeing Himself in the presence of God with so many and such abominable sins, it came to pass that He felt all that agony, all that fear, all that inward sorrow, and all that shame and confusion which would have fallen to the lot of each one of us to feel, for each one of

our sins, had we been chastised for them. Hence it was that He sweat drops of blood in the garden, through the agony He felt, *not at seeing Himself about to die, but at seeing Himself in the presence of God laden with so many sins*, on which account He prayed with His face to the earth, as a man would do who should be ashamed to look up to heaven, knowing that he was burdened with so many offences perpetrated against God. Now that it is true that God has laid our sins upon Christ, and that Christ has taken them all upon Himself, appears from Isaiah liii.,\* where he says, '*He was scourged for our rebellions and beaten for our iniquities ;*' and further on, '*He bore the sin of many ;*' and besides this he says, '*With the lividness of His stripes we have been healed.*' And this same appears by St. Peter, who, feeling as Isaiah felt, expresses himself almost in the same terms, saying, '*Wretched, or woe is me.* Thus could we each say, I see the evil I have done in offending against God, in not living according to the will of God, since with each one of my offences and of my sins I augmented the agony, the fear, and the sorrow which my Christ felt in His passion and in His death.'" Now it is because human reason does not see this that it can never understand the connection of the Son of God with death. All the

\* Which a pious antiquity calls a *fifth gospel*.—ADOLPHE MONOD.

wisdom of the wise is foolishness here, and just because the so-called wise of this world do not understand God, or sin, or atonement for sin, or the hell to which sin leads.

Blessed be His name! we who believe see His sufferings to be sufferings for sin. But we see more. We see His cross as a *throne-cross* for reward and for glory; for by death He will destroy death, and throw a flood of light concerning the character of God over the whole universe of His creatures. He who hung on the cross rejected will reign supreme. After the sufferings will come the glory. Sin has stained the earth and the heavens, but He has obtained dominion over sin, and will restore that which He took not away. His own resurrection was a first instalment of the mighty whole. Having paid the penalty due to us, death can hold Him no more. A prisoner having expiated his offence can be held as such no longer. When our offences were expiated God could hold His Son in death no more, but raised Him from among the dead, and placed Him at His own right hand, where He appears in the presence of God for us. Thus to save His sheep the Good Shepherd has taken the whole journey needful—from the throne to the manger, from the manger to the cross and the grave, from the cross and the grave to the throne.

"The work of the Rock is perfect." (Deut. xxxii. 7.) And we are "*complete in Him*." "Ah! if you knew," said the late Adolphe Monod, "how precious is this word to me. With Jesus I descend into the lowest depths of hell, and behold the formidable accuser of God's children but a vanquished enemy, and impotent to do me harm. With Jesus I tread as conqueror on the lion and adder, and on all the powers of the enemy! With Jesus I ascend to highest heavens, and in my Judge I recognize my Saviour! Whatever may happen, Jesus, Jesus is the only name I oppose to all anxiety and all terrors; to the agonies of death, Jesus; to the terrors of judgment, Jesus; to the sufferings of the flesh, Jesus; to the accusations of conscience, Jesus; to all questions, *Jesus, Jesus*."

This is the gospel; *we are as He is*. We "*have been crucified* with Christ." (Gal. ii. 20.) "We shall be glorified together with Him." (Rom. viii. 17.) It was for us He died, and we have died in Him. He being freed from sin, we are freed in Him. No sin, no condemnation, no death, no hell, rests on Him, and none on us. "Death no more hath dominion over Him." Therefore none over us, for whom He died. "For the death that He died, He died unto sin once: but the life that He liveth, He liveth unto God. Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God *in*

*Christ Jesus.*" (Rom. vi. 10.) This, I say, is the gospel, the good news of God to those to whom He has given His Son, and who *on believing* receive Him as such. Hence taking Him as God's gift to us, He is ours; for this word "*my Shepherd*" is a word of possession. Do any say, "How can I *know* He is mine?" Simply on the ground of His being God's gift to the sinner. I am a sinner; God gives Him to the sinner; as such I take Him, and on receiving Him *He is mine*, without money and without price. Yes; *my Shepherd, my Saviour, my Redeemer, mine as an absolute and unconditional gift.* "To as many as *received* Him, to them gave He power" (the privilege, right) "to be the *children of God.*" Can anything be more simple or more satisfying? and, I may add, more timely? For "now is the accepted time." And soon death may place you—

"Where tears of sorrow come too late for grace,  
As on th' *uprooted* flower the genial rain."

### III.

## Full Provision.



## FULL PROVISION.

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"AH, whence this wondrous stream of grace,  
Into my heart that steals?  
Is it that through an open place  
Heaven thus itself reveals?  
Yea, let the door be open still,  
And floods of grace my heart shall fill."

—*From the German.*

### Third Part.

## FULL PROVISION.

"I shall not want."

FOUNDED on the fact that "the Lord is my Shepherd" is the assurance, "*I shall not want.*" None but a Christian can say, "I shall not want." He who depends upon any earthly source of satisfaction can never feel he has enough. The Christian, rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory, realizes that he not only has a fulness of blessing, but an overflowing measure. With such a Saviour-Shepherd it could not be otherwise. And this word, "I shall not want," is not conditional, but absolute; not dependent on what *we* are, but on what *the shepherd* is. To supply the wants of his sheep, is the one great requirement of a shepherd. He withdraws from all other occupations that he may live with and, if needful, die for his sheep.

David himself would have died for the lamb

he rescued from the jaws of the lion. The Good Shepherd laid down His life for His sheep. None ever heard of a flock unattended by a shepherd, or of sheep requiring pasture that the shepherd did not give the supply. He has special knowledge of them by their need, and sometimes even by their sufferings or defects, as the Good Shepherd so specially knew Peter in his denial of Him, and David in his sin.

A shepherd never ceases his care. It is night and day work, winter and summer the same. Hence he knows his sheep. If in pastoral lands we watch the shepherd, we shall find that when a lamb is born he gives up all else to attend the little weakling, taking it to the fire if needful, or if there be no fire at hand, holding it in his bosom. And, moreover, when the flocks are on march, and a little one from weariness drops behind, he takes it up and carries it ; or if in its friskiness it gets out of bounds, he goes after it with his crook, by which he brings it to his hand, and carries it back to the flock again. When a young or a strange sheep is brought to his care, he talks to it, and feeds it from his own hand with the sweetest morsels, talking to it all the while, mingling his voice with the food, by which means his voice becomes known by the sheep ; and soon he begins to call it by a name, and thus the

sheep gets to know not only the shepherd's voice, but also its own name.

This needs no application ; for who does not think of John x. 27, 28, "My sheep hear my voice: I know them, and they follow me." Glorious description ! Tender relationship ! "*My* sheep," and "*my* Shepherd." "My" is a word expressing property. What a property have we in Him ! And He has His property in us. "Jehovah's portion is His people." Oh to know more of what is *His* inheritance in His saints—not *their* inheritance, which they have, but *His* inheritance in them !

It has been whilst in pastoral lands, seeing the devotedness and tenderness of the shepherds towards their sheep, that I have so specially thought of Jehovah-Jesus, of His love and tenderness, and of His ever-watchful care. Once, when far up amongst the higher valleys of the Engadine, I saw, on a still, quiet Lord's-day morning (one of those calm, unclouded mornings which so sweetly harmonize with the magnificence of the scene and with the sacredness of the day), what seemed like a little funeral procession moving slowly down one of the surrounding heights to the Alpine village where I was. It was a shepherd with an invalid sheep. He knew nothing of having a carriage for himself, but he had hired one for his sheep ; he had no room for himself, but he had hired one as

a temporary hospital for it. Arrived at the place, I saw him carefully separate the sheep from his large shepherd coat with its old Roman hood, which he had wrapped around it, and burying his fine face deep down in its woolly side, he gave it his parting, I may add, his loving, embrace, saying, as he kissed it, "Farewell, my Jeanie." I marvelled when I thought how he had, as it seemed, a thousand more on the height (for I had seen them on their going up from the transalpine plains of Italy), yet he had a name and, it would seem, a special love for each one.

Such in the great pastoral lands is an ordinary shepherd. Such doubtless was the sweet singer who sings for us this charming pastoral. He knew his sheep, and that he was responsible for them, protecting from all foes, and supplying all wants—able to give an account of each one.

"For twenty years," said Jacob to Laban, "have I been with thee ; thy ewes and thy she goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee ; I bare the loss of it ; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day or stolen by night. Thus I was" (this is what it cost him) ; "in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night ; and my sleep departed from mine eyes." (Gen. xxxi. 38-43.)

Touching description of Jacob's cares and sufferings in the discharge of his trust. "Not one torn of beasts did he deliver up to Laban." He could say, "*I bear the cost of it.*" In the mirror of this picture we see a greater than Jacob; we are reminded of *His* responsibilities, and *His* sufferings, and of how He came into the world full of tenderness and full of tears; so came that He might bear our griefs, and carry our sorrows, yea, die for us, as He said, "I lay down my life for my sheep, and those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost." And again, "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish: neither shall any" (*man* is not in the text) "pluck them out of my hand." Thus double security have we; for He adds, "My Father, which gave them Me, is greater than all" (all enemies and all ills), "and none is able to pluck them out of His hand."

Against such security—the hand of the Good Shepherd and the hand of His Father—what can earth or hell avail against us? No marvel the word is absolute, "I SHALL NOT WANT;" for besides the security being great, the supplies are infinite. All the vast departments of unsearchable and untraceable riches are in Him; allied to His resources there can be no lack. Our goal is "*the riches of His glory,*" and the wants by the way are provided

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for accordingly. Hence, "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Oh, what *can* we want that is not to be found in Him? Atonement? Reconciliation? Peace? We have all in Him. He has died for us; "He is our peace" and our pardon; He has purchased all for us by His own blood. Do we look for heaven? He is our title. Sympathy in sickness or suffering? He maketh our bed in our sickness. Society? "Lo, I am with you alway." By night He is with us; in sorrow He is with us; when solitary or alone, and others leave us, He is with us. Having *Him* who is the father of the fatherless and the husband of the widow, we can never say we are bereaved, never say we have no friend, none to help or sympathize with us. We are no longer alone in the world when once we can say, "*I know whom I have believed,*" or "I know *Him* whom I have believed." (*Revised Version.*)

Blessed Shepherd! Who can tell what we have in thee? Are we defiled? Thou "girdest thyself with the towel," and art keeping us clean. Are we exhausted? Behold, thy everlasting arms are around us. Do we fear thou art gone from us? "Fear not: for I am with you." Are we in want? Is the bread scant and the poor body in need? "He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust." Said an aged saint, whose confidence, like

her means, seemed to be wasting away, "I opened my Bible upon the words, 'All sheep and oxen, and the cattle upon a thousand hills,' when the Lord seemed to say, 'Do you think when these are mine I can deny you the little that you may need until the day I take you to myself?'" From that time she never lost her confidence and never suffered want. Another, also an aged one, who had saved a little for her old age, but on changing her last pound, and with only two shillings and sixpence of it left, was beginning to think that after all she might die from want. One morning, however, she was found fallen asleep in Jesus, with that little sum just lying near her couch. The Lord had taken note of her exact need, and knowing that in His own heaven she would be well attended, had taken her to Himself.

Precious in sickness or in health, in life or in death, is this word, "I shall not want." Oh, how much they lose who have no Shepherd, no Saviour, and no certain rest ; but are like the troubled sea, or as Luther says, describing the human heart, that "it is like a ship driven by the storm winds from the four quarters of the world. Here rushes fear and anxiety concerning future misfortune ; there comes grief and melancholy about present evils ; here whispers presumption of future prosperity." Who can count the sorrows of such ? And what is the



past human world but a history of such? What alas! is the voice of its millions which comes to us from over the long ages of time, and which imagination still hears? To what can we liken it? As with Nature, whose sounds are mostly of the *minor* key, so with this voice of the suffering ages. It is like the sobbing amidst the trees of some desolate forest; it is like the mourning of birds that sorrow for their mates; it is like the wailing of the storm over the remains of some gallant vessel whose distress rigging hangs broken on the lonely waves. But were the days of the past worse than these? Ah! no; man's inhumanity to man, the spirit of oppression on the one hand, and of predicted lawlessness on the other, are seen on all sides.\* The world is not still young, and going to grow better, as many imagine; but has grown old in iniquity, and is (this age of it) fast ripening for its long-predicted doom.† Hence the wave of apostacy still rolls on, and the groan of creation is still heard deeper than ever. Full of want is this sinful world, and must be so whilst without God; and such is the deceitfulness of sin man turns not to God in his want, but refuses His Son, who alone could satisfy him. Oh, ye who may read these words, say, Is this God *my* God? Can you

\* See 2 Peter ii. 11, 12, also Jude 10 to end (*Revised Version*).

† See *Papers for the Present Time*; "The Millennium," &c.

place yourself in the sweet "*mes*" of this psalm, saying, "He maketh *me* to lie down in green pastures; He leadeth *me* beside the still waters"? Can you say of God, He is *my* God, mine to supply all my need? and of this Good Shepherd, He is *my* Shepherd, *my* Saviour? And if not, why not? Alas! what loss is yours, for time and for eternity; yea, what want! With a first-felt and new-born solicitude deep down in your soul, well may you now say—

"Why burns no love within my breast?  
'Tis that in ignorance I rest.  
If I, my Lord, my life had known,  
Ah! to whom else should I have gone?"



IV.

**Green Pastures.**

## GREEN PASTURES.

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“AND, ah ! what sweetness I experience there—  
The blue sky crystal clear, and from the trees  
A thousand balmy odours fill the air,  
Borne on the pinions of the vernal breeze.

“For heart and eye, how rich the pastures spread,  
When with unceasing change by day and night,  
Like a fair garb, with jewels all inlaid,  
A veil of freshest flowers enchants my sight.

“The noonday sun, unveiled by envious clouds,  
Calls forth their varying tints in hues of light ;  
And when in evening shade his beams he shrouds,  
The violets yield their fragrance to the night.

“How well the unbroken calm, so deep and still,  
My soul refreshes, long with tumult filled ;  
And now methinks my undivided will  
May to my Shepherd's will for ever yield.”

—THOLUCK.

#### **Fourth Part.**

### **GREEN PASTURES.**

“He maketh me to lie down in green pastures.”

WHERE in nature shall we find a lovelier scene?—  
the calm day; the verdant mead; the clear stream;  
and a flock of sheep—some drinking and others  
feeding, or resting

“Where spreading trees and shady rock  
Defend them from the noonday sun.”

But it is first feeding, then resting. It is proverbial  
of all flocks that when they have well eaten they  
lie down and rest. Sweet image of those

“Whom the Good Shepherd leads,  
Where storms are never rife,  
In tranquil dewy meads,  
Beside the fount of life.”

Yea, image of those who, filled with Christ, lie  
down at rest and confidence in Him. My soul, art  
thou feeding and resting thus? All ordinances, all  
fellowship with others, and even the Word, will be

of no avail unless feeding on the Lord Himself; yea, on God, on the divine love He bears us, His purposes of grace and glory, by which we see He has separated us unto Himself, "that we may be holy and unblameable before Him in love." These are indeed true pastures in which to feed and rest. And it is He who leads us into them, even the Lord the Shepherd. But let us note the form is passive: "He *maketh* me to lie down in green pastures." Blessed this His constraining power when the Spirit through the Word works unhindered in the soul! It was He at the first who made us to lie down at the cross, leaving the burden of our sins there. It is He, now, who makes us to lie down afresh in God's presence where we are, as Christ is holy, righteous, accepted in the Beloved. Such pastures are green pastures, fresh springing with a delight which is eternal.

But we note further there is progress. Sheep when they have fed on one pasture are ready to be led out to another; or having gone in first for food, are ready to be led out on march. Thus we go in and out and find pasture. We go *in* in communion, and *out* in service. When our souls are happy in the Lord we are ready to be led out in service, or in suffering if called to it; ready also for a fresh leading into all the great departments of the hid treasures of wisdom and knowledge which are in

Christ. Progress as to our standing, our acceptance, our justification, our sanctification in Christ, our rank and title before God—*none* ; but as to service, and knowledge, and love, and joy, an infinite degree. We are to grow in these both here and hereafter. Said Paul, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after, if by any means I might apprehend that for which I am apprehended in Christ Jesus.” Progress? Yes ; for ever ! Who can tell “what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height,” or “know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge” ? Yet such is our path of progress—out, for ever into where our every bliss is bounded only by what is *eternal and infinite*.

Now Christ the Good Shepherd is the Door into all this ; and He it is who leads us in. (John x.) Yes, it is a kind of lovely contradiction, singular, and sweet as singular, that whilst He is the Door, yet He it is who leads us in, and then, being inside, He leads us more and more to Himself, and through Himself into God—into the ways of His grace and love, and purposes in Christ, into all His blessed will concerning us, which will is our sanctification, our entire separation, unto Himself through the Word. It was because the Word was *His* Word, and led more and more to the knowledge and enjoyment of Himself, that made it so



blessed to the psalmist. Hence he could say, in Psalm cxix.—

“*Thy* statutes have been my songs” (v. 54), and

“*Thy* word is a lamp unto my feet.” (v. 105.)

“*Thy* words are sweet unto my taste.” (v. 103.)

“*Thy* law is my meditation.” (v. 97.)

“*Thy* testimonies have I taken as an heritage.” (v. 101.)

“*Thy* commandments are my delight.” (v. 143.)

“*Thy* testimonies my counsellors.” (v. 24.)

It is into this law of the Lord, these testimonies, the whole realm of His love and grace as disclosed to us in the Word—a broad land of wealth unknown—that He delights to lead. This He does by His Spirit, who teaches all things, and brings all things to our remembrance.

But the word “green pastures” more correctly is “*fresh-budding pastures*,” that is, pastures which by reason of revival in growth are made to bud anew. If we want to know how they are made to bud anew in the soul of one who believes, let us, as in a mirror, behold the wonderful effect produced on the disciples, after the Lord’s death, resurrection, and ascension into Heaven, when the Holy Ghost came down and dwelt within them, bringing to remembrance all the things which He had said to them, and all that the prophets had written concerning Him. And even before the advent of the

gift of the Father let us behold the Good Shepherd with the two sorrowing ones on their way to Emmaus. Their subject as they stood before Him "looking sad" was *Himself*; "they trusted that it had been *He* which should have redeemed Israel." "Foolish" indeed, as He said they were, "and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets had written." "Ought not Christ the Messiah of the Scriptures to have *suffered*?" Suffered what? Why those very things that now so saddened them, "and then to enter into His glory;" of which, as if He had said, His resurrection this very day is the beginning. See how He leads them out into one "fresh-budding" pasture after another. Think with what new light they saw the whole ritual of suffering victims under Moses. Think of the Psalms—this xxii. Think of the cry there—"Eloi, Eloi," &c.—the very words of His anguish on the cross; and of the fact about His garments—"They part my garments among them, and for my vesture they cast lots." Think, did He tell them of Psalm lxix.—"They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink;" or Isa. liii.—"He was wounded for our transgressions;" or Zech. xi.—"The pieces of silver the price of His betrayal." Isa. liii., again, which speaks of His being "numbered with transgressors, and with the rich in His death." As they listened

how would the two robbers and the tomb of Joseph come to mind! Oh, what bursts of illumination on the Christ who had just died according to all these! Then He led them out into the glory to follow. His flesh would rest in hope. The Holy One, though dead and buried, would not see corruption; He would be shown the path of life. Was not this a way of leading out into pastures, fresh-budding pastures, they could never forget? And did not all these truths *fresh bud*, as it were, in their souls?

And were they not precious to Himself? Who knew the pastures better than He? As man He had often been refreshed by them, looking for divine relief and enjoying divine communion through their means. With what ever-growing interest would He trace in them the path of His humiliation, also the path of the glory which would follow the humiliation. As Son of man He understood, as in the Song, the sweet bridal affections yet to be manifested and enjoyed in the coming day of His espousals; also His connection with all the several glories of the earth and the heavens, as foretold by the prophets. Wonderful pastures were they to the Man of sorrows; ever refreshing His spirit with the joy set before Him, for which "He endured the cross, despising the shame." Teachable men were these disciples; the unction of His word had dropped on their inmost heart, as they said, "Did not our heart

burn within us, while He talked to us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?"

Oh, my soul, it is the entrance of His word that giveth light! it giveth understanding to the simple. The letter killeth; the spirit giveth life. It is true they did not see the Christ before them, their eyes were holden; but they saw the Christ *of the word*, how that He must rise again. They saw with the eyes of their soul; and their affections were all aglow with love and wonder and unspeakable joy. The darkness may seem to be still without, but there was sweetness within; Christ was formed in their hearts, the hope of glory. Is there nothing like this in our own experience? Are not the pastures "*fresh-budding*" pastures? After some new sense of His love, or some new refreshings at His table, or whilst sitting under the word, or speaking of Him to others, "Oh, I have believed in my completeness in Christ for years," may a believer say, "and in my sanctification in Christ before God; I have long believed in the atonement, and have known something of the savour of the precious blood of Christ with God; but these truths were never so precious to me as now! For years I have seen God's purposes, but they never appeared so comforting, so sanctifying, as now! What a balm for life's woes now for me is the atonement! What a rock under me as years grow

and life decreases are the purposes of God, which cannot be altered, but must be accomplished ! Christ Himself becomes revived in the soul ; the pastures under His leading are thus *fresh-budding pastures*. Blessed Lord, lead me into these pastures. Pasture me more and more by means of the glorious mysteries of thy word, and pasture thy poor flock in these days that they may never neglect or become independent of the Word, or of the fresh anointing and the pure grace which they so much need." Living on past experiences will not do ; dreaming of heavenly places and living an earthly life will not do. Oh, let it not be said now as once it was of Ephraim, "Grey hairs are upon him, and he knoweth it not !" Blessed Lord, revive thyself in thy whole Church. Why should not thy whole Church be led out anew into green pastures, the fresh-budding pastures of the truth, and beside the still waters of divine consolation and joy ? Why should any appear as if like the troubled sea when it cannot rest ? To the Christian we would say—

"Be not satisfied with gleaning  
 Scanty measures for thy soul,  
 When His pastures smile with blossoms,  
 And thou may'st enjoy the whole.

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

## PSALM XXIII. AND JOHN X. 7-9.

My Shepherd is the living Lord ;  
He makes me His salvation know :  
He leads me to His peaceful word,  
Where stillest waters gently flow ;  
He leads me to His boundless store,  
And tells me I shall want no more.

No door is now 'twixt me and where  
His own divinest pastures grow :  
He feeds me with a shepherd's care,  
And leads where living waters flow ;  
Yea, leads me, Saviour Shepherd mine,  
Where all is rest and all divine.

With Him I rest 'mid happier bowers  
Than highest seraph ever knew ;  
'Mid more imperishable flowers  
Than erst in balmy Eden grew :  
I rest where I can always prove  
The sweet restorings of His love.



V.

**Still Waters.**



### **"STILL WATERS."**

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**"SWEET waters these : but oh ! above  
The streams of life more purely flow ;  
There all the joys of heavenly love  
His fair unblemished flock shall know.**

**"There we, beloved, redeemed, and blest,  
The sorrows of the desert o'er,  
Beneath our Shepherd's eye shall rest,  
Nor ever faint or hunger more."**

**—SIR E. DENNY.**

## Fifth Part.

### STILL WATERS.

“He leadeth me beside the still waters.”

ALONG with the green pastures are the “still waters”—waters of rest; or, as some read it, “waters of rests” (plural). We are *led* by the Good Shepherd beside these. “He shall lead His flock like a Shepherd.” (Isa. lx. 4.) He Himself is the pure river of the water of life, “a fountain of gardens, and a well of living water.” As sheep refresh themselves by the side of calm waters, so we solace ourselves in Christ. How quiet and confident a flock appears when resting in the presence of their Shepherd. “In quietness and confidence shall be your strength” is the word of the Lord to us by the Prophet. Quiet resting in God is what our souls need. And faith in the many great and precious promises, which are all yea and amen in Christ, is blessedly related to this quietness. It is whilst enjoying the consolations of the Spirit which

flow from these, that we rest beside still waters. A sense, moreover, of what is our sure destiny now and for ever, as kings and priests, as heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, gives the strength that comes of this quietness and confidence. None not satisfied can rest, and Christ only can satisfy. "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst." Do we thirst for rest? He was our rest at first when He said, "*I will give you rest.*" As we take His yoke, and learn of Him who was of a meek and quiet spirit, He is our rest more and more, as He says, "*And ye shall FIND rest to your souls.*" But sin is the disturbing element. Hence I would draw out to our view something of those broad rivers of "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption" which issue from Him. It is by these we rest. Especially would I show that holiness—without which no man shall see the Lord—and rest sweetly agree; sin and rest never.

A child of God cannot rest by still waters if the mind be troubled respecting sin, or ignorant of what holiness is. As to perfection, only *One* ever knew perfection. There is no perfection but in Him. It is not sinlessness or innocence that the Christian can ever have in this life. Innocence supposes no knowledge and no thought even, of sin; holiness is compatible with both. The clear

heaven of an innocent bosom was an element which, added to a very happy outward condition, made for our first parents a paradise. They were created in innocence *without* the knowledge of evil. We have no such innocent bosom or outward condition, yet are we holy before the Lord. It has been well said, that a definition of terms, such as those of church, inspiration, minister, regeneration, faith, justification, sanctification, would do much to dispel the mistiness which hangs over divine truth, and save an immense amount of confusion and unrest in the minds of the children of God, and prevent volumes of controversy which issue from the pen.

Did we know rightly, we should know that it is saved *sinners* who, notwithstanding that they have a sinful nature, are holy before God.

Sanctification and its adjuncts—holiness, sanctified, saint, &c.—are terms the radical idea of which is simply—separate, set apart from one thing or purpose to another.

Every child of God is thus set apart, or is holy in a threefold sense—he is *holy in Christ*; he is *holy as possessed of a divine nature*; and is called upon to be *holy in his life*.

He is *holy in Christ*; set apart from all eternity by God for Himself; *accepted*, “highly favoured,” as the word is, “in *the Beloved*.” In order that

he may be righteously this—freed from sin in God's presence (for how otherwise could he be there?)—Christ undertook to bear our load of guilt, and to put all away by the sacrifice of Himself; yea, so put all away that we can say of His whole redeemed people, that He hath "*perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*" (Heb. x. 14.)

It is thus in its highest signification God has made Christ unto us *sanctification*. How He has done this Isaiah saw, when he beheld the Lord, "holy, holy, holy," high and lifted up in the temple. Once in God's presence, the prophet saw his own unfitness to be there, saying, "Wretched, or woe is me." But he saw another thing—the "live coal taken from off the altar" which had consumed the sacrifice, which had borne the sin. He saw that live coal put to his own lips, whilst the Lord said to him, "*Thine iniquity is purged;*" that is, the sins of which you feel the misery in God's sight are put away. Remember he had simply God's word for this; for he was, as to having sin in him, just the same after as before that wondrous Word. Was *he* then *in himself* utterly purged, and *in himself* whiter than snow? No, indeed, he was the same person before and after this sight, excepting what he heard, and this truly is blessed; viz., that his iniquity was purged, that it was gone from before God, and that thus he was holy *in*

*His presence*, in virtue of the sacrifice consumed by the live coal.

We have a striking picture further illustrative of holiness, in the threefold action of Aaron on the great day of atonement. That day was a high day in Israel, in which the millions of the people were free from all servile work, all ordinary occupations, that they might keep it holy, separate from all other days unto the Lord. In the morning of the day a victim for sin, selected for the purpose, was doomed to suffer death, having been first charged with the sins of the people. This solemn ritual, the burning of the victim to ashes, was performed outside the camp, outside the place of blessing. This being accomplished, Aaron, as a further thing, took the blood with him inside the veil, into the Holiest, where God was, and there in solemn solitariness placed it before the Lord upon the mercy-seat, underneath which was the law, whose claims had been answered by the blood; also "upon the ground before the Lord, as if the very earth and its atmosphere had been polluted by sin. Israel was taught to feel that their very breath was polluted; that man, till sprinkled with the blood of Christ, is not only sunk in sin and death himself, but that he is a moral and spiritual pestilence all around." Wonderful words these for such a people:—"On that day shall the priest make

an atonement for you, *to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins BEFORE THE LORD.*" (Lev. xvi. 30.) This Aaron did in his garments of perfect whiteness; for in this part of the wonderful transaction he had to disrobe himself of that gorgeous dress which at other times he was instructed to wear, reminding of Him who from the beginning was robed in the glory which He had as equal with the Father, but emptied Himself to live for us a sinless life, and die a substitutionary death. All was pure white, indicating the perfectness of Him who offered Himself without spot or blemish to God, on the ground of which He showed Himself qualified to make atonement for those who were full of defilement, full of the spot and blemish of sin.

This done, Aaron laid aside his white robes for the garments for glory and beauty, which had on them the names of the twelve sons of Israel, as much as to say, The victim has been slain, sin has been put away, God has accepted the blood, and now all Israel may be taken up into connection with Himself, on His shoulders, and near His heart, accepted through the blood. This Christ has done for us, only we who believe on Him are not released from our sins for a year merely, but for ever. We are as He is, not merely as stones on His breast-plate, but members of His body, of His flesh, of

His bones. To know this is surely to lie down in green pastures beside still waters.

A further action of Aaron was that some time in the solemn hush of the evening he had to present himself to the people, who came out to look for his appearing.

Under the radiant glow of the setting sun the gold and the blue of his attire were seen to be beautiful indeed. With uplifted hands he blessed the people who were waiting to behold him. Thus, in the result, Israel on *that* day was holy unto the Lord ; *i.e.* set apart unto Him as if without a sin. The sins of a whole year had been put away by the blood which had been placed before the Lord inside the veil. *Our* great day of atonement is now going on. Christ has made "once for all" an end of our sins. He Himself, now, is within the veil, there appearing in the presence of God for us ; and to them that look for Him shall He "appear a second time without sin unto salvation." This is our standing as believers ; this is our sanctification in Christ now and *for ever* before God, unchanging and unchangeably the same. Truly we can say—

"Had I an angel's holiness,  
I'd cast aside that wondrous dress,  
And wrap me up in Christ."

But further, the believer is holy in his new nature ; that nature is essentially holy ; for that which is



born of the Spirit *is* spirit, and naught else. It is in regeneration we are made partakers of this *nature*. We may and ever ought to grow in grace, but this nature never progresses in holiness. The old nature which is still in us can do nothing but sin, and would if allowed continually sin; but this new nature can never sin—" *That which is born of God sinneth not.*" It is spoken of in Eph. iv. 24 as " *The new man created in righteousness and holiness of truth,*" qualities assuredly *in us* and distinct from the work of Christ *for us*. And we have this new nature, not instead of the old, as many wrongly imagine, or as made out of the old, or by degrees to absorb the old into itself; but separate from it, and in opposition to it. Oh, well it is to know this! for without such knowledge the spiritual instincts of a child of God must ever be involved. Feeling sin, he will say, *Am* I converted? *am* I saved? Not knowing that sin and self have had their doom on the cross, he may go on and on as if doom still hung over him, uttering the cry, "Oh, wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this sin and death?" The way to dispose of the "*Oh, wretched,*" is looking at Christ.

But a third aspect of this question relates to our life; an important one truly. Practical holiness is thus referred to: "*Perfecting* holiness in the fear of

the Lord," and means that we should cultivate in a practical way the life corresponding to our state of holiness in Christ. The same also is referred to by Paul in his prayer for the Thessalonians—"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly, and I pray God *your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*" (1 Thess. v. 23.) Some may say, "If spirit, soul, and body can be preserved blameless, is not this sinless perfection?" Certainly not; for besides spirit, soul, and body, there is a fourth element in us—the *flesh*.

It may not be always seen; as the fairest lake has beneath its surface a sediment which needs only to be stirred to show itself; so a child of God may in his habit of life appear as the sweet reflection of a heavenly brightness, yet a word, a look even, may discover to him afresh the corruption which is still within. Is there a single text in all Scripture to show that the flesh is ever withdrawn from the child of God? No! only death will give the release. We shall then lay it aside as a defiled garment no more to be worn. Meanwhile its *presence* still with us may lead us to say "wretched." But occupied with God, the flesh will be in abeyance; the mind whilst set on things above will not be set on sin. Separation unto God involves practically separation from evil. The Thessa-

Ionians "turned TO God FROM idols;" Ephraim on hearing God say, "From Me is thy fruit found," exclaims, "What have I to do any more with idols?" (Hosea xiv. 8.) This I say is practical holiness. We are to be dead to sin, and dead to the world.

Continuous is the rest which the knowledge of this gives, not in self, but in Jesus; rest in God's presence, rest in our souls; a rest which spreads itself over the whole of life, down through the valley of the shadow of death, and beyond death into the land where sin and death have no more place. Oh, it is in such a condition, in such holiness bright, we can lie down as beside the waters of rest!

David meant something deeply practical and experimental when he prayed, "Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than 'snow;'" and again, "Create in me a clean heart, renew a right" (steadfast, fixed) "spirit within me." Did he mean *an absolutely cleansed old nature*? No! He wanted a heart practically clean, a heart fitting him for the presence of God. Sin indulged in and unconfessed prevents our communion with Him. "If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me." God delights in an entire consecration, a daily, continuous application to our souls of Christ by the

Spirit. It is in such application the heart is benefitted, the conscience at rest, and the soul fitted for every trial and for every service.

And now, with our psalm full in view, as sheep like still waters, so a child of God this divine rest. No scene can be more lovely than those fertile slopes and quiet retreats of some unlimited upland pastures, where no noise of town or of man breaks its peacefulness, and where beside still streams the flocks are lying at rest. Beautiful and refreshing image of the still waters that flow for us from God, and from Christ, to a life wholly consecrated to God! Like the waters of Siloe (Isa. viii. 8), these waters go softly away from the troubled world of self and sin; and oh! my soul,

“Thou hearest not the beating waves,  
Or angry winds that blow;  
But who shall say what wonders there  
Thy God to thee shall show.”

Sweet antepast of the time looked forward to by all the redeemed, when “He that sits on the throne shall spread His tabernacle over them,” and when “the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall shepherd them, and shall lead them to living fountains of waters.” (Rev. vii. 15-17.)



VI.

**The Restored Soul.**

**F**

## THE RESTORED SOUL.

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“WHEREFORE droops thy trembling soul?  
Wherefore saddened is thy brow?  
Clouds around thy path may roll,  
But thy God is present now.

“He, the Author of the faith  
Which thy spirit shall renew,  
In His sacred hour of death  
Finished thy salvation too.

“When the water-floods of grief  
Round thy helpless head shall rise,  
When there seemeth no relief,  
Look toward the eternal skies.

“There behold how radiantly  
Beams the star of faith divine;  
Yesterday it shone for thee,  
And to-day it still shall shine.”

—*Mrs. Winslow's Memoirs.*

## Sixth Part.

### THE RESTORED SOUL.

“He restoreth my soul.”

“HE restoreth my soul.” When in weakness or cast down by sorrow He does this; He *reanimates* it when exhausted, as in Ps. xix. 7, where we have the same word, “The law of the Lord is perfect, converting”—that is, *restoring*—“the soul.”

The same thought is expressed in Ruth iv. 15, where Naomi is told concerning Boaz, “He shall be unto thee *a restorer of life, a nourisher of thine old age.*” Note here in our psalm, the restoring, like the leading, the feeding, and the anointing, is all continuous work of our adorable High Priest, our heavenly Shepherd. The whole life of a believer is one of restorings. It is not that He *has* restored, or that He *will*, but, “He restoreth my soul.”

There is a natural power in food to restore. This power is the same with all physical nature. I have



seen whole flocks of sheep at the beginning of their summer season wending their way up from the dry hot roads of the low countries of the south to the rich valley pasturage of the higher Alps. On their ascent they looked exhausted and lean, as if ready to die ; but feeding and resting amid their green pastures they became fat and vigorous. We know the power of food as to our own bodily organism. After greatest fatigue how soon it restores !

In our own life up to a certain period supply preponderates over waste. This all through, from infancy to childhood, and from childhood to the zenith of our days. That period passed, a change ensues ; waste preponderates over supply. Thence comes a decay which nothing can arrest. But grace is stronger than nature. Feeding on Christ, restoring is continuous ; it never ceases. Our outward man may perish, but the "inward man is renewed day by day." Hence it may be with us spiritually as it was physically with Moses when one hundred and twenty years old. Forty years was he a prince in Egypt, forty years a shepherd in Midian, and forty years king in Jeshurun. One hundred and twenty in all, "Yet was not his eye dim or his natural force abated."

Blessed truth ! Christ need never fade from our souls, or yield us less supply as we near the end of our pilgrimage ; faith, instead of weakening, may

wax stronger and stronger, so that I have known many of the dear saints of God at the end of a long life holding and enjoying the truth in all its freshness and power far more ardently than in the days of their first love. Like the Israelites' shoes and garments in the desert, which waxed not old, the gospel to them has been as sustaining and blessed at the close as it was when first they believed. No; the hand may become palsied, and the eye dim, and the body weak; but the mind is still firm to grasp the promise and expect the crown. It was *aged* Paul who said, "There is laid up for me a crown of righteousness;" and how many others since have in their bodily decays exclaimed, "My heart and my flesh faileth: but God is the strength of my heart and my portion for ever." Thus there is no need that first love should be the strongest, or first days in Christ the happiest. It is feeding on the word, living in communion with God, that repairs all wastes and satisfies all wants. Christ has a power to remove all depression, to sustain amidst all calamities, so that apart from any decline through actual sin or unfaithfulness we can say, "He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake."

This, I believe, is the true thought here—"He *reanimates* my soul." But some there are who

read, "He *reduceth* my soul." That He chastens us when needful we do not doubt. The energy of the flesh may take the place of these supplies, and the child of God may imagine it is well with him. It is then God touches the false energy, as He did the thigh on which Jacob depended when the angel wrestled with him, and which led him to hang in conscious weakness, but in reality more clearly in possession of the blessed One who was wrestling with him, saying, as he helplessly but now securely hung upon Him, "What is thy name?" And the response was, as if this were better than the name, or as if this were His name, "*And He blessed him there.*"

But others take these words in the sense of *recovery from evil*. This also is true—that the Good Shepherd does so recover us when we wander. We may be bent on wandering, but He is bent on restoring us again. Nothing is more liable to wander than a sheep; and when wandering it seems to have no power to retrace its way, but goes on and on, with its face to the ground, until night sets in, or hunger or some enemy overtakes it. Then is heard its cry. But who is it that hears it? The Good Shepherd may leave the ninety and nine, but not this "one." "He goeth after the one that is gone astray until" when? Until He has given up the search? No, indeed; but "*until He find it.*"

Then the bringing back to the fold with joy! and note, not the sheep's joy, that is not said, but *His own joy!* Luke xv. is a picture of all this. It tells of one who had been in the fold, and needed to be restored. The one hundred sheep were all the Shepherd's own, the one who had gone astray as well as the ninety and nine. Not one can be plucked out of His hand; He must bring all to the fold with safe issue. "It is the Father's good pleasure that not one should perish." Wander, alas! we may, but never beyond the reach of His arm. Hence "He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake."

A backslider differs from an apostate. Judas was of this latter. Peter was a backslider. He had gone from confessing Christ. An apostate is no child of God, which Peter was. There are two kinds of backsliders—there are those who are such *in heart*, and there are backsliders *in life*. The backsliding in heart may be quite secret and imperceptible. Grey hairs were on Ephraim, and he knew it not. Alas! it is sad work; the profession made may remain fair, but the flower of it will soon bear marks of decay, so that the backsliding in the heart soon comes out into the life.

A sheep in the act of wandering, as I have said, seldom or ever lifts up its head; its eyes are on

the ground. So with poor backsliding souls ; they do not, as once they did, look up confidently to God or Christ. They look not as they did, with an unfaltering eye to God as their Father, to heaven as their home. Even when awakened their eyes are down on their sins, and on their wretched selves. Oh, blessed are the afflictions by which God awakens from the ways of sin and self! "Before I was afflicted I went astray." "Why should ye be stricken any more?" asks God. "Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings." (Jer. iii. 22.) This is all He asks, that we should return ; to return and repent are the same thing. Moreover, He will heal us. He does this not by any renewed act of atonement, but by the application by the Spirit to our souls of the atonement already made. The *death* of the red heifer could transpire but once, yet its ashes could be *applied* again and again. Thus the value of the precious blood He applies anew to our sins, also His unchanging compassionating love to our bleeding hearts. Oh, the grace, the love of our God ! It is only to such poor backsliding ones that He gives the tender, touching reminder, "*I am married unto you.*" Sweet thus the ways of His grace ! And sweet His word, "Return to *Me.*" To Ephraim it was the one entreaty of His heart ; and to us, as another has said—

"We are so feeble, with hearts so bad, having such depths of corruption, and the devil so strong, that we cannot cope with him alone. Hence His words, "Return unto *Me*; without *Me* ye can do nothing." There is, often, the returning of unbelief. We come heavy laden, hardly knowing what is wrong, trying to put ourselves to rights instead of returning on the finished work of Christ, and spreading all out before our Father.

Oh! how often we try to put the mistakes of our heart right *in the dark*, instead of in the light of His presence. *There* we are restored in a minute; if longer, it is unbelief. For to faith it is said "If we confess our sins" (*that* is our part) "He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins" (that is God's part, which ON our confessing He has promised to do), "and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Alas! for our unbelief; it is our greatest enemy—the destroyer often of our peace, but happily not of our safety; that depends not on faith even, but on Christ. "Unbelief," says an old writer, "may perhaps tear the copies of the covenant which Christ hath given us, but He still keeps the original in heaven with Himself. Our doubts and fears are no part of the covenant, neither can they change Christ."\*

But though Christ will not and cannot change,

\* RUTHERFORD.

the divine life within us, alas! may. David, for example, though forgiven his trespasses, could say, "My sin is ever before me." It was before him not to condemn, but to humble under a sense of its deep shame and sorrow. Of how many a child of God may it be said—

"Thou hast seen  
Fair seed time ; better harvests might have been  
But for thy trespasses."

Blessed when such can say, "He restoreth my soul, He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness, for His name's sake." These paths of righteousness are paths of holiness and obedience.

Many praise catholicity and largeness of charity who are forgetful of the lordship of Christ, of obedience to Him, and of practical separation from all evil. Ah! it is easy to profess that *Christ* is the way ; but not so easy, fully in all His paths, to follow in His steps. Would the things many are living in—religiously, socially, and as to the affairs of this life—be their's one moment longer if in place, and life, and walk they owned the divine Lordship, and simply followed Christ?\*

\* Two passages in the Word are important on this—Rom. x. 9 (*Revised Version*), "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord," &c., and 1 Peter iii. 15, "Sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord." Many take Christ as their Saviour who are not subject to Him as their Lord.

And yet where the love of God dwells it must lead into the paths (orbits, as the word is) of righteousness, and practical holiness—paths to be trodden daily in our own homes, in our business, in our walk before men, in the Church of God, in all our relationships in life and in the world. All the planets revolve around their central orb. The Lord would lead all His people in these paths around Himself. We must never wander from simple practical righteousness, not even on pretence of love of others or charity, as to departures from the truth. Soon He will lead where love and righteousness will have their eternal abode; there we shall wander no more, but “follow the Lamb whithersoever *He goeth*.” Meanwhile, if under depression of soul, or exhausted by sorrow or trial, or through sin, we have backslidden from God, let us betake ourselves anew to the Word, to the Good Shepherd, as revealed to us there—His blood to cleanse, His unchanging love and grace; let us read it as when we first were saved. Blessed was that new delight when first we saw the Lord; let us renew it again. Let us lie down in the green pastures, and beside the still waters of that loving, gracious, sin-forgiving presence which meets us at the cross, and lifts us to the throne; nay, lifts us to His own breast, and on that human heart of His which beats for us with truest love. Let us



be attentive to His voice ; moreover, to the lesson enjoined on us by one who, as to our service, our obedience, and communion combined, says—

“ Childlike attend, what thou wilt say,  
Go forth and do it while 'tis day,  
*Yet never leave thy sweet retreat.*”

VII.

**The Shaded Valley.**

## THE SHADED VALLEY.

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"No shadows yonder,—  
All light and song,—  
Each day I wonder,  
And say, 'How long  
Shall time me sunder  
From that dear throng'?"

—BONAR.

## Seventh Part.

### THE SHADED VALLEY.

"YEA, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy  
staff they comfort me."

THAT which is here spoken of is called the "shadow of death." Death, in itself, has nothing but shadow for those who enter its portals. How many fill that shadow with imaginary phantoms! The sweet singer fills it with the Lord.

"Do you ever realize," asks one who has sweetly written on this,\* "what will be your feelings in passing through that veil which separates from the unknown, when the curtain shall have dropped upon all below, and all around is reality? Much is contained in that word, '*Thou art with me.*' This is the rainbow in the valley; for there is no need of sun or moon when covenant love illumines. But we must find His presence superior

\* VISCOUNTESS POWERSCOURT.

to any joy here, if we wish to find it superior to any terror there."

The psalmist reasons: He is with me now, assures that He will be with me then. Grand assurance! founded on present experience as well as on direct promise. It is thus we rest in God, whose truth it is we believe; and it is thus God "giveth to His beloved *sleep*," or, as some read, "*sleeping*;"\* *i.e.* whilst reposing in Him having confidence in the truth which He has given in order to assure the soul, Christ being with it, of its full and final security, under all circumstances, in all places, and at all times, in life or death the same.

There are two things here: there is the scene itself, the gloomy valley, or, literally, the "*death shade*;" and there is secondly the confidence expressed—"I will fear no evil." As to the scene itself, it is supposed by some to extend all through this dispensation from the cross to the throne; *i.e.* through the whole of this evil age on which rests the sin and shame of a rejected and crucified Christ. By others it is supposed to be the whole course on earth of the believer. Christians are spoken of as if ever passing through it. But the word "*though*" or "*when* I walk" implies that the sweet singer himself was not in the valley at *that time*.

\* German translation.

Others describe it as a baptism of thick darkness, a season of soul misery, and suppose it to be the sure and certain experience sooner or later of every believer. But how many are taken to heaven immediately on conversion, whilst in their "first love." They go from what to them is a bright heaven on earth to a brighter heaven in heaven. Many indeed have darkness of soul, a baptism it may be of thick darkness, but though such may be the experience of a Christian, it may not be true Christian experience; it is not the experience contemplated here. The "Thou art with me," and "I will fear no evil," indicate that whatever the darkness may be, there will be a walking with God in it. Moreover, we must not forget the psalm is pastoral; sheep have to be led through dark and desolate places, savage gorges, which separate desolate heights. But such a shepherd as David would surely be with them, constituting the safety, and the stay, and confidence of his sheep. David himself takes the place of a sheep which may have to be led, as indeed he often was led, into times and places of great sorrow; but with such a Shepherd as his he would not fear. Christ being with us, whatever the scene may be, however dark or sorrowful, we need fear no evil. The valley may doubtless denote some season of distress, some blinding affliction, or dreadful encounter with the

enemy, or with evil in ourselves. The term is again and again used in Scripture for darkness ; for depths of sorrow ; and woe. (Job iii. 5 ; x. 21 ; xxxiv. 22 ; Ps. xlv. 19 ; Ps. cvii. 10-14 ; Isa. ix. 2 ; Jer. ii. 6 ; Amos v. 8.)

Fellowship too with the sufferings of Christ was surely to Paul as a "valley of the shadow of death." He bore in His body the marks of the Lord Jesus, and could say, "I die daily ;" yet was his heaviest sorrow counted by him as light affliction, and the sufferings of the present not worthy to be compared with the glory to be revealed in him. Bunyan, who did not look upon this valley merely as death, describes his pilgrim as passing through it long ere he reaches the river which divides our time state from the celestial city. I would understand the passage as embracing every path of sorrow and darkness through which the Good Shepherd may lead us, not certainly excluding, but specially including, our passage through the last sorrow.

The scene does not mean death itself, but *the shadow cast by death*, which cannot harm, and which can fall only on this side. It may indeed be darker to some than to others.

"I found it no playground," \* said one who being dead yet speaketh. Said another, "I have known more of Christ in this week" (the week of her

\* MAJOR MALAN.

death) "than I have known in all my whole life put together."\* Another, on the eve of departure, said, "When I go home shall not my ten thousand prayers be answered in the salvation of my seed, and of my seed's seed to the latest generation?"† Thus to the dying themselves it may be all light ; but dark to those who are bereaved. Rachel refused to be comforted concerning her children ; David too, concerning his Absalom, the anguish of whose soul respecting his death seems to have been complete. Supposing we have just seen death in another. Nature revolts at what we have seen in the death-room ; though while the features are still unchanged, and the look all tranquil, one might fancy, as friends step softly over the carpetted floor as if to hush their footsteps, that this was "the disguise of sleep, and not the mask of death." It is the bereaved surely who are in the dark shadow that falls on that room. The solemn hush that reigns there is broken only by the sobs of the sorrowing, or by the voice of sympathy which is gentle, and the words of comfort which are tender.

In the death-room, when we see the earthly house without its tenant, what thoughts pass and repass in the mind—how much we should like to say if we could, or perhaps to unsay ; how much

\* MRS. HARINGTON EVANS.      † MRS. MARY WINSLOW.



to regret, or perhaps to atone for if we could. Let us so live with our dear ones, that when they are gone we may have but few regrets, but few things for which our fond hearts would fain apologize.

Let us not lay the foundation of a deeper sorrow in the death-room than death itself may make. As a lovely instance of the contrary, precious from a loving son, is the following to the memory of a beloved mother—

“In childhood I have wept to think  
     The day would come when thou must die ;  
 The thought upon my heart would sink,  
     And fill with *clouds* my sunniest sky.  
 Yet thou *hast* died ! and though I weep,  
     Dear mother, as I gaze on thee,  
 I would not break thy placid sleep,  
     Nor ask thine eye to gaze on me.

“I would not for its tenderest glance,  
     Nor for thy sweetest smile of love,  
 Disturb that deep oblivious trance,  
     Nor lure thee from thy home above.”\*

Thus no shadow falls on the departed ; but it does fall upon those who linger around the dying couch, or stand over the open grave. With them it is a sleep in Jesus ; for that is what death is to a child of God—“absent from the body—present with the Lord.” But with the bereaved, what

\* SIR E. DENNY.

reality of sadness! yea, what bitterness of grief! Oh, what solace at such a time, when all else seems gone, to be able to say, "*Thou* art with me; *thy* rod and *thy* staff they comfort me!" But viewed in whatever light death is solemn. I speak now of our own departure—the near approach of which finds the eye bent with greater earnestness than ever over the sacred page, and the soul moulding its convictions to its sure doctrines and its eternal testimonies. For, oh! it is in death it will be seen whether our course has been a right one or not. For every soul what issues!—an eternal heaven or the second death! Dreadful must it be for the wicked; since they first pass into the power of death, and death, God's constable, brings them into the hands of the Living God, beyond which is the judgment. Who is not awed at the thought even, of such a death?

As to the Christian, there may be darkness of sin unconfessed in the dying hour.

"If unforgiven sin my conscience bear,  
Weakness and fear possess me everywhere."

But for this there is "the sacred quickening stream of Golgotha," which can give instantaneous peace. Christ is the one only true antidote to death. How I like, unchanged, that grand old hymn which so boldly pleads—

“Death of death, and hell’s destruction,  
Land me safe on Canaan’s side.”

For the death of Christ *was* the death of death,  
and the wrath He endured was hell’s destruction.  
His doom on the cross was sin’s doom. Thus with  
his accustomed truth and energy sings Luther—

“Christ Jesus, God’s own Son, came down,  
That He might us deliver,  
And sin-destroying took his crown  
From Death’s pale brow for ever :  
Stript of power, no more he reigns ;  
An empty shape alone remains ;  
His sting is lost for ever.

Hallelujah !

“It was a strange, a dreadful strife,  
When life and death contended :  
The victory remained with life,  
The reign of death was ended.  
Holy Scripture plainly saith  
That death is swallowed up by death,  
Henceforth made a derision.

Hallelujah !”

It is sin that makes death dreadful, and judgment  
as immediate on death ; but for a believer sin, and  
sins, and the vile nature which gave birth to the  
sins, with hell itself, all had their doom when Christ  
hung in death for us on the tree—“WHO HIS OWN  
SELF” (every word is of weight) “BARE OUR SINS  
IN HIS OWN BODY ON THE TREE.” Bearing our

sins He bore their judgment : "There is therefore no condemnation" (*no judgment*) "for them that are in Christ Jesus." It is because of this we die in the sweetest confidence of this word—"Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil."

And this word "yea," or, as some read, "*more-over*," shows a further effort of faith, a bracing of that power in contemplating all possibilities, however many or solemn, in the valley of the shadow of death. Ah, yes! Going down into the valley, or contemplating its possibilities, faith needs bracing, even as we would brace a limb. The result is, "I will fear no evil;" a result not only described in the Word, but seen in fact in the deaths of innumerable multitudes of the children of God.

I once asked a child of God who was dying, "Have you any fear?" "Fear!" she replied, "why should I fear? *Christ* does not fear. '*Jesus is mine.*' It is not death, there is no death; for I am lying down in green pastures, beside the still waters." Here the scene of departure was laid, not in a land of terrors, but in the very midst of a valley of peace, and she was falling asleep in Jesus lying down as in "green pastures" beside the still waters. Truly precious is such trust! and truly precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.

"Tis in trusting Thee, my Saviour,  
Peace and joy and strength are found ;  
'Tis while hiding in Thy bosom,  
Balm is felt for every wound.  
'Tis in knowing Thee, O Jesus,  
Life and love possess the heart ;  
Richest grace and truest freedom  
Thou dost to my soul impart.

"Tis in cleaving to Thee only  
That my spirit finds its rest ;  
'Tis while gazing on Thy beauty  
I am truly, fully blest.  
'Tis in drawing from Thy fulness  
Every want becomes supplied ;  
Truly Thou hast made me righteous ;  
Thou for my deep guilt hast died.

"Thou art pleading for me ever,  
In the Father's house above ;  
Nothing shall my spirit sever  
From Thy true, Thy changeless love.  
Thou canst scatter all my sadness,  
Chase my every grief and pain,  
Fill my heart with joy and gladness,  
Wake my song of praise again.

"Keep me then, Lord Jesus, near Thee,  
Resting in Thy precious love,  
Till Thine unveiled presence cheer me  
In Thine own blest courts above.  
Oh, to sound Thine endless praises  
Where Thy ransomed hosts adore,  
Where nor death, nor sin, nor sorrow,  
Cast a shadow evermore !

VIII.

**The Lighted Valley.**

## THE LIGHTED VALLEY.

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"I DO not dread death's valley—  
To me a pasture green—  
For there, beside still waters,  
Is laid its peaceful scene.  
I do not fear death's shadow,  
A shadow ne'er can harm ;  
I must rejoice in Jesus  
When resting on His arm."

—MRS. THOMPSON.

*While this page was in the press, the beloved writer of these lines passed through the valley "in great peace."*

## Eighth Part.

### THE LIGHTED VALLEY.

“I will fear no evil.”

OFTEN in Scripture we find the word “fear not,” and the bold response, “I will not fear,” or, as here, “I will fear no evil”—a declaration made in the face of all ills, especially in prospect of the valley of the shadow of death. And why not so? In the light of our glorious redemption, what is there for a child of God to fear? He is surely

(1) *Not afraid of God*; that is, with any inordinate or slavish fear. Noah was moved with godly fear to build an ark for the saving of himself and his house; and we would there was more of this fear! But what we want is the love; for the more we love, the more we fear to grieve those we love. It was a holy, reverential fear which Noah had, and not a slavish fear. He believed in God’s great grace and love towards him. It is the same with us. We are not afraid of those we love; and we love Him because He first loved us.



But there must be the knowledge of God's love to us ere we can love Him. It is never till God is seen in the gospel that He becomes an object for our love: to the natural man He is an object of dread. What a sea of sorrow is there in the soul, which has been made alive to sin, but has not seen the true God. Hewetson, when he felt he was one of Nature's castaways, ere he saw the love of God, to whom he cried as to an *unknown God*, speaks of his own state thus: "I tried to find relief in tears, but could not. . . . How miserable, above all that is miserable, to wish that the heart were full of love towards its God and Saviour, and after all to feel as cold as ice, and as hard as adamant. Only one thing rectifies this—to believe in the love God hath to us; faith's outward and not inward look—the outward look at the Word, which tells that God is love, and that He 'so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but *have* everlasting life.'" It is only in the Word that this is seen. The beautiful in Nature is the shadow of God's beauty; the sublime in Nature, the shadow of His sublimity; but only in His Word are we told of that deep, infinite, and eternal love where-with He hath loved us, in the gift of His Son. What a change, and in how short a time, the knowledge of Him thus creates in the soul! Said

a poor man, at the side of whose dying-bed I stood, "I am afraid to die, for God is frowning on me." I told him the story of the love and grace of God in the gift of His Son, who came to die for sinners, even the chief. A few days after, on calling again, I said, "Is God still frowning upon you?" "Ah, no," was his reply, "God is smiling on me." He had seen and believed the love which God hath towards us—how that, when we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Thus to the child of God there is no fear in love; for perfect love casteth out fear; and if not afraid of God, he is, knowing what God has done for him,

(2) *Not afraid of sin; i.e. its doom.* Though our tears may flow on account of our unfaithfulness, yet may our eyes be so filled with Christ, whose blood cleanseth from all sin, that the sense of our forgiveness may turn those tears into joy. Said Lady Powerscourt, in writing to a friend, "How it will astonish you, astonish angels, when the book of my sins is opened, except that they are so blotted with the blood of Christ as to make them illegible, which indeed they are—forgiven, blotted out, forgotten!"

"*I myself* am a sinner," remarked Luther, "and good works do not make a good man."

"It is hard with some to believe this," said Tholuck; "it is hard for a man to descend from

the leaves and fruit of his sin to a recognition of the *stem* and the *root*." It was not only our sins which Christ judicially put away on the cross, but our bad, vile *nature*, the root of them all, that Christ nailed to the tree. Blessed declaration! "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures;" how welcome it is to those who are hungry and thirsty for pardon; God searched them all out, and laid them upon Him. "*My* sins" may a sinner believing say. "Oh, merciful Shepherd, search out thy sheep, whose sins they were; lay them on thy shoulders, and put them on thy bosom, where thou canst say, 'Your sins and iniquities are remembered no more for ever.'" With sins put away, the strength of the law, as being any longer against us, is put away. Hence we are

(3) *Not afraid of the law*. Many speak of a mitigated law, as if God could lower His claim on His creatures, which claim is that man must be sinless or die. Speaking to such as cherish the hope of being judged by a mitigated law, the late Adolphe Monod asks: "Will you support it by the Bible: by the Bible? If I were to open the Bible that is before me, and read thus: 'If you cannot fulfil the entire law, do what you can, and God will require no more. If you cannot refrain from sin altogether, at least abstain from the commission of heinous crimes; have a certain degree of charity, of patience,

of holiness ; act thus and you may be sure that the law will be mitigated sufficiently to absolve you from its penalties,' would you distinguish the language of the Bible in this ? Would you not exclaim, 'Stop, faithless minister ! you are not reading ; you are inventing ?' So contrary to the spirit of the Bible is this doctrine of a mitigated law that if you attempt to appeal to its testimony in support of it, all your feelings, all your recollections, all that is in you of the Christian character, revolts against this attempt upon your credulity. But I am now going to read, without inventing, from the epistle to the Galatians : 'For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse : for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the book of the law to do them ;' and again, 'For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all ;' and again, 'For I testify to every man that is circumcised' (wishing to be justified by his works) 'that he is a debtor to do the whole law.' What shall I say more ? 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God ;' 'For our God is a consuming fire ;' He is 'of purer eyes than to behold evil,' and 'will by no means clear the guilty,' and a thousand similar passages. What do you say of them ? Do you think that this is the language of a God disposed to alter His law in

order to suit it to the weakness of sinful man? And if your mitigated law cannot stand before dispassionate reasoning, what will it be before the Bible?" No; God can never separate the law from Himself, or lessen its claim on His creatures. That claim is obedience or death. Man gave not the obedience, and Christ gave the death. He became a curse for us. Hence the law is satisfied. It has "no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

Oh, sweet, when the thunders of the law are thus hushed by Calvary! "It is finished!" answers all claims, all demands, great or small; it is the one pillow on which the sin-stricken, law-condemned conscience can find its rest. And, as the law can no more bring to death, the child of God is

(4) *Not afraid of death.* It was once said by a friend, "Death is a terrible monster; I hate it." To which the reply was made, "What, and Where, should you and I have been but for that terrible monster, as you call it, and which you so hate?" For death, in the use God has made of it, has become our boast and our song. It was by death that God found a way to save us from death. Hence Paul, telling out our blessings, says, "Death is ours." What a terror to Israel the Red Sea would have been had they not seen that it was now a way of life! Passing through it, in the midst of death

they were in life. The child of God has, so to speak, dissected death. He has seen him first *with* his sting, which is sin; and then, after the cross, the sting is gone. For him death has no sting; the Ruler of life has placed it among His spoils which He wrested from the powers of evil, making a show of them openly. Hence death, to a child of God, is but a shadow which, like the shadow of a sword, can never harm. After death is the judgment; but if sin is gone the judgment is gone. Hence a child of God is

(5) *Not afraid of judgment.* Jordan signifies *judgment*; suggestively, judgment lay between heaven and us; and "Christ must dry up that sea, fathomless to man, ere man can pass through it." Jordan had to be passed thus ere Israel could reach the land of Canaan. To cross that impetuous river at its flood was impossible. That river at barley harvest, when the sun is at its height, and the snows of Lebanon are fast melting under the tropical heat, is flooded to the very edge of its greater or outer bank, and rushes down with violence to the Dead Sea. Once borne down to that sea there is no hope. Its waters are too dense to swim in, and too strong to allow of sinking, thus insuring a kind of *living death*.

Christ has emptied the Jordan of both death and judgment. (John v. 24.) Oh, happy child

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of God who, thus standing on the banks of the river, can by faith see the judgment, no longer a barrier. Between him and God, between him and the sweet fields of the better Eden, there is no barrier. The tree of life is now blooming for him where there is no longer the sword of judgment turning every way to keep him from it. And the child of God is

(6) *Not afraid of Him who has the power of death.* It may seem a mystery why God allows Satan a place against us at such a time as death. "But He who so allows will give us grace to help in every time of need. His shield will be interposed when the air fills with darts of the enemy. His strength, by which the worlds are sustained, will uphold us when heart and flesh are failing. His hand will clasp and guide us when the last impenetrable gloom begins to thicken around us, and a darkness that can be felt veils the place on which we next must set our foot. Nor will His grasp slacken *till He has drawn us through the night, and our eyes are dazzled as we behold that for which He has caused us to hope—the golden gates of the paradise of God.*" Of all these the child of faith will not be afraid.

(7) *The promises prevent our fears.* From the moment we start on our course, and for every possible necessity, God puts so many *promissory*

notes into our hands, saying, "You will need them, and as you need them use them." If it be a question of passing through waters, here is the promise: "*When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee.*"

Or fiery trial:—"When thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. Or of conflict with the fiery darts of the enemy:—"No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper; and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn." If the fear is of being left alone, this word—"Thou art with me," is founded on a promise, "*I will never leave thee; I will never forsake thee.*" Nothing short of that promise will do for us. And then, as to all beyond, we are

(8) *Not afraid of the issues.* Absent from the body, we are present with the Lord. To die is gain—gain to be with Christ, gain to be where death has no more place. Thus, as night ends in day, so death ends in life; and as to departure, it leads to the real scene of a blest reunion. Our dying ones seem to be going a long way from us—we grieve on parting with them, we grasp the hand of the fondest and dearest for the last time, and utter our loving farewell, but in reality death puts us where all will soon meet. It is a move for a



coming meeting, instead of a long parting; and our partings will be short. Meanwhile we look up and admiringly say of the departed—

“How bright those glorious spirits shine !  
 Whence all their bright array ?  
 How came they to the blissful seats  
 Of everlasting day ?

“Lo ! these are they from sufferings great,  
 Who came to realms of light,  
 And in the blood of Christ have washed  
 Those robes which shine so bright.

“The Lamb who dwells amidst the throne  
 Shall over them preside ;  
 Feed them with nourishment divine,  
 And all their footsteps guide.

“’Midst pastures green He’ll lead His flock  
 Where living streams appear ;  
 And God the Lord from every eye  
 Shall wipe off every tear.”

To the unbeliever Death is a king of terrors—it is death *indeed*. For some vessels to draw anchor certain destruction awaits them. To die, with the wicked, is to be lost. Hence, what terrors will set in when this king of terrors appears, to take possession for him who hath the power of death, and who will use it for his own awful ends. Like the pillar of cloud, which to Egypt was all dark, but to Israel shining with the light of day, death to

those who die in sin brings only ill, but to the righteous rest, and hope, and triumphant day.

Glorious redemption! or rather glorious Redeemer! how hast Thou turned our darkness into light, our night into day, nay, our hell into heaven, which heaven thou hast procured for us by Thine own most precious blood, giving us the same blessed title to be there which as Man Thou dost Thyself possess, filling us with all joy, preventing all fear, and giving us to see that death places us beyond death; that Thou who art the God of life art the God of death; that the last pang of all his so-called terrors is the one which will see the end of his broken sovereignty over us, and the beginning of a day which has no eve—a day whose bliss is infinite, and whose duration—eternal.

“Oh, night and sleep and death—dim brotherhood,  
Omnipotent in evil and in good!  
How calm the quietude which mutely still  
Awaits the purpose which ye each fulfil;  
For sleep brings rest; and night the morning ray;  
And death?

Lo! is it not the gate of Day,  
Where night and sleep are not? for, 'mid the Blest,  
Perfection craves no sun, and needs no rest.  
Oh, chilly night, the dawn hath smiles for thee!  
Oh, darksome death, what shall *thy* morning be?”



IX.

**The Crodden Valley.**

## THE TRODDEN VALLEY.

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"THE valley of the shadow groweth brighter,  
Brighter and lighter, as we walk with Thee ;  
Its heretofore untrodden places  
No more a terror as Thy face we see.

"While passing through it keep us, Saviour, ever  
Safe in the shadow of Thy radiant form,  
Which moveth on Shekinah-like before us,  
And with its brightness doth the path transform—

"Into a shining way of peace and gladness,  
Where we may walk triumphantly with One,  
Before whose face the darkness parts asunder,  
As part earth's mists before her rising sun."

—PIGOTT.

## Ninth Part.

### THE TRODDEN VALLEY.

“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death,  
I will fear no evil : for thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff  
they comfort me.”

I WOULD linger on this verse, not so much on its doctrine as on its simple imagery. Who but a divine artist could produce such a picture? First we have a valley, obviously a lighted valley ; next, a lone traveller therein, walking calmly and peacefully with his guide ; next, a rod and a staff comforting him. Let us look at these now as descriptive, not of ordinary trial, but of our last nearness to the home that awaits us. Observe

(1) It is *a valley* ; not a boundless interminable plain, over which we may endlessly wander. A valley may lie between two near eminences, both which may be held in view when passing through it. We may still see the scene we have left and the one to which we are going. Thus at our departure by death there are two eminences : the life we are

leaving is one, and the life we are entering is the other. The patriarch-father Jacob, on dying, looked back upon the past as if the whole of his life had been *a waiting time*. "I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord;" but what filled his dying eye doubtless was the salvation itself, that which aged Simeon saw when he said, "Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared." (See Luke ii. 31, 32.)

And Paul the apostle said, on the eve of his martyrdom, looking back on the past, "I have fought a good fight: I have finished my course: I have kept the faith;" but looking forward to the future, his eyes being filled with Christ, he said, "Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing." Note, he does not say, "the Lord, the righteous *Saviour*," but "the Lord, the righteous *Judge*." A child of God is as much at peace and rest in the thought of God as Judge as when He contemplates Him as Saviour; and that not as a merciful Judge merely, but as a righteous one—all claims having been settled once and for ever, as we have seen, by the cross. Thus Jacob on going down into the valley looked for God's salvation as a blessed, but not

fully defined or perfected object before his gaze ; but Paul definitely looked on the crown of righteousness and on "the Lord, the righteous Judge," who would give him the crown at that day. Blessed occupation truly for a dying hour !

The martyr Stephen saw but the one eminence. He saw the Lord Himself standing to receive him, so that, save the prayer for his murderers, life and death, himself and all else, were perfectly eclipsed by the sight. In Acts vii. 55, 56 we read : "But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, and said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." Glorious vision ! adorable sight ! And for such as Paul and Stephen, and others who became martyrs for His sake, how infinitely happy ! Seeing Jesus, whilst dying, has been the testimony of thousands since on their coming to this valley. And will it not be so with ourselves ? We may indeed look back from it, as we have said, to our own poor lives, our marred services, and to our sins ; but what surely will fill our vision is the Lord Himself, who died for our sins, and our heavenly home, to which on the ground of the merit of that death He will bring us. Oh ! it is upward, and not inward ; upward, and certainly not backward, except at the cross,



that our eyes in death should be directed. "Put me looking upward," said a dying soldier; adding, "It is a glorious thing to die looking up." Blessed in life or in death to be looking, not at the things which are seen and temporal, but at the things which are not seen and eternal—at God Himself, at Christ, and the bright home to which He is bringing us. But

(2) The valley is a *lighted valley*; dark in itself, yet lighted, and the light all the more seen because of the darkness. But for night we should never see those golden luminaries, those glorious stars and all their accompanying systems of worlds beyond less distant worlds, which people with their beauty and magnificence the vast fields of immensity.

"Darkness shows us worlds of light we ne'er had  
seen by day."

A solitary light in a dark place! how prominent, and how welcome! Travellers amidst savage, desolate mountain gorges at night have by lighting a mere match illumined scenes they can never think of but with horror. There are paths among the Alps one would not traverse in the dark for worlds; but how easy and safe in the light. The sun shining on them makes all the difference. It is the presence of the Good Shepherd that can light up the dark valley of the shadow of death. Oh, who can tell what it will be to have *Him*, THE Light of

the world, with us when all other lights are withdrawn. He only can support in a dying hour, or bring home to the Father's house with its many mansions. Christ being with us, no scene can be dark. A pavilion of light, the very portico of heaven, must be the scene where, in departure, He becomes visible to the soul.

But some timorous one may say, "Will He be with me?" *Will He?* Hath He not said, "Lo, I am with you *alway*"? We sing, "*Abide with me*;" but does He not say, "I will *never leave thee*"? Would it not betray a singular mistrust if, when a friend assured us He was remaining with us, we were ever asking Him to remain? No, we must not regard appearances, or our own erring thoughts. Our confidence is founded not on feeling, nor on any frame of ours, but *on the written word of God alone*, which says, "I AM WITH YOU," and which warrants us to say, "Thou *art* with me." No; the believer can say, "I cannot be overborne with my sins, for my Saviour, who put them away, is with me. I cannot be filled with despair, for He, who is the God of hope, is with me; or with sorrow, for the God of all grace and consolation is my God.

(3) Further, this imagery presents us with the picture of *a solitary traveller*, who, with his guide, is simply walking through the valley. "Yea,

though *I* walk through the valley." It is "*I*," a solitary child of God, going with his Saviour on a lonely march, his Saviour being his guide. How wonderful this must be in death! Faith issues in sight, and the soul is found alone with the Lord. All else gone from view. No man, but Jesus only.

When the Lord comes there will be no solitary one walking through the valley with Him as now. We who are alive and remain, with those who sleep in Jesus, will be caught up *together*, an innumerable company, to meet the Lord in the air. Corporately the whole of the glorified, redeemed from Adam down to the close, will meet Him. A glorious multitude! Those who had died, their *corruption* will have put on incorruption; and those who had not died, but are alive at His coming, their *mortal* will have put on immortality. But not one, as to seeing Him, in the resurrection, will be before another. Dying, the child of God would seem to have the blessed Guide all to himself, as we sing—

"He and I together entering  
Those bright courts above;  
He and I together sharing  
All the Father's love."

Mark, now, *the mien of this traveller*. He is not exhausted; or hurrying as though excited or alarmed; but is walking in peace and security, as

if in sight of the golden gates of the city of his God. What gives so calm an attitude in life or in death is not only a sense of right—the Christian being the “righteousness” of God—but a sense of fitness. Hence, “Blessed are those who wash their robes,\* that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city”—a declaration on which the soul can repose, as having the gospel of the grace of God in Christ’s redemption before it, with a rich unction, and which beautifully shows the holiness of those gates of pearl through which nothing that defileth shall ever enter, set in immediate connection with that cleansing through which a title is given to enter in as ransomed, forgiven, and saved.

(4) Besides these images there are *the rod and the staff*, or, as some read, “thy rod and thy crook.” The crook at the end of the rod is of use in bringing the sheep near the person of the shepherd when in danger; the rod to keep off the foe. The ordinary shepherd, in bringing his sheep into the fold, makes them pass under the rod (as in Ezekiel), to see that their number is complete—not one lost or missing. With the Good Shepherd all is secure. The rod, moreover, is used for directing, chastening, and guiding. By it deep waters are ascertained to be such. When Christian, in Bunyan’s dream, got

\* TREGELLES, *Revised Translation of the Revelation.*

down into "the river," he asked his companion, "Brother, is there *any* bottom?" when in fact it was all bottom, as the rod could have told him. As with Israel and the empty Jordan, so with the dying of a saint, not a droplet of judgment is left. Hence we ought not to be as the poet mournfully sings—

"But trembling mortals start and shrink  
To cross this narrow sea,  
And linger shivering on the brink,  
And fear to launch away."

For though, alas! such fear is often the experience of the Christian, it is not christian experience. Rather ought he to sing, "O Jordan, what aileth thee, that thy waters were driven back?" "O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Such is the valley of the shadow of death, and such are the consolations and supports which await us there.

And now, leaving this valley of blessing, we would exclaim with the psalmist, "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright; for the end of that man is peace;" and with the Christian bard—

"How calm the hallowed ground!  
How cool the air around!  
So peaceful does the body rest;  
The spirit, too, how greatly blest!"

THE DEPARTED ONE.

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“Calm on the bosom of thy God,  
Fair spirit, rest thee now !  
E’en while with us thy footstep trod,  
His seal was on thy brow.

“Dust, to its narrow house beneath !  
Soul, to its place on high !  
They who have seen thy look in death  
No more may fear to die.

“Lone are the paths, and sad the bowers,  
Whence thy sweet smile is gone ;  
But, oh ! a brighter home than ours  
In heaven is now thine own.”

—MRS. HEMANS.



X.

**The Prepared Table.**



## THE PREPARED TABLE.

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"LIVING Bread from heaven,  
How richly hast Thou fed Thy guest !  
The gifts Thou now hast given  
Have filled my heart with joy and rest.  
A wondrous food of blessing,  
A cup that heals our woes ;  
My heart this gift possessing,  
In thankful song o'erflows ;  
For while the life and strength in me  
Were quickened by this food,  
My soul hath gazed awhile on Thee,  
Oh, highest only Good !

"Oh, well for me that strengthened  
With heavenly bread and wine, if here  
My course on earth be lengthened,  
I now may serve Thee free from fear !  
Away, then, earthly pleasure !  
All earthly gifts are vain ;  
I seek a heavenly treasure,  
My home I long to gain,  
Where I shall live and praise my God,  
And none my peace destroy ;  
Where all the soul is overflowed  
With pure eternal joy."

—PRIST

## Tenth Part.

### THE PREPARED TABLE.

**"Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies."**

IN this verse of our psalm there are three beautiful figures setting forth the Lord's care of us. First, a table which He prepares; second, a gladdening and a refreshing unction with which He anoints us; and, third, a cup too full not to overflow with the blessings with which He blesses us. The flock ceases not to be nourished because its enemies may be near. Concerning these the psalmist writes in greatest confidence, as if quite unfearing, saying, "Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. Thus when He, the Good Shepherd, "giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" The Lord puts us to eat at His table in peace, saying, "Eat, O friends! drink, O beloved!"

The first figure is a prepared table. It is no unusual figure in the Word. It denotes design,

purpose, also abundance. Sometimes it is for the individual, as here; also in Luke xv., where we see the feast spread for the returned prodigal, the father's welcome; a welcome according to the love of his heart, as seen when it is said, "He fell on his neck and kissed him," or, as in the Revised Version, "*Kissed him much.*" Tender expression of His love! Sometimes it is for the redeemed in their corporate blessedness. Thus we are carried on to the time of Isaiah xxv. 6, when, after this long night of Gentile rule and apostacy, all Israel shall be saved, and "the Lord of hosts shall make unto all people a feast of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined." This will be the sunny season of the earth's millennium.

Other feasts are spoken of, such as the marriage supper of the Lamb, the scene of which is laid in heaven, and indicates a time of heavenly glory, when we shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of the Father. The table will not then be in the midst of enemies; for there will be no foe there. The marriage feast is called a *supper*; the work-day of earth, for its favoured guests, will be overpast; and the sweet rest of their eternal Sabbath will have come.

But the scene of this table is obviously here, in the midst of our wilderness dangers, and in the very face of our enemies.

The feast itself which the gospel spreads is one of design, and according to an eternal purpose ; a design and purpose indicated by the words, " Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath *prepared* for them that love Him." It was God, before the worlds were made who, in His eternal grace and love, purposed these things ; and it was through Christ that He accomplished the purpose. Paul the apostle, in Titus i., speaks "of eternal life which God that cannot lie *promised* before the world began." Promised to whom ? Not to the world ; for it was not made. And not to the Church ; for as yet it was not formed. To whom was it but to Christ ; so that all the great eternal blessings which we now have were what satisfied Him, and were more than an equivalent for all the sufferings and sorrows He endured. Eternal life with all it contains was laid out in the mind of God for us before all worlds, and promised to the Son for us as a fruit of His soul's travail. The Spirit reveals these deep things to us. What deeper things could there be than God has so ordered it in our redemption that He Himself is our portion ; that we are as Christ ; having the same life, set down before Him, far above all principalities and powers ; all obstacles between God and us having been once and for ever removed out of the way. The Spirit it is who,

through the truth, brings us to Christ, and Christ brings us to God ; God has constituted Himself an object for our hearts, having made us the especial objects of His own. Oh, if we look back on the eternal past, to God's thoughts respecting us ; on the present, at what Christ is to us now before God ; and into the eternal future, at what God will be to us in Him for ever, we shall in a measure comprehend how abundant is the table He has spread, that it is an infinite and an endless provision. Even now, He has the blood of His own Son for our conscience ; His person for our hearts ; and His heaven for our home ; for, freed from sin, and death, and the kingdom of darkness,

“ A new, another hand,  
Now draws us to our Father-land.”

Meanwhile we have many and great enemies ; we have—

I. Enemies *internal*. “ The carnal mind is enmity to God ” and to the divine life which is in us. The law in our members wars against the law of the mind, and is never at peace with *it*. Notwithstanding we have, in regeneration, a new nature, the old corrupt one is still in us, and is “ deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.”

In a brighter age there will be no old serpent,

for he will be chained a thousand years ; and for a people who will be "all righteous" there will be no old nature. Hence the promise to Israel, "I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean : from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you : and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers ; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God." (Ezek. xxxvi. 24-28.) This relates to the day of the earth's glory, when God will give Israel not only a new heart or nature, as He now does to us, but will take the old completely away, which, for the present, He does not do with us. There is not one word in the Bible which says He does ; but many to show that it is still in us, not to be made holy in us, but to be mortified by us.

The consecrating oil, under Aaron, was never put upon man's flesh. God never sanctifies our sinful nature. What He did with it was to condemn it on the cross. This enemy would cut out

sad work for us at any moment, as it did for Ananias, when in his heart he lied against the Holy Ghost; and as it did to David in his great sin, and also when he said in his heart, "I shall one day die by the hand of Saul." Note, it *was in his heart*, not from *God's truth*, he said this—a heart full of unbelief; for the Lord had told him that he was His anointed, to sit as king on the throne of Israel. Better always to speak from the word of God than from our own treacherous hearts. Alas! we know how soon its unbelief would raise questions, doubts, fears, and would lead us to say with Jacob, when God is working for our good, that "all these things are against us." It is our greatest enemy, and at all costs and notwithstanding all appearances, we must believe God and not our own heart.

This enemy, unlike all others, is within us, and works quite unseen. We are always in the presence of this foe. Even when seated at the prepared table of our God, it is there; and when we would do good, it is present with us. But it has had its doom in Christ, and it will utterly cease when God takes down this earthly house of our tabernacle, which, because of its infection, must be dissolved; and "absent from the body" we are "present with the Lord." We have

II. Enemies *external*. The flesh, as I have said,

is internal, but the world, Satan, and his emissaries are all around us, and are ever present with us. Our lot is cast in an "evil age." Its powers are all around us—each one an enemy. If we walk as Christ walked the world will hate us. A poet so calm as Paul Gerhardt could say—

"Who joins him to that Lord,  
Whom Satan flies and hates,  
Shall find himself despised, abhorred ;  
For him the burden waits  
Of mockery and shame  
Heaped on his guiltless head,  
And crosses, trials, cruel blame,  
Shall be his daily bread."

But what with the worldliness of professing Christians, and the religiousness of utter worldlings, such hatred is but little known. Rather, instead of hatred, is it not friendship? Scathing words on this are those of the apostle when he says, "Ye adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." (James iv. 4.) Two cannot walk together except they be agreed. Yet the Church and the world in these days so walk. Any line between them has been so trodden on both sides that it becomes invisible. Hence it has been well said,\* "I look for the Church, and I cannot find it, for it

\* DR. HORATIUS BONAR.



is in the world ; I look for the world, and I cannot find it, for it is in the Church."

It is a solemn thing to be loved by the world ; for "the world will love its own," and the friendship of the world is enmity to God.

The world's love is a mean, selfish love. It gives its friendship and its favours only for what it can get. If it can get pleasure or worldly advantage from a Christian it will use him for its own purposes, giving him—what costs but little—its applause or its honour. In such way the world will love and use him as its own. "If a man abide not in me," said the Lord, "he is cast forth, and is withered, and *men* gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned." It is as if He had said, "*I* cannot use you if not abiding in me ; but *men* will use you for their own plans, and in carrying out their own purposes." It is in the midst of such an enemy the Christian's table is prepared. What fortifies him against it is the table itself—feeding on the Word, on Christ, the true bread. It was the cross which crucified the world to Paul. It was by it he was crucified to the world.

III. Enemies *infernal*. "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness (or wicked

spirits), in heavenly places." (Eph. vi. 12.) Such are the unseen hosts leagued against us. We ourselves, because one with Christ, are "in heavenly places." We have died with Christ, are risen with Christ, and are seated together "in heavenly places *in Him*. But if we are to possess and enjoy what God has for us there, we must expect conflict with these hosts of wickedness, who also are there. As with Joshua, when he had crossed the Jordan, he found the enemy in full force in the land, so we, in being raised with Christ, find we have many and powerful enemies who have access to the same scene to which we have been brought. Principalities and powers contend with us at our coming; they occupy themselves with spiritual wickedness against us; they rule over the darkness of this world; they "reign as demons in exercising their power over the lusts of man, and over the terrors of conscience." It is because of these, when in the enjoyment of the place to which God has brought us, that we find it so difficult to maintain it; and it is because of these that, when out of that enjoyment, it is so difficult to regain it. But the necessary armour is not withheld us. We have God Himself; we have His word. His truth is our shield and buckler. Our foes may suggest we are not saved, but His truth tells us we are. We have also principalities and powers of good who are

with us. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who are heirs of salvation?" We do not think enough of this angelic army, set apart by the great Captain for the benefit of His own.

But besides these there is the great adversary—"the devil goeth about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour." Note, when in hunger the lion is most ferocious for his prey. Thus Satan is seeking for his prey as if in a ferocious search. Our Lord thus speaks of him to Simon: "Satan hath desired to sift you as wheat," or as in the Revised Version, "Satan has obtained you by asking" (see margin), showing how, as in the case of Job, he has still access to God in his efforts against us. But added the Lord: "I have prayed for *thee*, that thy faith fail not." As if the Lord foresaw how, after his fall, he might easily doubt, either as to his ever having been a disciple, or that the Lord would ever receive him into His love and confidence again.

Peter, the Lord saw, was vulnerable, and Satan soon had him in his grasp. No other apostle speaks of him as Peter does, calling him a "roaring lion." A sheep is of all animals the most helpless. With what could David's little lamb defend itself against the lion and the bear? But David's eye was upon it; and the Lord's eye is upon us as it

was upon Peter. David put his hands on the jaws of the lion, and took the prey from out of death itself. Who does not seem to hear the greater than David say, "Mine they are ; thou gavest them me. They shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand." Blessed utterance ! How has it sustained in the darkest day !

"Oh, I have seen the day,  
When with a single word,  
God helping me to say,  
*' My trust is in the Lord,'*  
My soul hath quelled a thousand foes,  
Fearless of all that could oppose !" \*

Such trust may we have, blessed be His name, whilst in the presence of our enemies. The Good Shepherd protects His own ; He neither slumbers nor sleeps ; His ear is always open so that He hears the ravening wolf or the roaring lion. What is this world but Satan's prowling-ground as yet ? and we are in the midst of it. But, blessed Lord, thou dost strengthen us for our warfare by setting us down to eat and drink at Thine own table. Let but the enemy get a sight of Thy blood, and he is put to flight ; Thou art our strong tower, into which the righteous enter and are safe.

Sweet it is to think that "for every demon devising evil against us there is an angel of Thine

• COWPER.

guarding us and ministering to us" (Heb. ii.), penetrating the realms of air, encamping round about them that fear Thee, and protecting from the malignant foes before whom they might otherwise fall an easy prey. These are our heavenly guards now, and soon Thou wilt appoint them to be our convoy as we take leave of the conflicts of the wilderness for the Canaan of our everlasting rest. Thus though we have enemies internal, external, and infernal, we have none of them *eternal*.

" In Thee we every glory view  
 Of safety, strength, and beauty too ;  
 'Tis all our rest and peace to see  
 Our sanctuary, Lord, in Thee.  
 Whatever foes or fears betide,  
 In Thy dear presence, Lord, we hide."

**XI.**

**The Anointed Head.**

**K**

## THE ANOINTED HEAD.

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“PRECIOUS ointment, very costly,  
Of chief odours, pure and sweet ;  
Holy gift for royal priesthood,  
Thus for temple-service meet.  
Thus the Spirit's precious unction—  
Oil of gladness freely shed —  
Sanctifying and abiding  
On the consecrated head.”

—FRANCES RIDLEY HAVERGAL.

## **Eleventh Part.**

### **THE ANOINTED HEAD.**

**"Thou anointest my head with oil."**

A SECOND figure is that of an anointed head. "*Thou anointest my head with oil*"—makest fat, vigorous, flourishing, as the word is in the margin ; that is, with joy, cheerfulness, prosperity. It was customary at feasts to anoint the guest with oil. It added brightness, joy, to the countenance, and made the guest agreeable to his host by the sweet fragrance it emitted, and the freshness it imparted.

The oil of which the psalmist speaks was for no merely human joy. He knew of the divine unction—the Lord's anointing oil. That oil, as used by Moses, was made of the most precious ingredients,—spices, and other precious things, valued for their fragrantcy and for their medical virtue. There was deep meaning in the Lord's words when He said, "*Thou shalt make it unto me,*" reminding of how the true anointed One was made, by God and for



God, unto us "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption."

I have loved again and again to linger in thought over the value God set upon this anointing oil. He instituted it for His own divine use. Any one who made it for their own, or for the use of any other, would be cut off from among the people; teaching how dreadful it is to merely imitate the things of God.

God Himself, to secure its perfectness, appointed the ingredients. How it was made we read in Exod. xxx. 23-25: "Take thou also unto thee principal spices, of pure myrrh\* five hundred shekels, and of sweet cinnamon half so much, even two hundred and fifty shekels, and of sweet calamus two hundred and fifty shekels, and of cassia five hundred shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, and of oil olive an hin: and thou shalt make it an oil of holy ointment, an ointment compound after the art of the apothecary: it shall be an holy anointing oil."

As to what was to be anointed, we are told in the same chapter. The tabernacle of the congre-

\* "Myrrh is the living juice of the tree which yields its drops through bruised and broken parts, like blood from the veins, or tears from the eyes.

*"As myrrh new-bleeding from the tree,  
Such is a dying Christ for me."*

gation was to be anointed; the ark of the testimony, the table, the candlestick, the altar of incense, the altar of burnt-offering, with the laver and his foot—these all were to be anointed. All must have this sweet odoriferous oil upon them, and all with special reference to service;—and service as acceptable and pleasing to God as the presence of precious odours. Acts x. tells us how “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power,” according to what was prophesied of Him by the prophet (Isa. lxi.):—“The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” Thus He was anointed with the Holy Ghost for the mission He had to accomplish—a mission distinct in the mind of Him who anointed Him; seen by Him from all eternity; and to be finally accomplished when all things shall be made new.

The oil on Aaron was not confined to the head on which it was poured; it ran down to the skirts of his garments. We have an unction from the holy One—“we are in the one glorious anointing with our divine head.” The name Christ signifies *Anointed*, or *the Anointed One*. He is called such

in Psalm ii.—“The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against His Anointed,” which they did at His first coming (Luke xxii. 2), but which they will do on a far vaster scale under His great adversary, the antichrist, at His appearing again. In Ps. xlv. He reigns as Messiah; Christ, *the Anointed One*. Beautiful description!—“Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness; therefore God, thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.” “This psalm,” says a late writer, “brings before us the conquering Jesus, the reigning Jesus, the glorified Jesus; not Jesus put to death by conspiring Jews, but Jesus in His glory. Now when Jehovah says, “I have anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows,” it brings before us the amazing outpouring of joy which shall rest on the head of the Lord Jesus. But when? When His whole mystical body shall be gathered; when He shall present it to the Father “without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing”—*complete in Him*—and when He, with His entire company of glorified saints, will reign over the whole kingdom under the heavens, King of kings, and Lord of lords, the Ruler of princes and of men. For this end from all eternity has God set Him apart. “I have laid help upon One who is mighty; with my holy oil have I anointed

Him." And note, all for this glorious service—that He shall die for the nation; that He should be the Saviour of the Church; that in Him should all nations be blessed; that the whole earth may be filled with His glory; that principalities and powers may see in us the exceeding riches of His grace, and the manifold wisdom of God, displayed through all eternity.

We cannot contemplate this anointing apart from His people. He of whom the Lord said, "With holy oil have I anointed Him," was, as servant and man, filled with *unsearchable riches*. "For the whole fulness of God was pleased to dwell in Him." And why? That we, from out of that store, might be blessed with all spiritual and eternal blessings in and through and from Him. We have a beautiful figure of how this fulness is communicated in Zech. iv. First, a bowl, a golden bowl, on either side of which is an olive tree dropping its rich oil into it; and next, from the bowl there were seven pipes to carry the oil to the seven lamps.\*

\* Observe, not *candles*. It is said of the Son of man that He "walketh in the midst of the seven candlesticks" (Rev. i. 13; ii. 1), so near is He to them, and so observant of them. The word "candlestick" ought to be translated "lamp-stand." The distinction as setting forth the Christian is important; for a candle only burns what it has in itself. It is *self-supplying* and *self-consuming*; but a lamp is supplied *by oil that is poured* into it from without. The supply being continued, the lamp continues its burning, as in the tabernacle of old; but the candle soon burns itself away, and

The olive trees tell us of God Himself, who is the original source of all ; and the bowl, which is supplied from them, is Christ ; the lamps, ourselves. On the bowl we might write, "*In Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily ;*" and on the lamps, "*Of His fulness have we received.*"

"Nothing can be a greater necessity for man than that he should receive from this fulness. The whole history of man shows that apart from what Christ has for him he is lost, dead, corrupt, in ruin before God and for eternity. It is when something from Christ enters him ; when God puts His Spirit upon him, he has a new creation. Nothing instead will do ; no gifts, no natural endowments, no amiability of disposition." But once, by faith, touch the hem of His garment, and we become associated with Him in all the virtue and value of the atoning blood which He shed for us, and with all the riches stored up for us in Him, and which will flow to us from Him both now and through all eternity.

This oil was put on Aaron when arrayed in his "*garments for glory and for beauty.*" It was always

accordingly soon goes out. The distinction may appear small, but indeed it is not so.

It has been well said that "the lights and perfections of the sacred Word are only discovered by a clear attention to the jots and tittles. Attention to the words and grammar of the Holy Ghost is the telescope and microscope by which the great things and the very little great things of God are discovered."—NEWBERRY.

upon him when he went before the Lord, and it was put upon all the vessels of the sanctuary, and upon every ministering servant of God who was occupied with the service of the sanctuary. "See," says another, "how God will not use a single thing or person in His service that has not His mark upon it. There must be a touch of His consecrating oil upon us ere He can accept our service." On Aaron it was *poured*, but not on his sons ; for they, as the Church with Christ, were in the same pouring, and the same anointing. Such pouring, such odours, could not but make the person of Aaron pleasant ; portraying thus before the eye and heart of God His own beloved Son.

How we are associated with Christ in this unction we see in Aaron ; his head was first to receive the anointing ; thence the oil reached the ephod, and mingled with all the precious stones whereon were engraven with the engraving of a signet the names of the twelve tribes of Israel ; thence far down it reached, even to the hem of his garments. This was *the* great anointing. Mark, not garment, but "garments," as if to show that there was not a thread in all those garments but what was in the same anointing with the head. This of itself, the thought of it, is as a sweet unction to our souls. God had said to Moses, "*Pour* it upon Aaron's head." With such pouring how could the oil but flow to his gar-

ments? "Oh, if I be but a thread in those garments," may the youngest or weakest believer in Christ say, "I am as He is, in the same anointing, holy unto the Lord, righteous, accepted in the Beloved." Suggestively—Aaron's head we may take to represent Christ; but, from the neck downwards, in the garments for glory and for beauty, we may see the redeemed—suggestively again, the Church which is His body, forming with the head one new man. The fulness which is in Him is that in which the Church is complete—COMPLETE IN HIM!

A beautiful image of this is recorded in Ps. cxxxiii.; viz., "The dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion." An intelligent traveller writes of this passage: "Many have overlooked its beauty from not considering the geographical position of the mountain, which was one of the highest, if not the highest, of that mountain range. It was generally topped with clouds, which rested upon it. Those clouds were wafted gently on and distilled in dew upon Jerusalem and the surrounding country. Beautiful thought! a figure truly of the precious things of heaven which are lodged in the Lord Jesus Christ; and which He causes through His Spirit to distil upon us who live in these lower regions." It is thus we love to think of Him who is especially and em-

phatically the anointed One. Yes; for the dew, like the oil, is soft and healing; it blesses but never breaks the tiniest flower on which it falls. Thus the blessings lodged for us by God in Christ in the loftiest heaven descend upon "the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him that filleth all in all."

How the blessings descended on the early Church is thus told by a beloved disciple who is now with the Lord?\*"Look," he says, "at the character of the Spirit's presence in the Church immediately on His being given. (Acts ii.) What an oil of gladness, what a spirit of liberty and largeness of heart, is He in the saints there! Jesus had received Him in the ascended place, where He Himself had been made full of joy with God's countenance, and giving Him forth from such a place, He manifests Himself here accordingly, imparting at once something of that joy of God's countenance into which their Lord had entered. The Holy Ghost in them was joy, and liberty, and largeness of heart. It was the reflection on the saints here of that light which had fallen on Jesus in the holiest. The oil ran down from the beard to the skirts of the garment. Indeed we can form but a poor idea of the value of such a dispensation as this which the Comforter was to bring to a soul

• J. G. BELLETT.



that had been under the skirt of bondage and of fear gendered by the law. What thoughts of judgment to come were now bidden to depart! What fears of death were now to yield to the consciousness of present life in the Son of God! And what would all this be but anointing with an 'oil of gladness?'"

And observe how the anointing oil must ever betray its presence! It is in the nature of an odour to betray itself. "All thy garments smell of aloes and cassia, out of the ivory palaces whereby they have made thee glad." Of one filled with Christ, therefore, it need never be asked, "*Is he a Christian?*" I cannot wear a rose on my person but its fragrance tells of its presence. Can Christ indeed be *mine*, and I not shed abroad to others something of that love of His which is shed abroad in me? No; the oil told its own story. Among the thousands of vessels lying along the great wharfs of our land it may be difficult to tell from whence the most of them have come; but there are others which at once betray the secret. They are from Ceylon, or some other of the "*balmy isles*," and tell whence they are by the very spices they bring. The believer who hails from heaven, bearing with him Christ, will evidence the same. What we want is, a continuous fresh anointing for communion and for service. The Holy Ghost through the word

putting Christ afresh upon us again and again is what the Church wants. In any scene of blessing where Christ has been, I have found as if His savour were still remaining. Thus the Bride, in the Song of Solomon, when she put her fingers on the handles of the lock where those of her Beloved had been, found them dropping with the myrrh that had been left from His own. The myrrh told her that it was He who had been there, and told others also how that she had come from where He too had been.

The word "Thou *anointest*," as I have said, is a continuous word. Too many are satisfied with being merely saved. They rest in their conversion as if *that* were enough, when in fact it is only the beginning. We need a daily renewing; a constant taking from the fulness there is in Christ; the experimental and practical value of which who can tell?

Thus when we feel anew the power of the atoning blood it is a fresh anointing; when our souls are anew filled with the hope of His coming it is a fresh anointing, a fresh application of Christ; in fine, whatever of Christ is put upon us, teaching, strengthening, or refreshing our souls, is as a new unction of the Holy One.

It will be observed how penetrating oil is; how it diffuses itself through the substance on which it

is poured ; the head receiving it is made to flourish, the face to shine. Oh, that thus the anointings of the Lord, the preciousness of the Lord Christ, the Holy Ghost dwelling within us, may pervade our inmost souls, and be seen diffusing itself into all our life, words, and ways.

How interesting I feel it all is—this consecrating oil ! and how wonderful are such types as setting forth divine mysteries—mysteries which were in the mind of God from all eternity ! Think of this “tabernacle of the congregation” where He would dwell with man in this world ; of “the ark of the testimony” where He would meet with man and commune with him, bringing him into the very presence of His glory ; of “the cherubim,” under whose wings He Himself would rest, His delights being with the sons of men ; of the “laver,” that fountain open for cleansing ; of “the golden altar of incense,” where was owned the preciousness of the blood, that fountain opened for all sin and uncleanness, the precious atoning blood of Christ ; of this “oil of consecration,” this seal of divine power for service, this “unction of joy”—think of these being in the mind of God before the foundation of the world, and all as setting forth the dearest and greatest purposes of His heart. A faint analogy of this may be seen in what transpires in our own minds, an

analogy however which may well illustrate the distance between the creature and the Creator. Says the author of "*Earth's Earliest Ages*"—"We know that by force of imagination we can not only place before our eyes scenes in which we were long ago interested—spots which we fain would revisit in the body, departed forms dear to us as our own lives—but are even able to paint in fancy future events as we would wish them to be. . . . The vision is however shadowy, fleeting, and, alas! too often unholy. Somewhat then, perhaps as we produce this dim and quickly-fading picture, the thoughts of God, issuing from the depths of His holiness and love, take instant shape, and become not an unsubstantial and evanescent dream, but a beautiful reality, established for ever, unless He choose to alter or remove it. Hence it may be that a great part, or perhaps the whole host of innumerable suns and planets which make up the universe, flashed into being simultaneously at His will, and in a moment illumined the black realm of space with their many-hued glories."

And hence also these types, setting forth redemption, any one of which, regarding the work or person of the Son of God, must have been clothed in the divine mind with a far greater interest than the creation of a world, or any system of worlds, which He has made. Thus who

can measure that word, "So great a salvation"? "So great" that God it would seem made this world in order to plant the cross on it by which He will accomplish it. But as with creation, so with these thoughts of God issuing from His eternal wisdom and love,—if not flashed into being as were the innumerable suns and planets, yet they were personally made known to Moses to illumine the blessed pages of His word; to teach us what He is; what His Son is; what we are in Him now; and what we are destined to be, when with Him, for ever. How magnificent the words by which the Anointed One is described, "God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad." This is said of the Lord; but of the redeemed it is sung, "The king's daughter is all glorious within" (in *spirit*, in *mind*, in *affections*): "her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee." (Ps. xlv. 13, 14)

XII.

**The Full Cup.**

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## THE FULL CUP.

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"JESUS ! Thou art enough  
The heart and mind to fill.  
Thy life to calm the anxious soul ;  
Thy love its fear dispel."

## Twelfth Part.

### THE FULL CUP.

“My cup runneth over.”

THE third figure is a full cup: “My cup runneth over.” This in sight, perhaps, of some surprising deliverance; or on a review of some long accumulation of blessings. What child of God is there who, with heart overflowing, has not been led to say—

“When all Thy mercies, oh, my God !  
My rising soul surveys,  
Transported with the view, I’m lost  
In wonder, love, and praise.”

Thus is it when our own cup overflows; nor can it but run over when its portion is the Lord. There is no blessing the mind can imagine, or the heart crave, but may be found in Him. This figure is frequently met with in Scripture whenever a large supply of blessedness is spoken of. Thus the psalmist says, “I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord.” (Ps. cxvi.



13.) "It brings before our eyes" (I speak from another) "that from which the figure took its use. Not only had the Jews in their ceremonials these cups of blessing, but the heathen also observed this social and religious custom, so that when Paul is writing to the Corinthians he tells them that there ought to be an apprehension of the divine mercy as exhibited in the Supper of the Lord; and he says, 'Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils.'" The figure brings before us the freedom of the accepted guests at the Lord's banquet, just as it is written in that verse in the Song of Solomon, "He brought me into His banqueting house" (His house of wine), "and His banner over me was love."

Wondrous cup, truly! "With this cup," Augustine remarks, "were the martyrs inebriated when, going forth to their passion, they recognized not those that belonged to them,—not their weeping wives, not their children, not their relatives; while they gave thanks, and said, 'I will take the cup of salvation.'" Nor martyrs alone. Christians dying on their couch, like the apostles who were said to be drunk with wine, have been filled with an exultant joy, which found expression for itself in words of ineffable bliss. The same writer, speaking of this cup as a metaphor, says, "Various and remarkable are the metaphors in Scripture in general.

For instance, we are told of *the sprinkling* of the blood of Jesus Christ upon the conscience, as if upon that conscience there were so many plague-spots and sores, if we may so say, on which the blood is to be sprinkled. There is to be a distribution of the substance into parts, as the word literally signifies, that it may go over every part of the wounded conscience, and cleanse it and purify it.

And thus, to return to the figure before us, the cup represents the full blessing which the Lord bestows for the cheering of the hearts of His people, the cordial which the Master of the feast Himself bestows upon His servants. It represents the Lord's mercy as spread out before His people, each servant of the Lord being an accepted guest at the banquet, there to partake of that mercy, so that our Lord Jesus Christ says, as recorded in John vi., "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood dwelleth in Me, and I in him." Not referring to the Lord's Supper, for it was not at the time instituted, but bringing before the mind this great truth, that every one who lives on Jesus eats His flesh, drinks His blood ; that is, he drinks into the precious truths of a "covenant ordered in all things and sure," and finds them refreshing cordials to his soul.

The figure, however, is not always expressive of blessing. It is fearful when used in reference to

calamity. Thus Jeremiah xxv.—“Thus saith the Lord God of Israel unto me: Take the wine cup of this fury at my hand, and cause all the nations to whom I send thee to drink it.” A dark foreshadowing this of a heavy calamity which impends over an unbelieving and ungodly world. Psalm xi. tells of “*the cup of the wicked.*” “Upon the wicked He shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.” But why these cups? Not from passion or malevolence, but from God’s love of righteousness. It is because of this “the worm dies not, and the fire is not quenched.” Romans ix. tells of “vessels of wrath”—awful words!—vessels of wrath fitted for destruction. Mark, “*fitted.*” Sin naturally *fits* for hell. But vessels of mercy are *prepared* for glory. God has to put His own hand directly, as it were, for this blessedness. Mysterious was the cup which He gave His Son in Gethsemane’s garden. What was it but that exceeding bitter draught presented to the Lord Jesus as our Substitute? But what was in that cup? Sin, death, hell, THE WRATH OF GOD! And for whom did He drink it? Not for angels, or for saints as such, but for the sinner. And oh, marvel of marvels! He took that cup as a trembling man. “Being in an agony, He said, Father, if it be possible let this cup pass from me;” and added, “Not my will, but as

Thou wilt." If that cup had not been taken by Him the whole pedestal of salvation would have rocked and reeled to its foundation, and this sin-stained earth would have sunk down as it deserved into an endless hell. Say, did He leave one drop not taken? Not one.

Hence, now by faith, when we look into that cup we see it quite emptied of wrath and filled with salvation; filled, as we have been reminded, with "many of the ingredients which were in His own." His life—"Because I live ye shall live also;" His love—"As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you;" His friendship—"I have called you friends;" His wisdom—"Made unto us wisdom;" His fulness—"All that I have is thine;" His sorrows—"If the world hate Me, they will also hate you;" His strength—"My strength is made perfect in weakness;" His joy—"These things have I spoken unto you that your joy might be full." This is the present portion presented in the believer's cup of blessedness; the only ingredient kept back, *absolute rest*.

But stay. Does some one complain, "*My* cup does not run over; I am poor and needy; I am empty of bliss. Nay; I am full of sin, and sad foreboding of judgment; I have no cup but one of fear and trembling." Is it so? Then I ask you not to give, but to *take*. To take this cup of sal-

vation purchased by the precious blood of Christ !  
How long does it require to take an offered cup ?  
Only a moment. Oh, then, let not conscience  
make you linger ! If you had all the misery of  
earth and hell combined, I could send you to that  
precious blood which cleanseth from all sin. The  
value of it is written along the palaces and cor-  
ridors of heaven ; for there are magdalenes, robbers,  
persecutors, murderers, all washed and made white  
in the blood of the Lamb. God would have you  
TAKE His cup of salvation, saying, "What shall I  
render to the Lord ?" Filled from this cup, is to  
be filled with the Spirit, who fills from Christ, in  
whom dwells all the fulness of God.

"Filled—filled to overflowing !  
Say, my soul, can it be so ?  
Filled to overflow for others—  
Filled from God's own overflow.  
Oh, if filled from Him I be,  
His outflow must flow from me."

**XIII.**

**Goodness and Mercy.**

## GOODNESS AND MERCY.

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“SHALL I not sing praise to Thee ?  
Shall I not give thanks, O Lord ?  
Since for all in all I see  
How Thou keepest watch and ward ;  
How the truest, tenderest love,  
Ever fills Thy heart, my God ;  
Helping, cheering on the road  
All who in Thy service move.  
All things else have but their day,  
God's love only lasts for aye.

“As the eagle o'er her nest  
Spreads her sheltering wings abroad,  
So from all that would molest  
Doth Thine arm defend me, Lord ;  
From my youth up, e'en till now,  
Of the being Thou didst give,  
And the earthly life I live,  
Faithful guardian still wert Thou.  
All things else have but their day,  
God's love only lasts for aye.”

—*From the German.*

### Thirteenth Part.

## GOODNESS AND MERCY.

“Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.”

THIS psalm, which we have seen throughout to be full of divine confidence, brightens at the close. Not merely does the psalmist say, “The Lord is my Shepherd,” or “Thou art with me,” but “*Surely*” (or as some read “*only*”) “goodness and mercy” (or goodness and loving-kindness, as the word is) “shall follow me all the days of my life.” He does not say “they have followed,” or “*may* follow me”; but, looking unfearingly on into the untrodden future, whatever it may be, he says, they “*shall* follow me all the days of my life.”

Observe how this again is *pastoral*. I have seen vast flocks on their way to their summer pastures with the shepherd going before them—*they* peacefully and, as it were, reverently following him; but then following them again were the shepherd’s faithful helps, perhaps two or more. Nothing could meet them before without first meeting the shepherd,



and nothing reach them from behind without first reaching the helps. Thus it is with us—all the redeemed children of God. The Good Shepherd goes before His sheep, and nothing can meet them before without first meeting Him, and nothing can reach them from behind without first reaching His goodness and loving-kindness which are there.

Note 1. The nature of that of which he is so assured. Goodness and loving-kindness are spoken of as personating the divine Being ; in other words, God Himself. For God is goodness, and God is loving-kindness. Psalm ciii. shows how God hath crowned us with a crown of loving-kindness set with gems of *tender mercies*.

It is the privilege of God's people to know and never to doubt that He is with them. He was with Enoch, who walked with God. He was with Abraham, to whom He said, "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect." In the wilderness His presence was in the midst of and all around the sandaled army. At one time God told Moses that His angel should accompany them. Alas! some would be content with an angel ; but Moses, who had seen God face to face, could not do with such. He said, "If *thy* presence go not with me, carry us not up hence." Hence the promise, in answer to His prayer, "My presence shall go with thee," or, as the word is, "*My faces* shall go

with thee," as though God looked every way on His people's behalf for their protection and care—on the right and on the left, before and behind. All His attributes are gloriously engaged on their behalf. A mighty bulwark are they all around His redeemed ones in this wilderness. His omniscience is with us. Beautiful assurance!—"The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry." And again, "He that keepeth Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps." His wisdom is with us in devising means for our supplies, our safety, and our succour; and His omnipotence, by which in the old time He emptied seas and rivers of their waters, and rendered poisonous serpents innocuous. Mighty in strength the angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him. Blessed character is theirs. They *fear* the Lord with a holy, filial, reverential fear, as did Noah, and Joseph, and Obadiah of whom it is said, "He feared the Lord *greatly*." Around such He encampeth as if on special watch, purposely to guard and keep. Such indeed is the God we have! And it was this God, the God of Israel, that was before the mind of David when he said, "Only goodness and loving-kindness shall follow me all the days of my life."

Corresponding to what we have said was the position assigned to Israel. The cloud went before

them, and the water out of the rock followed them. That rock was Christ. Thus the hosts of Israel were between the cloud and the Rock, whilst right down in their midst was the tabernacle itself, with the ark of the covenant and shekinah of glory. Beautiful image of how He never leaves and never forsakes! Now, as the stream followed Israel in the desert, so goodness and loving-kindness are following, never leaving nor never forsaking, us.

David spoke as if prophetic of his own experience. It was goodness and loving-kindness that had made him an elect object of their care, which at the first had placed him among the sheepecotes at Bethlehem—type of the greater Shepherd than David; it was goodness and loving-kindness that delivered him out of the paw of the lion and the bear; and in the valley of Elah, from the uncircumcised Philistine of Gath; and what was it but goodness and loving-kindness that unveiled to him the character and glory of God as seen in the nocturnal heavens? “When I consider the heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; what is man, that Thou art mindful of him? or the Son of man, that Thou visitest him?” So with all else in the life of David. It was goodness and loving-kindness that saved him from the hand of Saul, and which in fact had never ceased to pursue him in love until his

advent to the kingdom and the throne—typical of Him who, having put down all rule and all authority, His enemies being His footstool, will yet reign King of kings, and Lord of lords. And now, just as the stream in the desert and the cloud moved together until the travelling days with Israel issued in the rest of the land promised to the fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob,—and just as God was with David, so also is He now with us. It was goodness and loving-kindness that fixed the bounds of our own habitation, that cast our lot where the gospel has been shining from the first until now. They fixed our first and second birth ; they have been with us to preserve and help in all times of trial and sickness, of weakness and want. And because they have been with us all the days of the past, we may look confidently to the untrodden future, knowing that as a matter of divine counsel and promise they will be with us still. Experience, promise, and hope all join in assuring us of this.

“ His love in times past forbids me to think  
He'll leave me at last in trouble to sink ;  
Each sweet Ebenezer I have in review  
Confirms His good pleasure to help me quite through.”

The psalmist says, “*only* goodness and loving-kindness ;” nothing else, whatever our lot, painful or pleasant ; and observe accordingly

II. The term of their continuance. "*All* the days of my life"—the dark days as well as the bright ones; those of depressing sorrows as well as of elevating joys; days of scarcity as well as of plenty; days when our dear ones are as olive plants round about our table, or days of bereavement, when their seats are vacant, and their loved forms are with us no more. Yea, "*all*" the days of our vicissitous sojourn here till the morning of heaven dawns, and we shall have reached, beyond time and beyond the tomb, the evergreen shore of our new and eternal home.

Blessed Lord! how would we praise and glorify thy name for all this, thy great love towards us! Blessed now thy ways which, as with Moses, Thou dost teach us; blessed to know that, whatever the future, Thou wilt be with us in life and in death; yea, beyond death, when we shall see Thee as Thou art, and be like Thee, and shall praise Thee and serve Thee for ever!

"Yes, when the storm of life is calmed,  
The dreary desert passed,  
Our way-worn hearts shall find in Thee  
Their full repose at last."

Perhaps some one is saying, "This is not for me. How different is my lot! No goodness and no loving-kindness follow me; nothing of good follows me. *I* have no second birth, *I* have no

certain hope of heaven; no rock following me, and no cloud guiding me. Alas! I have nothing. I *am* poor and needy and desolate." Poor desolate one! where shall I send you? Shall I send you to the cold world that only loveth its own? No, for thou art not its own. To the law, which condemns thee? No! for the law can only demand; it cannot give. Shall I send you to your own desolate self? No. I will send you to Calvary, to the cross of the crucified One; I will send you to *Himself*. He is saying, "*Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" ' He says, "*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.*" Come then, you who *are* nothing, and *have* nothing, come to Jesus. Come to the Friend of the sinner, the Saviour of the lost. Come beneath the droppings of His cross. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." 'Tis there at the cross you may at once sing—

"Ah! little have I, Lord, to give,  
So poor, so base, the life I live;  
But yet till soul and body part  
This one thing will I do for thee—  
The love, the death endured for me,  
I'll cherish in my inmost heart!"

M



XIV.

**The Sure Dwelling.**



## THE SURE DWELLING.

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“THAT home have I desired ;  
’Tis there I would be gone ;  
Till I am well-nigh tired,  
O’er earth I journey on.  
The longer here I roam, I find  
The loss of real joy,  
That ere could please or fill my mind ;  
For all hath some alloy.

“There shall I dwell for ever,  
Not as a guest alone,  
With those who cease there never  
To worship at Thy throne.  
There in my heritage I rest,  
From baser things set free,  
And join the chorus of the blest,  
For ever, Lord, to Thee.”

—PAUL GERHARDT.

## Fourteenth Part.

### THE SURE DWELLING.

“I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”

THIS verse is one of the three futures in the psalm; all the rest are in the present tense. The first future is, “I shall not want;” the second, “I will fear no evil;” the third, “I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.”

David, it is thought by many, wrote these words of confidence when still young. It does not belong to experienced Christians only to be assured of spiritual blessings; however tender in age or young in grace, the youngest of God’s children are entitled to all the great and wondrous things He has given to faith.

But what was the Psalmist’s hope as expressed by these words? In communion with God he had learned by faith to dwell in the secret place of the Most High, under the shadow of the Almighty.

When a fugitive, in his own land, he envied

even the swallows that made their nests in the eaves of the altars. But David could forecast the time when he should awake in the likeness of David's Son and David's Lord. It is interesting how the Old Testament saints, though they had one great hope as to their salvation, yet had different hopes as to the glory—hopes whose objects extended from the Eden of earth to the far-distant glories of the Eden of eternity. Enoch had knowledge of a far-off hope; he “prophesied of the coming of the Lord with ten thousand of His saints,” or with His saintly myriads, which event will be after the present dispensation of the Church has ended.

The Lord had revealed to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and the patriarchs another thing; they were the first to tell of a HEAVENLY CITY. “God was not ashamed to be called their God; for He hath prepared for them a city, even a heavenly. Therefore they looked for a city which hath foundations” (not a fading or a transitory one), “whose builder and maker is God.” God is not only the builder, but the artificer of this city. He is the one who had previously planned, as well as built it. What city can this be but the bridal city of Rev. xxi.\* But there will be one glory of the celestial and

\* See *Brides of Scripture*, descriptive of the Bride, the Lamb's wife.

another glory of the terrestrial. David knew of, and believed in, the hopes of his people in a Messiah reigning over them on the earth. Those hopes are inseparable from their history. "The history of Israel without a Messiah," remarks *Adolphe Monod*, "is like a body without a soul ; nay, is a contradiction in terms. Without the prophecy of the Messiah we can explain neither their origin nor their history ; their distinctive point of character always has been, and is to this day, their expectation of the Messiah. As Messiah, when He came to His own, His own received Him not. As King, He received nothing ; no reign, no kingdom. But reign and kingdom He will yet have.

The psalms, and the prophets, treat largely of this expectation. Isaiah sings, as to those days, of *the mountain of the Lord's house* on the tops of the mountains ; David, of *dwelling in His courts*. Psalm lxxv. is a beautiful rehearsal of what the time and circumstances will be. In principle much of it blessedly applies now ; for we are satisfied with the goodness of His house, even of His holy temple. The river of God is full of water. God does crown the year with His goodness, and His paths drop fatness. We have our times of refreshing, days and seasons of blessed revival. As in nature when the earth cries for rain, and God "makes it soft with showers," and His paths drop fatness, so in grace He opens

the windows of heaven, and pours us out such a blessing that we have not room to receive it. Infinitely more we may have than we have ever yet received. But the psalm is future. Praise is silent ; praise is laid up. And why ? Because the circumstances to call it forth have not yet come.

When Zion shall crown the earth's blessedness, men will be satisfied with the goodness of God's house, even of His holy temple. What praise then shall break from the innumerable multitude on earth ! Hence what a history is there yet to come ! greater and more splendid than any history of any nation that has ever yet existed. Meanwhile their house is left unto them desolate. Scarcely had the Lord foretold this than the desolation commenced.\* What waves have rushed over the Jewish race ! One Roman emperor razed the city to the ground, and left not a vestige standing ; another changed the name of Jerusalem into Eliah, and forbade the Jew to go within some miles of it, that he might not even look upon his city, ploughed and left desolate. But is the Jew subjugate ? And shall he have no more to do with the world's history ? No ; in glorious

\* It has been well said, "God has set forth two peoples on the earth—the Jew, who is under judgment now, but for whom grace is in store ; and the Gentile, who is now under grace, but for whom judgment is in store."—R. MAHONY.

prospect he is still one of earth's nobles, and will have to do with earth's history. The same Messiah that came once will come again ; then the blessed hopes of Israel will be all accomplished, and the nation saved, and all nations blessed in them. The Jews looked for glory on the earth, a temporal kingdom, that kingdom of which Daniel speaks, whose scene is not heaven, but "UNDER THE WHOLE HEAVEN ;" and in the midst of that kingdom a temple, a house of the Lord. Magnificent is the description given of it in the Word. Glorious the days of heaven on earth when the Lord shall be worshipped there, and when He shall say, "*This is my rest !*" How should we long for those days ! For we also are in all these great hopes of theirs ; for "all things are ours." This world itself, which now "rolls amidst the spaces of creation with a lurid light telling of the evil that has befallen it," will yet be ours ; ours as one with Christ, who has redeemed it for Himself. We are "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ ;" and we shall reign with Him. The one great centre of that reign may be the Jerusalem on the earth, the capital of all nations ; or "the holy city, Jerusalem, coming down new out of heaven," which will take up its position over the Jerusalem on the earth, to be its light and its glory, during the thousand years of the earth's blessedness.

But we have a special and more immediate hope ; not merely the hopes that were kindled for the lighting of the Old Testament saints, for, being one with Christ, all the innumerable glories which belong to Him, as Head of His Church, will be ours also. The kingdom *under the whole heaven* will be reigned over by Christ, and we, and all the risen and glorified saints, from the earliest ages down, shall, I believe, reign with Him. "The glory which thou hast given me have I given them." These are but parts of His ways. But until the Lord was about to leave His disciples there was no mention of the "Father's house," which He says He has gone to prepare. We look in vain in the prophets for any mention of any such coming again as is described in John xiv. and 1 Thess. iv. A coming "to the air" simply for His saints, to receive them to Himself, "that where He is there they may be also." This was quite new—a unique promise—and is our near, immediate hope, one which may be accomplished at any moment.

It is for the glorious accomplishment of this that we now wait. From over the long interval of nearly nineteen centuries have these words reached us—"I will come again, and receive you unto myself." Their sweet sound is still with us. If we take a shell from the ocean's shore and bear it miles away, we may apply it to the ear, and the

sound of the ocean is there. True, it is not the ocean, but it is its voice. This John xiv. is not the Lord Himself, but it is His voice. The words are like a ladder, reaching one step higher than another. First, the many mansions, or many "*abiding places*" (see Revised Version) in the Father's house; that house for the eye of faith to see and the heart to desire. Next—for that is not enough—"I go to prepare a place for you." His own chosen delight is to do this. Next, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, *I will come again.*" He will come in person, not by delegation, but Himself. And as if this were not enough, He says—which is nearest and best of all—"I will receive you to myself: *that where I am there ye may be also.*" This is our true hope. How blessed and how sanctifying! For "*every man that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.*" \*

It is an important principle, that none can tread the world beneath their feet until they see what is fairer and better. When the Lord Jesus, in all His beauty, love, and grace, as in this hope, is before us, our ears become deaf and our eyes dim to other objects. The beauty of the "all beauteous One" makes other attractions appear as nothing, all other loveliness unlovely.

\* John iii. 3, *Revised Version.*



The Old Testament saints were waiting for the salvation of God, but had they any thought of the God-man coming simply as Son from heaven to gather His people to the air, and thence to the Father's house with its many abodes, ere they *could* come publicly with Him to the world, over which they with Him and with us would reign? They had seen Him, according to Enoch, coming in the solemn array and pomp of judgment, but not "in like manner" as He ascended privately from Olivet. He went up from Olivet alone, the cloud bearing Him up; with only His disciples to behold Him in His glorious Home-going. After the cloud had received Him out of their sight, and as they still gazed up into the heavens, two angels suddenly came upon the scene, and spoke with them, as if the Lord had said—

"Go, tell yon group that this same (*the*) Jesus which is taken up from you shall in like manner come again." Blessed advent! But the last soul to be saved of this age must be gathered in by the great Soul Gatherer, the Holy Ghost, through the truth, ere the Church is complete, and ere He can come to take all to Himself. We are then to be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, thence to be presented to the Father, and to be ever with the Lord in the house of the Lord; this it is for which we are looking.

But who can tell what it will all be—the beauty, glory, and accommodation of our abiding places there? Amongst ourselves, when about to visit any abode, our expectations are regulated by our knowledge of its owner,—his character, his interest in us, his riches or otherwise. Let us consider this. For who is He to whom we are going? What is *His* character, *His* love for us, *His* resources? For long ages the Lord has been preparing for us our heavenly home with all His vast riches, and according to all His immense skill and love. We know what He has done in this lower department of His creation. He it was who, with His own hand, built up the majestic mountains, and formed the verdant vales. He it was who made each fertile hollow, and spread forth each lovely plain—who created with so lavish a hand the fruits and flowers of earth, and the grand azure ranges of sky in the heavens with all the bright luminaries which so gloriously adorn them; and He it is now who is preparing our new abode, those abiding places, situate in the paradise (the garden) of God. How He is doing it we can only imagine. Earth's preparation we know was not all at once, and the new Jerusalem city we know is to come forth as a bride *prepared* for her husband, showing special thought and design, which will be seen to an infinite degree as executed

by the Builder and Artificer of our blest home in the heavens.

We may gather too a little of what the Lord will do from the promptings of our own poor hearts. For when we receive our friends, it is our happiness to bestow upon them our very best. Let us consider this also in its application to Him, whose love for us cannot be told. Oh, think what will be the best which He will provide! and what all the blessedness which thus awaits us!

And yet a further thought. When, as one with another, staying with those we love, we give up ourselves to a happiness which must be shaded with the feeling that the time is limited, that the end must come. But our connection with the Lord, and with this house of the Lord, will not be as visitors; or merely as guests; but as children, to remain; as sons and daughters of the Lord God Almighty; as heirs of God, having come with Him who loves us into possession of our eternal inheritance, to be shared for ever with Him. The order is, *first, children*—first to be received at home as such, and then "*heirs*," to possess the property—heirs of an inheritance incorruptible; heirs of God; and in a dwelling whose paradise will never fade, whose heavens will be without a cloud, whose morn will have no eve, "for there shall be no night there."

What an inheritance ! what a morning ! Well may we sing—

“ Oh, blessed Lord ! we little dreamed  
Of such a morn as this ;  
Such rivers of unmingled joy,  
Such full unbounded bliss.”

And then the enjoyments of this house, who can tell ? *We shall behold His face. “His servants shall serve Him.”* He will receive us not to the house merely, but to *Himself*. John was received to His bosom here. Will it be less that He will give us there ?

It is not the house that will make the heaven, but having Him with us as One who has loved us with an everlasting love, and who by the shedding of His blood purchased us for Himself. Think further of this word, “*for ever.*” “*For ever*” will sit enthroned on all we are, and on all we have. “DEATH SHALL BE NO MORE ; NEITHER SHALL THERE BE MOURNING, NOR CRYING, NOR PAIN, ANY MORE : THE FIRST THINGS ARE PASSED AWAY.” (Rev. xxi. 4.)

Blessed indeed is the certainty of it all ! “I SHALL dwell.” How sure, how positive, the glad singer in the psalm is ! But not surer and more positive than he ought. Some would say this was presumption. But no ; it is the faith in which God delights, because it is founded on His word. Who can believe

John x. and xiv. and not be confident? "I go to prepare a place for *you*"—you disciples, you believers—and "if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take *you*"—you disciples, you who believe—"to myself, that where I am there ye may be also." And not the great only, but the small also. "Small and great," says Rev. xix. 5. "Having a legal tendency," said the late Mr. Bellett, "I have enjoyed the thoughts that have arisen in my mind from this verse. Be willing to be among the small; and not uneasy if you judge yourself little in either fruitfulness, or devotedness, or grace in comparison with others. The glory has made its reckonings accordingly. The millions of His saints are there as well as 'apostles, prophets, martyrs.'" But the question is, Am I to be there? or rather, Am I one of His sheep? If so all is secured. Do you ask, How may I know the Lord is my Shepherd? Because, as before said, He is God's gift to the sinner; and if I have taken the place of a sinner, and believe on Him as my Saviour, He has assured me, "I SHALL NOT PERISH, BUT HAVE ETERNAL LIFE."

Sweet psalm which suggests to us all this! We are loth to leave it. Yet leave it we may not, but take it with us into all places and conditions of our life, in sunshine or in shade, through the dark cloud of suffering and sorrow or in the bright day

of rejoicing ; it will always tell of what we need—divine provision, sure protection, gracious restorings, and peaceful leadings ; also of guardian attendants and of mansions being prepared for us in that Heaven of unending bliss.

To breathe the atmosphere of this Psalm is to walk with God, and to be assured of no fear and no want, so that in all circumstances, pleasing or painful, living or dying, we may say, “The Lord is my Shepherd : I shall not want.” Ah, yes ! “My !” “Mine !” “The Lord is MY Shepherd.” Let the heart say “MINE ;” for unless He be such it is of no avail all else that is said of “green pastures” and “still waters,” or of “dwelling in the house of the Lord for ever,” or of that immediate glorious hope of His soon coming again, in prospect of which we now leave this meditation in the hand of the blessed Spirit, to use it as He pleases, to the praise only of the name of Jesus.

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#### THE BLESSED HOPE.

“THOU shalt call and I will answer,  
Gladly rising from the sod,  
In the radiant light of morning,  
When I hear the trump of God.

N

“ Restless, storm-tost, heaving billows  
 May have hid my weary face ;  
 Or the waste and howling desert  
 May have been my resting-place ;

“ Or the quiet sacred graveyard,  
 Where the weeping mourners go,  
 While the words of life and blessing  
 Hush and soothe their keenest woe.

“ East or west, it scarce concerns me  
 Where I rest ‘the little while ;’  
 I shall hear the voice of Jesus,  
 I shall catch His loving smile !

“ I shall sleep, my heart still waking,  
 In the coldest, darkest place ;  
 Then awake to catch the foot-fall  
 Of my coming King of grace.

“ ‘Mid the myriads upward flocking  
 To the meeting in the air,  
 I shall look for none save Jesus,  
 Though His saints are with Him there.

“ Thus I think when death seems near me ;  
 But a brighter hope than this  
 Fills my heart with deep, sweet gladness,  
 Crowns my life with joy and bliss.

“ Death may never wing an arrow,  
 Causing heart and flesh to fear,  
 Ere the Lord descends in glory ;  
 For His coming draweth near !

“Who can tell? These eyes may see Him  
Ere death’s hand can close their lids ;  
They are watching night and morning,  
As the faithful Master bids.

“Who can tell? These hands may never  
Folded lie in Death’s cold grasp.  
No ; the life-blood may not leave them  
Till the Master’s hand they clasp !

“Who can tell? These ears so weary  
Of the earth-sounds sad and drear,  
May not rest in Death’s dim silence  
Ere the Saviour’s voice they hear !

“Who can tell? These feet so way-worn,  
Soon may spurn earth’s thorny ways,  
Upward mount to Christ and glory,  
After all their travelling days !

“Then these lips that long to praise Him  
Shall be filled with music sweet ;  
But or e’er one note they utter,  
They will kiss His wounded feet.

“Blessed hope ! like rainbow wreathing  
Heaven and earth in radiant light,  
Nerve me for my daily conflict,  
Be my helmet in the fight !

“Shine within me, beckoning others  
To my happy waiting place,  
That they too may hear Christ calling,  
That they too may see His face !”

—M. M.



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