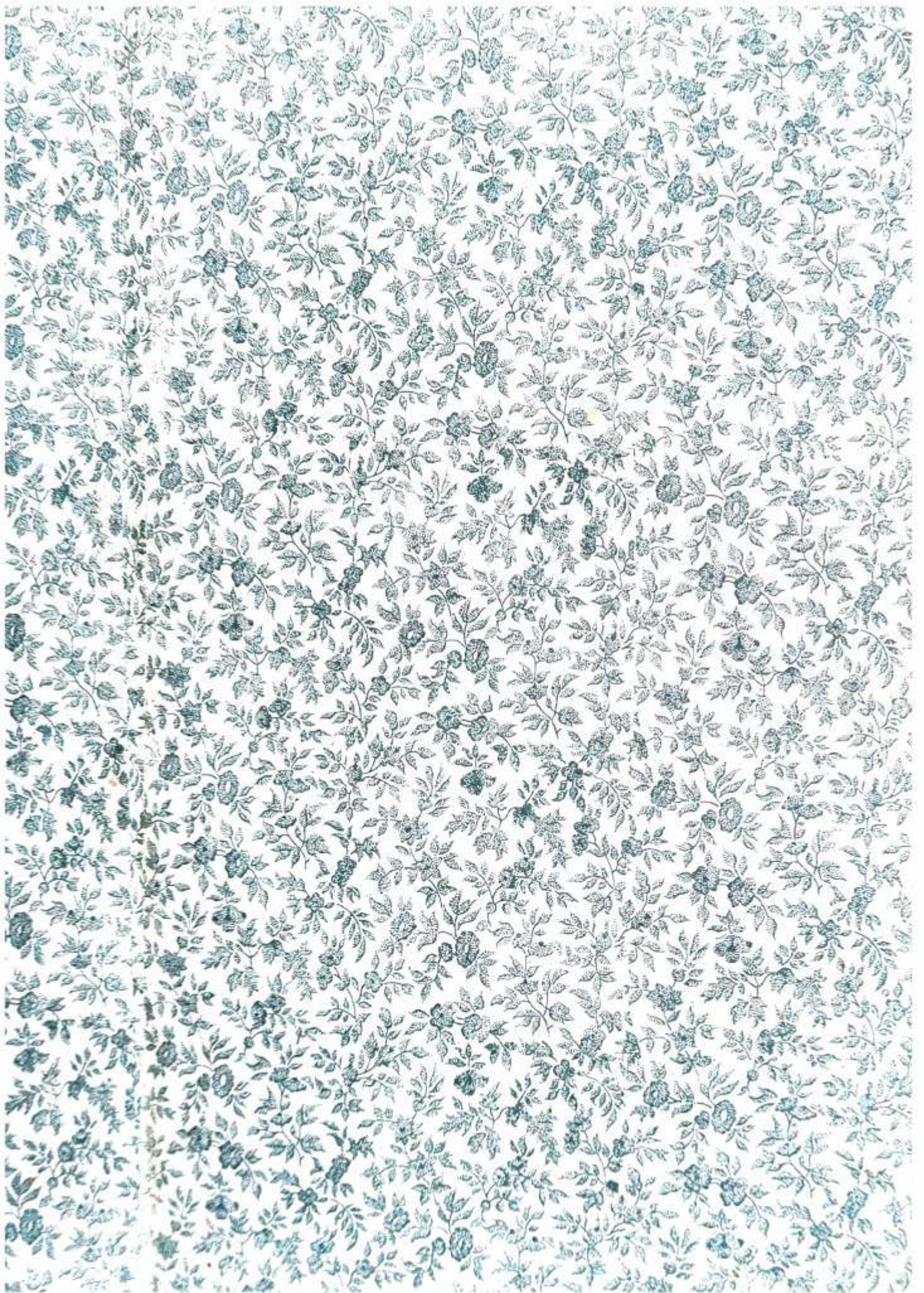


CHRIST

IN

THE SONG

KENNEDY



Rev. Robert Dunlop

with kindest regards of the

Author

# Christ in the Song.

AN EXPLANATION

OF ALL THE FIGURATIVE DESCRIPTIONS OF

CHRIST IN THE SONG OF SOLOMON.

By REV. JAMES KENNEDY, D. D.



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## PREFACE.

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THE following pages are a figurative description of Christ in the Song of Solomon.

Our chief object in preparing them is a desire to exalt the "Glorious One" of whom they treat, make him better known, endear him more to the children of God, and attract others to him as the great object of their confidence and love. If these ends are, in any measure, achieved, then our object, desire, and prayer are attained.

THE AUTHOR.



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# CHRIST IN THE SONG.

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## LECTURE I.

INTRODUCTORY. THE PRINCIPLES ON WHICH THE  
SONG OF SONGS IS INTERPRETED.

“The Song of Songs which is Solomon’s.”—Song i. 1.

THE object of the course of lectures, the substance of which is found in the following pages, was to set forth, in some measure, by the help of the wonderful imagery employed in the verses of the Song, of which they aim to be an exposition, the glory of Him who alone can be said to be “altogether lovely.” It was hoped that thereby believers might be quickened more fully to love, trust, and enjoy him, and inquirers stimulated and directed how to seek to become possessed of “the unsearchable riches of Christ.” It did not, therefore, form any part of our plan to examine critically the many questions which, in earlier and later times, have been raised about the authorship, date of composition, claims to inspiration, structure, character, and object of “the song of songs.” Not that such questions were overlooked; but the *results*, rather than the *details*, of the careful consideration of these points were given, and simply set forth as the *true principles* on which this inimitable poem can be consist-

ently interpreted, and, on which being expounded, it becomes a sweet gospel, and, like the other parts of the Scriptures, is eminently profitable to the man of God.

A careful examination of the extensive literature connected with this poem shows that, from a very early period, two distinct theories have been adopted as to the sense in which it is to be understood. The one is that of *Literalism* and the other that of *Allegory*. We speak not now merely of the structure of the poem, for, whether regarded as dramatic, or rather operatic, with some, or with others as consisting of eight idyls or short pastoral poems, the principle of interpretation is not affected. But to understand it as having some distinct meaning, we must regard it either literally as a song of human passions, or as a figurative allegorical setting forth of something spiritual and divine. True, some have taken a middle course, and adopt a sort of litero-allegorical or typical mode of reaching the meaning of the song, of which we will have something to say afterwards.

According to the principle of literalism, this poem is a song of human loves, whether he whose name it is supposed to bear was Solomon or some one of a later period,—a sacred pastoral drama, such as the Israelites were wont to recite during the seven days' festivities observed in celebrating their nuptials. More recent literalists, however, have constructed a story about a shepherdess girl, whose widowed mother lived at Shunem, with whom Solomon, after having met her accidentally, fell in love, and sought to win for himself; but she, having been before be-

trothed to a shepherd youth, rejected the royal advances, and was ultimately united to the man of her choice. But it may be truly said that no real scene that ever was enacted on any festive occasion, nor any romance ever imagined, would meet and match all the particulars in this poem, all its situations and descriptions. It could not be an epithalamium or marriage song, for it includes many years of married life on the part of the two leading characters; nor could it be such a romance as that to which we have referred, in which the suit of Solomon was rejected, for the king married the object of his affections, and repeatedly calls her his sister-bride. Besides, interpreted on the principle of literalism, the whole composition would be unnatural, absurd, and, in some respects, indelicate and offensive. For example, the leading female character, known as the spouse, is a shepherdess, a vine-dresser, a midnight roamer around the walls of the city, and is insulted, exposed, and wounded by the watchmen, and yet a king's daughter and queen-consort, a traveller away on the heights of Lebanon, the lessee of a vineyard for which she pays her husband a rent; while her consort is a shepherd feeding his own flock, and yet a mighty monarch in a stately palace, and his bed guarded by troops, yet a midnight suppliant at her door, his head drenched with dew from exposure, and treated by her with indifference and neglect. Besides, these leading characters often contradict each other, as when she asserts that her complexion is black as the daughters of Africa, while he declares she is fair. She often repeats the story of her deformities and mistakes and infirmities, while he

declares that there is no spot in her. Moreover, on this principle of interpretation the language would often be unnatural, as when he declares that he will get up into the palm tree to gather clusters of grapes! and when personal charms and intercourse are set forth in terms neither natural nor delicate. Very different was the estimate formed of this poem by the learned doctors among the Jews, who compared Solomon's three books—Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song—to the different parts of the temple; the first to the Outer Court, the second to the Holy Place, and the third to the Holy of Holies. In the same spirit, many of the early Christian fathers compare Solomon's books to a ladder with three steps,—Ecclesiastes, the natural, the lowest step; Proverbs, the moral, the second; and the Song, the mystical and spiritual, highest of all.

As to the allegorical method of interpreting the Song, it may be said that, with very rare exceptions, it was the only sense in which it was understood, until recently it has been subjected to the new German mode of destructive criticism, according to which it would lose its place among the lively oracles. The allegorical method, however, of interpretation is far from being uniform on the part of those who have adopted it. Indeed, three different modes of interpreting the Song as an allegory have been followed by those who agree in the general principle. First, some writers, especially Jewish expositors, are fond of interpreting the Song as an *historical* allegory, setting forth the divine love and favor in the choice of Israel to be his peculiar people, and their exaltation and happiness in having Jehovah as their God,

as well as their tendency to forsake him and rebel against his authority and government. Secondly, others would interpret the Song as a *prophetical* allegory, which, while not altogether leaving out of view the Church's past and present position, is specially designed, as they suppose, to set forth her longing desire for his second coming, and the beauty, glory, and boundless happiness she shall enjoy when she shall "reign with him on earth." Then, thirdly, a still larger number of expositors interpret the Song as a purely *spiritual* allegory, setting forth the love of Christ toward believers, how that love is shed abroad in their hearts, and attracts and draws them to him so as to enter with him into covenant relation, and become one with those who constitute "the bride the Lamb's wife." This of course implies his procuring for us and bestowing upon us all spiritual blessings, and holding with us the sweetest communion, and our own witnessing, working, and, if need be, suffering for him in the world with a zeal and devotion awakened by a growing sense of obligation from all that he has done on our behalf.

Now, while we hold that the allegorical method of interpreting this portion of the sacred records is undoubtedly the correct one,—first, because that no possible situation and circumstances connected with mere earthly loves can be made to fit in with, and correspond to, all the details of this poem; and, secondly, because that on the supposition that it was an epithalamium, recited during some marriage festivities, many of its parts could have no meaning or application to a feast that lasted only seven days; and, thirdly, because we interpret other parts of

Scripture on the allegorical principle, as the 45th Psalm, many parts of Isaiah, as the first part of the fifth chapter, as also many portions of the New Testament, as our Lord's description of himself as "the good Shepherd," and in his relation to his people as "the true vine,"—yet we think that to limit its allegorical meaning to any one of the three senses, historical, prophetic, or experimental, is utterly a mistake. In any attempt to fix the meaning and application of the many statements and figurative descriptions found in the song, whether explained of individuals or of the Church collectively, we require to take in all three. Every individual believer, as well as the Church as a whole, has a past, present, and future, and therefore has a history or record, a present experience and future prospect; and, in interpreting any other allegorical passage, we have no hesitation in including them all. For example, who, in the exposition of that noble "Song of Loves," the 45th Psalm, would think of limiting its language to the historical, prophetic, or experimental alone? They are all there, and it requires a skilful use of all three to give this and other such figurative compositions, relating to Christ and his people, their full application. Now the Songs of Songs is as much "a song of loves" as the psalm referred to, and many expressions in the one, if not directly referred to in the other, are so exactly parallel in meaning, and sometimes almost identical in language, as to suggest the same authorship. Some of these striking harmonies and parallels in the two poems will be noticed afterwards.

An examination of the structure of the song will

be found to confirm the above views. It is somewhat operatic in structure, different parties singing or reciting different parts. These parts consist of addresses and replies, narratives, soliloquies, mutual commendations, common interests, communion, and prayers. The parties in these performances are three. First, Solomon, the beloved, husband and king; then the Shulamite, the spouse, fair one, prince's daughter; and then the "daughters of Jerusalem," often addressed by the spouse, and who address her in turn in the language of inquiry. Besides these, however, there are other parties referred to, or perhaps seen in the distance or background, as soldiers, guards, sedan chair bearers, queens, concubines, virgins, and attendants. Such a view of the parties in the different situations in this sacred opera has led many to what we regard as a grave error in its interpretation; namely, that Solomon and his leading queen, the daughter of Pharaoh, with their ministers and attendants, are here used *typically* to set forth the great facts spiritually pertaining to the relation betwixt Christ and his people. This has long been a favorite way of expounding the song, chiefly because the word "Solomon" repeatedly occurs in it, and a corresponding female name, the "Shulamite," supposed to be a designation for the favorite wife. And as this favorite wife was an Egyptian, Solomon, in uniting her to himself in marriage, is supposed to have typically prefigured Christ calling the Gentiles to enjoy the privileges of his covenant people. In the same way, the city Jerusalem, the temple, Solomon's palaces, gardens, vineyards, and even his horses and sheep, are all inter-



preted as setting forth typically something about Christ and his body, the Church. Now, this typical mode of expounding the song, however acceptable at one time, is now regarded as mistaken and objectionable. In the first place, there is no evidence to show or any reason to suppose that the Egyptian queen was identical with the Shulamite, but just the opposite. Besides, in marrying Pharaoh's daughter, Solomon was transgressing the divine law and committing sin, as he also certainly was in filling a harem with foreign women, who proved such a snare and curse both to him and the nation. Now, in a sinful act, or series of acts, we can hardly conceive how any one could be a type of him who is "holy and harmless and separate from sinners." A much more reasonable and consistent way of interpretation is to take the words in the original, translated Solomon and Shulamite, not as proper names, but as common nouns. The word for Solomon is the active participle of the verb "to give peace," and signifies the peace-giver or reconciler. The word rendered Shulamite (Hebrew, Shulammith) is the passive participle feminine of the same verb, and signifies the peace-receiver or reconciled one. Thus rendered, these words would make this poem simply the song of the reconciler and of his reconciled one, and its subject matter the story of our reconciliation to God. Thus we have embodied in this song precisely Paul's great theme, "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled unto God by the death of his son, how much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." "And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we

have now received the reconciliation" (Rom. v. 10, 11). This method of interpretation we hold to be the only one that frees us from insuperable difficulties in understanding this part of divine revelation, and has many things to recommend it above all others; as, first, it wipes away at once all the doubtful morality about Solomon's loves, which always cleaves more or less to the typical method of exposition. Being not typical, but allegorical, it neither refers to nor sanctions anything irregular in the domestic life of the illustrious monarch, but merely borrows figures from human life to illustrate spiritual relationship and experience, just as Paul does, when, after dwelling on the relation of husband and wife, he says, "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." The language and imagery of the poem are thus preserved fresh, beautiful and pure, and at once so purged from the dross of corrupt passions, and "all filthiness of the flesh and spirit," that the Jewish rule, that this composition should not be read by persons under thirty, becomes unnecessary, the whole being as clean as the psalms or apocalypse.

Again, this method of interpretation removes the prejudice that has often been felt against this book by showing us the complete correspondence there is betwixt it and other portions of the Divine Word. It has often been objected to the song that it is dark, mysterious, and enigmatical, without once having the name of God or anything which we could definitely pronounce spiritual or religious; and, while on these grounds some are hardly prepared to accept it as part of the inspired word, others see no beauty or

edification in it, and have a strong feeling against it as a subject for instruction in the class-room or pulpit. But the simple fact that it is not typical, but allegorical, meets all such objections. We always expect the allegorical to be mysterious and enigmatical, and it is safe to say that the song is not one whit more so than are many other parts of scripture. Take, for example, the first parable spoken by our Lord, that of the sower, as left with the multitude unexplained, and is it not so dark and mysterious that even the disciples could not tell what it meant, and had to ask him in private some word of explanation? Not a word in it about God or about any doctrine of religion, but only the story of a sower, who scattered seeds on different kinds of soil, with different results as to yield. So, also, of the parable of the prodigal son; God is not directly named in it, nor is there any distinct reference to any religious truth, but only a fond father and a foolish, wayward boy, sowing his wild oats and reaping want, misery, and pain; his repentance, the forgiveness and joyous reception by his father he experiences, while an angry brother blames the partiality shown to the spendthrift, and refuses to again associate with him. And let it be remembered that, as far as the multitude to whom they were spoken were concerned, these parables were left in all their mysteriousness, without one word of explanation, wrapped up and muffled in allegorical phraseology, which to them, to whom it was not "given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God," was without meaning or profit. The fact, therefore, that the name of God or direct religious teaching is not to be found in the

song, or in many of the parables, is no proof that they are not divine or profitable when rightly understood, but that they belong to some form of the figurative, in the language in which they are expressed. There are in scripture different forms of figurative language, as the symbolical, metaphorical, allegorical, ironical, hyperbolical, etc. Metaphor is the single use of a figure to describe something by terms borrowed from something else, as when our Lord defined regeneration as being "born again," or when James inculcates a wise use of speech by "bridling the tongue." Allegory is simply metaphor continued, or sustained metaphor, as when our Lord in a long discourse instructs the Jews as to the nature of faith in him by the figurative terms, "eating his flesh and drinking his blood" (John vi. 30-60). Now, such is the language of the Song of songs. It is a long series of sustained or continued metaphors, and whilst we have not the divine persons by their usual appellations there, we have the Father, Son, and Spirit, all there under borrowed names, as well as angels, the redeemed Church, and all the great verities of our holy religion. In this respect, the language and structure of the song differ nothing from many allegories, ancient and modern, to which we might refer.

In connection with the above, the objection may be noticed that the song is not quoted or referred to in any other of the books of Scripture. The truth of this objection we are not prepared to admit. While there may not be any lengthened quotations from the song in the New Testament, yet in both the sentiments and language of many passages are often not only so similar, but really identical, that they

create the strong impression that in the one there is reference to the other. Thus God's covenant relation to the Church under the figure of marriage finds fuller and more frequent expression in the song than elsewhere in the Old Testament. Now compare the language of the song with such expressions as that of the Baptist, "He that hath the bride is the bridegroom; but the friend of the bridegroom who standeth and heareth him rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy, therefore, is fulfilled" (John iii. 29). Again, compare what is said of the Redeemer in the song (chap. iii. 11), "In the day of his espousal, in the day of the gladness of his heart," with the words of Paul, "I have espoused you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. xi. 2), or of John: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her it was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white, for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Rev. xix. 7, 8); or when the Church is described as a "bride adorned for her husband," "the bride the Lamb's wife," "Blessed are they who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." Such passages, and others to which we might refer, clearly show how one in sentiment and language the Song of songs is with the other Scriptures. There is, however, perhaps no other passage, either in the Old Testament or New, that, being compared with the song, will so fully illustrate this point as does the forty-fifth psalm, to which we have already referred. This psalm is entitled "a song of loves," and is recognized as divine by being quoted

and applied to the Redeemer (Heb. i. 8). Let us compare it with the song in a few particulars, and, first, as to the chief character in both. In the psalm he is the king (v. 1), and so also in the song (i. 4). In the psalm he is "fairer than the children of men" (v. 2), and in the song, "Thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant" (i. 16). In the psalm, the king rides forth prosperously" (v. 4); and in the song he goes for his bride in "a chariot of the wood of Lebanon" (iii. 9). In the psalm the royal bridegroom is anointed so that "his garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia" (v. 7), and in the song, "Because of the savor of thy good ointments thy name is as ointment poured forth" (i. 2). In the psalm we have his relation to the Father, "Therefore, God, thy God, hath anointed thee" (v. 7); and in the song, "His head (the Father) is as the most fine gold" (v. 11). In the psalm we have his relation to the spirit, "anointed with the oil of gladness," and "grace poured into his lips" (v. 2), and in the song, "Awake, O north wind, and come thou south" (iv. 16). In the psalm the queen (the Church collective) and innumerable virgins (believers), and the richest gifts from Tyre and all nations of the world, are brought to him (9-15); and in the song there are "threescore queens and fourscore concubines, and virgins without number." And they are "brought into his chambers" and "into the banqueting house, and his banner over them is 'Love.'" Then as to the spouse. In the psalm, her natural state of sin and misery must be forsaken, "forget also thine own people and thy father's house" (v. 10); and in the song the same state is described

as black and sun-scorched (i. 5, 6). In the psalm her dignity in her new relation is set forth as the "queen," the "king's daughter," with royal companions, attendants, etc.; and in the song she is the "spouse," "king's consort," "prince's daughter," and attended by a large and admiring following (vi. 10). In the psalm, "The King desires her beauty" (v. 11), and in the song, "His desire is toward me" (vii. 10). In the psalm, her clothing is rich and glorious, as becomes her state (v. 13), in the song it adds to her beauty (i. 10, 11). In the psalm she "is brought into the king's palace" (v. 14, 15), in the song, "The king hath brought me into his chambers" (i. 4). In the psalm, her relation to her husband is fruitful, "Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children" (v. 16), and in the song, "Also our bed is green" (that is, fruitful) (i. 16). Here are a few particulars, selected at random, in which one allegory, having the seal of inspiration, is found so precisely to correspond with the song in subject matter, details of the spiritual life, and even in forms of expression, as should remove any doubt about its being the word of God and a portion of the "All Scripture given by inspiration," and greatly contributing, when properly understood, to the edification and comfort of the people of God.

A still further advantage of this method of understanding the song is that we have thus a distinct place given to the religion of the passions or emotions. In practical godliness, there is a wide domain of spiritual thought and experience given to each element that goes to form a holy life and character; and these different domains we can mark off and distinguish,

as each is active in its own sphere. Thus we have the wide domain of *knowledge*, in which all our intellectual powers are exercised in the limitless fields of natural and revealed truth. Then we have the domain of *faith*, in which we are exercised in confidence and trust, as we realize more and more of the trustworthiness of the divine character and word, and become "followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." Then there is the domain of law, its obligation, practical requirements, and claims to obedience. There is also the domain of "*Godly fear*" that exercises so healthy an influence in every service we render to God. There is also the *domain of hope*, by which we are saved, and the bright light of whose rays pierce the dark clouds that often gather about our future. And, besides, there is the domain of *spiritual desire*, whose breathings are, "Pray without ceasing," "Bless the Lord, O my soul," the daily exercise and experience of every child of God. Now, with a place for each of these, may we not expect a place for such emotions and affections as love, joy, delight in God, and transcendent complacency in our Saviour? And may we not expect that there will be something in the word providing for the want of our spiritual being, keeping alive and exercised all the tenderer and sweeter emotions of the new man? not merely the love to God and joy in God, which the moral law demands, but the abounding, triumphant, holy joy and delight of the reconciled soul in God our Saviour, "Whom having not seen we love, and in whom, though now we see him, not yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."



Before the days of Solomon, there were, no doubt, isolated portions of the Word, as far as then given, that would work this joy, as the song at the Red Sea (Exod. xv.), Moses' song (Deut. xxxii.), and many of the psalms and spiritual songs used in the service of worship; but we have in the Song of songs, and in its epitome, the forty-fifth psalm, selected the most tender, intimate, unselfish, pure, and abiding of earthly passions, of which the poet sings, "Hail, holy wedded love! may I express thee, unblamed, for God is love," the most effective way, figuratively, to set forth all that the heart can experience of the love of Christ. Thus understood, this poem is a very full commentary on the words of Paul, "That Christ may dwell in your heart by faith, that, rooted and grounded in love, ye may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph. iii. 17, 18). And how many humble, pious, and devoted children of God, who have had no knowledge of all that war of criticism that has raged around it, have had in all ages many of its expressions indelibly fixed on the mind and memory, and inwrought into the very substance and texture of their spiritual life. Such expressions as, "I am black, but comely," "My beloved is mine and I am his," "Yea, he is altogether lovely," "This is my beloved, and this is my friend," "Make haste, my beloved, and be as a roe or young hart on the mountains of spices," have been familiar to those of rich spiritual experience through many generations,

and have often been as cordials to the broken in heart, and brought reviving and strength to their fainting spirits, realizing the truth, "For his love is better than wine." And not, while we joyfully quote of Christ as a husband, "who loved the Church and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word; that he might present it to himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. v. 25, 26), or, "Behold I stand at the door and knock, or, "Behold I come quickly," "Amen, even so come Lord Jesus," will the phraseology and imagery of this inimitable poem pass away from the hearts and lips of God's dear children, founded, as these are, on the holiest, purest, most endearing and abiding of human affections and relations, and which more frequently than any other are employed, both in the Old Testament and the New, to set forth the union in thought, feeling, fellowship, and interests of Christ and his people. Blessed are they who so read and understand the words of the book of this divine poem.

As to the authorship and canonical authority of the song, little requires to be said. The most ancient tradition ascribes its authorship to Solomon; and, though this has latterly been questioned by some, yet we think it will be found, on close examination, that the places and scenes, the condition of affairs, and the state and circumstances of the country, referred to throughout the book, correspond more perfectly to the Solomonic period than to any other that could be named, and that the arguments

that have been advanced in favor of a later authorship are by no means conclusive. As to its place in the canon, it will be enough to say that it has always been recognized both by the Jews and by the Christian Church as canonical. In the words of a writer on this subject, "There can be no doubt that the Song of songs formed a recognized portion of the sacred Scriptures in the days of our Lord and of his apostles, and has received the sanction of their authority." Of the inspiration and divine character of this poem, the same writer remarks, "Indeed, the title is itself sufficient to prove that, from the most ancient period, the song has been accounted sacred. For why was it called the 'Song of songs'? Several of the psalms have the title song, but this is the 'Song of songs.' Why? Whence this preference? In what consists the superiority of this song? Surely, if it had not been regarded an inspired composition, it would not have been dignified by a title that gave it a higher place than even the inspired songs of David. No doubt it is a song of surpassing beauty, but we cannot imagine that that alone would have induced the ancient Jewish fathers to bestow upon it so exalted a title, had they not recognized its sacred and sublimely mysterious character. Finally, the references to the song in the other books of the Old Testament Scriptures is the crowning proof of its having been recognized, even from the time of its composition, as the production of one who spoke as he was moved by the Holy Ghost." (Fairbairn, i. 273.) While, however, these points offer a wide field for criticism and remark, yet to enter into their consideration more largely would, in our circumstances, be entirely out of place.

Another point of considerable importance to the right understanding of the Song is the sense in which we view the leading female character,—the object of the most intense love and devotion on the part of him whom she so passionately calls her beloved. Of his identity there can be no doubt or obscurity, as, in language as figurative as that of the Song, one of the prophets comforts Israel: “Thy Maker is thine husband; the Lord of Hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; the God of the whole earth shall he be called. For the Lord hath called thee as a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit, and a wife of youth, when thou wast refused, saith thy God” (Is. liv. 5, 6). And again, “As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee” (Is. lxii. 5). While, however, all who understand the Song evangelically see in the spouse some aspect of the Church which Christ loved with the love of a model husband (Eph. v. 25), yet some would limit the Church of the Song to the Church of the old dispensation, chiefly because during that period she was in so open and avouched manner in covenant relation to God. Others again interpret the poem chiefly as a prophecy of the trials through which the Church was to pass, and the glory she is ultimately to attain. Others, moreover, like Bishop Lowth, while rightly applying what is said of the spouse to the Church Universal, yet restrict its meaning and application to the Church in her *corporate capacity*, and will not admit that it has any reference to the experience of believers individually. Now we think, as before hinted, that it is a great mistake to limit the appli-

cation of these canticles to any special time or age of the Church's history. The Church which Christ loved, and which he will finally "present to himself a glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle," the bride, the Lamb's wife, belongs to every age and condition of human life; and it requires her whole past history, her present condition, and her magnificent future to fill up the descriptive imagery here employed. Besides, the Church is an abiding, an ever-living community, a corporate body with many members,—a family, part on earth and part in heaven (Eph. iii. 15), a spiritual house, of many individual living stones; and, as all the members are continually in sympathy with one another and with the body as a whole, the experience of one part must be the experience of all the rest, and what can be predicated of the whole must in some measure be true of each component part. As Bishop Horne has well said, in relation to the psalms, "that these songs are not only applicable to the condition of the Church generally, but equally to the experience of all her members, so that she often complains, prays, and praises as if only an individual; while they often do the same in the name of and as representing the spiritual body to which they belong," so it is here. To take away, therefore, from this record of the spiritual life the personal experiences, gracious exercise, religious enjoyments, and sweet communion with God in all its varied forms and concomitants as enjoyed by individual believers would be to rob it of the very life and power of true godliness, and despoil it of the joy many have experienced while applying it to themselves and welcoming it as "the

voice of the beloved." At the same time, not limiting its application to individual experience, but, as we often do in other parts of the Word, finding both the Church and her members described, enlarges our sympathies, makes us feel delightfully one with the people of God in every age, broadens us out in spiritual character, so that we can appreciate and appropriate what is predicated of the people of God at all times. And many passages are striking examples of this experience. Thus the psalmist, speaking of the passage of Israel through the Red Sea, says of the effect of that stupendous miracle, "There did *we* rejoice in Him" (Ps. lxvi. 6). Why say *we*, and not *they* who witnessed the miracle? Simply to show that what was done for the Church at any time or under any circumstances belongs to her whole history, and may be again and again repeated to the joy of the Israel of God. Accordingly, many hundreds of years afterwards, on the basis of this miracle, God makes promise to all his people, "When thou passeth through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee" (Is. xliii. 2). Another passage illustrates the same truth. When Hosea speaks of Jacob's intercourse with God at Bethel and Peniel, he declares, "Yea, he had power over the angel and prevailed; he wept and made supplication to him; he found him in Bethel and there he spake *with us*,"—not *with him*, but *with us*, to show that it is the common experience of the people of God. So Paul says, "That ye may be able *with all saints* to comprehend what is the breadth and length and the depth and height, and know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge." And, when

our Lord addresses the churches in Asia, each epistle is addressed to the "angel of the Church" or the Church under government as a corporate body; and yet he often speaks to individual members, "As *many* as I love I rebuke and chasten," "To *him* that overcometh."

The only other point we deem it necessary to notice is the structure, or the relation of the parts, of this poem. Is the song a unit, or is it a collection of minor poems strung together without any close relation? The latter is the opinion of many who have expended great labor and critical skill on this composition. They think it a series of sacred Hebrew idyls; not exactly a drama, but a number of songs so full of poetry and passion as to make them suitable to be sung or recited on marriage occasions. What the points of division are, these critics are not agreed. Some have made the poem to consist of seven parts, others of eight, and others of twelve. While, however, the poem is evidently scenic and progressive, its unity cannot be questioned. The subject-matter is the same throughout, and so are the parties; while names, phrases, prayers, experiences, and enjoyments are frequently repeated, so as to give a high degree of unity and consistency to the whole. Thus, at the beginning of the poem, we have the spouse speaking of her vineyard as being in a neglected condition (chap. i. 6), and afterwards, at the end, of her vineyard being in a prosperous state (viii. 12). We find (chap. i. 6) "her mother's children" and, in viii. 2, her "mother's house," and "little sisters" (viii. 8); and so many of such harmonies are found throughout as to make us, as we

read, irresistibly feel that the song is one. No doubt there are abrupt transitions and unexpected changes of person, place, and scene; but such things need not surprise us, as they are marked features of Oriental life, and will be met with as frequently in the psalms and language of the prophets as in the Song of songs, a fact each one can verify for himself.

While, however, the song is doubtless one, yet distinct divisions may be pointed out; but it requires great care to fix these limits in harmony with the theme, or subject-matter, of the book. As an illustration, we may notice the theory, recently propounded by an eminent Scottish expositor of this book (Rev. Moody Stewart), in relation to its leading divisions and what they are intended to set forth concerning Christ and his church. While we regard his exposition as in some respects admirable, and as offering the only true principle upon which the poem can be interpreted,—the strictly allegorical,—yet his divisions and his methods of explaining them we think more ingenious than real. After showing the futility of the opinion that the song is a sort of conglomerate composition of many idyls or minor pieces, he adopts a fivefold division, and gives to each a separate meaning and application, both as to time and matter. These divisions, which he calls canticles, are as follows: Cantic I., chap. i.—ii. 7; Cantic II., chap. ii. 8, iii. 5; Cantic III., chap. iii. 6, v. 1; Cantic IV., chap. v. 2, viii. 4; Cantic V., chap. viii. 5–14. As to the time and matter, they are as follows: Cantic I.: time, immediately before the birth of Christ. The cry for the advent, and Christ born in Bethlehem. Cantic II.: time, from the appearance of



John the Baptist till the baptism of Jesus. John heralds the coming of Christ and John's disciples find the Christ. Canticle III.: time, from Christ's return out of the wilderness till the Last Supper. The word made flesh and dwelling among us, the spotlessness of the Church, and the closing scenes in the life of Christ. Canticle IV.: time, from the agony of the garden till the evangelizing of the Samaritans. The garden of Gethsemane, the sepulchre, Christ's resurrection, the descent of the Holy Ghost, the conversion of the Samaritans. Canticle V.: time, from the calling of the Gentiles till the close of revelation. Calling of the Gentiles. And thus, on the ground plan of his divisions, he expounds the whole song as fulfilled in events all included in the first century of the Christian era. Now we can hardly bring ourselves to believe that such a scheme of prophecy, so consecutive and comprehensive, could be formed out of the figurative descriptions of this book; and so, when the author comes to the task of expounding the language of each canticle, to bring out the events supposed to be its subjects in the time specified, he finds it hard work, and badly needs the bed of Procrustes to force the words into the shape and size of his previous theory.

The only safe and satisfactory way, we think, of interpreting and applying the words of this poem is, first, to inquire what is the theme or subject-matter of the book, and then to understand all the parts as related to, and in harmony with, this leading idea. Now, it will be generally admitted that the theme of the poem is our being restored to God in new covenant relation

and the benefits flowing therefrom, set forth by figures taken from human love, consequent marriage, and the communion in joy, happiness, interests, and prospects of those who are thus made one. This is the substance of all that is here represented as passing between Shelomo and Shulammith, the reconciler and reconciled. This, of course, implies all that was necessary on his part as reconciler to secure such new relation, as his engagement in covenant, his becoming our representative and surety, his incarnation, ministry, suffering, atonement, death, resurrection, exaltation, and gift of the Spirit, all of which have a place in this song. Then, on the part of the reconciled, there are the drawing of divine power, holy longing and desire, conviction of sin and misery in our natural condition, faith's views of the person and work of Christ, working by love and resulting in our spiritual union to him in grace and in glory, with all the joys and blessed experiences flowing from such union, all of which are also here in the often obscure language of this song. And, as it was written for our learning, it is noticeable that the reconciled speaks at much greater length than the reconciler. His words are always in the form of description or direct address; but the reconciled narrates, soliloquizes, admires, praises, and prays to her beloved as to her Lord, and earnestly desires more and more to "rest in his love." Inseparable union to Christ, therefore, as figuratively set forth by married life, with all its antecedents, concomitants, and consequences, is the subject-matter this song is intended to illustrate; and, as the Church and people of God were one in all ages, and the experience of the whole

that of all the parts, the song belongs equally to all times, and expresses the experiences of all saints. Shelomo, the reconciler, is he "whose goings forth have been of old, even from everlasting," "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and forever"; and the work of grace and power wrought on Shulammith has been common to all those who have lived and walked and overcome by faith since the first revelation of the grace of God in Eden.

But, while union to Christ and its effects on the character and life belong to all the saints, yet, inasmuch as these are here set forth by figures taken from earthly relation, and as that relation may be viewed in different stages of progress, so far may we distinguish parts and divisions in this spiritual song. In forming the earthly relation, there is, first, the period in which the love of the future bride is sought and won, and she made willing to enter a new relation. Then there is the day of espousals, or of entering into the covenant or contract, that makes the parties one. Then there follows a season of high mutual joy and happiness in the new relation. Then there may follow an interruption of the happiness for a time, experienced by absence, affliction, worldly pressure, and even by selfishness, coldness, and estrangement. And, following such a season, there may be mutual sorrow for the causes that brought on the estrangement, mutual reconciliation, and a restoration of mutual love and peace, with the desire and hope that their joy in each other may never again be disturbed. Now, we have all these five states set forth with wonderful clearness and fulness in this song in its spiritual sense and application. In the first part,

she is attracted, drawn, and moved by the grace shown to one so unlovely as she describes herself to be, and yields to the gracious advances made to her by one of wonderful glory and beauty. This state is the subject-matter of the first two chapters and part of the third. Then in the third chapter, she having been made willing in the day of his power, he comes for her in a royal chariot, and their nuptials are celebrated. Then in the fourth chapter and first verse of fifth the joy of espousals is described in mutual commendation and expressions of tender and endeared affection. Then in the fifth chapter, from the second verse, we have a period of decay in her love, and temporary estrangement through her sloth, love of ease, and disrespect for her beloved. And then, lastly, we have, on her repentance and confession of her fault, her beloved restored again, and his gracious presence again enjoyed and her peace renewed, all of which results in increased interest, activity, and zeal about her beloved's house, gardens, vineyards, and all the ends and interests of his cause and kingdom on earth, and closes up with a prayer that "his kingdom of glory may be hastened." "Make haste, my beloved, and be thou like to a roe or to a young hart upon the mountains of spices." And these progressive stages are in other ways also clearly marked and distinguished. For example, in the first stage the only name given to the reconciled is "my love"; but after her marriage (chap. iii.) she is called "my sister bride" (chap. iv. 9, 10) once and again as suitable in her new relation. Now, also, she becomes Shulammith, the wife of Shelomo, and obtains an interest and right of posses-

sion in all that is his, so that she speaks of "*my garden*" and "*his garden*" as common property (chap. iv. 16). Now, also, she is ennobled and styled "*Prince's daughter*" (chap. vii. 1), and displays a wifely interest in her husband's estate, his home, garden, vineyard, servants, tenants, and everything pertaining to him who has won her love and united her to himself. Here, then, we have natural and well-marked divisions in this poem, which, while omitting minor details, are sufficient to enable us to understand Christ's ways of dealing with his people in every age and dispensation, as well as the gracious relation of the great "*Bridegroom*" to the "*Bride, the Lamb's wife.*"

Thus understood and applied, the song not only becomes a sweet gospel, but, like the marvellous glass longed for by Mercy when "*with the shepherds on the delectable mountains,*" it reflects and exhibits a true likeness of every object, but particularly of the prince of life himself. We have often compared it to a large hall hung all round on every side with mirrors, with a person walking up and down therein, who, as he moves, is seen reflected by these mirrors in all his parts,—front, back, sides,—all in one grand panoramic view. So it is with the grand imagery of this poem, in which our Lord is seen not only in all that he is in himself and in all his saving offices, but also in his relation to the Father, to the hosts of heaven, and to the human family at large, but specially to the subjects of grace, past, present, and prospective. Or the song, in its figurative language and descriptions, may be compared to an ornamental lamp or beautiful transparency;

but, as the beauties of these are not seen till the light is put in, so it is Christ in the song that gives it its light, glory, and beauty. Indeed, of this and every other part of the word, it may be said as of the glorious state that awaits us, "For the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof."

## LECTURE II.

### THE EXCELLENCY OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST.

"What is thy Beloved more than another Beloved."—SONG v. 9.

HAVING sketched in the previous lecture the principles on which we believe the song should be understood and interpreted, and shown that, without going into minute details, there are five distinct parts in the poem, into which it naturally divides itself, as it presents all the phases of married life in its different stages, as emblematical and illustrative of Christ's dealing with us, and our experience of his ways, it will only be necessary here to state that the magnificent description of the Beloved in Chapter V. falls within the fourth of these divisions, when through sloth and neglect the comfortable sense of the Saviour's presence and the joy of his salvation were withdrawn and lost for a time. Such a season is a thing not unknown to the people of God, whether we speak of them in corporate capacity as "the Church of the living God," or of them as individual members. How often in the psalms and the prophets we find the Church bewailing her condition as forsaken of God, and praying him to return in his former manifestations of power, and "cause his face to shine on her" as before, in token of his pardoning mercy and covenant faithfulness. In the case of individual believers, also, such

eclipses of their joy and peace are frequently referred to, and have been called by our old writers "seasons of desertion," when with the man of Uz they have to complain, "I went mourning without the sun" (Job xxx. 28), and pray, "Oh, that it were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when his candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked through darkness" (Job xxix. 3). Even our Lord, in the depth of his humiliation, "as the chastisement of our peace was laid on him," experienced such a season, and cried, "My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" No wonder, then, if his Church and people have sometimes to "drink of his cup," and be "partakers of his sufferings" (2 Cor. i. 7).

Now in this distressed and deserted condition, "the sister bride" of the Beloved is represented as doing exactly what we do under similar circumstances; namely, to call upon our friends and well-wishers to join us in praying and seeking that our joy may be restored, and "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord" may return. Therefore we have such earnest entreaties as "pray for the peace of Jerusalem," "brethren, pray for us." This appeal, however, to her friends, "the daughters of Jerusalem," brings out one noteworthy fact,—namely, that they, noticing her earnestness and deep distress, are led the more anxiously to inquire who this wonderful personage is, this so highly prized beloved and friend, the want of whose presence, and the cloud of whose displeasure and rebukes so involved her in darkness and sorrow as to make her feel sick of love, and deep penitence for her sinful neglect.



Thus the season that was sorrow to her was edification to them, and as in answer to their request she dilates upon the glories of the beloved they realize much of "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord." And remarkable it surely is that in the season of desertion and darkness she had the most enlarged knowledge and appreciation of the supreme object of her love, showing that our spiritual comforts may be withdrawn for a season, while the other graces of knowledge, faith, love, may become more intensely active, and the winter of our darkness and sorrow tend to enlarge the harvest of our happiness, as "we come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon our heads."

While the nature and "excellency of the knowledge of Christ are the principal things suggested by the question of the daughters of Jerusalem, "what is thy beloved more than another beloved?" yet it may help us to a clearer understanding of the passage — and indeed of the whole poem — to enquire who are the parties represented by the "daughters of Jerusalem," frequently spoken of, or to, or themselves speaking, in this "song of loves"? Well, very different, and sometimes, we think, very mistaken views as to that matter have been put forward. Literalists, and those who interpret the poem typically, have both, of course, their own way of explaining these characters, in harmony with their own theories; but, as we have seen reason why we cannot accept either of these modes of interpretation, let us see how expositors of the allegorical school interpret the expression. And here we have far from uniformity of exposition. Some regard them as indicating figuratively the call-

ing of the Gentiles into the Christian Church, and think that their words here are equivalent to those of the Greeks, "Sir, we would see Jesus (John xii. 21)." Others, again, understand them as meaning particular local churches as distinguished from the church universal, "Jerusalem above, the mother of us all." Others regard the daughters of Jerusalem as meaning persons not *in* but *about* the church, while many make them inquirers and children, and young converts of immature knowledge and attainments, and requiring constant care and instruction. Some even regard them as formalists and hypocrites, destitute of Christian experience, and that their questions here are a light, flimsy way of speaking about what they regarded only imaginary troubles.

We think, however, that a little consideration will show that the expression "daughters of Jerusalem" in this poem is simply a name for the members of the church individually considered, as distinguished from the church herself in her collective or corporate capacity. This we argue from the following considerations:—

1. From the analogy of the language to that of other expressions which can have no other meaning than that of church members. It was not only customary among the Hebrews to call towns and villages, with their inhabitants, daughters of any large metropolitan city under whose government they lived, and that afforded them protection, but individuals of both sexes were called its sons, daughters, or children. Thus we have the "daughters of Israel," daughters of Moab, daughters of Syria, daughters of Jerusalem, daughters of Zion, daugh-

ters of Shiloh, and of the Philistines, etc. In the latter sense, Christ addressed the women that followed him to Calvary, "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and for your children" (Luke xxiii. 25). Now as Jerusalem and Zion were both the religious and political metropolis of Judea, where every Israelite had standing and rights as a member of the community, such expressions simply indicated citizenship and membership with the avowed people of God. Thus of Israel, assembled for worship at a religious festival, it is said, "Let Israel rejoice in him that made him, let the children of Zion be joyful in their king" (Psalms cxlix. 2). But the daughters of Jerusalem are also, in the song, called "daughters of Zion" (iii. 11); and surely if the children of Zion mean church members, then, as the daughters are as much children as are the sons, and both equally prayed for as belonging to the church (Psalms cxliv. 12), they must be recognized as in the same relation. And therefore Paul speaks of the "Jerusalem that is above, which is the mother of us all." Moreover, he declares that we are "come to Mount Zion" (Heb. xii. 22), and John saw the followers of Christ on Mount Zion with the Lamb (Rev. xiv. 1).

2. The same view of the daughters of Jerusalem is confirmed by the fact that it is quite common, in both Testaments, for the Church at once to be spoken of both collectively, and also separately in her members. Thus, in the 45th psalm, we have "the queen" and "the virgins, her companions that follow her"; and precisely in the same way, John heard a voice crying, "For the marriage of the Lamb

is come, and *his wife* hath made herself ready"; and yet adds "Blessed are they *who are called to the marriage* supper of the Lamb," who can only be those, considered individually, who compose the corporate body before called the "*Lamb's wife*" (Rev. vii. 9).

3. The same view of the parties meant by the daughters of Jerusalem in this poem is further apparent from the high admiration they express in regard to the beauty of the spouse, and the desire they felt for a fuller knowledge of the beloved. They address her, "O thou fairest among women," and ask her to "return that they may look upon her" (chap. vi. 12); and many expositors regard the first five verses of the seventh chapter as also spoken by them, in which they rapturously extol her beauty and magnify her many perfections. In the passage before us they desire increasing knowledge of the Redeemer; and, instead of his being a "stumbling-block or rock of offence, they manifest the feeling, "To you who believe he is precious."

4. These daughters of Jerusalem, or of Zion, are also represented both as the objects of his love and the subjects of his grace. They go forth to witness his nuptials (chap. iii. 11), when he comes in a chariot "*paved with love for the daughters of Jerusalem*"; and surely such an interest in his love shows them to belong to that Church which, through love, he died to redeem. And then what the spouse here asks of them implies the highest exercise of a gracious character. In her trouble and sickness, she asks for an interest in their prayers, taking it for granted that they were in habitual fellowship with the beloved, and knew so much of spiritual experience as

to sympathize with her sorrows. And we have already seen how such seasons come to all God's children, and are parts of the experience of all saints, so that, when "walking in darkness, and having no light," they seek comforters who can speak to them "a word in season," and minister help and consolation. In seasons of persecution and suffering, also, how often has the Church sought to enlist the prayers on her behalf of all those who, like Jacob, have "power with God." In her work, also, in the world, as she contends with enemies and difficulties, and has to wait long for success, is she anxious to invoke the help on her behalf of all "who love his righteous cause." What, for example, are special seasons of prayer—as the "week of prayer," now so largely observed by the people of God in every part of the world—on behalf of the interests of religion but the translating this charge of the spouse to the daughters of Jerusalem into actual practice. Moreover, the expression, "If ye *find* my beloved, tell him that I am sick of love,"—for his cause and work and his kingdom coming in the world, and for his second coming in glory,—surely can only be predicated of subjects of grace. True, a certain expositor lays stress on what he calls the *hypothetical* "if," "*if* ye find," as implying that it was doubtful and uncertain, and rather against the idea of their being the living subjects of grace. But the spouse herself sought, and for a time did not find. Was she, then, not a subject of grace? The truth is, *seeking* is as much the outcome of a work of grace as *finding*. "Seek and ye shall find." "For this thing will I be inquired for by the house of Israel to

do it for them." Besides, another charge, thrice given to these daughters, not to stir up or awake the beloved—that is, not by any strife to disturb the peace and comfort of the Church, and so lose the sweet sense of the presence of Christ—also proves them to be her members. It is such evils *within* the Church on the *part of her own members* that lead to many of her calamities and sufferings; and the charge here is, for substance, the same as that often given to the churches in the New Testament, as when Paul directs, "Live in peace, and the God of love and peace shall be with you."

If the earnestness wherewith a thing is sought indicates its value in the eyes of the seeker, then this inquiry of these daughters of Jerusalem, "What is thy beloved more than another beloved?" shows how her words had quickened them to a desire to hear more of him whose absence she mourned, and prepared them to profit by the magnificent and unparalleled description of his person, work, and offices, till, excited to a holy fervor, they cry, "Whither is thy beloved gone, that we may seek him with thee?" (chap. vi. 1). They seem now to have got such a view of the great Reconciler as stirred Paul to the very depths of his nature, "Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ" (Philip. iii. 8). In this statement, Paul does not merely mean, as the passage at large shows, a *prophetical* Christ, nor an *historical* Christ, but such a Christ as he could say of, "The life I now live in the flesh, I live by the

faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me," or, "For to me to live is Christ." Such was *the* beloved these daughters were now determined to seek, quickened by these words that outlined all the revelation of Christ that can be possibly made, as he is daily the life of the believing soul.

It is possible, too, that this description is in some respects more clear, full, and distinct, because, in making it, the Beloved was contemplated through the medium of her own sorrows. At noonday, so overpowering is the brilliancy of the sun that we cannot bear a full view of his disc, or describe his appearance; but when he sinks low in the west, and is seen through the moist, dense atmosphere near the earth's surface, which, like smoked glass, shears him of his beams, and moderates the fierceness of his rays, we can look upon his face as if it were a mass of molten lead, and outline his figure and form as he majestically sets beneath the western horizon. So it seems to have been with the spouse, as she contemplated the beloved through the medium of her sorrows and griefs. Some brilliant, dazzling things found in other parts of the poem, as she speaks of him whom her soul loved, may be wanting here as she beholds him through the mists and fogs of earth, and sees through a glass darkly; yet her description is in sweet adaptation to what we constantly need of Christ experimentally, as we pass through this vale of tears.

The superlative value and excellence of the knowledge of Christ are seen,—

1. In the incomparable value and worth of the object of this knowledge or of the thing known.

Man, created in knowledge, was, by his thirst for knowledge, deceived, and led into sin, since which time he is engaged in endless inquiry and research. Now, while many of the things he investigated are good and worthy of the powers of the human mind, a large portion are not only worthless, but hurtful and pernicious, the fruit of "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil," "which brought death into our world and all its woes." Thus some, with great diligence, search for the knowledge of *trifles*, as if they were of chief importance, wasting upon a toy, useless ornament, or mere bauble, thought, care, and energy, which are poorly rewarded when the end is attained. Others, again, seek only to know the *animal and sentient pleasures of life*, saying, "What shall we eat, and what shall we drink," how shall we fill up every hour with some new luxury to gratify our passions for the present? thus concentrating their whole energies in gratifying the flesh, as if the *summum bonum* of existence was to be reached only in the nervous thrill of a little temporary excitement. Such a course the Scriptures describe as "living to the flesh," "serving divers lusts and pleasures," "fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind," and in all the ends of life being but little above "the beast that perisheth." Others, again, esteem the knowledge of the *way to success in the world* as of supreme importance above everything else,—worldly men, who seek only to have their portion in this life, to whom the highest happiness is to accumulate the treasures of earth, and pile up a magnificent fortune. Others would rather climb the ladder of ambition and enrol their names on the imperishable monu-



ments of fame, and live forever in the admiration and worship of their fellow-men. The airy dreams of all such, and the utter disappointment all such must ultimately suffer, are admirably expressed by Pollock in the *Course of Time* :—

“ Attempt, now monstrous, and how surely vain,  
 With things of earthly sort, with aught but God,  
 With aught but moral excellence, truth, and love,  
 To satisfy and fill the immortal soul !  
 Attempt, vain inconceivably ! Attempt  
 To satisfy the ocean with a drop,  
 To marry immortality to death,  
 And with the unsubstantial shade of time  
 To fill the embrace of all eternity ! ”

And much more still shall they who put evil for good, who esteem a knowledge of the wicked and criminal as the highest wisdom, and who expend an energy and ingenuity in planning and accomplishing that which is evil, which, if rightly directed, would have led them to distinction and happiness, how much more shall they be filled with anguish and disappointment over their sad mistake.

Not all the pursuit of earthly knowledge, however, is to stand condemned. There are many noble objects of knowledge, courting investigation and promising ample reward, to the diligent student of God's mighty universe ; and it is only when the relative importance of these is overestimated, and when they are substituted for what must always rank highest and be supreme, that anything can be said but to their praise. Large fields of scientific research are being explored to-day as never before, adding something each year to the sum of human comforts ; and

star-eyed Science, with penetrating glance, is now utilizing those natural laws, "which even to guess a Newton made immortal." The practical value of knowledge thus attained we are free to confess. It has lessened the burdens and increased the comforts of human life. It travels among the stars, and makes us acquainted with their courses, and not only weighs the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance, but calculates the density and reveals the elements of the distant planets. By the ladder of sustained investigation it makes its way through the solid crust of the earth, and brings back the "testimony of the rocks." Nay, it rakes the bottom of the ocean, and tells us what is occurring in its greatest depths. It lays its hand on the cloud and the storm, and foretells their pathways over continents and seas, it chains the lightning and makes it carry our messages and illuminate our streets, it furnishes a motive power that in great measure does our work and relieves us of the drudgery of toil. In these and many other fields of research is science, or well-directed knowledge, doing much, in harmony with its sister philosophy, to elevate the condition of man, and make him what by creation he was designed to be under God,—the Lord of this lower world. Nay, science, rightly directed, becomes the handmaid of religion, and furnishes materials for the most adoring worship and most rapturous praise, as we "rise from nature up to nature's God," and realize with the psalmist, "The works of the Lord are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein" (Ps. iii. 2).

Compared, however, with Christ as an object of

knowledge, how poor the loftiest flights of science or study of the mysteries of creation! These may show us some of "the footprints of Jehovah in creation," whereas to know Christ is to know God himself. "No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son will reveal him." "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Creation may be a stairway leading up to the heaven of glory; but Christ is on the throne of that heaven, adored by the highest forms of created being. Science may manifest with wondrous power many of the perfections of God; but upon others it can cast no light, as his eternity, infinity, love, mercy, and grace. But in Christ these shine forth in undimmed lustre, "To give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Whether God was active before creation, science, in the widest ranges of its discoveries, cannot tell; but Christ reveals that away in the dateless eternity, "Before the mountains were brought forth or ever he had formed the earth and the world," the deity was exercised in providing for our redemption, having loved us with an "everlasting love," formed an "eternal purpose," and on our behalf entered into an "everlasting covenant." Nature shows us a God all-wise, powerful, and good, but in righteousness enforcing such stern Draconian laws that there is seen in him no pity for the suffering, no grace for the unworthy, no mercy for the miserable, no pardon for the guilty, no reconciliation for the offender, no help for the ruined, no hope for the lost. But, when we turn to Christ for a fuller view of God, we see one whose name is "love," who redeemed us by the

death of his own Son, who is ready to forgive, and pardons us for "his own name's sake," who is "now in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, not imputing to us our sin," and who, as a loving father, is "waiting to be gracious," and takes back the erring prodigal to his bosom, and, however unworthy, "places him among the children." Surely, if there was nothing else, what in Christ is thus revealed to us of God should make us feel that our beloved is more than any other beloved, and that it is the highest wisdom to "count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord."

2. Another thing, also, that makes the knowledge of Christ of incomparable value is, that it is to him who has attained it, eternal life. It was long since said by the wise man, "I saw that wisdom excelleth folly as far as light excelleth darkness," and he afterwards emphasized the statement thus, "For wisdom is a defence, and money is a defence, but the excellency of knowledge is that wisdom giveth life to them that have it" (Eccles. ii. 13 and vii. 12). While these statements are true in many important particulars even in respect to the present life, and while every day's experience shows that genius, talent, earthly knowledge and skill bring many solid advantages, and may for a time be the means of saving and protecting our bodily existence, yet it requires knowledge of a higher type in the more important department, the spiritual and eternal, "to give life to those who have it." And here becomes apparent the superior excellency of the knowledge of Christ. "For this is life eternal, that they may

know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." In many different respects, as numerous as the forms in which death now worketh in us, does the knowledge of Christ "give life to them that have it." First, it gives the *legal life of justification*, which delivers from the death of condemnation,—a life that can never be forfeited or destroyed or lost, because based on the satisfaction and perfect work of Christ on our behalf. Therefore, we are assured, "By his knowledge" (or the knowledge of himself) "shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquity" (Is. liii. 11). As the result of "bearing their iniquity," Christ, in the day of believing, "justifies from all things from which we could not be justified by the law of Moses"; and we can joyfully and triumphantly exclaim, "There is, therefore, no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus." "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died,—yea, rather, that is risen again,—who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. viii. 33, 34). This gives life of the most valuable kind, a legal right to live and enjoy life, which condemned criminals possess not, and which is only the privilege of those to whom Christ "is made God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." This blessed life of justification, with all its legal bearings and advantages, is the security of all else that pertains to life, being unchangeably conferred by the Father, and makes us possessed of the righteousness of the Son, gives us an interest in his continual in-

tercession, and is sealed by the holy Spirit of promise. It is thus indestructible by foes from any quarter, and in the blessed possession of which, we can assure our heart, "He that believeth shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life."

But besides this legal life of justification, the knowledge of Christ is the means of our attaining *a new spiritual subjective life*. It is to this Paul refers when he declares "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death" (Rom. viii. 2). Of this "law of sin in his members," he complains bitterly in the previous chapter, and now gratefully records that the same grace, that in Christ had lifted him out of a state of condemnation into a condition of justification, had now made him "free from the law of sin and death," by imparting a new subjective life. This wonderful transition he describes "Seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him." This new man is represented as begotten of God, "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth"; as *born*, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit"; as a *new creation*, "If any man be in Christ he is a new creature (or more correctly new creation); and as in the first creation there was the united *act of all the persons in the Godhead*, "Come let us make man," so in the new, "According to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ." In the first creation, each person of the Godhead created in a way proper to himself.

The Father created *authoritatively*, as representing the will and purpose of the eternal God. The Son, "by whom also he made the worlds," proclaimed the decree and *officially* uttered the creation fiat, the omnipotent "Let be"; and this was followed by "And there was," by the Spirit putting forth *efficiently* the divine energy necessary to give effect to the divine will. And just so it is in the new creation. The Father authorizes the son, "As thou hast given him power over all flesh that he may give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him" (John xvii.). The son proclaims in his word the fiat, Be born again, and so "Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth." "Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever"; and there is "the renewing of the Holy Ghost," that gives subjective effect to the word of Christ, so as to quicken into spiritual life. This birth into a new life, not being "of corruptible seed," is not the result of human descent — or being "born of blood," — as the Jews trusted in their relation to Abraham; nor is it by any human ability or natural power of free will, nor "of the will of man," as the result of education, precept, or example, but by the incorruptible seed of Christ's word, which the Spirit implants as a germ of life in the soul, and fosters until it attains its full development. And this view of our becoming new creatures, spiritually considered, corrects a mistaken interpretation of two passages already referred to,—the first that in which our Lord says, "Born of the water and of the spirit," and the other, "the washing of regeneration and the

renewing of the Holy Ghost." It has been customary with many to explain water in the one and washing in the other, of baptism. But the meaning of these terms we learn by Paul's expression, "the washing of water by the word," and our Lord's statement, "Now ye are clean through the word that I have spoken to you." Water and washing in the new birth is simply the word of Christ—the creative fiat—made effectual and fostered into life by the efficient work of the divine Spirit. Hence, our older divines were wont to distinguish the life of sanctification into *initial*, *progressive*, and *perfect*,—its *initial* stage being regeneration; its *progressive*, the attainments reached in the present life; and its *perfect*, our spiritual condition in heaven, "the spirits of just men made perfect."

This new spiritual life, however, while efficiently the work of the Spirit, is enjoyed and maintained by virtue of our union to Christ and our increasing knowledge of him. Therefore, Paul says of Christ "who is made unto us of God, wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. "There is reference in these words to the threefold offices of Christ, and their constant exercise toward his people for their final redemption from all the effects and consequences of sin. He is wisdom to us in his prophetic office, righteousness in his priestly, and sanctification in his kingly. It is in the last, his kingly, that he quickens by his power, dwells in us by his Spirit, provides us with the means of grace, receives our homage and obedience, and administers providence so as to make us "partakers of his holiness." The consequence is that our spiritual sub-



jective life, like our justification life, flowing from our saving relation to Christ, is permanent and imperishable because our union to Christ is indissoluble. Therefore John declares of him that is born of God, "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (1 John iii. 9). There is no particular difficulty in understanding these words, and how they are in harmony with a foregoing statement, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (chap. i. 8), if we only take into account that not only does the life of justification put us in a position in which nothing can be laid to our charge, but that the new man of regeneration is often spoken of as an entity or personality, distinct from the law of sin in the members. Thus Paul repeatedly asserts of his sin, "It is no more I that do it." He speaks as of two "I's," an "I" that does not sin, and an "I" miserable and wretched, and from which he hoped in due time to be delivered. The one was the "I" of regeneration, the new creature, renewed in the image of God, and sinless; the other, the "I" of indwelling sin, vile, and its presence a matter of constant grief. Our Lord makes the same distinction when he declares, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." The distinction and antagonism of these two elements in every subject of sanctification are frequently referred to. Thus: "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, so that ye

cannot do the things that ye would." A parallel in nature will illustrate our meaning. In grafting or budding trees or shrubs, a small scion or single bud, of some valued variety which we wish to cultivate, is inserted on a wild stock; and, when it unites and begins to grow, it is trained so as to form a head to the whole plant. Then all that grows from any point above the joint of union where the bud, or scion, was inserted, is the new and good; while all below that joint is wild and unchanged, and, as it attempts to make growth, has to be cut off and removed. By this method not only are fruit trees entirely changed, but on the wild dog-rose of our hedges can be grown splendid standard roses from the most valued specimens in the conservatory. On the sour crab of our woods can be grown the luscious apple; and the sour sloe will yield the most excellent plum. Advantage was largely taken of this fact a few years ago when the phylloxera destroyed the roots of the vines in France and Italy. It was found that the roots of the wild vines of the woods of America were so hardy as not to be assailed by this destructive insect, and, accordingly, thousands of these roots were carried to Europe, and grafted with short sections of the canes from the *vitis vinifera*,—the wine-bearing grape, and thus a wild stock, whose native produce is both small and bitter and worthless, is to-day growing thousands of acres of the most delicious of cultivated fruit. Now just such is the effect of the spiritual change in regeneration and sanctification. "The old man is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts." The "new man is created on righteousness and true holiness."

Whatever is the product of the former is a body of sin and death; whereas, whatever is the product of the latter, the new man, is "holiness to the Lord," and destined to live forever.

Then, again, this inward spiritual life, which we have from union to Christ and the work of the Spirit, soon develops into outward form, and becomes a life of *new obedience*. "Through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Christ." Union to Christ is not only a vital *principle*, but it is also a vital *force*, so that by "abiding in him we bring forth much fruit"; and so also of the work of the Spirit, "For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth" (Ephes. v. 9). Thus "obedience to the faith" commences within, with the state of the heart, affections, will, and desires, as the apostle expresses it, "casting down imaginations and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. x. 5). But soon, like the red current that comes with living force from the heart to warm, nourish, and give power to every part, the inward spiritual life makes its way into all details of outward life, and pervades the whole with a holy, sanctifying influence. Accordingly, to use the words of Paul, we "are transformed by the renewing of our minds" (Rom. xii. 2). The word "transformed," here used, it is worthy of remark, is very different from the word "*conformed*" in the same passage, when he warns against being "conformed to this world." The word for "conform" merely means to put on shape or assume an appear-

ance without further change, and is usually rendered by the word "fashion"; whereas the word rendered "transform," while it implies also change of outward appearance, implies that, while for substance, the thing spoken of remains, it is changed as to its qualities and properties and conditions. The overlooking of this distinction betwixt the two words has led King James's translators to some faulty renderings. One of the most unhappy of these is the passage in which Satan and his ministers are spoken of as transforming themselves, the one into "an angel of light," and the others into "apostles of Christ" (1 Cor. xi. 13, 14). Here the word "fashioned," used in the Revised Version, exactly expresses what takes place when Satan apparently becomes an angel of light, and his servants "apostles of Christ"; namely, they assume the *outward* appearance of, or profess to be such, without any real change of moral condition. The practical bearing of this distinction will be understood by an illustration. If we take of the white, pearly sand that lines the beach, and dry it thoroughly, we can put it into a vessel of any shape, and it will run into every open cavity, and adapt itself to the whole internal configuration of that which contains it. That is conformity. But by adding some chemicals, and subjecting that sand to a high temperature, it will, while remaining in substance the same, be changed into bright glass that we may place in our window or that may sparkle on our table. That would be transforming. Thus in the physical world we may find the counterparts of many things in the spiritual world, and that worldly circumstances, connections, and influences may lead

men to conform to any system or form of religion, as water or sand in a vessel, without being really changed; whereas "the power of godliness can alone "make all things new," so that "we put on the new man," become "new creatures," and thus "whether we live, we live to the Lord," and "the life of Jesus Christ is made manifest in our mortal bodies." Here, again, in its power to work out such a life, we see the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.

3. The knowledge of Christ also is above all other knowledge in the power it gives its possessor to accomplish great and noble objects in the world. When Daniel was instructed as to the future of his race and of the kingdom of Christ, one particular feature of the people of God was thus described, "But the people that do know their God shall be strong and do exploits" (Dan. xi. 32). They realize, with Bacon, the fact that "knowledge is power"; and under the influence of the knowledge of Christ they have achieved some of the grandest exploits which history records. Indeed, so much has been promised them: "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy Redeemer, the holy one of Israel. Behold, I will make thee a new sharp thrashing instrument having teeth. Thou shalt thrash the mountains, and beat them small, and shalt make the hills as chaff. Thou shalt fan them, and the wind shall carry them away, and the whirlwind shall scatter them; and thou shalt rejoice in the Lord, and shalt glory in the Holy One of Israel" (Is. xli. 14-16). What an exploit for a worm to thrash a mountain till it becomes dust, and be blown away and disap-

pear! And yet the people of God do it still in three respects:—

(1) They do exploits of *servicing*. “Remember these, O Jacob and Israel, for thou art my servant: I have formed thee, thou art my servant, O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me” (Is. xliv. 21). What exploits of serving Moses performed, whose honorable title was, “Moses my servant”! And the same noble title is given to David, Peter, Paul, James, John, and Jude, and, most wonderful, to our Lord himself. “Behold, my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth.” “He took upon him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” And what exploits in that line have not his followers achieved, not only strong men, but tender, delicate women, willing to leave all and forsake all that his work might be accomplished! Thousands in every age, “zealous of good works,” have not spared their means, personal labors, and even their lives, that they may do him service; and it has been always found that the more zealous, earnest, and enthusiastic we are in his work, the less will we feel its hardships or yield to discouragements. For has it not been promised, “They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall run and not be weary, and shall walk and not faint”? Those who are most zealous and run have a higher promise than those who only walk. The one does not even “grow weary,” whereas it is only promised to the other, “He shall not faint.”

(2) In *warring* also, as well as *servicing*, the people of God do exploits through the knowledge of him.

“Strong in the Lord,” and, “mighty through God,” however weak in themselves, the people that do know their God become conquerors, and more than conquerors, through him that loved them. Though intrenched in “high places,” and under the protection of the mightiest worldly empires, old systems of idolatry and false worship have been boldly assailed and cast down by the soldiers of the cross” as they “fought the good fight of faith”; and, though their apparent weakness has often been the scoff of their enemies, as they ask, as in Nehemiah’s time, “What do these feeble Jews”? yet, though the “weapons of their warfare are not carnal,” yet are they “mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.” No doubt, much remains to be done to purge the world of many of the evils that still afflict it, and bring the nations of the world to become kingdoms of Christ; but the work is in progress, the battle goes on and is thickening, the issue is not doubtful, and in due time those who “have gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark and over the number of his name, shall stand victorious ‘on the sea of glass,’ and, having laid aside the sword and taken the harp, will be made conquerors and more than conquerors through him that loved them.”

(3) By way of *suffering* also “the people that do know their God do exploits.” “For unto you it is given on the behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake” (Philip. i. 29). What an example of this truth was Paul himself when he could say, “And if I be offered on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with

you all" (Philip. ii. 17), ready to work and undertake the most arduous labors, if such were required, or ready to be sacrificed if for the glory of God and the interests of truth. And in the same way Moses shaped his life, "choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. xi. 25). And he was only one in a long catalogue, dating from the days of Abel, in which we have the most brilliant examples of suffering and self-denial for the sake of the beloved; so pregnant with the highest moral triumphs is "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord."

4. The excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord above every other form of knowledge is also found in its power to confer the highest, purest happiness and joy. The avidity and thirst for knowledge which characterizes every stage of human life is familiar to us all; but alas! the ardent pursuit, as of old, often leads to the knowledge of evil rather than that of good, as the taste of that tree that "brought death into our world and all its woe." Knowledge often is of good lost, and evil to be endured. And a sad price is still to be paid for the knowledge of evil, often no less than death itself. In Christ, however, our tree of knowledge is also a tree of life; and not only is there no evil or death in seeking for knowledge in that direction, but, as the wise man declares of wisdom, "She is a tree of life to them that lay hold on her, and happy is every one that retaineth her" (Prov. iii. 18). The knowledge of Christ is the germ and very essence of the happiness of heaven. Heaven will be



to "see as we are seen, and know as we are known," which, after all, will only be the present inconceivably enlarged; for even now we "rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." "Light is even now *sown* for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart"; and of that seed, now sown, the joys of heaven will only be the outcome and fruit. And, oh, how diligent all ought to be in attaining that so precious knowledge! God has put it now within the reach of all. Like particles of richest gold, it lies scattered among the sands of time; and blessed is the man who seeks to be enriched by it now, for it is "a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth" (Luke xii. 33).

## LECTURE III.

### OUR LORD'S COMPLEXION.

*"My Beloved is white and ruddy."*

**K**EEPING in view that the two leading characters in this poem are Christ and his people, either individually or collectively considered, the peace-giver and the peace-receiver, the reconciler and the reconciled, it will be noticed that they are always represented, from the intimate and close relation they sustain, and the frequent intercourse they hold, as being so fully acquainted with every particular of each other's character and appearance, that much of the song consists in personal description and mutual praise. And, though, when answering the call for more full and perfect knowledge of the beloved from the more immature members, called daughters of Jerusalem, the reconciled one was passing through a period of sorrow, darkness, and distress, yet in the reply that follows she is able from past experience, from heart and memory, to give a most magnificent description of his person and offices, his excellence and beauty. Reserving what we have to say of the term, "my beloved," till we come to explain the sixteenth verse, we shall take the twelve particulars, strictly descriptive, in their order.

And of the whole series it may be remarked that, as poetry has been called "thought materialized, or

thought incarnate,"—the loftiest mental conceptions, in drapery borrowed from human or earthly things, —so all spiritual conceptions of God and of heavenly realities can only reach us as they put on an earthly and fleshly garb. And therefore, to reveal himself to our apprehension, God has seen fit to clothe himself with particulars of description, borrowed from human personality, that we may more fully realize some just conception of what he is as we approach him. The most perfect example of this we have in the incarnation of the Son of God when he became "God manifest in the flesh." As it takes a person fully to represent and reveal a person, in Jesus Christ, the God-man Mediator, we have the most perfect provision possible made for knowing God. Therefore he of whom it is written, "The word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," afterwards, in answer to Philip's request, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," replied, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." And long before the incarnation actually took place, he was known to believers of the olden time by terms that implied it, as a future and most perfect form of manifesting God. The antediluvians knew him as "the seed of the woman," the post-diluvians as "the seed of Abraham," Moses as the "Shiloh," the peaceable one, that was to come; David as his son and heir to his throne; Isaiah "as a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch out of his roots," "the Virgin's Son," "Immanuel, God with us." Zecharias knew him as "the man who is the Branch," and "the man who is my fellow." And

should any one object to the study of this song because of the manner in which our Lord is therein set forth, described pictorially by an enumeration of bodily parts, clothed and made glorious by super-human beauty, let him remember that this poem is in this respect no more mysterious, no more figurative, than many other parts of the Word of God; as, for example, in the first chapter of the Apocalypse, or as when, in another part of that book, he is described as "clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow was on his head, and his face as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire" (chap. x. 1). Therefore, when, in the way of depicting what is most lovely, desirable, and excellent in a human person, these twelve particulars are employed to set forth the glories of the Beloved, they are no more to be understood in any carnal sense than are the pictures of him by Isaiah, Daniel or John. To our judgment, understanding, and heart, they may wonderfully realize John's word to the churches, "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled of the word of life; for the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us. That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ" (1 John i. 1-8).

The first particular in this elaborate description is in respect to the complexion,— "My Beloved is white and ruddy." The Semitic race are white-skinned

and of fair complexion; and ruddiness of countenance in contrast with this whiteness has always been regarded as an important element of personal beauty. And therefore of David it is said, "Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to" (I. Sam. xvi. 12). The color of the skin generally is due to pigment cells in the epidermis immediately below the cuticle, as is the color of the hair and of the iris of the eye. Exposure to air and strong sunshine have the effect of bringing to the surface this pigment, as is seen in the tanned skin and freckles of persons even of the fairest complexion during the height of the summer season. But the ruddiness in connection with whiteness, here referred to, is not in the human complexion due to pigment, but to an abundance of blood in the capillaries of the face, especially of the cheeks. It is, therefore, there permanently in persons of very vigorous constitution and full habit, and in others occasionally and temporarily when any strong emotion drives an unusual quantity of blood to the face, as in the case of blushing. There are various emotions, as love, joy, shame, that act on the heart so as to stimulate its action, and the effect is often seen in the face; while there are other emotions, as fright, terror, fear, that have the contrary effect, and by weakening the power of the heart and flow of blood produce pallor, sallowness, and comparative darkness and blackness of countenance. And these facts are often referred to in Scripture, as when the spouse says, "Look not upon me because I am black, because the sun hath looked upon me"; and when Jeremiah describes the changes produced by the

hardships of the siege,—“Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire.” But what a change sorrow and distress and want had made,—“Their visage is blacker than a coal, they are not known in the streets, their skin cleaveth to their bones, it is withered, it is become like a stick” (Lam. iv. 7, 8). And again, “Our skin was black like an oven, because of the terrible famine” (v. 10). And both Joel and Nahum use the expression, “All faces shall gather blackness.” The beauty therefore indicated by being white and ruddy implies purity, freedom from discoloration, vigorous health in all the organs, especially the heart, and in the face such a delightful blending of colors, in pleasing contrasts, as the eye loves to look upon and admire.

As to what we are to understand, morally and spiritually, by these two terms, “white and ruddy,” as they are here applied to our Redeemer, there has been much difference of opinion and explanation; and while we cannot but regard many of these opinions as strained and unnatural, yet the fault of expositors, we think, has rather been to limit the force and meaning of the figurative description than to make it full and comprehensive. Now we think it should always be accepted as a first principle of interpretation that everything figurative in the language of Scripture, whether about God or the spiritual world, should always be interpreted in accordance with the laws and facts of nature, from which it is borrowed. In metaphor, parable, allegory, and everything figurative, this rule holds

good; and all such terms as water, fire, leaven, seed, fruit, salt, light, etc., only, as thus treated, yield a satisfactory meaning. Whether the persons originally employed to utter or write the words understood all the laws and facts to which reference is made is of little moment, as the Word of God was for all time; but as the Scriptures are studied and understood in the progressive light of human knowledge, it will always be found that, whether or not the writers understood their own words, the spirit that dictated them always did, so that the language of the Bible is always in advance of human knowledge, and in harmony therewith when that knowledge is real and true. For example: in how perfect harmony with all that modern researches in embryology have revealed are the words of Job (chap. x. 9-12) and of David (Ps. cxxxix. 14-16). How fully do the verses (Eccles. xii. 1-7) not only agree with, but cast light on all that the anatomy and physiology of the present day have made known concerning the structure and working of the different parts of the human system, including even the circulation of the blood, which is claimed as a modern discovery; and so of other things. The principle, then, always to understand and interpret figurative language *naturally* is of special importance, and in particular in endeavoring to understand this song. In application to the first description, "My Beloved is white and ruddy," it leads us to a twofold view of his person and work: first, the absence of all moral discoloration, spot, or blemish; and secondly, in *contrast therewith, the place* and prominence given to his blood and blood-shedding, as it flows from the great-

est of all hearts, the heart of God, and from the strongest of all emotions, his everlasting love, and as it lies on the surface of the whole history of the work and economy of redemption. Thus understood, the expression suggests:—

First. The contrast betwixt what the Beloved is in the purity, dignity and glory of his divine person, and what he voluntarily became that he might redeem us by his blood. The divine nature and Godhead of him in whom the Israelites of a former dispensation believed as their coming Messiah, and whom we call "our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," is as much the teaching of the Old Testament as of the New, being, in the one case as in the other, revealed directly, incidentally and inferentially; and many expressions in this song can only be adequately and consistently interpreted on this principle. That "he thought it no robbery to be equal with God," many passages in Moses, the Psalms, and the prophets fully bear witness, as when he is addressed, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," or when stated for our edification and comfort, "The eternal God is thy refuge," or "They shall call his name Immanuel, God with us," "The everlasting Father and Prince of Peace," "And the Lord (Jehovah) whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in," "Whose goings forth have been of old, from everlasting." Such expressions, used of him and applied to him by that spirit by "which holy men of God spake in time past as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," clearly show that whatsoever is divinely great and pure, and ineffably glorious and perfect,



belonged to, and characterized him. And one term, repeatedly used of him in Scripture, exhibits this view of him very clearly; namely, when he is called "the light." It has been long known to Scientists that the different primitive colors in the sun's rays are only so many elements and component parts of white light; and that the reason why objects appear of different colors is because they have a prismatic power to stop one color, so that it is reflected back and is seen, while they allow others to pass through, so that, not being reflected, they make no impression on the eye. It is on this principle that paints and artificial colors, and the tints on flowers and other beautiful objects, are explained. It is also known that, by combining the primitive colors, the result is pure white, so that white is really the concentration and perfection of all colors. And this fact explains why God is so often represented as light. Each distinct attribute is not only beautiful and adorable, but all his perfections combined form infinite perfection. Therefore, not only is he light, but "he covereth himself with light as with a garment," and, as the Ancient of days, his garments appeared to Daniel "white as snow." And so of our Beloved. "His brightness is as the light" (Hab. iii. 14), and he is "the light of the world," and "the light of men," and at his transfiguration, his raiment was white as the light, and, as seen by John, "His head and his hair were white like wool, as white as snow" (Rev. i. 14). How eminently then does the term "white" set forth the concentration in our Beloved of all divine glory, beauty and excellence.

But in contrast with white, he is also said to be ruddy, and here our physical system will again furnish us the key to the interpretation. Though possessed of all the perfections of Godhead, he could show no blood on the surface of his relation to and dealing with our fallen race, except the blood of the condemned, as the dread sentence went forth, "Dying thou shalt die." But when the decree went forth to save the lost, then blood came to the surface, and became a prominent feature in the economy of salvation, in which "without the shedding of blood there is no remission." A venerable professor, at one time, was wont to impress upon his students that our Lord's blood, to be redeeming, required many distinct properties or qualities. It must needs be *federal* blood, shed and accepted under a covenant engagement. Therefore our Lord is addressed, "As for thee also, by the blood of thy Covenant, I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water" (Zech. ix. 11). And Paul speaks of the blood of the Everlasting Covenant (Heb. xiii. 20). But his blood required also to be *human* blood, in order to redeem. The nature that sinned must suffer, therefore "Made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem them who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons." It moreover must be *kinsman* blood, that he might have a legal right to redeem. Therefore, "Forasmuch as the children were partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb. ii. 14). It must also be *innocent* blood, as the death

of a malefactor can make no atonement for others. "For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Cor. v. 21). To be redeeming it must also be *his own* blood, over which he had an independent right of disposal. This no creature possesses, whereas, our Lord's human nature being assumed into personal union with the divine, he had an independent right to shed his blood that we might be redeemed. Therefore, speaking of his life he says, "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." Accordingly the term "*own*" is often used to characterize his blood: "Feed the Church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood" (Acts xx. 28); and "that he might sanctify the people with his own blood" (Heb. xiii. 12); and "To him that loved us and washed us from our sins in his own blood" (Rev. i. 5). His blood, to meet the necessities of the case, must also be *divinely precious*. So Paul, in a passage already referred to, speaks of it as God's own blood, not literally, but because offered by a divine person and therefore of infinite merit to meet the wants of the whole family of the redeemed. Therefore Peter, speaking of our redemption, says, "Not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ (1 Pet. i. 18). It must also have been *freely offered* blood. Therefore, "Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me." It must likewise have been *sacrificial and intercessory* blood, and therefore, "Hath given himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour"

(Ephes. v. 2) ; and as intercessory it is called "the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel." In all these and other respects, as soon as it was revealed that there was salvation for our fallen race, this blood was brought into prominence, and was kept before the eyes of the redeemed by the sacrifices that were appointed to be offered till he should come who was "the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world." And this was wonderfully emphasized at a very early period by the rejection of the offering brought by Cain, because it had no sacrificial blood, and the acceptance of Abel's through faith in the blood of which it was a type. Indeed, in every part of his saving work it comes prominently into view. His exaltation is the reward of his having been "obedient unto death, the death of the cross." Because he thus "humbled himself, God hath highly exalted him." His intercession rests on his atonement, for his "blood speaketh better things than the blood of Abel." They who stand before the throne, who are they? Those who "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb"; and at last, in the heavenly Jerusalem, that blood shall be our title to a place with the company of the redeemed forever. "Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. xxii. 14).

Second. The Beloved is white and ruddy in his perfect sinlessness, as contrasted with the blood-guiltiness he assumed. "Holy, harmless, and undefiled, and separate from sinners," is the moral character of him of whom even the Holy One of Israel could say,

“In whom I am well pleased.” And as a mistake here would be dangerous, the Spirit, in the Scriptures, reminds us again and again, and reiterates in different forms of expression, the great truth of the absolute sinlessness and impeccability of him whom we call Saviour. Some of these testimonies of the Spirit are as follows: “He hath done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth”; “Who knew no sin”; “Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth”; “As a lamb without blemish and without spot”; “And in him was no sin.” And this immaculateness belonged not only to his divine person, but also to his human nature; for, having been supernaturally conceived by the direct agency of the Holy Spirit, his humanity had no taint of original sin, moral corruption, or guilt, having no connection with Adam as a covenant head. In him, therefore, there was not, as in us, a depraved heart and nature, which, as a corrupt fountain, would send forth polluted streams into the life,—no irregular desires, unholy passions, and hurtful lusts that could be aroused into intensity and lashed into fury, as the sea is agitated by the violence of the storm. He could therefore consistently challenge his enemies, “Which of you convinceth me of sin?” and declare, “The prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me,”—nothing on which to found a temptation or by which to gain an advantage over him in consequence of inherent weakness, as he often does with us.

And yet, amazing as it may seem, this spotless one was treated both by God and man as an aggravated offender and criminal, whose guilt was of the deepest dye, and he was “the hind of the morning” (Ps.

xxii.), who was fiercely hunted all the day of his sojourning here, and was at last run down, and his blood poured out by his merciless pursuers. Nay, God himself joined in inflicting the terrible sufferings to which he was exposed; "for it pleased the Lord to bruise him: he hath put him to grief, he hath made his soul an offering for sin (Ps. liii. 10). The Father forsook him when on the cross, and "spared not his own son"! What a scene! Heaven, earth, and hell, each adding something to the unspeakable agony through which he was to pass. That was a spectacle which may be truly said never to have had an equal or parallel, and never will again; and as we gaze on it with mingled feelings of wonder and awe, we are ready to ask, What did it mean, and what great end did it serve?

And here comes in a point of divergence among those who profess to believe in Christ, and to be his followers, and at this point spring up many dangerous errors against which we ought to be on our guard. For example, some utterly reject and repudiate the idea of his sufferings being, in any proper sense, an atonement for the sins of others. Such atonement as implies his bearing by imputation the sins of his people, and suffering the penalty due to the sin thus laid on him, they regard as a thing both unrighteous in itself and dishonorable to God. That blood redemption theory, they say, represents God as unjustly imputing to one the guilt of another, and exacting from the innocent the penalty due to the guilty; and language strong enough to denounce such a monstrous absurdity and shocking impiety they find it impossible to employ. As to their own

views, as to the nature and object of our Lord's sufferings, they think it sufficient to assert that they were endured merely to leave us an example, and more fully to seal his testimony as to the truths he had taught. But, whatever may be thought of the equity of our Lord's suffering for others, it is surely quite sufficient to reply to this class of objectors that on their principle it would be much more difficult to vindicate the righteousness of God than on that which they repudiate. As already observed, both in the Old Testament and the New, God is represented not only as permitting his sufferings, but actively inflicting them, so as not to spare, but deliver up, his son. Now, if he were without sin, personal or imputed, how, on the score of justice, could God's conduct be vindicated in inflicting on him such agony and wrath? We know that it often happens that the innocent do suffer for the guilty; but here would be suffering, most agonizing and intense, inflicted without any transgression at all. As we shall afterwards see, it is, *under certain conditions*, not morally or legally wrong to punish one for another's evil doing; but to punish for *no crime at all* would be, on the part of God, a thousand-fold more unjust than when Pilate delivered up Jesus to be crucified to satisfy the Jews, and went through the mockery of washing his hands as a protest against the wicked outrage. If our Lord suffered not for others, and, as bearing their sins, was not dealt with as a transgressor, then, as he was personally free from all sin, his death at the hands of God as well as of man was the most outrageous violation of justice ever witnessed in the moral world.

Nor is it any more satisfactory a view of the nature and objects of our Lord's sufferings to say that they were only designed to exercise a vast *moral influence*. The *moral-influence* theory is a half-truth. That his sufferings have had, and still have, a most powerful and beneficial influence is a precious truth, which we could wish every one most fully to realize; but that such influence was *all* that was contemplated in these sufferings is a position wholly irreconcilable with Scripture statement. For example, the priestly and sacrificial terms in which these sufferings are described; the legal benefits, such as justification, freedom from condemnation and wrath, they secure; the legal washing in blood so as to have sin forgiven; and the meritorious grounds they furnish of acceptance and renewed fellowship with God,—all these are something wholly different from the moral influence they exert.

Nor is the theory usually called *governmental* any more satisfactory in its attempts to explain the nature and ends of Christ's sufferings. This theory teaches that Christ suffered, by the will of the Father, merely as a *vindication* of the righteousness of the divine government, that God might be able to pardon sin with honor to his own character and perfections. Here, also, we have only a half-truth theory. That the righteousness of God, as well as his holiness and other perfections, were honored and vindicated by the sufferings of our Lord is a glorious fact; but good government, human and divine, can only have one vindication,—namely, that it impartially punish crime and reward obedience. But as crime always implies a criminal, if our Lord's sufferings were only



an empty display of what God *could* inflict by way of punishment, but not a real punishment of actual guilt, then they would have been a mere farce, if not a standing disgrace. One of the ablest advocates of this theory of the atonement (Dr. Wardlaw) argues that the primary object of our Lord's sufferings was such a vindication Godward, and that the salvation of man was only a secondary object,—a kind of afterthought. In his suffering, he thinks, Christ had no special relation to man, so that through his sufferings he might have saved even the devils, had it so pleased him. Now, in such a theory, it is manifest we lose sight of God's everlasting love to our world, the reason for Christ's incarnation, "that he might redeem them who are under the law," and his whole investiture with mediatorial offices, that he might effectually secure our salvation. His whole humiliation work is resolved into a mere exhibition, having really no meaning nor any practical purpose.

Far different from these, however, are the views presented in Scripture as to Christ's bloody sufferings. Three things, especially, we are there taught as to his suffering and death: first, that, though absolutely and perfectly sinless, he suffered the penalty due to sin; secondly, that his suffering and death were inflicted in the strictest justice and righteousness; and thirdly, that his whole suffering and obedience had for their object the salvation of the lost objects of his own and his Father's love.

As to the first of these,—that, though himself sinless, yet he suffered the penalty due to sin,—its truth is plain from the fact that he suffered death at all. "Death is the wages of sin": therefore, in the

moral world death presupposes sin. The fact, therefore, that he was "made lower than the angels for the suffering of death," implies that he came into our world to submit to the extreme penalty of the moral law, as in some sense a transgressor. And thus Paul suggests that his *first* coming was, in this respect, different from his *second* coming: "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him he shall appear the second time *without sin* unto salvation" (Heb. ix. 28). Had not his first coming been in some sense "*with sin*," there would be no force in saying that his second coming was to be *without sin*. Another expression also very strongly suggests the same thought, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. iii. 13). As the law says "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them," Christ's being made a curse for us must imply that before the law cursed him and made him a curse, law-breaking or not continuing in all things written in the book of the law to do them" must have been reckoned to him, for without sin the curse was impossible; for "The curse causeless will not come." This sin, however, that in law reckoning was charged to him, in no wise derogated from his spotless innocency, but rather set forth the moral glory of him who is "white and ruddy."

As to the second point, that our Lord's sufferings and death were inflicted in the strictest justice and righteousness, we have also copious evidence. We are aware that this is the stumbling-block in the way

of many in accepting what is usually called the evangelical and orthodox views of the atonement. It is objected that the perfect innocence and sinlessness of our Lord rendered it unjust in law that he should suffer for anything of his own, "For who ever perished being innocent, or where were the righteous cut off?" (Job iv. 7), and that it is equally unjust that he should have suffered for the sins of others. But there is not in the whole range of revelation any idea more clearly and frequently expressed than that Christ was to suffer for the sins of others. The whole institute of priesthood and sacrifice taught that, if it taught anything, and the prophets spoke of it very fully, as when Isaiah says, "Surely, he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; but he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities" (Is. liii. 5); or when it was told Daniel, "After threescore and two weeks the Messiah shall be cut off, but not for himself" (x. 26); or in the language of Peter, "Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree," and "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God" (1 Pet. ii. 24 and iii. 18). Now, the more fully to understand this idea,—namely, suffering by or through the faults, misfortunes, or sufferings of others,—we must remember that there is a popular sense in which we often suffer for others, and there is a strictly legal sense in which a person may suffer for another. As to the first, our relations, personal, domestic, and social, are full of sufferings with and for and by means of one another. This is usually called the suffering of *sympathy*, in which we, as it were, take

our part of others' woes, and lighten their burdens by sympathetically sharing their griefs. And to this sense some would limit what is said of Christ having suffered for us, and quote in support of this view what is said of him after having healed multitudes of bodily diseases, "That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, 'Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses'" (Matt. viii. 17). Now we fully admit that to this form of suffering for others our Beloved was fully conformed. He had "compassion on the multitude," wept in sympathy with the sisters of Bethany in their affliction, shed copious tears over the coming miseries of Jerusalem; and of him it is written, "For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

But this suffering *with* us, by way of sympathy, is far from exhausting what is said about what our Lord endured *for* us. His relation to us in his sufferings is often represented as *legal*, and intended to effect legal changes, highly to our advantage. Thus, it is said of him, "Made of a woman, *made under the law*, that he might redeem them *who were under the law*, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. iv. 4). This language can only mean his legal, vicarious taking the room of those to be redeemed, that he might remove legal penalties and disabilities, so that they might become sons of God. This could only be effected in justice and righteousness in one way,—namely, that, before they had contracted guilt and become liable to penalty, the Son of God had contracted for them in covenant that he would meet,

and answer all the claims of law that ever might be brought against them, or, in other words, had become their *surety*. Suretyship covers everything, and is fully admitted, in the administration of human law, to be righteous and just. Whilst, however, law sanctions suretyship, it cannot provide the surety. "But what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us who walk not after the flesh but after the spirit." Now of this God-provided and God-sent Saviour, the Apostle declares, "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament," — or covenant (Heb. vii. 22). And that covenant — the covenant of grace — being previous to our contracting guilt, he, as our surety therein, was bound to meet all the claims of law and make our legal standing perfect. This suretyship, making him one with us, made our sin to be his sin, our guilt his guilt, and the punishment due to us justly to fall on him. He married us in covenant relation, and as our husband was liable for all our debts; and that payment should be enforced by law was perfectly equal and just. Therefore, he could say in the widest and most comprehensive sense of his own words, "If ye take me, let these go their way." And in many departments of human society, this principle is accepted and acted on continually. In banks and other corporations, in the case of bailsmen, and of soldiers who have covenanted to fight the nation's battles and suffer in its stead, this principle is accepted as just; and why not in religion? In the late war, when military service

was made for the time compulsory, there were many cases, occurring continually, of persons drawn for the service who were allowed to procure *substitutes*; and many pathetic stories are told of such substitutes, not only fighting in the place of others, but even of dying in their stead. And why, if right in ordinary life, should it be wrong in religion?

And in this connection there is one fact that makes this principle, in its application to Christ and his people, so plain that we wonder it should have ever been overlooked,—namely, that not only are our sins pardoned for Christ's sake, but for his sake as *an act of justice*. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth on Jesus" (Rom. iii. 25, 26). We could easily conceive of a father forgiving a transgressor who had wronged him or done him an injury, at the intercession of a favored son, as a *matter of grace and kindness*, as the same apostle elsewhere expresses it, "in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sin, according to the riches of his grace." But how that would be an act of righteousness or justice we cannot imagine, except there was some reparation made by the son to the father's violated rights,—expressed by "through his blood,"—on the ground of which pardon could be extended on the principle of equity and justice.

We are well aware that many scout at and ridicule what they are pleased to call the *commercial equivalent* theory of atonement; but two facts, when duly considered, go far to show the folly of such objectors. First, it is a fact that in very numerous passages the words to express what Christ did to save us are of this class of commercial equivalents. To redeem, buy, purchase, ransom, price, etc., are all of this class. Now, why object to understand such terms in their natural sense and meaning? If it be true "ye are bought with a price," and that Christ "*redeemed* us from the curse of the law," and that "he gave his life a *ransom* for many," why suppose that the spirit employed terms that would only lead us astray and give us false views and impressions of the nature of Christ's work? And then, secondly, we are never to let out of view the fact that God does not pardon as a man may condone a *private personal offence*. The sin that God pardons is a *crime* against his government and law; and therefore, while pardoning transgression, iniquity, and sin, he will by no means "clear the guilty." Crime against righteous law and rule cannot be overlooked or passed by under a perfect government, such as God's; but while he cannot clear the guilty, yet, having accepted the work of Christ as full satisfaction, and as "magnifying the law and making it honorable," he can consistently pardon all who, on the grounds of that work, seek reconciliation with him. And thus the honor of his government and the integrity of his law are fully sustained, and a door of escape is opened to the lost, realizing the words of Israel's sweet singer, "Mercy and truth are met

together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven." "Our Beloved is white and ruddy."

Thirdly. The terms "white and ruddy" express another marked contrast in the Beloved; namely, that, while the prince of life, he was made subject unto death.

In apparently contradictory terms, Peter, on the day of Pentecost, charged his countrymen, "Ye killed the prince of life." The word for "prince" here is rendered "captain" (Heb. ii. 11) and "author" (xii. 2), and always implies that the person to whom it is applied is an author and leader, going before others in respect to whatever is being accomplished. Thus "the captain of our salvation" sets forth our Lord as the author of salvation, going before and leading the way to its full enjoyment. In the same way, when he is styled "author and finisher of our faith," it means that he is the source from which our faith is derived, the object on which it is exercised, and the sum of all to be believed. So, also, when he is called "the prince of life," it means that he is the author of and leader up to all life. He is so essentially as God,— "In him was life, and the life was the light of men." As Creator, he is the life, light, source, subsistence and end of all being. "For, as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself." He is also the author and communicator of spiritual life,— "As the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will." "For I give unto them eternal life." "And this life is



in his Son." Thus our Beloved hath in himself life, divine, eternal and inherent; whilst, in mediatorial fulness, while the first Adam was made a living soul, Christ, the last Adam, is "made a quickening spirit."

But now comes the amazing fact that this prince of life was killed! As an expositor has well observed, "That this giver of life to men, this author and prince of life, should himself be capable of dying, be slain and killed of men,—this is the wonder of wonders. Glorious, but awful, paradox this is, "Ye killed the prince of life!" Yet, amazing as it may seem, it was not only possible, but absolutely necessary and unavoidable. Therefore, near the close of his public ministry, and immediately before his transfiguration, "he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be killed" (Mark viii. 31). "*Must* be killed"! What amazing language! Why *must*? Because it was arranged from everlasting, even before the foundation of the world, and recorded in the Book of God's eternal purposes. "Then said I, lo! I come, in the volume of the Book it is written of me"; because it was proclaimed and foretold from the earliest history of our race, and written and recorded in the book of prophecy; because divine love was such that he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, and the Son's love toward us was "stronger than death," so that, "having loved his own, he loved them to the end"; because that, being born of a woman and made under the law, and bearing our sins on his own body on the tree, he became obnoxious to the law's fullest penalty; and because it was the only way

“through death to destroy him who had the power of death, even the devil, and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” But what a contrast,—“the prince of life,” “the prince of peace,” made obedient unto death, even the death of the cross! How spotless, pure, and glorious that life, white as he appeared on the Mount, yea, whiter than snow; yet a lamb slain, his blood an open fountain, and we going there continually have “redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sin.” And what brought that blood upon the spotless complexion of his perfect life? Ah, it was with him according to the figure here employed. It was the throbbing of profound emotion, stirred by unspeakable love, that made the blood rush to the surface, and become a prominent feature of his work, so as to present that amazing contrast to the deathlessness of his divine and perfect life. And himself groups these two together, as he proclaims to the churches, “I am He that liveth and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death.” And in these respects, also, our “Beloved is white and ruddy.”

Fourthly. As the object of God's infinite love, complacency, and delight, while bearing, in his sufferings, his displeasure and wrath, we can see how the Beloved is “white and ruddy.”

Considering that God is love, and taking into account the infinite nature and close relations of the persons in the Godhead, we must feel how utterly inadequate we are to conceive with what intensity of complacency they are affected toward each other.

If the love of Christ toward us "passeth knowledge," who can conceive of the extent and intensity of the love between the persons of the Godhead. But besides this infinite mutual love of the persons of the Godhead, the Father, in the new relation in the Covenant of Grace, is again and again represented as taking ineffable pleasure in the Son as Mediator, which is often declared with peculiar force of expression. Thus, speaking of the personal wisdom of God, the Son, as Mediator, declares, "When he appointed the foundations of the earth, then I was by him as one brought up with him; I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him: rejoicing in the habitable parts of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men" (Prov. viii. 30, 31). And again, when the Father summons the world to receive the Saviour, it is in similar terms: "Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth" (Is. xlii. 1), and quoted by Matthew as fulfilled in Christ (xii. 18). At his baptism on the banks of the Jordan, and again, as Peter rehearsing the transfiguration scene puts it, "When there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory," the Father proclaimed, "This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." In these words there is a double expression of delight. First, "my Beloved Son," a term also employed by the Apostle of the Gentiles, "who hath made us to be accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. i. 6). And again, "His dear Son" or "Son of his love" (Col. i. 13). Then in the second part of the expression, "in whom I am well pleased," as has been observed, the verb in the original is much stronger than in our translation, and

would rather express Isaiah's idea, "in whom my soul delighteth." We also find our Lord himself often referring to this complacent love toward himself on the part of the Father. Thus, "The Father loveth the son and hath given all things into his hand" (John iii. 35). And in prayer he claims, "For thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world" (John xvii. 24). And oh, how white, how beautiful, how adorable, in all the fulness of that complacency and richness of divine love, is our Beloved. As God can delight only in the holy, the excellent, and the pure, how inconceivably perfect must be he of whom he can say, "in whom my soul delighteth."

And yet when we turn to other aspects of our Lord's work, how differently are they described, and such language employed as fully warrants the compilers of our catechism in asserting that part of his humiliation was "undergoing the wrath of God." Thus, in many of the psalms predicting his sufferings, he bewails as the weightiest part of his sorrow that "God had forsaken him" (Ps. xxii. 1), and declares "Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves" (Ps. lxxxviii. 7); and asks, "How long, Lord, wilt thou hide thyself,— forever? Shall thy wrath burn like fire?" (Ps. lxxxix. 46). So also Isaiah speaks of him as "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (liii. 10); and Zechariah represents the Father saying, "Awake, O sword, against the shepherd, against the man that is my fellow" (xiii. 7). And it was this bearing of the wrath of God that produced the agony of Gethsemane, that was so intense as to force from his

body great drops of blood, while he cried, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death." Many such expressions might be referred to, all indicating that he endured something more awful and overwhelming than anything that was merely inflicted by the hands of man. But his bearing the wrath of God was nothing more than was implied in suffering for our sins. The wages of sin being death,—physical, spiritual, and eternal,—implying the loss of the divine favor, and the bearing of the righteous displeasure of God, or "his wrath and curse due to us for sin," such hiding of God's face, and being forsaken, and intense agony, were only parts of the penalty he had undertaken to endure; and without these his sufferings as a sacrifice would have been incomplete, and wholly insufficient to deliver us from the wrath to come. Of course the wrath our Lord endured was not personal, but rectoral or judicial, and was no more inconsistent with his being, at the same time, the object of God's ineffable delight than is it for a judge to commiserate and pity the condition of the law-breaker while pronouncing on him the sentence of stern retribution according to the law he administers. But as we contemplate the meeting simultaneously on him of infinite love and complacency, and, at the same time, of infinite wrath and displeasure, we have another wondrous view by way of contrast of our Beloved being "white and ruddy."

Fifthly. In his immeasurable riches, as contrasted with the depths of his voluntary poverty, we have another exhibition of our Beloved as "white and ruddy."

“For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich” (2 Cor. viii. 9). What a limitless extent of meaning in their application to our Lord have those words! “In him, the son of God and King of glory, we see the earth and all its fulness as his possession by unquestioned right” (Ps. 24). By him not only were all things created, whether things in heaven or things on earth, visible and invisible, but by him do “all things consist,” as he, “upholding all things by his power,” perpetuates the universe he has formed. And yet, wonderful to relate, though the proprietor of all worlds, he became so poor in his incarnation that, as “the son of man, he had not where to lay his head.” He hungered for forty days, till angels spread a repast for him in the desert. When thirsty, he had to beg a drink from a stranger, and was at first refused. And how wondrous those other words, “who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation (emptied himself), and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. ii. 6-8). Oh, that wonderful *Kenosis*, or emptying of himself! Though “in him dwells the fulness of the Godhead bodily,” though “it hath pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell,” what depths of emptiness and self-abnegation were necessary that for us might be provided “the unsearchable riches of Christ,” and that “we be filled with all the fulness

of God"! And in the days of his flesh, his inexhaustible riches towards others, in the face of his own self-denial towards himself, were seen sometimes to burst forth through all restraints and manifest how boundless were his resources. Once and again he miraculously furnished a banquet for thousands. Once and again he demonstrated his right over the sea as well as the dry land. Twice the finny tribes rushed together at his command, a fish brought him money to pay the temple tax, and nature laid, for others, her bounties at his feet. The bread of life he proclaimed himself to be, all sufficient for the world, and the water of life, of which, if a man drink, he should never die. The hosts of heaven stood ready at all times to minister to his wants, when permitted, and devils, praying for longer sufferance, acknowledged the boundlessness of his dominion. And yet, of all that Godlike fulness, he *emptied* himself. The explanation, however, is simple. His poverty was penal, part of the punishment due for sin, that had robbed us of all title to any good, emptied us of all happiness, and exposed us to all evil. All that emptying himself was that he might be "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," might be ruddy in his bloody sufferings, as he is white in all the glorious riches of his divine and mediatorial fulness.

Sixthly. Among the many striking contrasts in our Beloved it will suffice to mention one other,—namely, his unparalleled grace, meekness, gentleness and long-suffering, as contrasted with the terribleness of his wrath.

"I am meek and lowly in heart," "I beseech you

by the meekness and gentleness of Christ," "And account the long-suffering of God as salvation," and other such expressions, very forcibly exhibit one element in the contrast. And it was on this aspect of his character that Moses rested his hope for Israel when he pleads that, notwithstanding their sin, God would not refuse to go with them. "If now I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go among us, for it is a stiffnecked people" (Exod. xxxiv. 9). What a wonderful confession to use as an argument why God should go with them, that they were a "stiffnecked people"! It would rather look like a dissuasive to his going. But it means, If thou go not thyself, we are lost; no created being would bear us, nothing but the patience, long-suffering, pity and tender mercy of God could put up with our continual stubbornness and disobedience and need of pardon. As an argument in prayer, therefore, addressed to the "angel of the covenant," who "was with the church in the wilderness," what a tribute it was to the abundant grace, patience and long-suffering of him who dwells between the cherubim, and never casts off his people.

And yet, on the other hand, in what a fearful contrast to all this is "the wrath of the Lamb," "the terrors of the Lord," and the fearful picture we have drawn of the other side of his character by the prophet. "Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah, this that is glorious in his apparel, travelling in the greatness of his strength? I, the Lord, that speak in righteousness, mighty to save. Wherefore art thou red in thy ap-



parel, and thy garments like him that treadeth in the wine-fat? I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me; for I will tread them in mine anger, and trample them in my fury, and their blood shall be sprinkled on my garments, and I will stain all my raiment" (Is. lxxiii. 1-3). In the same way in the New Testament the "terror of the Lord" is preached as well as his love, and John tells us of those who will "say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?" (Rev. vi. 16.) He speaks of him, also, as clothed with a vesture dipped in blood, and as "treading the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (chap. xix. 13-15). How blood-red these views of Christ and his work, and what a contrast to the meekness and gentleness of Christ! And yet they belong to "the gospel of the grace of God,"; for Paul says of those rejecting Christ "as offered in the gospel," "Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the spirit of grace. For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord" (Heb x. 29, 30).

With what feelings, then, of mingled tenderness and holy fear may we contemplate our Beloved "as white and ruddy," rejoicing that in him is the all-perfection of personal character, the riches of grace,

the unfailing efficacy of atoning blood, and the righteousness of wise and holy government. May we, quickened by these views of him to apprehend him in all saving relation, enjoy all the happiness of those who can say, "This is my Beloved and this is my Friend."

## LECTURE IV.

### OUR LORD'S PRE-EMINENCE.

"The chiefest among ten thousands."—*SONG* v. 10.

**W**HILE all nature is laid under contribution to supply terms and figures whereby God may be revealed to the human mind, and his being and character put, in some measure, within the grasp of our thoughts, it is specially true of him who was "made in the likeness of sinful flesh," that all earthly life — the sinful excepted — is made to furnish different views of the outlines, angles, and principal points of his mediatorial character, beauty, and fulness. The light, however, thus thrown on his character and work, to be understood and appreciated, requires to be approached in an humble frame, a sober judgment, and a sanctified heart.

In considering the second descriptive particular of the Beloved's beauty, "chiefest among ten thousands," it will be observed that it is, unlike the following particulars, rather a statement than a comparison, a glorious superlative, in which he infinitely excels all with whom he stands related, the "ten thousands" of them of whom he is the chiefest. It will help us much to enjoy a sight of our Lord's beauty accurately to understand what is meant by both terms, "chiefest" and "ten thousands." As to the former, "chiefest," in the ordinary use of lan-

guage, we denote thereby one excellent above all others, either in bodily stature, mental attainments, social position, or military rank and status. The word in the original is, properly speaking, a substantive, and means a standard-bearer, differing only from the word for standard in some of the vowel points. There is also another word, modified to some extent in the same manner, occurring, Is. x. 18, "As when a standard-bearer fainteth," and applied to our Lord (Is. xi. 10), "A root of Jesse which shall stand for an ensign of the people"; and by Zechariah, "They shall be as the stones of a crown lifted up as an ensign upon his land" (chap. ix. 16). The way in which the word in the passage before us came to be rendered "chiefest" was simply this: the standard-bearer, who was appointed to carry the colors, was chosen for that important position because of his great stature and physical strength and superiority to all others, and when used of the Redeemer may be taken to signify not only all kinds of personal excellence and pre-eminence, but rank, supreme authority, and leadership, as he moves at the head of all those hosts in heaven and earth that follow him to certain, ultimate victory. "Behold I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people" (Is. lv. 4).

As to the second term in the description, "among ten thousands," it is enough to say that it consists only of one word in the original, generally put for innumerable multitudes, and rendered "ten thousands" here, because regarded as the equivalent, if not the root, of the Greek word *myriad*. It is like the expression by John, "And I beheld, and I heard

the voice of many angels around about the throne and the beasts and the elders; and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands" (Rev. v. 11), and of Paul, "To an innumerable company (myriads) of angels" (Heb. xii. 22). The myriads of myriads in heaven and earth can show nothing like our Beloved. However numerous and distinguished may some of those great hosts be, our Lord infinitely surpasses them all in personal glory and official standing, conferred on him by the Father, "that in all things he might have the pre-eminence (Col. i. 18). Let us look on the beauty and glory of the Beloved in both these aspects,— as "chiefest," and as "standard-bearer."

First. The Beloved, as "chiefest," means infinitely above all in personal perfection and glory.

As the tallest and best developed men physically were selected to carry the colors before the troops, so the person of our Lord as mediator is unique and unparalleled, so that it may be safely said that there is nothing like it in heaven and earth. It is specially distinguished from all others by four things,— his divinity, humanity, the conjunction of these two natures in one person, and their permanent disjunction in qualities and properties. As to the first, his proper deity or Godhead, "he is over all, God blessed forever" (Rom. ix. 5). "The only wise God, our Saviour" (Jude 25). Then, as to his proper humanity, it is said of him, "The word was God" (John i. 1), and, "The word was made flesh and dwelt among us" (v. 14). Then, as to the union of these two natures in one person, Paul

asserts, "For in him dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily" (Col. ii. 9); and one and the same person addresses John, "I am the first and the last," which could only be true of God, and, "I am he who liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore," which could only be true of him as man, or God and man, speaking, acting, seen and heard, as one individual person. And, finally, as to the natural disjunction in the qualities and properties peculiar to each nature, it has been thus accurately expressed by the Westminster divines, "So that two whole, perfect and distinct natures, the Godhead and the manhood, were inseparably joined together in one person, without *conversion, composition or confusion*. Which person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man" (Conf. viii. 2). Or in other words there is no blending or mingling of the two natures in our Beloved, as taught by some of the early heretics, no lowering of his divinity, nor deifying of his humanity, or any change in the qualities proper to each. He is "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and to-day and forever." It must never be overlooked, however, that while "Christ, in the work of Mediation, acteth according to both natures; by each nature doing that which is proper to itself; yet, by reason of the unity of the person, that which is proper to one nature is sometimes in Scripture attributed to the person denominated by the other nature" (Conf. viii. 7), as when God is said to have "laid down his life for us" (1 John iii. 16), or when Christ speaks of himself as "the Son of man who is in heaven" (John iii. 13), or when it is said

that "God hath appointed a day in which he shall judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained." But as his person is one, all that he has performed, or is still performing, has all the value and merit belonging to his divine character, and therefore of infinite worth for all the ends contemplated in our salvation. It is a fact to be deplored that there have been in every age, since our Lord's ascension, many even of those calling themselves his followers who have cast doubt and suspicion on all these points concerning our Beloved by a wilful perversion and misinterpretation of the Scriptures of truth. But so, also, there have been many who have refused to believe the truth even about God himself, his being and perfections, sceptics and rationalists who have erred from the truth, and "pierced themselves through with many sorrows." But there can be no doubt that the Scriptures, soberly interpreted, claim for the Beloved all we have ascribed to him, and that, in personal perfection and glory, he has no equals, being the "chiefest among ten thousands."

Secondly. The Beloved is chiefest, and has in all things the pre-eminence, in the high official position to which he has been exalted as Mediator. This includes:—

1. The rank and precedence above all creatures bestowed on him as the reward of his obedience. This the apostle expresses with great fulness when, after describing his humiliation, he adds, "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven,

and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil. ii. 9-11). And at wondrous length, and with wondrous power, he reasons with his own countrymen on this subject in his epistle to the Hebrews, showing them how the greatest and most venerated men in history, Melchizedek, Abraham, Moses, were counted far below the dignity of Him who claims to be the Son of God, and that even the higher orders of beings in heaven, "the principalities and powers in heavenly places," were infinitely beneath him in rank, honor and dignity. In the words of Ahasuerus, it may be said that he was "the man whom the King delighted to honor." Therefore, as he contemplates him as taking his seat at "the right hand of the Majesty on high," he adds, "Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they" (Heb. i. 3, 4). And then he proceeds to show that, in being recognized as the only begotten Son of the Father (v. 5), in angels being commanded to worship him (v. 6), in being addressed as God Supreme on the throne of the universe (v. 8), in being recognized as the unchangeable Creator of all things (v. 10, 11), and alone invited to sit on the right hand of God (v. 13),—that in all these it is plain there can be no comparison in rank and position between him and the highest intelligences known anywhere to exist. And another apostle, in ecstatic vision being permitted to look through an open door on the scenery and company of the invisible world, records that, whilst the redeemed of our race are before the



throne of God, and angels innumerable round about the throne, our Beloved, bearing the marks and memorials of his sufferings, is in the midst of the throne, and there, identified with the Father, receives the worship of heaven and earth (Rev. v. 12-14). Surely, then, in the widest and most comprehensive sense, our Beloved is the "chiefest among ten thousands."

2. This being chiefest officially also includes authority and power to administer the covenant of grace. One of those pledges by the Father to our Beloved reads thus, "I will make him my *first-born*, higher than the kings of the earth." This term "first-born" is not only very significant, but freely appropriated to him in the New Testament. Thus he is "the first-born among many brethren" (Rom. viii. 29), "the first-born of every creature" (Col. i. 15), and "the beginning, the first-born from the dead" (v. 18). Now, to be recognized as the first-born was no merely titular honor, but meant position and office in the family. To be first-born brought with it the *birthright*, for lightly esteeming which Esau is called a "profane person," and of which Reuben was deprived for a gross breach of domestic purity, it being transferred to Joseph as a reward for his noble conduct in a far more grievous temptation than that by which his eldest brother fell (1 Chron. v. 1). The first-born in the father's absence was prophet, priest and king in the household, and had a right to a double portion of the family inheritance. Now, when our Lord is spoken of as first-born, it does not mean his natural relation to the Father in the Godhead, for that was not constituted by the Father's act,

but to that economic relation and standing, given in covenant, that he might be empowered to carry forward and accomplish our redemption and salvation.

Of course, this being first-born implies that he is heir to God's government and throne. Therefore, not only does the prophet, when announcing his incarnation, declare, "The government shall be on his shoulders," but Paul says that "he hath *by inheritance* obtained a more excellent name" than the angels, or as in the same passage expressed, "Whom he hath appointed heir of all things" (Heb. i. 2 and 4). And it is in virtue of this heirship on the part of the Beloved that, when we become his, we are "heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." In virtue of this heirship he has been promoted to the throne, and "on his head are many crowns," as he conducts the government of the different kingdoms and departments of the great empire of nature, providence, grace and glory, over which he is made ruler and Lord. In harmony with this, Daniel tells us, "I saw in the night visions, and behold, one like the Son of Man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion and glory, and a kingdom, that all people and nations and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed" (vii. 13, 14). We have therefore the fullest warrant to worship him in the most exalted praise and say, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness and hatest iniquity: there-

fore, God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows" (Ps. xlv. 6). And from such language we learn the secret of Messiah's perpetual rule. The nations and empires of earth decay and come to nought because their sceptres of administration are not righteous sceptres, nor do the parties set up to rule love righteousness and hate iniquity, but internal moral corruptions and official depravity sap their very foundations and hasten their total overthrow; whereas the righteousness of Christ's government secures its indestructible perpetuity through all ages.

Moreover, as first-born, and administering the affairs of the Kingdom of God, he cares for the family and household of which he is head, and supplies them with all provided blessings. Therefore in the marvellous predictions concerning him in the sixty-eighth psalm, which, though speaking of things far in the future, like many of the prophecies of Isaiah, are couched in the language of the historic past, it is said of the administration on which he entered at his ascension, "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received *gifts for men*, yea, for the rebellious also, that God might dwell in the midst of them. Blessed be the Lord who *daily loadeth us with his benefits*, even the God of our salvation" (v. 18, 19). We have here our first-born, elder Brother, as "the God of our salvation," fully entered upon his mediatorial administration, and having received gifts for us, loading us with benefits and favors. And it is worthy of notice that Paul, speaking of these ascension gifts and benefits, interprets them, first of all, of the offices, privileges

and ordinances bestowed on his church, "He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come in the unity of the faith, and the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Like Joseph, our Beloved has committed to his administration all the affairs of the kingdom, and, when we go to the Father,—as the Egyptians went to Pharaoh,—we are bid to go to our New Testament Joseph "for it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." "And out of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace." "If ye ask anything in my name I will do it for you."

And moreover, as *first-born, heir of God*, and administering the affairs of the kingdom, he must have not only a relation to every part of the kingdom, as *its rightful head*, but power to employ all the instruments and agencies he requires. So much is implied by the language of Paul, "And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the *Head* over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all" (Eph. i. 22). Headship implies relation, authority, government, rule, management, and the working out of all those final issues which God has purposed in respect to all his creatures. This is expressed with wonderful force in another part of the same chapter. "That, in the dispensation of the fulness of time, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth, even

in him" (v. 10). It is only the idea of universal headship that can render possible or even conceivable, such a thing as gathering into one all things in heaven and on earth. We see it imaged, in some small measure, in human governments. As the eye takes in and rapidly runs over all the Russias, from the North pole, far south to the Caspian Sea and the gates of Herat, over how many different zones, filled each with creatures adapted to its climate, over how many human races, differing in language, literature, modes of life, religious and moral characteristics widely apart, does it roam, and how many things it sees gathered into one by the headship of one despot! Or as we turn to the British Empire and see, in virtue of royal headship, the same individual,—in one place, Queen of Great Britain and Ireland; in another, the monarch of a wide American Dominion; in another, ruler of a goodly part of Africa and isles of the sea, then Empress of India and sovereign of the great insular Continent stretching away to the South pole,—we can form some idea how our Lord, in virtue of his divinely conferred headship, gathers together under one great government and mediatorial management not only the whole universe of being, but all the purposes, works and operations of God. And this implies three things: that he is head of all law, the head of all active agencies and instrumentalities, and the head of all institutions.

He is, first, the head of all Law. What we call physical laws, or what the psalmist better designates "thine ordinances" (Ps. cxix. 91), are simply the will of God in the creature, or God immanent in his

works; and in this respect our Beloved is "over all, God blessed forever." This was grandly manifested in his miracles of power when on earth. The laws that guide the storm, that agitate or calm the billows, the incipient germ or long continued power of the most malignant disease, the organic ailments or mental aberrations, the hunger, thirst and all forms of human want and misery were all one to him, and perfectly under the control of his will, and amenable to his command. It was the same to him to supply his creatures with the necessaries of life in the form of showers of manna from the skies, or by multiplying the substance of a few loaves that thousands might be fed, or through the ordinary channel of a crop of grain, prepared in the dark bowels of the earth by a wondrous chemistry, and dragged to the surface by an irresistible force. While in his own life of holy obedience he daily observed the laws which he himself had originally imposed on both matter and mind, he gave many indubitable proofs that he was Lord of all the laws and forces in the midst of which he moved, while he tabernacled with us on earth. All moral law also is in his hand as mediator, and therefore we find him declaring that "the Son of Man is the Lord of the Sabbath day," while at the same time he defines the principles, enforces the obligation, and announces the rewards and penalties of the moral law, as not only the great code of God's government over rational creatures, but which he himself, as our Lawgiver and King and judge, will honor and fully sustain, as he shall at last "render to every man according to his works."

Moreover, our Beloved is the head of all intelligent agencies in any way connected with his government. In conducting the government of God in the exercise of infinite wisdom and power there cannot possibly be any failure, for "He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set judgment on the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law." And therefore, while under a double figurative view of his character and offices,—that of "a Lamb slain on the throne" of God, and of "the Lion of the tribe of Judah,"—he is represented as unfolding the purposes of God in opening the sealed book. As each epoch in that strange prophetic story passes in panoramic vision before us, innumerable agencies are seen at work, some seeking to promote and others to thwart the object for which the Son is exalted to reign. Angels of light and angels of darkness, armies in conflict, horsemen and horses, locusts and frogs, beasts normal and nondescript, true witnesses and false prophets, the forces of heaven, earth and hell, all moving round the great point, the divine purpose in the salvation of the redeemed church, with the throne of God and of the Lamb over all and above all, unmoved and unshaken by all the heaving and tossing and throbbing of that wondrous scene. It reminds us forcibly of the language of the psalm, "The Lord sitteth on the floods, the Lord sitteth King forever." How pleasant to think that all these agencies and active forces, whether friendly or hostile, are under the headship, management and control of him to whom has been given "all power in heaven and on earth." Angels are specially his, and therefore he declares, "Behold, I send *my* angels to testify these

things in the churches," and, "The Son of man shall send forth *his* angels," and, "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" And with these celestial forces are conjoined the armies of the redeemed, who follow him and fight his battles, and of whom it is said, "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony; for they loved not their lives to the death." And not they only, but the enemies and opponents of his people and cause are also under his power. "These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them; for he is Lord of lords and King of kings, and they that are with him are called and chosen and faithful." And, during the day of grace, how like his present dealings with these irreconcilables to what it was during his ministry on earth. Then he submitted to be tempted of Satan till the arch-enemy had exhausted his wiles, and allowed him and his confederate demons to possess and torment human beings, made in the image of God, till the time for "Get thee behind me, Satan," had come, or when "the strong man armed was bound by one stronger than he, and despoiled of his goods." Such is his patience and forbearance still with even the most inveterate of his enemies; but, when the time appointed by the Father shall arrive, Satan shall be seen "as lightning falling from heaven," and be bound by the great covenant angel that has the key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand"; and so shall the head of the serpent be crushed under the feet of the victorious seed of the woman, and the wrath of men and devils be made to praise



him on "whose shoulders has been laid the government."

But, besides, under him as a head are put all natural and all gracious institutions. The family, with all its happy relations and blessed influences, is under him as an institution of prime importance. Therefore, they who marry are "to marry in the Lord." Children are "to obey their parents in the Lord." Husbands are "to love their wives even as Christ loved the Church." Children are "an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb his reward," and "servants are to be subject to their own masters in the Lord." In the same way the Sabbath day, of which he claims to be the Lord, he puts into full force in the family, "Thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy ox, nor thy ass." In fact, "the Lord of the families of the whole earth shall he be called"; and this is his steady claim since he said of Abraham, "I know him, that he shall command his children and his household after him; and they shall keep the ways of the Lord." And it may be safely said that no other natural institution among men has yielded him a greater revenue of glory or a larger harvest of souls.

In like manner, all social institutions are put under him, and he gives law to them all, and claims to be their Lord. Thus, not only the judicial laws, given by Moses in the wilderness, but even many of the ceremonial — though some of them were typical and therefore temporary, and others topical and adapted only to the land of Canaan — were eminently wise, and admirably calculated to promote health, prop-

erty, and social comfort, on the part of those who observed them, and "in keeping them there was great reward." In fact, our Lord claims to rule society in all its manifold relations, pursuits, interests, and enjoyments. "The earth being the Lord's and the fulness thereof," Moses teaches Israel "It is he that giveth thee power to get wealth" (Deut. viii. 18), and not only how we may accumulate, but how we should use wealth in harmony with the claims of God and our neighbor. As the family and social duties of life were performed, was there any promise given that we should "live long on the land which the Lord our God hath given us"; and every precept enjoining social purity, virtue, and obedience, had, as much as the highest truth or ordinance of religion, the seal of divine authority, "I am the Lord."

And, moreover, civil government and national institutions for the comfort and good of man are all put under him as the head of all principality and power. Of the many crowns seen by the Apostle John on his head (Rev. xix. 12), one is "King of kings and Lord of lords." Both in the Old Testament and the New, kings, judges, and all civil officials are distinctly given to understand that it is the divine will that all nations should serve him, and all are admonished to "be wise so as to serve the Lord with fear, and kiss the son lest he be angry, and they perish from the way when his wrath is kindled but a little" (Ps. ii. 11, 12). Nor is it easy to understand, in the face of such commands, why some should persistently advocate the excepting of civil government alone, of all social institutions, from obligation to

Christ as a head. It is only as civil government is pervaded by the spirit of Christianity that it really accomplishes the end for which it is appointed of God. When it is true of any land as it was of Israel of old, "They set up kings, but not by me; princes, and I knew it not," such government still proves more of a curse than a blessing. Besides, civil government is God's ordinance, and they who administer it are responsible to Christ, are judged, corrected, rewarded, or punished by him according to their works. As he smote the land of Egypt for disobedience to his high behest, as he gave even his own Israel into captivity as a punishment for their national transgression, and as he has wiped out many of the mightiest empires on the earth, all because they disregard his authority and resisted his will, so does he still; and the most blessed condition for which he can hope on earth is that foreshadowed in prophecy, when it was proclaimed by "great voices of heaven," "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever" (Rev. xi. 15).

Thirdly. But, besides his personal glory and high official position, our Beloved is standard-bearer among myriads. This designation is designed, as formerly explained, to set forth the place and position our Lord occupies as the head of the Church militant. It is a military term, rendered in the margin of the revised edition, "Marked out by a banner," and exactly corresponding to what is said of him in a passage already quoted, "Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people" (Is. lv. 4). It is intended to describe him

at the head of all his forces, carrying his colors to victory, "till he have set judgment in the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law." And in this aspect our Lord, in his great "holy war," is often contemplated. In the first notice of the coming conflict, he crushes the serpent's head; and, at his appearance, with drawn sword, to Joshua, he says, as "the captain of the Lord's hosts am I now come." In the psalm, "he rides forth prosperously, and his right hand makes him acquainted with terrible things." In prophecy, he is "a man of war," and his garments stained with the blood of his enemies. In the Apocalypse, he is seen going forth with "bow and crown, conquering and to conquer," and heading his heavenly armies, "smiting the nations and ruling them with a rod of iron" (Rev. xix. 11-16), and subduing the whole world to himself. In all these, we get a glimpse of our Beloved as standard-bearer among myriads, which implies:—

1. That he is the great centre and bond of union among all his followers on earth and in heaven.

As the standard-bearer carries aloft the colors in front of the battalion, the flag becomes a unifying power, welding into one homogeneous mass all who follow it to the battle-field. Therefore, in all wars, the flag is indicative of the side on which the soldier fights, and, as a symbol, unites all who do battle for the same cause. Now, so it is in the spiritual conflict; and therefore God promises, "And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people. To it shall the Gentiles seek, and his rest shall be glorious." "And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble

the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth" (Is. xi. 10-12). Many armies, both in ancient and modern times, have been made up of many nationalities; but fighting under the same banner makes them all one. And therefore Paul says of God in Christ, "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named"; and even the persons of the Godhead and the holy angels are all a unit in this great power that draws all into the closest relation. Therefore our Lord prays, "That they all may be one, as thou Father art in me and I in thee; that they all may be one in us." And thus God and angels, heaven and earth, are brought nearer and harmonized, as they are connected with and ranged round the banner of redeeming grace. And specially as his people on earth gather round that standard as borne by Christ, and join the armies that follow him, there is realized the lively picture of Zechariah, "And the Lord their God shall save them in that day, as the flock of his people; for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land" (Zech. ix. 16). In other words, it is here promised that, as they elevate and bear up, and make conspicuous the crown and crown rights of Messiah, and enforce his claim upon nations and individuals, his true and faithful followers will bless the world, and make it one.

2. The standard-bearer, moreover, is a power to assimilate what would otherwise be dissimilar and unlike. In the armies of earth, many nationalities are often represented, and many multitudes, forming often whole companies, battalions, and brigades, dif-

fering in color, language, pursuits, and habits of life, are all cast into one mould, and assimilated by waving under one flag. That banner, though nothing in itself, is the symbol of a cause, and so transforms as to make homogeneous and similar what would otherwise be dissident and inharmonious. And how marvellously this assimilating power of one Christ, one cross, one truth or faith, one hope, one object, and one cause transforms the followers of the Lamb. "It changes us into the same image," so that we "put on the Lord Jesus"; and, clothed in the same uniform, and following the same banner, former distinctions are annihilated, so that there is no longer "Jew nor Greek, barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ all and in all." And thus, whatever may have been our former character, the religion of Christ works the same gracious results in all, the same feelings, religious experiences, and practical influence on the life, as much on the heart of the savage as those of educated and refined civilization, giving emphasis to the song of the elders, "Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, out of every kindred and tongue and people and nation (Rev. v. 9).

3. As our standard-bearer, too, he is to his followers the great stimulus and incentive to labor and effort in his service. As he goes before us, waving in our sight the standard of "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," it is to indicate where our work lies, and where we are to take our place in the thickest of the fight. That "the Lord hath gone before us and the shout of a king is in our midst" should be sufficient to arouse the enthusiasm of every soldier of the

cross ; and, as he goes before, and indicates our path of duty, we should regard him as beckoning us on to supreme effort in fighting the good fight of faith. Cases have been related of earthly commanders who, when their soldiers hesitated to advance, actually seized the colors and flung them into the ranks of the enemy, thus to stimulate their own troops to a more vigorous effort to recover what a soldier can never lose with honor. And just so our Lord often leaves his people in the enemy's hand, apparently casts his truth, cause, and people into the very jaws of the dragon, that all our powers of prayer, suffering, labor, and sustained effort may be more fully quickened into holy zeal and abundant activity in his service. And, blessed be our Lord, it can never be with us as "when a standard-bearer fainteth." David fainted (2 Sam. xxi. 15) after many years of heroic prowess ; but of our standard-bearer it is written, "He fainteth not, neither is weary, and there is no searching of his understanding" (Is. xl. 28).

4. As our standard-bearer, he is also to his followers the source of their security and safety. "His banner over me was love." This is said of one who had been taken into the banqueting-house and been refreshed in his pavilion. In the East, when one is taken into the house of another, and set down at the family table, he is regarded as under the protection of his host ; and all kind and friendly acts are regarded as only the dutiful outcome of the relation that for the time being subsists between them. Now Christ's banner ever floats over his banqueting-house ; and, whether in the fierce conflict, or enjoying a season of spiritual refreshment with Christ in

his chambers, he ever cares for us with unspeakable love, supplies us with unbounded generosity, and the royal banner ever over us is our unfailing security and assurance of good. "In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion, in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me" (Ps. xxvii. 5).

5. Being our standard-bearer also means that, amidst many thousands of rivals, he is the peerless object of our love. "Whom have I in the heavens but thee," thou chiefest among myriads! "Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." Like the sun, Jesus Christ is the centre of the system. He is the angel in the sun that casts no shadow, because he is himself all light and glory, surpassing even the sun himself. But as the eye, looking even for a moment at the brightness of the sun, gets a dazzling impression that remains long after the look, so, as we look on the face of Jesus, impressions are made that shall never fade till they be swallowed up in the glory of the eternal state. May we ever glory in his unrivalled pre-eminence, and faithfully follow him, as our glorious standard-bearer, wherever he may lead us.



## LECTURE V.

### OUR LORD'S HEAD OF GOLD.

"His head is as the most fine gold."—SONO v. 11.

**T**HE Messianic portions of the Old Testament have aptly been compared to the swaddling clothes in which was wrapped the infant Jesus, the incarnate Son of God, before being laid in the manger, the lowly emblem of his humiliation state. In these sacred writings he had been swaddled in prophecy, prefiguration, types, shadows, and promises, in all the ages preceding his incarnation, and heaven and earth, and whatever in them was glorious, precious, perfect, pleasurable, and to be desired, were laid under contribution to furnish terms to set forth the glory and honor he was to reach through suffering. And what a tribute these terms were, as descriptive of the "Son given," and the "child born"! Heaven lends its light, sun, moon, and stars, its clouds, winds, rainbow, and storms to describe and signalize "the great and notable day of the Lord," while earth adorns the coming one with its brightest colors, perfumes him with its sweetest odors, so that "his name is as ointment poured forth," and clothes him in richest robes, so that all his "garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia." Moreover, it loads him with the most costly orna-

ments and most precious jewels, and marks him as "more to be valued than sapphires," and "more precious than rubies," while to meet our wants he is the hidden manna and the water from the rock, the "finest of the wheat, and honey from the comb, the bread of life, the tree of life, the water of life, and everlasting joy." One of these descriptive terms supplied by earth, namely, gold, always esteemed the standard of value, is here employed to give us some faint conception of the glory and excellence of the Beloved. "His head is as the most fine gold."

What is meant by his head, as applied to the Beloved, first demands our attention. To this inquiry there has been answer given in different forms, some of which we regard as wholly mistaken, and others true only in part. Some suppose that his head being like gold is a figure taken from Solomon's crown, which was so large and massive that, when in position on his head, it made it look as if it were a solid mass of gold, and as his hair was long and black it was seen fringing the gold and presented a notable contrast in color to the precious metal. Others think there may be reference to what Josephus tells, that it was in Solomon's time customary to powder the head and hair with gold dust or filings, which gave a brilliant appearance to the head, especially in the sunshine. Others, referring to the statement that the serpent should bruise the Saviour's heel, think that, as he suffered only in his human nature, his humanity must have been his heel, and his deity or divine nature his head. Others again, taking the key to the figure from the image seen in

a dream by Nebuchadnezzar, of which the head was gold, figurative of universal sovereignty and rule, think that the head of the Beloved must mean his headship over all things.

Now, while our Lord is the "head of the body," and "head over all things for his body the church," yet it must not be overlooked that it is not something in relation to others that is meant by the Redeemer's head here, but something that is a head to himself, a head over himself, and what that is Paul plainly states thus, "And the head of Christ is God" (1. Cor. xi. 3). By God here, as the head of Christ, the Apostle does not mean any one person of the Godhead in particular, but the Godhead represented by the Father in covenant. In the covenant of grace the Father represented the Godhead, in sustaining its claims and upholding its authority; the Son represented the fallen and rebellious race to be redeemed and restored; while the Spirit formally and officially witnessed the covenant, and engaged to give the whole covenant arrangement, publicity, application, and effect. And this view of the relation and co-operation in our salvation of the persons of the Godhead is often referred to in Scripture, as when Peter says, "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Christ." Now, as thus representing the Godhead in the covenant of grace, the Father was the economical head of Christ as Mediator, in all he undertook to accomplish; and as all thus proceeded from him, all things were subordinated to his will. That this is the true view of what is meant by the head

of the Beloved the following considerations will show:—

1. It is shown by his own words, "The Father is greater than I." These words cannot mean that in attribute or divine perfection the Son is less and the Father greater; for, if the Son be "the only wise God and our Saviour," he must be God in the fullest sense of the term. There cannot be a more perfect and a less perfect God. He must be infinite, eternal, and unchangeable, if he is to be recognized as God at all. But as among men, in government, business, or any earthly pursuit and employment, one person may be another's equal and even superior in all personal qualities, physical and moral, and yet his inferior in rank, office, and the exercise of power. So in the economy of the plan of salvation. For mediatorial purposes, our Lord became not only subject to the Father, but was even "made lower than the angels." Without this distinction betwixt greatness of personal attribute, and greatness of official position, it would be impossible to explain or reconcile many of our Lord's own statements. Thus, at one time, he speaks of himself as wholly dependent upon and subordinate to the Father, and yet claims that all should "honor him, even as they honor the Father." So, also, at one time he declares, "I and the Father are one," and again, "My Father is greater than I." But the difference between natural and economic relation solves the difficulty and harmonizes such statements.

2. By the fact that the Father gave the Son a mission and work, for the execution of which he is held responsible.

“Behold *my servant* whom I uphold.” This idea of being a servant to God in the accomplishment of the whole work of redemption is presented very frequently in the Psalms, prophets, and New Testament. Thus in the fortieth Psalm, as quoted by Paul, and applied to Christ, “Lo, I come to do *thy will*, O God”; and Psalms ii. and cx. describe the provision made by the Father that this work be successful in the grant of the universal possession of all nations, and all things being put under his feet. Isaiah also, with wonderful frequency, presents our Lord under this aspect, as God’s servant, whether in his humiliation or exaltation, always doing his will and working out his purpose. And when our Lord himself speaks of his own work it is always in similar strain, “I came not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me,” “I can of my own self do nothing,” “I have finished the work thou gavest me to do.” Now three things exhibit with wonderful clearness this headship of God, and subjection of the Son in all mediatorial work. First, that all along and through it was offered to God for his acceptance as soon as rendered. Thus, on different occasions, the Father testified his acceptance, “In whom I am well pleased.” Our Lord also, in his intercessory prayer, offered his obedience to the Father, “I have glorified thee on earth, I have finished the work thou gavest me to do.” Therefore Paul assures us that “he offered himself without spot unto God.” He is never said to have offered himself to the Father, but to God, to show that it was in economical not natural relation that the persons of the Godhead stood to each other in the whole work of our redemption.

Then again, as showing the same thing, is the fact that our Lord is spoken of as not only responsible and bound as to the accomplishing of the work undertaken, but at last is represented as giving in his final account and being rewarded for his faithfulness and success,—“Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. . . . And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the son also be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all” (1 Cor. xv. 24, 28). During his whole work when on earth, he represents himself as acting under the Father's commandment. Thus as to offering his life, “I have power to lay it down, and power to take it again. This commandment have I received of the Father” (John x. 18). And as to the doctrine he taught, “The Father that sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak” (John xii. 49), and “as the Father gave me commandment, even so I do” (John xiv. 31). In thus acting under the imperative command of the Father in every part of his obedience, he acknowledged God in covenant as “his superior and head; and, when with this fact we conjoin his official giving up the kingdom at last, we have the clearest proof that he, first and last, felt and owned responsibility and obligation. His work, undertaken in covenant, was to perfect and make triumphant the kingdom of God over all opposition; and, this kingdom perfected and complete, when the day of judgment shall have settled all moral questions and all human issues, the Mediator is here rep-

resented, when he returns with his glorified saints to take possession of the kingdom prepared before the foundation of the world, as delivering up to God, as having fully accomplished all he had undertaken to perform. And this he will do in his mediatorial character and in full discharge of his mediatorial responsibilities, as "subject to him who did put all things under him, that God may be all and in all." And it seems strange that any one, from this passage, should advance the opinion that, after the day of judgment, the Son shall lay down his mediatorial office, and cease to have toward the redeemed Church any farther mediatorial relation. The expression, "Then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him who put all things under him," goes to prove the very opposite; for it is only *as Mediator* that the Son is or can be *subject* to the Father. The passage evidently means that the final delivering up of the kingdom, perfected and complete, according to God's eternal purpose, will be the grandest proof and display of the economical relation of the persons of the Godhead, and that the covenant, under which all had been accomplished, is an everlasting covenant, in which the parties shall remain forever in the same relation which they have sustained in the past, so that the Son as Mediator shall still be subject to the Father. Two thoughts illustrate this fact. First, his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and his exaltation, as a reward of his obedience, can never have an end; and, moreover, the blessedness of the state of glory to be enjoyed by the redeemed forever is a river flowing out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. But if, *as the Lamb*, he is to be source of

eternal life and happiness to his people, their relation must remain unchanged.

And, lastly, the fact that the Father *supported* our Lord in his work shows that it was God himself that is meant by the head of the Beloved. "My servant *whom I uphold.*" How this idea runs throughout the psalms and the prophets, and explains why, both in the Old Testament and New, our Lord is so constantly and continually at the throne of God in prayer. In view of all human help failing him, he assures the disciples, "Yet I am not alone, but the Father that sent me is with me." And when, as a part of the penalty due to sin, the Father withdrew for a time the comfortable sense of his presence, we know how he cried out, "Why hast thou forsaken me!" Moreover, the conferring of a reward for his obedience unto death, being the Father's act, shows the relation in which they stood to be such as we have described. "Because he humbled himself, God hath highly exalted him and given him a name above every name." For such reasons, therefore, we conclude that the head of the Beloved is nothing less or more than the economic relation which God the Father sustained to Christ as Mediator in every part of his work. "And the head of Christ is God."

II. Of this economical head of the Beloved it is said, "His head is as the most fine gold." The expression in the original, as also in our translation, denotes gold of the finest quality and greatest purity and brilliancy. Among metals, gold has been always distinguished by its weight, value, and incorruptibility, not being liable to rust or oxidize or be



affected by many acids that corrode other metals. It has therefore been taken in all ages as a standard of value, measuring comparatively the worth of everything else, so that the psalmist, when magnifying the law of God, could find no higher term than "better than gold, yea, the most fine gold." From the intrinsic value it possesses and the brilliant polish it is capable of receiving, it has always been used for the most precious ornaments, and especially for the crowns of kings and those exalted to power. Thus, "Thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head" (Ps. xxi.). And of Mordecai it is said that he "went out from the presence of the king in royal apparel and with a great crown of gold." Now, because gold has always thus held the place of a standard of value in the world, and because possessed of the most excellent properties, many expositors think that, when used figuratively of spiritual things, it always means something divine in its nature, something proper to God. Of this, in this song and elsewhere, we have striking illustrations. Thus in this poem we have the qualities and properties of both the Beloved and his spouse often set forth; and, while he is frequently described by figures taken from gold, she is never. When gold is spoken of in connection with the praise and commendation she receives, it is always something that has *been given her, or put upon her*; never what she is in herself; whereas, when gold is predicated of him, it is something of and proper to himself. A few examples will illustrate our meaning. There are only two passages in the song in which we have gold descriptively used of the spouse. These are found in

the tenth and eleventh verses of the first chapter, "Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, and thy neck with chains of gold," in which gold is merely put on as an ornament, but no part of herself. And so v. 11, "We will make thee borders of gold with studs of silver," referring to the borders of her robe, mixed or embroidered with gold threads. And this exactly corresponds with what is said of the queen in the 45th psalm, "Upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir" (v. 9), and "Her clothing is of wrought gold" (v. 13), in both something external to herself, but put on and worn. Now, in contrast with these, in the four places in the song in which gold is used figuratively of the Beloved, it is always descriptive of something personal, and part of himself. Three of these we have in the twelve descriptive particulars we are considering, the first in v. 11, "His head is the most fine gold"; the second in v. 14, "His hands are gold rings set with the beryl"; and the third in v. 15, "His legs are pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold." And it is noteworthy that in each of these passages the "as" of comparison is supplied by the translators, whereas, read literally, they each express something personally belonging to our Lord. The fourth passage is in the description of the nuptial chariot (iii. 10), "The bottom thereof of gold." As that chariot pointed out the provisions of the everlasting covenant by which, being married to the Beloved, we are saved, the bottom that supported all the other parts being gold beautifully shows us that the divine perfections, being all engaged in the work of our salvation, God himself is the bottom, founda-

tion, security, and support of the whole blessed plan. And so in many other parts of Scripture, where anything spiritual possessed by us is described by a figure from this precious metal, and standard of value, it is always something divine in its nature, and divinely imparted and enjoyed. Thus the Lord says of his Church of old, "I decked thee with ornaments, I put a chain on thy neck, and a jewel on thy forehead, and a beautiful crown upon thy head, and thus wast thou decked with gold and silver" (Ezek. xvi. 11-13). So our Lord, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire" (Rev. iii. 18); "and the elders had on their heads crowns of gold" (iv. 4); yea, the very "city was of pure gold, like unto clear glass" (xxi. 18), owing all its light, glory, and beauty to the presence of the throne of God and of the Lamb. The description, therefore, "His head is the most fine gold," shows:—

1. That the relation of the whole Godhead to the work of Christ gives it its highest glory, value, and excellence. "I am Jehovah thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel," an oft-repeated assurance, suggests that in the Godhead, indicated by the incommunicable name, originated the whole thought and method of our redemption; and that our salvation, being the fruit and exercise of all divine perfection, it must be something worthy of God. And so, indeed, it is; and therefore Paul calls our Lord, "Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. i. 24), and the gospel making him known, "The wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory" (ii. 7). So also is Christ and his work the most

marvellous display of righteousness or justice, "That he might be just and the justifier of him that believeth" (Rom. iii. 26). "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed" (i. 17). His holiness also shines forth conspicuously in every feature; and therefore, "I am your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel," was of old, and still is, a covenant name for the God of our salvation. So, also, his omniscience, foreknowledge, and sovereignty are wonderfully manifested in Christ's work, "Whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son." "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father." In fact, as has often been explained, to the whole plan and work of our salvation may be applied the language of the psalm, "Surely, his salvation is nigh them that fear him, that glory may dwell in our land. Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." "Truth shall spring out of the earth, and righteousness shall look down from heaven." Thus the whole conception, inception, and completion of our salvation in Christ are of gold. His everlasting love, boundless grace, infinite wisdom, inflexible justice, irresistible power, and unsullied holiness, all give glory and effect to what our Lord came to accomplish on our behalf. Truly, Godhead is to our Beloved a head of gold.

2. The relation of Godhead to Christ as Mediator is also golden, because thereby his whole work was performed under a covenant in which there could be no failure

In the first covenant into which the human family was taken, there could be no failure on the part

of one of the contracting parties,—namely, the Creator,—but, the other contracting party being fallible, there was room for failure, as afterwards became mournfully apparent. But in the covenant of grace, both of the parties being divine, and therefore infallible, there could be no failure. Therefore, of our covenant head who contracted for us, it is said, “He shall not fail nor be discouraged till he have set judgment in the earth, and the Isles shall wait for his law” (Is. xlii. 4). Having assumed our position, he never shrank from anything included in his undertaking. Therefore he addresses his Father as his head, “Thy vows are upon me, O God,” and “I will pay my vows before them that fear him” (Ps. xxii. 25). Accordingly, his whole obedience and suffering are spoken of as under a covenant. Therefore God is represented as “boring, or piercing his ear (Ps. xl. 6), as of old they engaged those who voluntarily offered themselves as servants forever. In the same sense, his blood is repeatedly called the blood of the covenant. Thus, “As for thee, also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water” (Zech. ix. 11). As the blood sprinkled on the people at the making covenant with them at Sinai is called by Moses, “This is the blood of the Testament (or covenant),” so Paul speaks of some who have trodden under foot the Son of God, and have counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing” (Heb. x. 29). At the institution of the Supper, he speaks of the cup as “the New Testament in my blood,” and Paul says “who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep through the

blood of the everlasting covenant." This covenant then, under which he shed his blood and performed his whole work of obedience, being betwixt divine and infallible parties, made all its benefits sure to us, so that he promises, "Incline your ear and come unto me; hear, and your souls shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David" (Is. lv. 3).

3. It is this relation to God as his head that gives worth and efficacy to all the Redeemer's offices. While we speak of Christ's various relations to us under the familiar term of offices, and usually designate them as three,—prophet, priest, and king,—yet, properly speaking, his one great office is that of Mediator, the functions of which toward mankind are very suitably expressed by the terms to which we have referred. Indeed, when we speak of his mediatorial office being distinguished into three, we mean various aspects of what he has done, is now doing, or will do for us, as a saviour from sin and all its evil consequences. Now, whether we speak of his offices as one or three, we find that uniformly the Scripture speaks of them as in a great measure deriving their authority and efficacy from the appointment of God. It is true there is an intrinsic worth and value in everything that the Son of God is, or has done, from the glory of his divine nature, and the personal excellence and fitness for whatever he undertakes, and this is repeatedly recognized in the Word of God. But when we come to official claims and official acts, we find their value and efficiency chiefly ascribed to his investiture with office by the Father. Therefore his mediation is often connected

with his place in the everlasting covenant, as when it is said, "And for this cause he is the Mediator of the New Testament" (Heb. ix. 15), and again, "Ye are come to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant" (xii. 24). In that covenant, the Father gave him place, position, office, and work, and all mediatorial functions and provisions that would secure the success of his undertaking. His investiture by the Father is usually said to consist of five things: his *eternal designation* to office,—“I was set up from everlasting”; his *actual consecration* by the oath of God,—“But the word of the oath which was since the law maketh the Son, who is consecrated forevermore; his *mission*,—“As the Father hath sent me”; his *unction*,—“For God giveth not the spirit by measure unto him”; and his *inauguration* on entering on his public ministry,—“This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” And many are the references to this investiture, both in the Old Testament and the New, which show the important place it holds in the economy of redemption. Thus, in addition to the passages already quoted, we have the Father saying, “I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thy hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant to the people, for a light of the gentiles”; while the son, as Mediator, declares, “The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me,” and assures us, “For him hath God the Father sealed” (John vi. 27).

In like manner, in relation to his several offices, Peter quotes Moses, “A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren; him shall

ye hear in all things." And Paul, referring to his priestly rank, declares, "And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my son, to-day have I begotten thee, saith also in another place, Thou art a priest forever, after the order of Melchisedec" (Heb. v. 4-6). Daniel also represents him as being brought to the Ancient of Days to be invested with kingly power, and receive a universal kingdom (vii. 13-14), so that all official power, all official qualification, and all official acts flowed from God as his head. "It pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." "For the Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand." And how beautifully all this accords with the vision John had of the glorified Redeemer, "And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle" (Rev. i. 13). He is here seen "clothed with the garment" of office, "down to the foot," on every part and aspect of his person; and this robe of office is girt on and held in its place by the golden girdle of the Father's appointment and investiture. And beyond the bounds of that investiture he has no authority or power to act. And thus, when instructing his disciples about the last day and end of the world, he declares, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels that are in heaven, *neither the Son*, but the Father." No doubt but that as God he knew the day and hour as a matter of foreknowledge, but mediatorially and officially it was not given



him of the Father to make known, as he said to his followers after the resurrection, "It is not for you to know the times and seasons, which the Father hath put *in his own power.*" As the head, therefore, stands in closest and most beneficial relation to every part of the body and all its functions, so the Father, as representing the Godhead, is to Christ and to the whole economy he administers a "head of gold."

4. The Godhead, being the head of the Beloved, is also golden because it brings all the persons of the trinity into active co-operation, in securing to us all the ends contemplated in our salvation.

This thought is sweetly suggested by the assurance of Paul: "All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come,—all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Cor. iii. 22). The effect of our being Christ's, and Christ being God's, he here represents as giving abundant security that all things are, and shall be, ours in safe and everlasting possession. But how can it be said that "Christ is God's," and how does that bring us a feeling of security? Why, Christ is God's fellow in this whole work, and is officially commissioned and sent forth with God's seal on him to give us assurance, so that God is responsible for the efficiency of Christ's undertaking, and the fulfilment of every promise he has made, and stands engaged in the all-sufficiency of divine perfection to make all sure. And therefore, while it is true that we are filled out of the fulness of Christ, we have many expressions connecting all our supplies with God the Father. Thus, "Grace be unto you and peace, from God the

Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ," and "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ"; and one of the epistles is addressed "to the church that is in God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ"; and John prays, "Grace be unto you and peace, from him who is, and who was, and who is to come, and from the seven spirits which are before his throne, and from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth." And thus in a blessed order, suitable to each, all the persons of the Godhead save us. By the Father we are "predestinated to the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ to himself," and are "elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father," who also "justifieth us from all things from which we could not be justified by the Law of Moses," and who holds safe in his almighty grasp all the sheep of Christ, so that none is able to pluck them out of the Father's hand." Redeemed also and reconciled by the Son, and quickened, sanctified, and perfected by the Spirit, we are saved with a glorious, everlasting salvation; and the head of gold, concentrating into one the whole blessed energies of the adorable trinity on our behalf, nothing less than God can ever endanger our safety, or despoil us of that new birthright bestowed on us, by which we become "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ." And thus it is a matter of unceasing good and enjoyment that we can say of our Beloved, "His head is the most fine gold."

How truly does this feature of the Beloved thus

contemplated impress us with the truth, "To you who believe he is precious"; and how foolish and irrational it is to treat himself or his glorious gospel with indifference, neglect, or contempt! How ready men are to catch at a little of the precious metal of earth, the gold that perisheth! how infinitely more valuable is the gold tried in the fire, that makes truly rich!

Moreover, in the light of this passage and the view it gives of the Beloved, how safe and secure the work of our salvation must be, since the whole Godhead is engaged in its full accomplishment and ultimate perfection, so that we can delightfully say, "If God be for us, who can be against us?"

## LECTURE VI.

### OUR LORD'S BUSHY RAVEN LOCKS.

"His locks are bushy and black as a raven."—SONG v. 11.

CONSIDERING that, in our present life and state, we can only conceive of divine things when expressed in language borrowed from sensible objects, and that our whole mode of thought and expression about the spiritual must be to a great extent metaphorical, it is easy to perceive how easily we may fail rightly to understand or interpret many passages in the divine word. If we fail to apprehend the true nature and meaning of the figure employed, we cannot well get at the spiritual thought that underlies it, or conceive accurately of what it was intended to express. A wise rule to guide us, we think, is that suggested by a judicious expositor, "*Be natural, consistent, and evangelical.*" And perhaps we could hardly point to another expression, in all this allegorical poem, in which the need and importance of some such rule is more obvious than in the words now to be considered, "His locks are bushy and black as a raven."

It may help us the better to understand the expression to remember that the locks, or hair, are often referred to as not only part of our bodily system, but their condition is often noticed as indicative of something about the state of the individual,

as when Solomon declares, "The hoary head is a crown of glory, when found in the way of righteousness," or as when Hosea says of Ephraim, "Gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not" (vii. 9). Therefore, when both the hair and its condition are here used as descriptive particulars to set forth some aspects of Christ and his work, it will be necessary to inquire both what is meant metaphorically and spiritually by "his locks," and also what is meant by the conditions that characterize these locks; namely, "bushy and black as a raven."

First. What are we to understand by "his locks," when the term is applied to our Beloved? The answers that have been given by expositors to that question have not only been very numerous but very diverse. One of the most recent and most eloquent expositors of the song, as he makes the Beloved's head to be his divinity, thinks we should regard his locks as his humanity. Others suppose that the expression means the innumerable multitudes of believers which grow upon Christ as their head; and others still, that by his locks are meant the dispensations of his kingly office which he administers as a head. Now we think that much that has been written on the subject has failed to bring out the full meaning of the figure, because of not taking the correct view of what the *head* of the Beloved was intended to express. We have shown that by the head of Christ is not meant his deity, nor his mediatorial headship, but God himself, as the apostle states, "The head of Christ is God." Now, interpreting the passage from that standpoint, we must come, naturally and consistently, to the conclusion that his locks mean all that

grows and proceeds from the head,—that is, from the economical relation the Mediator sustains to the Father. Accordingly, in every case in which our Lord is described by hair or locks, the connection of these with the head is never overlooked. Thus, “*My head* is filled with dew, and *my locks* with the drops of the night”; “*His head* is as the most fine gold, *his locks* are bushy and black as the raven.” So Daniel vii. 9, “Whose garments were white as snow and the *hair of his head* like the pure wool”; and in our Lord's post-exaltation appearance, “*His head and his hairs* were white like wool, as white as snow” (Rev. i. 14). Now this connecting of the hair always with the head, by a very natural figure, points to the locks of the Beloved as consisting of all that springs out of, or grows from his relation to God,—all that has its source, spring, progress, development, and full accomplishment in the mediatorial arrangements of the covenant of grace. And considering that everything necessary to the full accomplishment of our salvation springs from this source, how extensive must be the import of the figure, “his locks.”

For example, springing from his mediatorial relation in covenant to the Father are all those gracious purposes that underlie the whole work of our salvation, and the gradual revelation and manifestation of these to the inhabitants of earth and heaven. Or as Paul expresses it, “And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ; to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly

places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, according to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Ephes. iii. 9-11). It is noticeable that in these verses the purpose of God is the spring and source of everything brought into existence, and that this purpose is "in Christ Jesus our Lord." It has been well said that "the eternal purpose of God in Christ is the strap that binds firmly together, in one sheaf, all divine providences and dispensations, and gives unity of design and operation to all that God accomplishes." Moreover, springing from the same source is the delegated power by the Father to the Son to carry into effect his plans and purposes. Therefore it is the Lamb that opens the sealed book of the divine purposes, and to Him is "given all power in heaven and earth" to execute them to the glory of God. In the same way, all those manifestations and revelations of the Father's nature and character we have in Christ spring from meditorial relation of Father and Son,— "to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." So also is our calling, gathering in and final perfection in holiness and bliss, "according as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." In the same way all his power of administration,—in crushing the enemy, and bruising the head of the serpent, to judge the nations, and finally to reward or punish all men according to their works,—all these are from his relation in covenant to supreme Godhead, and, with many others that might be mentioned, springing from his divine head, may be fairly understood as

meant by "his locks that are bushy and black as a raven."

Again, in harmony with the above views of what is meant by the hair or locks of the Beloved, there is also implied in this figurative language the idea of what his head is to him by way of glory and beauty.

Abundance or wealth of hair has always been regarded as eminently an element in personal beauty, as its scarcity, or want of it, or baldness, has always been a sign of weakness, sickness, or mourning. We know how important a feature of Absalom's beauty was his wondrous wealth of hair (2 Sam. xiv. 25), and how in the case of Samson it was the sign and figure of amazing bodily strength, and how Paul makes it one of the richest ornaments of woman (1 Cor. xi. 15). On the contrary, how often, in denouncing judgment on transgressors and in describing their misery and disgrace, is the want of the hair or baldness used as a figurative way of expressing various forms of evil and suffering. Thus of Moab it is predicted, "On all their heads shall be baldness, and every beard cut off" (Is. xv. 2). And of Israel's coming calamities, "Make thee bald, and poll thee for thy delicate children; enlarge thy baldness as the eagle; for they are gone into captivity from thee" (Mic. i. 16). Want of hair thus became a figure of misery, wretchedness, and contempt, so that plucking off the hair was the sign of the most frenzied distress, and the most contemptuous and insulting language that used by the children of Bethel to the prophet Elisha, "Go up, thou bald head! go up, thou bald head!" (2 Kings ii. 23).

Now, as the things here uttered by the spouse in



praise of her Beloved were intended to set forth his loveliness and beauty, we would naturally expect abundance of hair to be one feature that would be used for that purpose, as it is used by Daniel and John in passages to which we have already referred, and also as the opposite is used to describe the depth of his humiliation, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair. I hid not my face from shame and spitting" (Is. l. 6), indicating how the relation he claimed to God as his Father was rejected and dishonored by his condemnation and execution as a malefactor. Now, in full harmony with the figure thus understood, we have the Beloved often represented as receiving his glory and beauty as a mediator from his relation to God, his head. Thus he himself declares: "His glory is great in thy salvation: honor and majesty hast thou laid upon him. For thou hast made him most blessed forever: thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance" (Ps. xxi. 5). So also as the last Adam it is said, "For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honor" (Ps. viii. 5). In the same line of thought, our Lord himself speaks of "the glory which thou hast given me," and prays, "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" (John xvii. 5). Some have explained the expression, "The glory which I had with thee before the world was," as the glory of his Deity, or essential glory, which, they say, was laid aside during his humiliation, to be resumed again, and which he asked that soon he might enjoy again. But the

passage can properly bear no such interpretation. The glory of the divine nature could not be laid aside, nor could he be divested, even for a moment, of his deity; and therefore, even when he was on earth, he is described as "the Son who is in the bosom of the Father," which certainly would imply something very different from "stripping himself of his glory," as some express it. The key to the true meaning of the passage is to be found in the words, "*with thine own self.*" And now, O Father, glorify thou me "*with thine own self.*" In essential glory, all the divine persons are equal; but in the mediatorial economy the Father, representing the Godhead, and as such the Redeemer's head, is *himself* the glory of Christ; and this glory was promised and stipulated as his reward, "or the joy set before him," "before the world was," or from all eternity in the everlasting covenant, when "his delights were with the sons of men." Now, just as the apostle speaks of "the grace given us in Christ before the world began, which in due time is actually imparted, and becomes operative in our sanctification and glorification," so he here prays that the glory, stipulated as the reward of his obedience, may in due time be imparted by the Father whom he served, and thus all that honor, joy, glory, and blessedness that, "set before him," enabled him to "endure the cross, despising the shame," might, by the deed of the Father, be fully realized.

But, still further, his hair or locks are, no doubt, intended figuratively to express his universal headship, bestowed on him by the Father, with all the communications of grace and power that make it

effectual. "But," says the apostle, "I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor. xi. 3). While God is the head of Christ, Christ has a headship over *every man*; and his headship grows out of the headship of the Father. By the will, purpose, and act of God, this headship is over "*every man*," and not only over rational, intelligent beings on earth, but "all things are put under him." And, though "*we see not yet* all things put under him," yet we know the divine decree has been declared. Voluntary subjection is demanded, and to resist him exposes to the most fearful punishment. But this headship of Christ is not an empty honor. It is not merely a proclamation and a threat. It is an operative, efficient headship, that has a purpose to accomplish, "For he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." For this end, to our Lord has been given abundance of energy and power, vitality and vigor, such as are indicated by a copious supply of hair on the head; and thus the success of his mediatorial work is abundantly secured. He has power both judicial and executive, as he says to the Jews, "And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man" (John v. 27). How this transference of power, judicial and executive, grows out of the relation of the Lamb slain to Him that is on the throne, the whole Apocalypse was designed to illustrate. The book of the divine purposes is in the hand of him on the throne, and out of his hand it is taken by him who "is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world," and also "the lion of the tribe of Judah,"

and taken not only to break the seals, and unfold its contents, but to administer the dispensations and execute the judgments therein contained. Therefore he is seen going forth conquering and to conquer, dispatching his agents in various ways to promote the ends of his government and accomplish his purposes, laying all nature under contribution in the interest of his kingdom, and the subduing of his enemies, and by his ambassadors of peace and the power of his spirit effectually carrying into effect all that was foretold of the glory of his reign, and the blessedness of his people. Universal right, and "all power." meet in him in what he is by the Father's will and act, and these springing from his head set forth with wonderful fulness that "his head is as the most fine gold and his locks bushy and black as the raven."

Secondly. Another point to be considered in this description of the Beloved is the condition and color of his locks. It is observable that among men the color and appearance of the hair are often referred to as indicative of character, a means of recognizing and identifying individuals, and as, to some extent, an element that should regulate our feelings and regards towards them. And the same thing often appears in the divine word. Thus, God commands by Moses, "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head," and, "The hoary head is a crown of glory, if it be found in the way of righteousness." In the same way, great abundance of hair is mentioned as an element in Absalom's beauty, and the seven locks of his head were connected with Samson's great strength. Now two marked conditions of the Beloved's locks are specified,— "bushy, and black as a raven."

1. His locks are said to be "bushy." The word here rendered bushy is supposed by some to have its root from a word signifying to hang out and become pendulous, waving like the leaves of the palm-tree. Others more satisfactorily derive it from a word signifying to heap, or gather into heaps, and it will thus mean his locks are heaped up in heaps all around his head, implying perhaps crisp or curled, in contrast, as a man's locks, with the long, flowing, extended locks of the spouse, as a woman (chap. iv. 1). Now the term "bushy," thus understood, as applied to the locks of our Beloved, evidently meant, first, the great perfection in which he possessed all given him by his Father, as his head, to the accomplishing of the work which as Mediator he had undertaken. As already noticed, great abundance of hair, heaps of it, all crisped and curled, has always been regarded as indicative of vigorous health and physical strength. The seven locks of his head—seven being the number of perfection and implying great abundance—was thus a natural figure of the great strength of Samson; and Absalom's locks must have been in wonderful profusion when the growth of one year weighed two hundred shekels,—nearly six pounds avoirdupois (2 Sam. xiv. 26). The bunchy, curling tendency of hair, by which it is raised up in heaps about the head, instead of hanging straight down, has also always been regarded as an outward manifestation of bodily strength, so that, as referred to above, the description of the Beloved's locks is in striking contrast to that of his bride. She is represented as having long flowing tresses or ringlets, falling down on her neck and shoulders, through

which, as a setting to the face, her eyes looked forth. "Thou hast dove's eyes within thy locks, thy hair is as a flock of goats that appear from Mount Gilead" (chap. iv. 1). This was to her honor and glory as a woman, whereas he, in all the power of a magnificent manhood, is set forth by the massive locks that surrounded his head, and is seen "travelling in the greatness of his strength, mighty to save." Moreover, his locks, being bushy and very massive, is intended to indicate that this all-sufficient strength and power would so enter into and characterize everything to be accomplished that there would be no possibility of weakness or failure. Those subjected to the tyrannical treatment of cruel conquerors, helpless in the hands of malignant enemies, are often described by a figure taken from despoiling or destroying the hair. Thus Isaiah threatens Israel, "In the same day shall the Lord shave with a razor that is hired . . . the head and hair of the feet, and it shall also consume the beard" (vii. 20). And so, in punishing some of his incorrigible countrymen, Nehemiah says, "I smote them and plucked off their hair" (Neh. xiii. 25). So that loss of hair is often put for incompetence and failure, suffering and disappointment. But the figure implies that no such failure shall characterize his work whose "locks are bushy." As, however, it may here occur to some that such interpretation of this figure is hardly consistent with the statement of Paul that our Lord was "crucified through weakness" (2 Cor. xiii. 4), it may be necessary to explain that the weakness through which he was crucified was voluntary weakness,—a weakness of passivity or submitting to endure what he had voluntarily

covenanted to endure. But it was "the greatness of strength" in him to be able to fulfil those conditions and submit to such sufferings, when he could have summoned legions of angels to deliver him from the hands of his enemies. True, their carnal minds could not see the need of Almighty strength to endure what God himself inflicted, and therefore were ready to ascribe his being on the cross to weakness and want of power; and therefore exclaimed, "He saved others, himself he cannot save." But they did not know that what bound him over to that shameful and accursed form of death was his own voluntary engagement in covenant, and that, because his "love was stronger than death," he became weak in the sense of being unable consistently to draw back from what was necessary to save the objects of his love. Besides, we should not forget that it was in that hour of apparent voluntary weakness that he showed the greatest power in defeating the enemies of our salvation, and gave the deadliest blow to the serpent's head, "spoiling principalities and powers, and making a show of them openly, triumphing over them in the cross." His weakness, like Samson's, inflicted the most telling blow on the enemies of God, and was a striking proof that the omnipotence wherewith he was girded could not fail or come short of any gracious purpose he had in view.

And, still further, the locks of the Beloved being bushy may have reference anti-typically to his visible subjection to God as his head, as set forth of old by the Nazarite's vow of consecration to God. The philosophy, or, rather, the *rationale* of the law of the Nazarite's vow (Num. vi. 1-21), is perhaps still a

little obscure; but connecting it with what is here said of the locks of the Beloved will help us, in some respects, to understand the reason of the institution. In carrying out the service required by the law of the Nazarite, the state and condition in which he was to keep his locks or hair was a matter of special enactment. Not only was he to abstain from partaking of the fruit of the vine in any form,—probably intended to teach that in the higher state of spiritual life, and communion with and consecration to God, our fleshly appetites and desires are to be rigidly mortified,—and also not to come near any one dead, even though father or mother, brother or sister,—probably to show that the claims of God are always prior to those of any being, however dear,—but besides, the Nazarite was to allow his hair to grow during the whole period of his separation, and at the end of that period was to have his head shaven and was to put “the hair of the head of his separation in the fire which was under the sacrifice of the peace offerings” (vi. 18). Some Nazarites might be perpetually so, as Samson, Samuel, John the Baptist; others only for a time, as was the case with the great majority of those who came under the vow. Still, the institution seems to have been largely kept up throughout the old dispensation; and therefore, during the last days of the Jewish commonwealth, even during the siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, Jeremiah declares, “Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire” (Lam. iv. 7). In New Testament times, also, besides John the Baptist, it is said of Paul, “having shorn his head at Cenchrea,



for he had a vow." Besides, on his return from his third missionary tour, we find him advised by James and the Elders, "We have four men who have a vow on them; them take, and purify thyself with them, and be at charges with them, that they may shave their heads," etc. (Acts xxi. 24). Now as far as the law of the Nazarite had reference to the hair, it evidently was based upon the natural principle that long, unshorn hair was a mark of subjection to a head. And on that account the woman was to have long hair as a covering to denote her subjection to her husband or her head. Accordingly, the spouse is praised for her hair, covering her temples, fringing her eyes, and covering her whole head, like a large flock of goats browsing on the sides and summit of Mount Gilead. Now whilst in all earthly relations man is the head, yet in spiritual relation we have a divine head, and extraordinary devotion and subjection to him was beautifully set forth by a symbol taken from human life. The Nazarite therefore took in relation to God the wife position, by letting his hair grow long, and indicated that his whole life should be one of consecration and obedience, as due from a faithful spouse to her husband. The burning of the hair at the end of the period on the altar, under the peace offering, showed that the service was accepted, and that he was in peace and fellowship with God. Now Paul says, "But I would have you know that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God." Now if it were proper that the subjection of the woman to the man as her head was to have an outward token in the state of her hair, and if in the fig-

urative dispensation something similar manifested our subjection to Christ as our head and Lord, may we not expect that something bearing the same significance would mark the subjection of Christ to his head, even to God. This subjection to God on the part of the Mediator is found everywhere in the inspired word, running through the whole story of his humiliation and exaltation, and everywhere presenting him as one "who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house." A rather curious illustration of the same idea is also to be found in Ezekiel's description of the ministers of the new dispensation. Among other things alleged of them, it is said, "Neither shall they shave their heads, nor suffer their locks to grow long: they shall only poll their heads." This precisely corresponds to what is said of the locks of the Beloved by the spouse in the passage before us. His hair is not hanging down in tresses, nor close shaven, having the appearance of baldness, but in a condition betwixt the two extremes, showing at the same time his subjection to God and headship over his church, and over all things for her sake.

2. In further describing the locks of the Beloved, they are said to be "black as the raven." It is interesting to note how natural the figures are in this poem. In childhood and early life, the color of the hair is comparatively light; but it deepens as the subject advances to manhood, at which time it usually attains its deepest shade, and, like the flowers, becomes most perfect and brilliant in the summer of life. After that, however, we have passed the meridian of life, and begun to travel down the other side, a

noted change takes place, and locks that were once black as the raven gradually become white as the snow. The physical law of this change it is not necessary to explain, as every one knows that it is the result of declining vitality, or loss of constitutional vigor. The time of darkest locks is, therefore, the period of life's highest animal perfection, the mid-summer of our physical function, during which personal beauty and physical vigor and vitality reach the highest point of our earthly existence. But as in nature, autumn has advantages over summer in the fruits of earth being then more largely matured, ripened, and gathered, so that of this season, above all others, it is true, "Thou crownest the year with thy goodness"; and we become richer by the wealth of a whole season. So it is in human life. Its autumn is its richest and best part, when the fruits of knowledge, wisdom, experience, and more advanced holiness and Christian attainments are more mature and practically better than all physical endowments. As autumn's crown of rich luscious fruit is more valuable than the spring or summer crown of showy, gaudy flowers, however pleasing to the eyes, so the hoary head, found in the way of righteousness, is a more valuable crown of glory than anything we can reach by bodily power or achievements.

Now, in keeping with these facts, experienced daily in life, the Beloved is represented at different times as having his locks, not only different in color, but of colors the very opposite of each other. Thus, while in this song his locks are "*black* as a raven," he is said by John to have had "his head and his hair white like wool, as white as snow"; and of "the An-

cient of Days," as seen by Daniel, "And I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit, whose garment was white as snow and the hair of his head like the pure wool." Whether with some we understand by "the Ancient of Days" here God the Father as the covenant head of Christ, or with others that it is only another name for the Beloved himself, it will not affect the meaning of the figure that his hair is white as pure wool. In its natural application, the figure is taken, not only to indicate different stages of human life, but also fitness and attainments in relation to any work to be accomplished. Black hair is indicative of the period of youth, with all its strength, energy, and vigor to accomplish the tasks of life; and therefore John says, "I have written unto you young men because ye are strong" (1 John ii. 14). Then white hair or locks, though in our present state indicative of some diminution of physical strength, yet figuratively they express rich, high attainments, the fruits of experience. We have, therefore, Elihu addressing Job and his friends: "I am young, and ye are very old: wherefore I was afraid, and durst not show you my opinion. I said days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom" (Job xxxii. 6, 7).

In the application of the figure to our Beloved, therefore, it should be carefully noted that the contrast betwixt his hair being at one time black and again white as snow does not imply that in his case a period of youth and vigor was to be followed by weakness and decay, but that, as seen in different parts and stages of his mediatorial work, both aspects of his hair figuratively set forth his perfect fit-

ness to accomplish all that he has undertaken. Thus his locks, being black, indicates his perpetual youth and "everlasting strength," and his perfect ability to save to the very uttermost. His being put to death in the very prime of life may point to the same thing; and throughout his whole undertaking he is seen "travelling in the greatness of his strength, mighty to save." Like the seven locks of Samson's head, the relation of the Beloved to God as his head is the assurance of power to overcome all obstacles and perfect all promises. Again, his hair being elsewhere seen as white shows everlasting strength in union with the perfection of knowledge, wisdom, and counsel. Therefore, he says of himself, "Counsel is mine and sound wisdom; I am understanding, I have strength" (Prov. viii. 14), thus combining what is meant figuratively by both colors of his locks. "In him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"; and he is the "everlasting Father," who could say, "Before Abraham was, I am," "the king eternal, immortal, and invisible, the only wise God and our Saviour," venerable for being and length of days, while powerful in everlasting strength that knows no decay. Thus we have another example of those strange combinations and contrasts in the character of our Beloved, suggested by another compound figure already considered, "My beloved is white and ruddy," and which, while showing qualities diametrically opposite, all harmonize in him who is "fairer than the sons of men."

And in connection with the above it may be mentioned that in the twofold color of his hair may also be set forth the vigor of his administration, combined

with its judicial purity. From his head he hath "received power to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man." He judges individuals, churches, and nations; and, while clothed in a "vesture dipped in blood," he goeth forth "on a white horse," and the armies in heaven follow him on white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." With Abraham, as he pleaded for Sodom, we can say, "Shall not the judge of the whole earth do right?" While from his throne there issues a fiery stream, how blessed it is to know that he who is on the throne has his garments white as snow, and the hair of his head as pure wool!

Who would not practically feel from such views of our Lord and Redeemer how perfect he is in all his relations both to God and to man? He has no dark side, no weak spot, nor anything to make him less the great object of our confidence,—nay, the very figures of earth that would in us suggest weakness and imperfection, when applied to him, show wisdom and everlasting strength.

And, again, how worthy our Beloved of a place always in our hearts, and that not only to receive the full measure of our love, but our fullest confidence and trust in all his dealings both with ourselves and others.

## LECTURE VII.

### OUR LORD'S DOVE'S EYES.

"His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set."—SONG v. 12.

THE object of applying figures from earth to God, or to Christ as Mediator, seems to be twofold; first, more fully to reveal their nature and character, and thus make them known; and secondly, to cheer and comfort us by showing what they are to us in gracious relation. Now, in this fifth particular, in the description of the Beloved, we have both of these ends served, especially the latter, and that perhaps in the Scriptures generally, with a fulness and power greater than any figure we employ. In the anthropomorphic language in which God is set forth to our apprehension in his Word, there are none of the parts of the human body—with the exception perhaps of the ear—so frequently employed as the eye, both to suggest thoughts of his perfections, and to work in us a large measure of comfort and joy in the changing circumstances in life through which we pass. To realize this we require to know what is meant by the "eyes" of the Beloved, and what is implied in their description "as doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk, and fitly set."

First. What is meant by the eyes of the Beloved?

The eye is an organ that stands at the head of all

our perceptive powers, and almost infinitely surpasses them all in the extent and range of its operations. And it is a curious fact that there is in this respect a regular gradation in the extent to which our perceptive organs can act upon their objects. The sense of smallest range is taste, which must be in closest contact with its object to be affected by it at all. Then follows touch, which can reach out, and, in a considerably large sphere, lay hold of the objects it is fitted to apprehend. Then follows smell, with a greatly enlarged field of operation, as it scents the effluvium from many objects all around. Then comes hearing, the attainment of the ear, which can receive impressions from objects many miles away. But when we come to the eye, who can tell the sphere of its operations? Even unaided, it ranges over continent and ocean, comprehends the loftiest mountains in its grasp, and soars away to heaven itself, and roams from star to star, and from world to world, in almost infinite power of perception. And aided by the help furnished by science, it can still more extensively and effectively perform its wondrous feats. Now, as by the operations of this most wonderful organ the mind is not only kept actively exercised, but its stock of knowledge and experience greatly enlarged, the eye becomes a figure of certain mental states, so that the word, either in the singular or plural, whether describing something about God or about man, is to be understood in a purely intellectual sense. A consideration of a few passages, in which the eye is figuratively used, will show that, in application to the Beloved, it means chiefly two things: —



1. His perfect, yea, infinite, knowledge of us and of all things, circumstances and conditions, affecting our safety and happiness.

Among men, the eye is often put for the understanding or judgment, so that we speak of persons as seeing or not seeing a point, in a purely mental sense. In that sense, also, the word "eye," singular and plural, as well as its correlatives, "to see," "to look," etc., is often used. Thus, "The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes" (Ps. xix. 8). "A gift blindeth the eye," that is, prevents its seeing. So the inability of the natural man to understand spiritual things, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard" (1 Cor. ii. 9), and "The eyes of your understanding being enlightened" (Eph. i. 18). Now, in this sense, eyes are often predicated of God as, "His eyes behold, his eyelids try the children of men" (Ps. xi. 4), and "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth" (2 Chron. xvi. 9), and as when it is declared impossible to bide anything from God, as "The darkness hideth not from thee" (Ps. cxxxix. 12), or "For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings" (Prov. v. 21). In this sense, also, of perfect, infinite knowledge, eyes are predicated of the Beloved. Thus, speaking of him as our judge, Paul declares, "But all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. iv. 13); and addressing the churches of Asia, he prefaces what he has to say to each by the impressive statement, "I know thy works." And in striking harmony with this claim was the wonderful knowledge of heart, character, and life of those with whom he came into

contact, he exhibited when on earth, verifying John's statement, "But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man, for he knew what was in man" (John ii. 24). Accordingly, after his resurrection, he accepted Peter's confession, "Thou who knowest all things knowest that I love thee" (John xxi.). Therefore he himself claims as Mediator to be possessed of all the knowledge that belongs to God, "For the Father loveth the Son and sheweth him all things which himself doeth" (John v. 20). It is true—and a singular fact it is—that on one occasion he seems to disclaim equal knowledge with the Father, at least in one particular, namely, the day of his second coming and of the end of the world. "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father" (Mark xiii. 32). But, as shown in a former lecture, he had minutely foretold every circumstance about that closing event in the history of the world, and it would be most surprising if, knowing everything else about that day, he should, as to the time of its occurrence, be totally ignorant. We find him often, as the great prophet, revealing the future, opening the seals, commissioning angels, and often informing us of the exact length of time a judgment shall continue, and the period at which an event shall happen. The expression, therefore, can mean nothing more than that, in subjection to God as his covenant head, the exact date at which the world is to be ultimately judged was not committed to him to make known, that all might be watching and prepared to meet the

Lord at his coming. It should be remembered, also, that he withheld the knowledge of other things from his disciples that they were anxious to know, as when after his resurrection they asked him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the Kingdom of Israel?" And he replied, "It is not for you to know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power" (Acts i. 6, 7).

But that our Lord is infinite in knowledge and wisdom is apparent from the fact that he now administers the covenant of grace, is making continual intercession for us, and will at the last day be our judge, and that of all mankind; any one, or all of which, requires absolute omniscience, as well as other divine perfections which he now exercises in carrying out to completion the great work of our salvation. And, therefore, among the various figures characterizing the eyes of our Lord, one of the most remarkable is by John, "And I beheld, and lo, in the midst of the throne, and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders stood a lamb as it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God, sent forth into all the earth" (Rev. v. 6). Seven the number of perfection, horns the emblem of power, seven spirits the perfection of energy in everything he was mediatorially to accomplish, and these his eyes, his infinite knowledge and wisdom by which he superintends, directs, manages, and makes successful the great scheme of covenant grace and mercy. Nor was this the first time such a magnificent illustration of the Beloved's eyes was given. Zechariah, when announcing his coming under the title of "the Branch," declares to Joshua the high

priest, and to Zerubbabel the civil governor, to encourage them in the work of building the second temple, "For, behold, I will bring forth my servant the Branch." "For, behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes" (Zech. iii. 9), and in the following chapter these seven eyes are said to be with Zerubbabel as he held the plummet in his hand, and are declared to be "the eyes of the Lord, which run to and fro through the whole earth" (chap. iv. 10). Thus these noble workers for God, as they laid the foundation stone of their new temple, were taught that the true foundation stone was not yet brought forth, and that when it was, and became the branch of the Lord, it was by his knowledge, wisdom, and divine management — the seven eyes on the stone — that the true temple was to be built and at length completed with shoutings of grace, grace unto it.

2. By the eyes of the Beloved are also meant his desire for, delight in, and care of his own redeemed people. Among men the term for such an organ as the eye, ear or hand, is often descriptive of some bodily power we possess, and that we are capable of putting forth; and as it has been shown, it is so understood and employed figuratively, to express some power or quality, mental and spiritual, with which we are endowed. Now, while in harmony with this principle, we have found the eyes in Scripture figuratively meaning knowledge, wisdom, experience, skill, or the state of the understanding and judgment, it will be often found that they express desires, passions, emotions, and marked regard and feeling in relation to the object to which they are directed.

Thus Solomon uses the word in the sense of a covetous disposition, "There is one alone, and there is not a second, yea, he hath neither child nor brother, yet there is no end of all his labor, neither is his eye satisfied with riches," etc. (Eccles. iv. 8). Our Lord puts it for any sinful propensity. "If thy right eye offend thee," and Jude for gloating lust, "Having eyes full of adultery." Desire, expectation, hope, are all expressed by the word, as when Bathsheba says to David, "And now, my Lord, O King, the eyes of all Israel are upon thee, that thou shouldst tell them who should sit on thy throne after thee" (1 Kings i. 20). And thus as the human eye sparkles in pleasure, grows dim in sorrow, watches in expectation, longs in desire, melts in affection, beams in joy, becomes a fountain in grief, and a guardian in danger, so it has become a figure of very wide application, an emblem of many of the mental conditions, feelings and sympathies to which we are subject. Now, as applied to God, and especially to the Beloved, the eye is often a figurative expression of the manner in which he regards both his people and their enemies, and how he manifests these regards towards the one and the other. To the one his eye expresses affection, kindness, care, unerring guidance, gracious knowledge and consideration of all their circumstances; whilst to the other it is "a flame of fire," not only all-seeing or omniscient so that no wickedness or crime can escape detection, but consuming and destructive as it watches the persistent workers of iniquity. Thus it expresses pity and compassion towards Israel, "Nevertheless, mine eye spared them from destroying them, neither did I make an end of

them in the wilderness" (Ezek. xx. 17). So Moses assures the people of the land they were about to possess, "A land which the Lord thy God careth for; the eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year, even to the end of the year" (Deut. xi. 12); and not only care, but protection and support are expressed by the eyes, as the prophet assures Asa, "For the eyes of the Lord run throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him" (2 Chron. xvi. 9). The Psalms likewise abound in examples of this figure as applied to God. Thus, "Behold the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy" (xxxiii. 18), "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry" (xxxiv. 15), "I said in my heart, I am cut off from thine eyes" — his gracious cognizance and care — (xxxi. 22); so of divine guidance, "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go, I will guide thee with mine eye" (xxxii. 8). To the same effect are the words of Solomon concerning the divine regards towards the temple he had built: "That thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there," (1 Kings viii. 29). Of Nehemiah also, "Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant" (i. 6); and Ezra's statement, "But the eye of their God was upon the elders of the Jews, that they could not cause them to cease, till the matter came to Darius" (Ezra v. 5). But not only his gracious regards towards his people are thus set forth by a

figure taken from the eye, but, on the contrary, his feelings towards his impenitent enemies are often similarly expressed. Thus, "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity," (Hab. i. 13), and, "For his eyes are on all the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings. There is no darkness, nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves" (Job xxxiv. 21, 22); "But thine eyes are upon the haughty, that thou mayest bring them down" (2 Sam. xxii. 28). Of all these passages it may be safely said that they all belong to the Beloved, as he is contemplated in his dealings with them over whom he now graciously and providentially rules, and whom he at last will impartially judge. And it may be added that this twofold interpretation of the Beloved's eyes is in full accord with the only other reference to his eyes in this Song, "Then was I in his eyes as one that found favor" (viii. 10), that is, in his knowledge and gracious regards.

Secondly. What is meant by the figurative description of the Beloved's eyes: "Like the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with milk and fitly set."

As already noticed, this is the only passage in the Song in which there is reference to the eyes of the Redeemer, with the exception of chap. viii. 10, though in many other parts of Scripture they are not only referred to, but figuratively described. Thus Daniel says, "And his eyes as lamps of fire" (x. 6), probably referring to the light and guidance we get from the face of Christ. Again, John says, "His eyes were as a flame of fire" (Rev. i. 14), a constant threat of

danger and destruction to the workers of iniquity. As to the description, "His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters," it is noticeable that the second time the word "eyes" occurs, immediately before doves, it is supplied in italics by the translators, and should not, as many think, be in the text at all. Therefore, in the revised version we have it literally: "His eyes are like doves beside the water brooks." The difference is simply this, that in the authorized version the comparison is between the eyes of doves and our Lord's eyes; whereas, in the revised version it is betwixt our Lord's eyes and the doves themselves, as seen in connection with certain surroundings. But, in either way of reading the text, the comparison is both suggestive and instructive.

In the first sense in which the comparison is betwixt our Lord's eyes and the eyes of doves, it is true that doves' eyes, among Orientals, like the eyes of the gazelle, were often used as a poetical descriptive figure for what was beautiful, praiseworthy, and calculated to excite admiration. Thus, two of the descriptions of the eyes of the spouse in this poem are taken from the eyes of the dove. Thus, "Behold thou art fair, thou hast dove's eyes" (i. 15), and "Behold thou art fair, my love, behold thou art fair; thou hast dove's eyes within thy locks" (iv. 1). Now, as the basis of figurative description, the dove's eyes were taken by Oriental poets as emblems of the *beautiful*, the *penetrating*, the *loving*, and the *chaste*; all of which may be truly predicated of the eyes of our Lord. His knowledge, wisdom, care, sympathy, interest, and abiding presence, are things more beau-



tiful and delightful to the spiritual mind than anything that falls within our experience. Then, for perspicuity and power of penetration, how glorious are our Lord's eyes! Nothing dark or hidden to him, "whose eyes are lamps of fire." And how loving those looks of compassion, pity, tenderness, and loving kindness, that made him weep at the tale of woe by the sisters of Bethany, and "groan in the spirit" as he followed them to the grave of a beloved brother! How loving, even when scourging! "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten." Moreover, how chaste, faithful, and pure his eyes are! faithful to all his covenant engagements, faithful in all the relations into which he has taken us, faithful in all the promises he has made us, faithful in rebuking his Church and people for all idolatrous practices or breaches of covenant; in everything, "the faithful and true witness." In all these respects his eyes are pre-eminently as dove's eyes; and the figure is not only true, but brings much comfort, joy, and peace.

But, on the other hand, we may, with many of our best expositors, make the comparison with the doves themselves; and thus, too, the figure will be full of meaning. In Palestine, the dove existed in great numbers, and, being a clean animal among the birds, was offered in sacrifice to God. In the warm months of summer, doves collected often in vast numbers by the brooks, both to drink and to bathe; and not only often waded into the water, but threw up the water over their bodies with their wings, so as to be enveloped in clouds of white spray. And this last particular is thought to be referred to in the expression, "washed with milk." It is thus expressed

by a popular expositor: "It is the bright water trickling over the dove, as it bathes itself in the river, and sparkling with shining whiteness." The comparison being with doves, thus seen by the brooks evidently suggests that all indicated by the Beloved's eyes — his knowledge, wisdom, pity, care, guidance, etc.— are all by the abundance above measure of the Spirit of God put upon him. While as the Son of God he was possessed of every divine attribute, so that "in him dwelleth the fulness of the Godhead bodily," yet all mediatorial qualifications, and all exercise of grace, wisdom, love, and power, were by the infinite fulness of that Spirit which John, at his baptism, saw descending from heaven as a dove, and abiding upon him. All his human powers and all his official acts were by that Spirit, and therefore the text of his first sermon in Nazareth: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke iv. 18). And thus when on earth he himself spake of the power he possessed to cast out devils: "But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you" (Matt. xii. 28). In Luke the expression is, "If I with the finger of God cast out devils" (xi. 20). The Spirit of God was his finger and hand, as well as his eyes, in putting forth and applying his power, as the magicians of Egypt confessed to Pharaoh, when they said of one of the miracles by Moses, "This is the finger of God." And this finger our Lord moved

and actively employed in all the miracles he wrought when on earth, and all the operations he now conducts from heaven. And in beautiful harmony with this are the two passages from Zechariah and the Apocalypse, in which the eyes of our Lord are said to be "the seven spirits of God that run to and fro through the whole earth." In the one case the seven eyes are on the true foundation stone of the temple (Zech. iii. 9), and in the other they are that power by which he opens the sealed book of the divine purposes, and administers the covenant of grace (Rev. v. 6). And at these waters he meets his dove, even the river that makes glad the city of our God, saying, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters!" For "the Spirit and the bride say come; and let him that heareth say come, and let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely (Rev. xxii. 17).

It may be stated, in further illustration of what is said of the Redeemer's eyes, that they are "washed with milk," that in ophthalmia and inflammatory states of the eyes, a lotion of warm milk was at one time considered a most beneficial application, and in many countries still is a favorite remedy. It is said that milk was the chief element in the eye-salve of the ancients. Now milk is figuratively and spiritually put for the Word of God: "As new born babes desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby." And our Lord hath set us a wonderful example of looking at, and seeing everything through; the Word. And so would he have us to do also. Therefore he rebukes the Sadducees: "Ye do err, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of

God," and enjoins, "Search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life, and they are they that testify of me," And practically Paul recommends the same thing, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom." And while pre-eminently it may be said of the Beloved himself, "O Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth?" (Jer. v. 3) it is by teaching and habituating our minds to look at everything through the glass of the Word, that the spirit enlightens the eyes of our understanding, and makes us "light in the Lord."

As to the other characteristic of our Lord's eyes, "fitly set," different translations have been given of the clause, and different views of its spiritual meaning. Some translate, "sitting by full streams," as indicative of the fulness and all-sufficiency of Christ towards his people in the exercise towards them, through the Spirit, of his knowledge, wisdom, and care. Others would prefer to translate, "sitting in fulness," the reference being to the prominence and fulness of the eye of the dove, like a precious stone in its setting or socket, or as the stones in the High Priest's breastplate, which by the Jews were called "stones of fulness." This would express in a lively manner the perfection and pre-eminence of our Lord's wisdom, care, and love, especially in adaptation to the wants, necessities, and interests of his people. "For it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell." "And of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace." And others still prefer the rendering, "sitting *upon* fulness," indicative of our Lord's heart and eyes being upon the fulness of covenant provision for his people's salva-

tion, the fulness of time, when, becoming incarnate, he would enter on his work, the fulness of love and grace, when the gospel would be offered to all nations, the fulness and completeness of his body, the Church, and the "fulness of joy and pleasure at God's right hand forevermore." In any or in all of these senses, however, the clause is true, and full of meaning and comfort, and presents another aspect of our Beloved's glorious character so as to strengthen our confidence and quicken our love and new obedience.

With such views of our Beloved ever before our minds, should we not always rest sweetly on his loving care, and trust his wisdom to choose, and power to perform, all things for us most perfectly? How solemnly and reverentially also should we have respect always for his omniscient character, and remember that "all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." And let our mind be ever looking hopefully to that fulness of joy upon which he is now entered, and in which he has promised that we shall be with him forever. "So we shall be ever with the Lord."

## LECTURE VIII.

### OUR LORD'S AROMATIC AND BRILLIANT CHEEKS.

"His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers."

IN many of her wonderful processes, nature throws a covering of beauty over her most valuable operations that we may derive pleasure as well as profit from the contemplation of her works. Thus, when in tree or plant the fruit germ is formed, and the process of fecundation, without which there could be no fertility realized, is being accomplished, she covers over and masks the whole secret, but all-important, operation with a gaudy display of flowers to please the eye, adding often such an amount of delicious fragrance as to be a luxury and banquet to our sense of smell. And just so it may be said that in these wonderful descriptions of the Beloved, and of what he is secretly doing in and for us continually, the spirit often spreads over the most important parts of our salvation, as gradually effected, the veil of such magnificent imagery as is calculated to bring enjoyment to all our spiritual senses. Of this, the passage under consideration is a striking example. "His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers." In relation to this whole description, some have thought it strange that we should have both *cheeks* and *countenance* separately described, just as we have afterwards *lips* and *mouth*; and some have

even gone so far as to call the language tautological. Such, however, we conceive not to be the case, but that each word has its own distinct idea underlying its use, and that the diversity and fulness of terms are intended to convey a more full and copious view of him whose "greatness is unsearchable" and whose "understanding is infinite." Let us try to ascertain.

First. What is meant by the cheeks of the Beloved?

When a term or description is in any passage entirely metaphorical, it is very helpful to a right understanding of its meaning that we have a number of other passages in which it occurs in the same figurative sense, that by comparing Scripture with Scripture we may more satisfactorily judge what is the idea it is intended to convey. This we have seen when considering in what sense we are to understand the eyes of the Beloved. We get small help, however, from this quarter when endeavoring to ascertain in what sense we are to understand the term, his "cheeks," for the simple reason that the word is only in one other place used in a metaphorical application. It is used in its literal, physical sense in different passages, and in one of these in describing the literal bodily suffering of Christ, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair"; but only once does it occur as a figurative description, when it is said of the spouse, "Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels, and thy neck with chains of gold." As might be expected, therefore, great diversity of opinion prevails among expositors as to how the term should be interpreted in its application to the Beloved. One

expositor who has written learnedly and well on this poem regards the word "cheeks" here as chiefly referring to the hair growing upon the cheeks, or the beard, the product of the cheeks, and so thinks that the cheeks may mean all believers, the graces of the Spirit, and the manliness and courage distinguishing the Beloved, and his presence in ordinances. The Jewish Targums explain the two cheeks here as the tables of the law, ranged in order, as the spice and flower-plant in the gardens of Solomon. Others suppose it to be merely a figure for manly beauty, while others do not seem to have interpreted the word on any definite or intelligible principle. Such fanciful and often unnatural modes of dealing with the figures of this book we deem both unsatisfactory and unsafe, as, instead of being guided by sober criticism, they often are merely the offspring of an unbridled imagination.

In ordinary life, we all understand the two cheeks as forming the greater part of the face, and as that chiefly by which we know, recognize, and identify and describe one another, and also that by which our passions, emotions, and our feelings generally are unmistakably manifested. And thus, as no two faces are exactly alike, so the general appearance of the cheeks becomes in our minds identified with the personal individuality of those we have seen and known, and the principal means of recognizing them, and also what changes in appearance take place as years pass over us, as we press forward from youth to old age. The cheek is the part also that brightens, saddens, burns, pales, blushes, scowls, threatens, under the influence of our feelings, and also that on which



is stamped the results of our course of living, whether benevolent and pure or immoral, intemperate, and vile. All are mirrored there. Now, we think these facts will help us to the true meaning of the term "cheeks," when figuratively used in describing both the Beloved and his sister bride.

1. By the cheeks here is evidently meant character.

Character is what we become, under the influences to which we are subjected in life, and in no way do we more readily judge of what a man is than by the appearance of his face. A poet has well said,—

"Some faces show a date,  
And others tell a tale."

But whether date or tale, the tell-tale face seldom lies in what it has to say about our character and condition. Physically, the appearance of the cheek tells of health and vigor, or of weakness, illness, and disease, and of age and decay. In the same way we expect a man's mental and literary attainments to show on his cheek; and thus we speak of a person having "a fine intellectual face," and countenance of a philosopher, while to distinguish the laggard, the stupid and uncultured, we have only to glance at their face. And so, also, moral character is stamped on the cheek. The bloated sensualist, the suicidal drunkard, the wasted miser, the vain, the haughty and imperious, the cunning, revengeful, and cruel, all soon come on the cheek to give indication of what they really are. In the same way, the virtuous, the benevolent, the contented, the holy and pure are, to some extent, marked by their looks; while

grief, care, labor, oppression, sorrow, and suffering all leave their traces on our cheeks, giving character more or less marked to the observation of others.

Now, it is a somewhat remarkable fact that in the only passage in which the word "character" occurs (Heb. i. 3, Greek), it is used of Christ, the Beloved. Our word "character" is simply a Greek word, imported unchanged into our language, and translated "*express image*" of his person, literally, the "*character of his being or substance.*" By this expression, we are taught to conceive of Christ as one in Nature and being and substance with the Father, possessing all the attributes and perfections of God, and therefore ineffably above angels and every other creature. Oh, what a glorious view of his cheeks, how magnificent a display of his character! And then his character as God, Man, Mediator, unique and unparalleled in the universe of God. And also his moral character, "Holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens." How pure his life, how perfect his doctrine, how instructive and heavenly his conversation, how glorious his works, how unswerving his devotion to God and to the objects of his love! Pilate could find no fault in him; and his master, the emperor Augustus, proposed to make an image of him and place it among the Roman gods in the great Pantheon. Even Jews and infidels acknowledge that his life was pure and without blame, and admit that they cannot account for such a magnificent conception as the life of Jesus is, as set forth in the Gospels, or how into the minds of illiterate men, as the apostles, there should come the power to sketch a character and life absolutely

pure and perfect. It is only as we conceive of him as the "*true light*," that we can have any adequate idea of the absolute perfection of his character, notwithstanding all the temptations that assailed him, and all the ingratitude, contempt, and suffering he endured. Light may shine on the foulest things on earth, the corrupt fountain, the putrid stream, the malodorous scenes of corruption and decay, but itself is never polluted; nor can it be impregnated with the elements of evil. The atmosphere may become pestilential, the water charged with germs of disease and elements of death; but light, glorious light, can never be corrupted, nor lose its pristine purity of character by contact with evil. "For God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all."

2. As the one cheek is character, the other is expression.

A nobleman once stood before the picture of a child that appeared to be laughing with the most joyful glee, when the painter showed him how easy it was to convert one expression of feeling on the face into the very opposite. Taking a piece of chalk, he drew a few lines about the mouth, cheeks, and eyes; and then the laughing child appeared weeping under the influence of the most intense grief. Now, just as easy those sudden changes of countenance, and variable expressions of feeling, that are ever flitting over our cheeks, and telling the nature of the feelings under the influence of which we are for the time. And how truth-telling many of those appearances of the cheeks are! The writer was lately on the avenue a short distance behind a person of small size, and whom he took from his stature to be a

grown lad, returning home from school. But, on passing him and taking a look at his face, it was apparent that he was much older than at first was supposed. His cheeks were those of a man over thirty years of age, while his stature and his appearance otherwise were those of a boy. It was his face that showed the true date; but it is just as true that the face is ready to tell a tale, not only of by-past experiences, but of present feelings; and we only need to read and interpret aright what we notice there to unfold a tale sometimes joyous, but oftener miserable and sad. As we see the cheeks dimpling with smiles or contorted by frowns, hard, rude, and impertinent under the influence of evil, or glowing with benevolence, we can understand how it has passed into a proverb, that for a man to do certain things requires him to have a good deal of cheek, and how character and expression are inseparable.

Now, the Beloved in expression, as well as character, has in all things the pre-eminence. Thus he is the highest expression to man and angels of the glory of God. "We beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth," and, "to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." In him also we have the fullest expression of the love of God, "God commended his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." He is also the fearful expression of the wrath of God, not only enduring it for us, but warning us "to flee from the wrath to come." He is also the most marvellous expression of the grace of God, for "Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." In his holy doc-

trines, also, and edifying conversation and life, what an expression we have of God, his covenant, his revealed way of salvation, his holy will, and righteous law, and of everything affecting our relation to God, to each other, and to the world around us! "Never man spake like this man" characterized all his teaching, while the record of his life, in public and in private, is one continuous sermon. Wherever, and whenever, approached, in every incident and in every situation, in every scrap of conversation and every view of social life, always holy, spiritual, and edifying. It is recorded that once and again he wept, but it is never said that he laughed. Never a word low, trifling, worldly, or commonplace escaped his lips, and never for a moment did he seek to amuse those in whose presence he spake. A minister of religion once complimented a youthful brother by saying that he was "a man of infinite jest"; but, oh, how unlike the Lord who never uttered a witticism, made a joke, or sought to excite carnal mirth! Indeed we can hardly conceive of such things, either in private or public, as coming from him of whom it is said, "Grace is poured into thy lips," and whom even the devils acknowledge to be the "Holy One of God."

Secondly. The description of the cheeks of the Beloved, as "a bed of spices, as sweet flowers."

While the cheeks of the spouse are said to be "comely with rows of jewels" (i. 10), those of the Beloved are described by comparing them to the most beautiful and delightful of all earth's productions, "as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers." The language of this description is somewhat differently ren-

dered. The revisers of the Old Testament render "as a bed of spices, as banks of sweet herbs." They still, however, retain the original rendering of the latter clause, "as towers of perfumes." The word, "bed," also, in the description, in this and one other passage in this poem, (chap. vi. 2), literally is "furrows" or rills, and is supposed to refer to little water-courses made round the edges of the beds for the purpose of irrigation. Solomon had large collections of flower and spice plants, many of which he had brought from tropical regions, and that required the greatest attention and care; and he refers to the arrangements he had made for irrigation in describing the great works he had made. "Thus I made me gardens and orchards, and planted trees in them of all kinds of fruits. I made me pools of water to water therewith the wood that bringeth forth trees" (Eccles. ii. 5). It is also referred to in this song, "Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates with pleasant fruits; camphor with spikenard, spikenard and saffron; calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense; myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices. A fountain of gardens, a well of living waters, and streams from Lebanon" (chap. iv. 13-15). The fact that in this enumeration all but one are spice plants shows that Solomon paid special attention to the cultivation of odoriferous plants, as do the words that follow, "Awake, O north wind, come thou south! blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out" (v. 16). Now these spice plants and other ornamental shrubs and flowers were generally grown in banks or raised beds, considerably elevated at the centre, and falling off to the

level of the walk at the border. A tall-growing plant was placed in the centre, and next round it a circle of plants of a smaller growth. Next to these a row of plants still smaller, and so on in concentric circles till the border row was reached, which was of the smallest kinds of plants cultivated. Thus each row of plants in the bed rose one above another, till the central plant was reached, which rose towering above all, so that the whole looked like "banks of flowers," or "towers of perfumes." Such beds we often see in our own country, where flowers and flowering shrubs are skilfully cultivated. The outside row is usually made up of low growing plants, as the pansy, sweet alyssum, heliotrope, or mignonette, the second of plants of a larger growth, and so on to the centre, which is crowned by some tall growing plant like the superb dahlia, the whole a veritable pyramid of beauty, "a tower of perfumes." Some expositors, however, instead of growing plants here, understand cut flowers, skilfully arranged in a bouquet or vase, to be meant, the larger in the centre and the smaller outside. While we have no doubt that the first method of explaining the figure is the true one, the spiritual meaning is the same in both. The description implies concerning the Beloved:—

1. That his whole character, and all that is made known of him, is an assemblage of the most glorious moral excellences.

What wondrous laws have been brought into operation by the great designer of the universe, to evolve from coarse earth the magnificent forms and floral displays to be seen in our gardens and conservatories, and often wild in the open field, without culture or

care, "a lily among thorns." And these wonderful products of earth, air, moisture and sunshine, the great Teacher did not think beneath his notice as he revealed to us the rich munificence and fatherly care of Him, whom, at all times, we should trust with confidence. "Consider the lilies how they toil not, neither do they spin, yet Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." Examined by a microscope, their beauty becomes more apparent, and instead of becoming coarse and less beautiful, as do the finest works of art, their beauty and perfection become more conspicuous. In the eye of a pansy, or throat of a crown imperial, the glass enables us to discern a magnificence of coloring which human art never rivalled, and a perfection of form to which she has never approached; and the wonder is felt that God should have bestowed such pains in adorning what to-day is a specimen of matchless beauty and "to-morrow is cast into the oven." And the same wonder is felt how a spice plant can extract the sweetest odors from a soil saturated with filth, so as to make the atmosphere around it like a "box of precious ointment." Now, by such wondrous things is the perfection of our Beloved set forth. In character, conversation, revelation of divine things, and manifestation of moral beauty and glory, nothing equalled our Lord in heaven or earth. In the most grand and impressive manner his moral beauty grew brighter as his character was better understood, and the most microscopical scrutiny failed to detect a flaw either in his doctrine or life. In the most adverse circumstances, even when to many a "root out of a dry ground, having no form nor comeliness or



beauty why he should be desired," yet in him what an assemblage of all the graces, nothing wanting, nothing superfluous, but all blending together in one harmonious, glorious whole, "full of grace and truth," his cheeks objects of unspeakable beauty, "like a bed of spices, even as towers of perfumes."

2. The description further implies that these moral excellences and perfections dwell in the Beloved in such wonderful order, fulness, and harmony as to be more easily contemplated and followed by us.

Not only to set forth the glories of the Beloved's character are the most lovely and enjoyable of earthly things selected, but the wonderful order in which these things can be viewed, contemplated, and copied by us is also presented as "banks of sweet herbs" or "towers of perfumes." The literal meaning of banks and towers as applied to floriculture has already been explained,—a large bed, surrounded by a small rill or furrow to convey water to the plants, when required, tapering to a point above, on which was a tall-growing plant placed, and all below this central object planted, each row in succession, with flowers in growth of different sizes, the whole a rising-like bank or pyramid, in which each was in its natural place, and the whole could be more easily viewed and deliberately enjoyed. Now, all this helps us materially in the study of our Lord's character. We can contemplate him as in some respects a gradation of all moral perfections, beginning at the lowest grace of his character, till we are lost amid the glories of the Son of God. But it may be asked, What is the lowest grace of his character? Well, it is just the grace in him *nearest ourselves*, what he

was in spirit and example, in his humiliation state. It was *humbleness of mind*. "I am meek and lowly in heart." This seems to be the *border grace* in Christ in which he touched all round the outside of human life; and, oh, how beautiful and how fragrant!

Then again, there was the *tender, pitiful, compassionate, forgiving, and unrevengeful feature* of his character: "When he saw her he had compassion on her"; "I have compassion on the multitude"; "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do"; "Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again, when he suffered he threatened not, but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously." What a whole row of spice-plants are these! Then we have another row in the *holy, filial obedience he performed*: "Though he was a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered"; "I came not to do my own will, but the will of him that sent me"; "Who, for the joy set before him, endured the cross, despising the shame." Oh, that patient, uncomplaining example of filial obedience! there never was anything like it, or equal to it, on earth or in heaven,—a spice-plant so rich of perfume as to make it all fragrant and balmy even all round the cross. Then there was constant *spirituality of mind, frame, and pursuit*, that raised him above the level of everything human. He so lived on, and spoke of the spiritual and eternal, that even his disciples could not understand him, showing how true were the words of the Baptist, "He that cometh from above is above all; he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth; he that cometh from heaven is above all, and

what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth." Moreover, in *the spirit of prayer in which he so abounded*, we have another of his fragrant graces of character. His life was a prayer, and everything he undertook or accomplished was prefaced by prayer. In the act of prayer, he was baptized. After a whole night spent in prayer, he selected and ordained the apostles. Many of his miracles were intermingled with prayer. When transfigured he was praying, and support under and deliverance from his suffering was by the instrumentality of prayer, "Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him who was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared" (Heb. v. 7). Again, another row in this bed of spices was *the grace and truth that came by Jesus Christ*. In him and the exercise of his offices "light is sown for the righteous." And again, as gardeners have a plant familiarly known as the plant *poverty*, so there is in him an *enriching poverty* that makes many rich. The careful nursery man takes from his beds cuttings and slips and seed from growing plants by which he can greatly enlarge his stock: so Christ is the parent stock, and many partake of his fulness, "He that was rich for our sakes became poor, that we might be made the riches of God in him." All these, and many other features of our Beloved's character, on which we need not dwell, are all so many sweet flowers on this tower of perfumes, the whole surmounted and climax-capped by his *divine character as the Son of God*,—"God manifest in the flesh"; "Far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named,

not only in this world, but in that which is to come." Our Lord is "the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God," and his flower graces and spiritual fragrance are propagated in all his true followers. This is effected in various ways, as being "born again, not of corruptible but of incorruptible seed," or by being "engrafted into Christ" and made "partakers of the root and fatness of the good olive-tree" (Rom. xi. 17). And as in the plants of earth, many of the most precious and fragrant known to the botanist do not seed, nor can be propagated by grafting, budding, or cuttings, but only by what is called layering, so it is in the spiritual world. In layering, a shoot is bent down and a little trench made in the earth to receive it, into which it is securely fastened, and the earth replaced, leaving only the point of the shoot uncovered, which, when regularly watered and cared for, soon throws out roots, and, as it still retains its union to the parent plant, grows vigorously and becomes strong. So in a condition of union to Christ, the Father, the great husbandman, bends us down into circumstances favorable to our being "rooted and grounded in love," so that in time we become, as he declares, "the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified" (Is. lx. 21). This is the secret of all likeness to Christ in all his fragrant graces, in which "we grow up into him who is the head, even Christ."

3. The description of the cheeks of the Beloved also expresses how sweet and delightful to the spiritual mind are the excellences of Christ's character and work.

Paul speaks spiritually of having "our senses

exercised to discern both good and evil." To him, however, the excellency of all knowledge was the knowledge of Christ, and the joy of all joys was the "joy of his salvation." Therefore, to every spiritual mind, the glories of his character will always be as "beds of spices," "towers of perfumes." Therefore the keen appreciation shown by the spouse, "Because of, the savour of thy good ointments, thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee," and an expression of similar import by the psalmist, "All thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad." And the figure is kept up in the New Testament when he appears at the altar with "much incense" (Rev. viii. 3), or sweet spice, indicating how grateful to God, and how sweet and all-important to the saints, is the intercession he continually makes on our behalf. To the spiritual mind, "his name is above every name," "For to you who believe he is precious."

How glorious, then, in every aspect is our Beloved! The bloom of his glorious character is over and on all his fruit as the tree of life. Happy are all who live in him, and near him, and for him, and how unspeakable the calamity and loss to remain ignorant of his character and gracious salvation. May we all learn in the spirit of full appreciation constantly to "rejoice in the Lord, and glory in the Holy One of Israel."

## LECTURE IX.

### OUR LORD'S LILY LIPS DROPPING MYRRH.

"His lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh"—SONG v. 13.

**B**UT now we see through a glass darkly" is an expression characteristic of our earthly condition in relation to all true spiritual knowledge, and indicates two modes of communication by which we reach any spiritual attainment. First, we get by the help of some object that, as a glass or mirror, reflects the idea, so that it can affect our powers of spiritual perception; and, secondly, by being thus enabled to penetrate the enigmatical form in which divine truth is often conveyed. Of both of these we have many examples. First, the mirror form of conveying truth is seen in such words as "The heavens declare the glory of God, the firmament showeth his handiwork." Then, as to what is meant by "darkly," the word signifies "in an enigma or riddle," which we have to study to find out its inner meaning, as when our Lord declares, "Ye must be born again," or "Except ye eat my flesh and drink my blood, ye have no life in you." Now, this enigmatical form of revelation is one of the distinguishing peculiarities of the Song of songs, in which truth is reflected from many a glass, and veiled in many an enigmatical statement; and the more correctly we can reach the right interpretation of the riddle, the more will we profit, and

find, like Samson, that "out of the eater comes forth meat, and out of the strong comes forth sweetness."

In this seventh particular of the beauty of our Beloved, we pass naturally from his eyes and cheeks to his lips, which are compared to "lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh." In order to understand this compound figure, we must first inquire what is meant by the parts described. And, as we noticed before, some expositors think it strange that we have a distinction made in this description betwixt the lips and the mouth of the Beloved, as we also have betwixt his cheeks and countenance, as in both cases they suppose the same thing to be meant,—cheeks being the same as countenance, and lips as mouth. While, however, the terms may have something in common, they convey, in some respects, distinct and diverse ideas that can be profitably considered. And this is the more manifest from the fact that all the same words—cheeks and countenance, lips and mouth—are likewise employed in describing the spouse, and setting forth her spiritual beauty. Let us consider:

First. What is here meant by the lips of the Beloved.

In the anthropomorphic form in which God is so frequently set forth in the Word, few terms, borrowed from our bodily system, occur so frequently as that of the lips, and of course we must find the meaning of the term by referring to the functions that these organs perform in our animal economy. Now the term thus interpreted, in its natural use and signification, when applied to God, to the Beloved, or to the spouse, "the Lamb's wife," will chiefly express two

things; namely, *mode of communication, and power of impression.*

1. The lips of the Beloved are put for his modes of spiritual communication.

The first time the word "lip" occurs in Scripture is in its literal sense as an organ of speech, in what is said of men after the flood, "And the whole earth was of one language and of one speech." The expression is literally of "one lip and of one word," referring to the office of the lips in uttering words so as to communicate our thoughts. There are altogether four organs that concur in producing articulate language,—namely, the lips, teeth, tongue, and throat. Hence, the letters have been divided into labials, dentals, linguals, and gutturals, according as any of the organs are more specially employed in producing the sound the letters represent. And as all these organs are connected with the mouth, the lips and mouth are often used together to express speech, communication, message, or information. Thus Job declares to his friends, "But I would strengthen you with my mouth, and the moving of my lips would assuage your grief (xvi. 5). In the same way it is sometimes joined with the tongue,— "Your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness" (Is. lix. 3). The first and chief idea, therefore, suggested by lips, when used figuratively, is evidently that of making some statement or communication. And thus the lips are characterized by a vast number of epithets descriptive of the manner in which they perform this service in active life. Thus we have "uncircumcised lips," "unclean lips," "feigned lips," "flattering lips," "lying lips," "stam-



mering lips," "joyful lips," "perverse lips," "righteous lips," "false lips," "burning lips," and "lips of knowledge," etc. And not to our fellowmen only, but even towards God, our utterances are thus expressed. Thus it is put for vowing, "What my lips uttered" (Ps. lxvi. 4); for prayer, "The prayer that goeth not out of feigned lips" (Ps. xvii. 1); for praise, "The fruit of the lips," and "the calves of our lips"; for honoring God by profession, "This people with their lips do honor me" (Is. xxix. 13). Now, if we transfer the idea expressed by lips in ordinary life to God himself, it will help us to understand in what sense lips and mouth are so often predicated of him. It will be found that the term, as among men, means, whether used of God or of Christ as Mediator, just the manner in which they communicate with us. Thus Zophar exclaims, when heated in argument with Job, "But, oh, that God would speak, and open his lips against thee!" (xi. 5). Job himself declares, "Neither have I gone back from the commands of his lips: I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (xxiii. 12). In both of these passages, the term, used figuratively, denotes such communications of truth and judgment as they expected God to make in Job's case, and such precepts and commands as he has announced as the rule of our obedience. And in another passage the term means the same thing, only clothed with a salutary terror,— "Behold, the name of the Lord cometh from far, burning with his anger; and the burden thereof is heavy, his lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire" (Is. xxx. 27),—supposed by some to be referred to, if not quoted, in Paul's

well-known saying, "Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming" (2 Thess. ii. 8).

Guided by these examples, we can form some definite idea of what is meant by lips as applied to our Blessed Redeemer. The term can only, in his case, mean the many forms in which he makes communications to us in the exercise of all the offices he executes as our Mediator. In each of these, as prophet, priest, and king, he is making communications to us continually. Therefore, "grace is poured into his lips," and he cries, "Hearken unto me, my people; and give ear unto me, O my nation: for a law shall proceed from me, and I will make my judgment to rest for a light of the people" (Is. li. 4); for "The Lord hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary" (l. 4). Therefore, Paul warns us, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh; for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven (Heb. xii. 24, 25).

One of the earliest characters in which he was revealed was that of prophet, in which office he is the author of all that progressive revelation which we call the Holy Scriptures. Hence the whole Word of God is called the word of Christ,— "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." All doctrinal truth; all pertaining to the way of salvation; all defining sin, holiness, faith, repentance, love, and new obedience; all necessary to sanctification and growth in grace,—all this, with amazing power and impressiveness, he makes known to us as "the prophet whom

the Lord has raised up for us." Therefore, even in his state of humiliation, he was a prophet teacher of wondrous power, so that "all bare him witness and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth"; and the officers sent to apprehend him and bring him before the council were themselves captivated, and, returning without their prisoner, could only say, "Never man spake like this man." And such power of revealing and teaching was one way by which the men of that generation evidently expected the Messiah, when he should come, could be recognized. Therefore, moved by intercourse with him at the beginning of his ministry, Philip said to Nathaniel, "We have found him of whom Moses and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth"; and Peter, quoting the words of Moses, adds, "Him shall ye hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto you." And not only was this idea of revealing and making known understood to be a feature in the coming Redeemer by the better instructed Jews, but even the woman of Samaria could say, "I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ; when he is come he will tell us all things." Indeed, one great end of his coming was to reveal the Father, the covenant of grace, the way of salvation, and everything pertaining to life and godliness. He has also made known the great leading events of time, the resurrection and final judgment, and brought life and immortality to light by the gospel, and realized the words of Paul, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made

the worlds" (Heb. i. 1, 2); "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy"; "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches" (Rev. xxii. 16).

In his priestly office, too, he is continually making communications. "The priest's lips should keep knowledge" is true in its highest sense of him whom we call our Beloved. He is practically, as he teaches us how to have access to God, "the way to the Father"; and, as the priests of old instructed the people as to the way of approach and the nature and use of sacrifices, so he says of his sacrifice on the cross,— "And I, if I be lifted up, will draw all men unto me." As the sound of the bells on the High Priest's robe was heard by the people outside, as he sprinkled the blood and offered the incense, so the atonement becomes vocal as proclaimed by the gospel, and as it practically cries, "Look unto me, all ye ends of the earth, and be saved." The Lord's Supper, also, as a memorial and figure of his priestly work, voices the atonement, and is to the spiritual mind a sacramental gospel, bringing us into living communication with God. And as we see him in that vivid view of the priest at the altar (Rev. viii. 3) offering incense with the prayer of all saints, we have the voice of the sacerdotal office crying, "Wherefore he is able to save them to the very uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." And when, as the great High Priest of our profession, he succors the tempted and suffering and dying, how sweet the consolation the lips of this priesthood pours into the wounded or trembling spirit when he cries, "I am he that liveth

and was dead; and behold I am alive forevermore, Amen, and have the keys of hell and of death" (Rev. i. 18). Moreover, when he lifts up his wounded hands to bless us, and shows us his hands and his side, and what our salvation cost him, what a voice there is in such acts to impress us with the fact that to his priestly suffering and obedience we owe everything we enjoy or hope for, and that "If God spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things."

In his kingly office, also, we have his lips often making us communications. At our regeneration or spiritual quickening, as at the grave of Lazarus, he cries, "Come forth!" from that state of death in which we had been lying hitherto. In his kingly office he spake the commandments of the law at Sinai, and is the author of all the laws, statutes, precepts, and judgments, that form his system of morals, and to us the rules of obedience to his kingly government. All church organization, government, order, and worship, proceed from the same office, and only as prescribed and appointed of him can they be profitable to us, and acceptable to him. As a king he demands our implicit confidence and cheerful obedience, makes us promises, and bestows rewards, and as of old he speaks in this office "with authority." As a king he "utters his voice out of Zion," demands a hearing from all mankind, and in terrible threatenings it is said of him, as "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," "The Lord will go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy as a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies" (Is. xlii. 13). In this office, too, he assures us of judgment to come, and that he

will give to every man according to his works. Thus, in one form or other, his lips are communicating with us continually for our direction, help, comfort, and happiness in the present, and our hopes in the future. "His lips are like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh."

2. "His lips," as applied to our Beloved, mean also his wonderful power of impression.

We speak of some men, peculiarly gifted, as magnetic, because of the power they possess to impress themselves on our judgment, feelings, and passions, so as often to carry us away with a power we hardly know how to resist. That our Lord possessed and put forth such power through his utterances when on earth we have already furnished two examples. Now the lips, as literally the instruments of such power, are well adapted figuratively to express the power itself, as a feature especially of him "who spake as never man spake." Physiognomists say that the lips, or external parts of the mouth, impress us more strongly than any other part of the countenance, of what a person is by way of feelings, passions, habits, indulgence, and general character of life. Thus gratitude, love, friendship are often expressed by kisses of the lips. So Jacob kissed Rachel as a token of their relation when he first met her. Judas pretended friendship when he kissed our Lord, bringing the rebuke, "Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" Thus Jacob expressed his love and joy at finding his long lost Joseph, and the woman who in gratitude for being forgiven anointed his feet with ointment, "ceased not to kiss his feet" (Luke vii. 45), and by a holy kiss of charity the members of the

early Christian churches were wont to express to each other their affectionate regards. Solomon uses the same term for our hearty approbation, when he says "Every one shall kiss the lips of him that giveth a right answer" (Prov. xxiv. 26); and since the days of Job it was an act of idolatrous worship, "And my heart hath been secretly enticed, and my mouth had kissed my hand" (Job. xxxi. 27). So also Hosea, "They say of them, let them kiss the calves" (xiii. 2). Even the worship we render to Christ is, in its reality and hearty impressiveness, similarly expressed, "Kiss the son lest he be angry" (Ps. ii. 12). In many other ways also the lips impress us: they quiver with emotion, smile with approbation and delight, curl in proud disdain, and are compressed in unyielding stubbornness and opposition. And thus our Lord complains, "All that see me laugh me to scorn, they shoot out the lip, they shake the head." Thus in many ways the lips are used figuratively for the power of impression.

Now the lips of the Redeemer are represented not only as making communications, but as also leaving impressions of the most powerful and salutary character. Therefore the spouse prays "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for his love is better than wine." In the same way, in expressing her earnest desire for such gracious impressions, she cries, "O that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother! when I should find thee without, I should kiss thee; yea, I should not be despised" (Song viii. 1). In many ways have the saints of God such sweet impressions, warm and powerful from the Beloved's lips. In his gracious, drawing

invitations to come to him we have them; in his precious promises that are "sweeter than honey to the mouth"; in his shedding abroad his love in our heart by the Holy Spirit; by bringing us deeply under the felt power of divine truth, to reprove, sanctify, and comfort; by assuring us that we shall be partakers in all his own exaltation and glory, as belonging to his bride, the Lamb's wife; and in many, many other ways we receive impressions, the power of which will continue forever. But not only in love and the more gracious experiences do his lips impress us. By warnings, and threatenings, and counsels, and assurances that the "wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," he often makes impressions most salutary and abiding. Even the terrible "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels," has been known to move the hitherto impenitent to flee from the wrath to come, and escape from the city of destruction, so as to lay hold of eternal life.

Secondly. We have a description of the Beloved's lips, "like lilies dropping sweet-smelling myrrh." In this wonderfully figurative poem, the lips of the spouse are twice described; and these descriptions will help us to interpret what is here said of the lips of the Beloved. The first of the two is both natural and eminently beautiful, "Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet, thy speech is comely" (iv. 3). This description is unique, inconceivably beautiful, and true to nature. The redness and fulness of the lips, like a scarlet thread drawn across a good part of the countenance, is due to the vigorous and hearty



action of the heart in sending up a large supply of blood, whereas when the heart is weak and languid the lips are pale and colorless. Now, that the lips of the spouse here mean the same as those of her Beloved, namely, the mode of making communications and the power of impression, is plain from what is added, "thy speech is comely." As the Father sent the Son into the world, so the Son sends us into the world, with the same truths to proclaim, the same communications to make, the same law to enforce, and the same salvation to offer. And the fulness wherewith we shall fulfil our mission will depend on the state of the heart; the color of our lips will always be regulated, as in nature, by the action of the heart. The second description of the lips of the spouse confirms the same views, "Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honey-comb; honey and milk are under thy tongue" (iv. 11). The language here is not only similar but almost identical with what is said of the Beloved's lips, and as we shall see, is full of beauty and meaning.

The comparison of our Lord's lips to lilies is not only one of great poetical beauty, but has a wonderful adaptation and force to set forth the efficiency with which he makes us communications. It is well known that there is in the summer months the greatest abundance of lilies in Canaan, not only gay and splendid in appearance, but of many different varieties, some tall and striking, others low and humble, growing everywhere, by the waysides, on the uncultivated ends and sides of the fields, and even among the thorns and other large trees; and so beautiful that our Lord declared that "Solomon in

all his glory was not arrayed like one of these." But it was not for color or beauty that our Lord's lips are here compared to lilies, but for their shape and form. The flower of the lily is of trumpet form, and that set forth figuratively with wonderful power how most effectively he reaches us, and reaches earth's remotest ends, with those communications he makes for the edification and good of all. From the setting up, in regular form, of the church of a former dispensation, our Lord chose the trumpet to issue more effectively his communications to his people. Thus we are told that at Sinai, "It came to pass on the third day in the morning, that there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the *voice of the trumpet* exceeding loud; so that all the people that were in the camp trembled" (Exod. xix. 16). "And when the voice of the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder, Moses spake, and God answered him by a voice" (v. 19). Trumpets were blown at new moon, and over the sacrifices, and it was the jubilee trumpet that was known as "the joyful sound" (Ps. lxxxix. 15). By the trumpet, the people were called together for worship, or war; with trumpet sound God went before his hosts against all their enemies, as when he overthrew the walls of Jericho, and with trumpets they praised him as Israel's God, and chanted those noble and sublime psalms that are so full of his glory. And being thus associated with almost every part of their fellowship with God, the trumpet became a figure among the prophets for preaching the gospel. Thus Isaiah declares, "And it shall come to pass in that day that the great

trumpet shall be blown" (xxvii. 13); and, "Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their transgressions, and the house of Jacob their sins" (lviii. 1). So also Zechariah, when he foretells the overthrow of the Grecian philosophy by the power of the gospel, "When I have bent Judah for me, have filled my bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man. And the Lord shall be seen over them, and his arrows shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south" (ix. 13, 14). So also Paul describes the preaching of the gospel as a "trumpet giving not an uncertain sound" (1 Cor. xiv. 8). And our Lord sends forth seven angels with seven trumpets to proclaim, so that all might hear, the judgments that shall overtake the opponents of his kingdom. The great proclamation, also, that shall be made at his second coming is described in similar figurative language, "And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet" (Matt. xxiv. 31); or, as Paul puts it, "The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, and with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God" (1 Thess. iv. 16). We are thus prepared for John's identifying the trumpet with the voice of Christ himself: "I was in the spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last" (Rev. i. 10). Now as the lily was of trumpet form, and as the trumpet was so constantly used as a figure for what greatly enlarged and increased the power of

the human voice, and the distance at which it could be heard, so as with greater efficiency to make communications, utter proclamations and convey intelligence, it is a very bold poetical use of the term to make it descriptive of these lip communications our Lord is making to us daily in many a form. As the Lion of the tribe of Judah he may "roar against his enemies," he may in the day of battle shout as a "giant refreshed with wine"; but in the peaceful proclamations and invaluable communications made to us daily through his ordinances, word, and spirit, how sweet his voice, and how gladly we can recognize that his lips are like lilies!

But, again, these lily lips are said to "drop sweet-smelling myrrh." The reference is to the fact that many of the lilies have the trumpet-shaped flower, hanging with the mouth or wider end down, and that in the throat of the flower is generally found a roscid drop of considerable sweetness, which from its weight drops out and falls to the ground. Darwin says that this honey drop in the throat of the lily, like the brilliant colors of its petals, is intended to attract bees and other insects, which by penetrating into the very heart of the flower brush the pollen from the stamens, and rub it on the pistil, and thus secure its more perfect fertilization. Now, how much in keeping with this figure is the manner in which the sweetest communications from our Beloved reach us. They proceed from the "mouth of the Lord," and drop out so far as we by diligence can reach them; and, as we are attracted by them, and feed on and enjoy them, we are, like the insect, doing a service of usefulness to others. Thus Moses,

with special reference to what he had communicated from the Lord to Israel, declares, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain; my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass" (Deut. xxxii. 2). Job also says of his helpful advice and counsel to others, "My speech dropped on them" (xxix. 22). So, also, Ezekiel, directed how to utter his warnings, "Son of Man, set thy face toward the south, and drop thy word toward the south, and prophesy against the forest of the south field" (xx. 46), and "Son of Man, set thy face toward Jerusalem, and drop thy word toward the holy places, and prophesy against the land of Israel" (xxi. 2). How suitable, then, is the word "drop" to express the continuous communication our Lord is ever making us. As the rain drops on the pastures wide, on the arable field and the extended forests, and when needed drops again, so it is in the experience of all exercised believers. Our Lord's lips drop not once or twice, but keep dropping, dropping, dropping, till the whole soul becomes "like a watered garden, and like spring of water whose waters fail not" (Is. lviii. 11).

But, still further, these droppings from the lily lips of the Beloved are "sweet smelling myrrh." The myrrh plant was and still is greatly esteemed among Orientals for the richness of its perfume. Therefore it was among the luxuries that the Ishmaelites were carrying down to Egypt when Joseph was sold to them by his brethren, "Bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down into Egypt" (Gen. xxxvii. 25). It was likewise part of

Jacob's present to the Governor of Egypt when he sent his sons a second time to buy corn, "Carry down the man a present, a little balm and a little honey, spices and myrrh, nuts and almonds" (Gen. xliii. 11). It was the largest ingredient in the holy anointing oil (Ex. xxx. 23), and was one of the offerings presented by the wise men of the East to the infant Saviour,— "And, when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts, gold, and frankincense and myrrh" (Matt. ii. 11). The garments of the Beloved "smell of myrrh, aloes, and cassia"; and himself calls the temple and its worship "a mountain of myrrh" (Song iv. 6), while the spouse declares of him, "A bundle of myrrh is my well Beloved unto me" (i. 13). The reference in all these passages to myrrh shows both its preciousness and also the universal esteem in which it was held for the sweetness and richness of its perfume, and, as descriptive of the communications our Lord is constantly making us, shows how incomparably precious and sweet are the word and truths of God to the spiritual mind: "More to be desired than gold,— yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb." "The droppings of Christ's lips are always new, fresh, refreshing, and seasonable; and, if in our reading and study of his word we were to pick out stalks of the myrrh and bind them in a bundle to lie all night in the bosom of a spiritual and sanctified mind, we would realize, as God's people ever have, that his lips are like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh."

And, surely, with our Bibles, frequent fellowship with Christ, our meetings for prayer and mutual

improvement, our private meditation and public sanctuary ordinances, we ought always to be within easy reach of these spiritual influences, and thus realize the apostle's words, "But we have the mind of Christ."

## LECTURE X.

### OUR LORD'S JEWELLED HANDS.

"His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl."

ALL Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good work." "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." But while the sufficiency of Scripture, and its adaptation to every condition in which we may at any time find ourselves placed, is fully admitted, it is only as we have some intelligent understanding of the meaning of the inspired word that it can minister in all things to our guidance and comfort. In fact, Philip's question to the eunuch is always suitable, "Understandest thou what thou readest?" But some are ready to say that there are some parts of the Scriptures they cannot understand, and accordingly they have a prejudice against them, and read them seldom, if at all, because they think them unprofitable. Noteworthy among such parts of the Word are the Song and the Apocalypse, both of which many regard as so uncertain in meaning and so unintelligible in figure and expression that they can derive no profit from them. And yet the



daughters of Jerusalem, or in other words ordinary Church members, were expected to understand the language in which the expected Messiah is described in the Song, while our Lord himself pronounces a blessing on him that reads and understands the visions of the Seer of Patmos. A curious fact in natural history illustrates how the difficulty is overcome by the spiritual man. Darwin has shown that nutrition in plant-life is remarkable for three things. First, plants, according to the class to which they belong, have a strong affinity for the food that is suitable, and search for it in every direction continually and perseveringly, often sending out their roots hundreds of feet into the adjoining soil, and pervading the whole with a network of rootlets that nothing can escape. Then, secondly, what the roots find out and absorb, the foliage helps to digest and assimilate, expelling through a system of excretory ducts some elements, as carbonic acid, and absorbing others, as oxygen and aqueous vapor. But the third fact is the most curious of all; namely, if a root comes, in its search, into contact with a hard body containing suitable nourishment, as a bone or a piece of lime, it can exude an acid on the hard substance, which acts as a solvent, and prepares it for food, so as it can be absorbed by the rootlets of the plant. Now if we, as God's spiritual plants, would take a lesson from such facts; if we were not only earnestly to desire and diligently seek in the Scriptures what our daily wants require, but by dropping some of our own experience and earnest persevering prayer on hard passages, we would find that their hardness would dissolve, and they would become nourishment

to support and enlarge our spiritual life. If we would pray over a hard text or obscure promise, and bring our experiences, our sorrows, and our joys to illustrate its meaning, we would find the darkest passages profitable.

Now, of the twelve descriptive particulars in this chapter, setting forth the glories of the Beloved, there is none more delightful and comfortable than what is said of his hands, that they are "as gold rings set with beryl." With the exception of the eye and ear, there is no member of the human system so often figuratively ascribed to God as the hand and arm, and what they mean when so applied can only be learned by the part these members play in the economy of human life. Let us consider,—

First. What is meant by the hands of the Beloved?

A very satisfactory view of the meaning of hand and arm, as figuratively used of both the Father and the Son, is to be found in those Messianic psalms and prophecies, that so fully exhibit the work of Christ, and the provisions of the Covenant of grace. Thus, the Father speaks of the Redeemer, "With whom my hand shall be established, mine arm also shall strengthen him"; and again, "I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers (Ps. lxxxviii. 21 and 25). In both of these expressions, the terms "hand" and "arm" are used in the naturally human sense for the putting forth of power, and figuratively applied to the Redeemer simply mean what he himself declared to the disciples, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." This is apparent from the place the hand and arm

fill in the economy of the human system. In all our manual operations, the arm is the motive power, and the hand the instrument by which that power works. In the forearm are located the muscles that move the hand and give it power in all its multitudinous and multiform operations. Vigorous exercise of these muscles makes them stronger, and we often see the mechanic stripping his arms as he goes to work, to give them freer action and at the same time strengthen them. Therefore, borrowing terms from earth, God is said to have "made bare his holy arm," when he is about to work in sight of the nations. Now, the hand is an instrument admirably adapted to apply the power lodged in the arm. From the point of articulation with the two bones of the forearm, each hand, including the carpus, metacarpus, and bones of the fingers and thumb, consists of twenty-seven bones, or fifty-four in both hands. The object of constructing the hand with so many bones, so differently and wondrously articulated and held in place, is to give it the greatest freedom of action, and power of motion and direction in all that it attempts to perform. Hence, the hand has wondrous adaptation to the work of life. It has a circular motion, and a back and forward motion, through the flexibility of the wrist, while the many bones and articulations of the fingers, and their relative position to the thumb, enable it to assume almost every position that any possible operation may require. Of course, the duplex power of two hands, operating together, greatly increases our ability to accomplish results. Working in harmony, the hands can put forth every form of applied power.

They can twist and twine, grasp and clasp, push and pull, loosen and tighten, bind and free, directly approach or skilfully incline, bear a burden or warn us by a most sensitive touch, in fact put themselves into every conceivable relation to the work in which they may be engaged. Hence, when these natural powers of the hand are taught and trained most effectively to operate, it is called its "cunning," (Ps. cxxxvii. 5), and the result of its labors "the work of the hands of a cunning workman" (vii. 1).

Now, every reader of the Bible is familiar with the frequency wherewith hand and arm are figuratively applied to God, as when Moses and Israel sing, "Thy right hand, O Lord, is become glorious in power; Thy right hand, O Lord, hath dashed the enemy in pieces" (Ex. xv. 6); and, "Thou stretchest thy right hand, and the earth swallowed them" (v. 12); and "His right hand and his holy arm hath gotten him the victory" (Ps. xcvi. 1). In its application to God, it thus bears the same meaning as when applied to man. God's arm is his almighty power, and his hand the putting forth or exercise of his power, in all his works of creation, providence, and grace. Therefore, not only has he said of his works of creation, "My hand hath made all these," but of his wonderful works in grace, "Mine arm brought salvation." And in its application to the Beloved, it has the same figurative sense and meaning, so that hand, arm, and finger, are used to denote the mediatorial power wherewith he is clothed, and the putting forth of that power for all the practical purposes contemplated in his work. What some of these purposes are, in which the hand and arm of the Beloved

are active on our behalf, as seen in this Song and elsewhere in Scripture, will prepare us for further understanding the figurative description here given. All the active operations of Christ's hand on our behalf are included in the following five particulars:—

1. By his uplifted hands he powerfully and efficaciously *blesses*.

“And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands and blessed them” (Luke xxiv. 50). As the great High Priest of our profession, three functions belonged to our Beloved,—atonement, intercession, and benediction; and all these are necessary to our full enjoyment of the benefits of his priestly work. Now, as he parted from his disciples to take his seat on “the right hand of the Majesty on high,” his last act was benediction. “And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them.” As an old Scottish writer has well observed, “The last seen of him, he had his hands lifted up in blessing, and no one can show that he has ever since taken them down.” And often does the Beloved claim this prerogative of his office, especially in authoritatively pronouncing beatitudes. “Blessed are the poor in spirit,” “Blessed are they that mourn,” “Blessed are the meek,” etc. And not only when on earth, but now in his state of exaltation, he still continues this priestly function towards all his people. And, therefore, the “Father hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus”; and our Lord pronounces, “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy.” “Blessed is he that watcheth, and keep-

eth his garments." "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord." "Blessed is he that hath part in the first resurrection." "Blessed are they that wash their robes, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in by the gates into the city." Thus, to the spiritual Israel he still gives "the blessing out of Zion," as he lifts up his hands constantly on our behalf, having entered into the holy place made without hands, "there to appear in the presence of God for us."

2. Another function of our Lord's hands is sweetly to *support and embrace*.

"His left hand is under my head, and his right hand doth embrace me." In this spiritual experience, two things are noticeable. First, the supporting power we need and enjoy when partaking of the communications of the Saviour's love. "His left hand is under my head." We are like little helpless babes in the embrace and safe-keeping of the nurse; and as in their case, the more right-hand favors and love tokens we enjoy, the more we need supporting grace. As the nurse grasps firmly her charge, holding it fast with her left hand under its head, and, while thus held safely, will, with the right hand, amuse it with a toy, or treat it to a dainty, or affectionately caress it, but the stronger and more active it is, her hold must be in proportion, so it is in spiritual experience. "The Eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms." Those who have enjoyed most of God have most felt the need of gracious support, even to bear up under the manifestation of his favor. Thus, the manifestations of God at Sinai were so "terrible a

sight" that even Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake." Daniel's "comeliness was turned into corruption," as he had more than ordinary views of Christ and his heavenly agents (Dan. x. 8). At the transfiguration, not only were the disciples overwhelmed with awe, but of Peter it is remarked, "Not knowing what he said" (Luke ix. 33). Paul, "through the abundance of the revelation at one time made him, knew not whether he was in the body or out of the body," while John "fell at his feet as dead" when he had a vision of the glorified Redeemer. We need, therefore, supporting grace as well as comforting.

The second thing noticeable in the expression is the manner in which his hand manifests his love. "His right hand doth embrace me." As Isaiah tells us, "He shall gather the lambs with his arm" (xl. 11), so we are all moved by his power, drawn by his grace, and constrained by his love, as we are gathered into his flock and fold. And the love of espousals, and the joy of salvation, are all embraces realizing the assurance: "As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee" (Is. lxii. 5). As, when entering into the marriage covenant and married relation, the parties hold each other by the right hand, so his love, having apprehended us and constrained us to be his, and we thus apprehend him for that for which we are apprehended of him, his right hand of power is seal, security, and pledge of the blessed mutual transaction. And as the right hand gives gifts, bestows favors, provides necessaries, supports and fondles, so our glorious bridegroom, who "hath the bride" (John

iii. 29), bestows on us the unspeakable gift, provides a perfect righteousness, endows with such a glorious inheritance, and withholds no good thing that the heart of love can devise, or the power of God can confer. The joy of such an experience even rises, at times, as in the case of the spouse, to the height of holy rapture and foretastes of heavenly bliss, those preludes of the happiness of being ever with the Lord. Especially are such experiences realized on two occasions; namely, when we first give ourselves to the Lord and rejoice in the "love of espousal," and also when we reach the Land of Beulah and are in sight of the heavenly city. The embrace of love, especially in the latter case, has often been so intense, so ravishing, as to render necessary the support of the left hand to bear up under the exuberant bliss imparted by the right. Thus, in his "choice sayings of dying saints," Willison tells of one who, on his deathbed, was so swallowed up and overcome by the manifestations of God's love to his soul, that his bodily strength and spirit were not able to bear up under them, and the prayer of friends for him were, "Lord, hold thy hand, for he is but a clay vessel: this new wine will burst the old bottle." But, blessed be our Beloved's care, "his left hand is under our head," while "his right hand doth embrace us."

8. His hands also are put for his power, *providing for and supplying our wants.*

Among men there is no more common figure of speech than that of expressing by the state of the hand a person's character for liberality and generous giving, or otherwise. An open hand towards the



needy, or a close hand shut tight against every claim or appeal, are figures of speech every one understands. Now, of the great Benefactor it is said, "The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing" (Ps. cxlv. 15). And when Moses was astonished at the magnitude of the proposal to feed two millions of people in the wilderness with flesh for a whole month, he was rebuked by the question, "Is the Lord's hand waxed short?" (Num. xi. 23). And Israel's tendency to unbelief throughout the whole history of the nation is often similarly rebuked. Thus, "Is my hand shortened at all, that it cannot redeem? or have I no power to deliver?" (Is. l. 2), and again, "Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear" (lix. 1). Now, nothing more distinguishes the Beloved than that his hands have always been open, and like Joseph in Egypt he administers all the riches and blessings of the kingdom. Therefore, "It hath pleased the Father that in him all fulness should dwell," and, "Of his fulness have we all received, and grace for grace." Paul therefore assures the Philippians, "But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Jesus Christ" (iv. 19), and James asserts, "That giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not." Indeed the whole record of his mediation is giving, giving, continually giving; and we are assured that there is no good thing he will withhold. When he came to earth, it was "not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give his life a ransom for many"; and his

whole ministry was one of giving, giving away himself and all he possessed to the destitute and miserable; and that he still prosecutes as one great end of his mediatory work. To stimulate our obedience, he covers our whole future with promises of giving; and therefore, in addressing an epistle to each of the Seven Churches of Asia, they all close, "To him that overcometh, I will give"; and, indeed, the whole book closes with a promise to give, "I will give to him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely"; "He that spared not his own son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things."

4. His hands are also put for all implied *in government and rule*.

The possession and exercise of kingly power among men has long been expressed by the right hand grasping a sceptre. And, therefore, it was early foretold, "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a law-giver from between his feet." We have also, in the case of Ahasuerus and Esther, "the golden sceptre"; and of Babylon it is said "The Lord hath broken the staff of the wicked, and the sceptre of the rulers." The sceptre was a wand or rod consisting in more primitive times simply of a shoot of a tree, but latterly of gold or iron. Thus, of Israel under the figure of a vine, it is said, "And she had strong rods for the sceptres of them that bare rule" (Ezek. xix. 11), whereas the sceptre that Ahasuerus held out to Esther was of gold; and it is the ordinary Hebrew word for sceptre rendered in the second Psalm, "rod of iron," and also in the twenty-third Psalm, "thy rod and thy staff." Now, from the be-

ginning, "the government being upon his shoulders," the father hath put into his hand a sceptre of rule, and therefore he is addressed, "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre."

Now, as with sceptre in hand our Lord rules over all the events occurring in the history of our world, his government comprehends many functions that both fill us with awe and inspire us with confidence. Thus, first, *his right gives law to all his creatures*. He who holds the sceptre of Judah is also a "law-giver between his feet," — that is, all moral law, as it binds moral beings, has been given by the ministry of angels *in the hand of a Mediator*. Therefore, when on earth his whole teaching was giving law and impressing moral obligation; and his godlike, oathlike, Verily, Verily, impresses the conscience more deeply than the thunders of Sinai. His "Thou shalt," and "Thou shalt not" are as full and authoritative as the decalogue, and as permanent, too; for "heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass away." And this element of his rule, as connected with his hands — the figure before us — is beautifully illustrated by an expression by Habakkuk, "God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light; *he had horns coming out of his hands, and there was the hiding of his power*" (iii. 3, 4). From the hand of his ruling, governing power, came of old, and come still, all those laws, institutions, and authoritative directions — horns of power and rule — which are given for the guidance and comfort of his

Israel, so that in the moral world, as well as in the material, it is true, "He sendeth forth his commandment on earth, his word runneth very swiftly (Ps. cxlvii. 15).

Another function of his rule is to put all things in this rebellious world *in a state of subjection to God*. He is "the man of God's right hand" (Ps. lxxx. 17), and "the Lord at God's right hand" (Ps. cx. 5), which simply mean what is said of him to John, "Jesus knowing that the Father had put all things into his hands." And this exalting him to the place of highest honor, and commissioning him as Mediator with all power in heaven and earth, have for their object "the subduing all things to himself." This he is doing now, and will at length fully accomplish in two ways of operation — first, he offers terms of reconciliation to all who oppose him. And that is expressed by terms taken from his hands. Thus Paul, speaking of the rejection of the gospel by the Jews, quoting Isaiah, says, "But to Israel he saith, All day long I have stretched forth my hands unto a disobedient and gainsaying people" (Rom. x. 21). As he is now "in Christ reconciling the world to himself," as he "beseeches us to be reconciled," he, as it were, stretches out his opened arms, that we may rush back to the bosom of his fatherly love and embrace. Such as accept this offered reconciliation, touch the golden sceptre of grace, and are subdued and made willing in the day of his power. And, then, those who refuse to be reconciled are removed by his judgments; systems of falsehood and iniquity wiped out, and the Lord alone exalted.

Then a third thing connected with the rule of his

hands is *the care and protection and safety of his own subjects.*

We have this thought set forth in many forms in both parts of the Divine Word. One of the most remarkable is taken from a mother's love: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the fruit of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands: thy walls are continually before me" (Is. xlix. 15). Another most expressive figure, also, for the same thing is taken from a shepherd's care for the sheep of the flock he has in charge. It is from this that we are called "the sheep of his hand" (Ps. xcv. 7), expressive not only of what he does in leading us into the green pastures, but especially how he guards us against being lost. To prevent this calamity, the shepherd, at stated times each day, numbered his sheep. How that was done we learn from different passages of the Old Testament. Thus, in the law of tithing, we have, "And, concerning the tithe of the herd or of the flock, even of whatsoever *passeth under the rod*, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord" (Lev. xxvii. 82). The shepherd held his rod with outstretched arms, called to the sheep, which in file passed under the rod, and were thus easily counted. Sometimes, however, the hands alone were stretched out for the sheep to pass under, and to this effect Jeremiah, speaking of the restoration of Israel, says, "In the cities of Judah shall the flocks pass again under the hands of him that telleth them, saith the Lord" (Jer. xxxiii. 13). In the same way, Ezekiel expresses the safety of all Christ's people in

their new relation, "And I will cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bonds of the covenant" (Ezek. xx. 37). Thus our glorious Shepherd "counts the people," and under his eye we cannot be lost. And our Lord strongly expresses the same thought, "And this is the Father's will that hath sent me, that of all he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day" (John vi. 39). And many other passages express most emphatically the same idea of safety, care, and protection by the hand of our Lord. Thus, when it is foretold, "I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered," it is added, "I will turn my hand upon the little ones" (Zech. xiii. 7), by the "little ones," over whom he spreads his hands, meaning the infant church, which was wonderfully preserved when the Romans almost extirpated the whole Jewish race. The same assurance is given by the Good Shepherd himself, "I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand" (John x. 28). And it is noteworthy that when our Lord appears in Patmos to the beloved John, among other things, it is said of him, "And he had in his right hand seven stars," expressive of his employing, upholding, endowing, and succeeding his gospel messengers by the exercise of that power by which he is "able to subdue all things to himself." And this is the reason why, when his people are described as his crown and diadem, they are not said to be on his head, where we would naturally look for them, but in his hand, "Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the

hand of thy God" (Is. lxii. 8). It also explains why the power put forth on the minds of the prophets is frequently expressed by the phrase, "The hand of the Lord was on me," equivalent to John's expression, "I was in the spirit."

And still a fourth thing expressed by his hands, as indicative of government and rule, is the restraint, punishment, and destruction of the enemies of his kingdom. It is foretold of Messiah, as he is invited to gird on his sword and ride forth prosperously because of truth, meekness, and righteousness, "Thy right hand shall teach (make thee acquainted with) terrible things" (Ps. xlv. 4). As the soldier in the day of battle becomes acquainted with terrible thing, so the reign of Christ is marked by terrible events in which he defeats and destroys those who oppose him. Therefore, one marked and prominent ground and matter of praise in the psalms are those "terrible things in righteousness" by which he often answers our prayers. The plagues of Egypt, the judgments in the wilderness, the destruction of the Canaanites, national calamities following national sins,—these and other similar vindictive doings of his hand are all turned into praise; and we are taught to "say unto God, How terrible art thou in all thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee" (Ps. lxvi. 8). Our Lord has a sceptre of iron as well as a golden sceptre; and when he lifts it, and threatens to break us in pieces, he is as much dealing with us for our good as when he addresses us in the invitations of the gospel. And what is history? and what is daily providence? and what is prophecy? They are all

full of the hand of the Redeemer. When the Philistines gloried in having carried away the ark of the God of Israel to Ashdod, it is said, "But the hand of the Lord was heavy upon them of Ashdod, and he destroyed them" (1 Sam. v. 6). In the calamities and judgments of every day's occurrence, "his hand is stretched out still"; and prophecy is but a reading off what is in a book in the hands of the Lamb. So far-reaching is that hand that nothing can escape it, "Thy hand shall find out thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee"; and oh! "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hand of the living God."

5. The hands of the Beloved are also indicative of his power *swearing and pledged* on our behalf. According to Paul, "An oath for confirmation is the end of all strife"; and we find the oath of God in relation to everything connected with both the constitution and administration of the covenant of grace. Thus the apostle assures us that the priesthood of Christ differs from the priesthood of all others; that, while they were "made priests without an oath, the word of the oath maketh the Son, who is consecrated forevermore" (Heb. vii. 28). But, while the mediatorial arrangement and appointment of the Son was thus sanctioned, and made permanent and immutable, his administration and promises are also thus confirmed. Thus we have the statement, "Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it with an oath, that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who



have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." By "his counsel" here is simply meant his covenant, the promises of which, being "confirmed by two immutable things,"—his word and oath,—there is solid ground of comfort and consolation in making them our own in Christ, the hope or refuge city set before us. And it is a striking fact, and one which all should consider, that the oath of God as much confirms his threatenings as his promises. On different occasions, we find him thus confirming his word, as when he declares, "Unto whom I swore in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest," and again, "I lifted up mine hand unto them also in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them through the countries" (Ezek. xx. 28). Thus every utterance of his will has been confirmed by an oath, either by the figure of lifting up his hand or by pledging his being and character for the truth of what he has said, as when he uses the formula, "As I live, saith the Lord," or, "Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David" (Ps. lxxxix. 35).

Now, our Beloved's hands are also raised to swear. Thus Daniel says, "I heard the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, when he held up his right hand and his left unto heaven, and sware by him that liveth forever and ever, that it shall be for a time, times, and an half," etc. (xii. 7). And corresponding to this vision of Christ by Daniel is that by John, in many things wonderfully similar, "And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth, lifted up his hand to heaven, and sware by him that liveth forever and ever . . . that there

should be time no longer," or "the time is not yet" (Rev. x. 5). In both of these visions it is the angel of the covenant that is seen; and his position in both cases indicates sovereign possession of the whole world, sea, and dry land. Having a foot on each, he in both cases announces the time in the future when certain events shall take place; and in both cases he lifts up his hands and swears. And, being "the faithful witness," the mercies promised and pledged are "the *sure* mercies of David,"—" *sure* to all the seed," so that in everything we hope for he says, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me." Having confirmed his covenant with us by an oath in which he cannot lie nor repent, and we having reciprocated that covenant thus confirmed, we may gladly take home his cheering, comforting words: "For this is as the waters of Noah unto me; for, as I have sworn that the waters of Noah shall no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee" (Is. liv. 8-10).

Secondly. Keeping in view the foregoing five particulars, as descriptive of the Beloved's hands and their operations, let us now inquire what is meant by their being said to be as "gold rings, set with the beryl." In attempting to frame an answer, we think necessary to say that various interpretations and applications of these words have been made by expositors which we do not think it profitable to

notice particularly, preferring the natural sense of the figures employed. Now it is plain that, if his hands are his power operating in the different ways which we have already explained, then by the gold rings must be naturally meant something within which his hands work, and inside of which we can contemplate all his doings. Now there are two things in the operations of Christ's power which exactly meet these conditions:—

1. Christ's hands of power work inside the rings of the *divine commission and appointment*.

It has been well said by a late writer on the Song that the ring was worn either on the finger or on the wrist; but the Scripture, without any reference to this distinction, speaks of it uniformly as a ring on the hand. Now, from a very early period, a ring—probably a ring for the hand, and nearer the bracelet size—was used as a seal of office power, and authority, and was stamped on public proclamations, royal decrees, and on laws and ordinances, and was more valid and carried more authority than even the sign manual of the monarch. Such a hand ring, sign and seal of office and lordship, Pharaoh gave to Joseph when appointing him governor over the land of Egypt, combining therewith the robe of honor, "vestures of fine linen" and a gold necklace as a badge of nobility (Gen. xli. 42). In the same way, Ahasuerus took the ring off his hand and gave it to Haman, to seal and make authoritative that infamous law for the destruction of the Jews, and afterwards transmitted it to Mordecai, when he made him prime minister of the empire, remarking, "For the writing which is written in the king's name, and sealed with

the king's ring, may no man reverse" (Esth. viii. 2, 8). Now our Beloved has the signet ring and seal of a divine commission and appointment for everything he undertakes, and is always working within the bounds of that commission in everything he performs in heaven and on earth. Therefore, he claimed that, in his mighty works and miracles of power, when on earth, he bore the seal of God's commission. "For him hath God the Father sealed" (John vi. 27). He is also the angel whom John saw "ascending from the east, having the seal of the living God" (Rev. vii. 2), and therefore addresses the Father, "As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he may give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him." And these rings are numerous, he being commissioned to effect all the purposes and counsels of the divine mind in every province of the universal empire of God; and they are "of gold," to show, as formerly explained of this figure in the Song, that they are a divine element in the work of the Redeemer,—divine in purpose, plan, and effectual application, in all of which "his hands are as gold rings."

2. The "gold rings," inside of which the hands of the Beloved work, also denote *those mighty dispensations* which he is commissioned to conduct to their appointed issues.

It will help us to take in this idea to know that there are four words in the original of the New Testament all rendered, and in some sense meaning, our world. The first means the matter of which the world is composed; the second, the order, arrangement, and beauty of the world as a structure; the

third means the inhabited world, or mankind on our planet; and the fourth the ages, past, present, and to come, through which the world is to subsist. Now the world, in this last sense of ages or dispensations, is often connected with our Lord's hands. Thus it is said of him, as God's agent, "By whom also he made the worlds"; that is, the ages or dispensations, as is obvious from the fact that the word for "worlds" here is precisely the same as in the expression, "That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph. ii. 7), and, "Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages, and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints" (Col. i. 26). Now, if our Beloved made these ages or dispensations, or, as scientists like to call them, those æons, then his hands must have been in them; and they are mighty rings on his hand. Illustrative of that is the fact that, when Christ speaks of "the end of the world," it is always the word for ages that is used. Thus, in explaining the parable of the tares, he says, "The harvest is the end of the world," and "So it shall be in the end of the world" (Matt. xiii. 39, 40), and, "Lo, I am with you alway, even to the end of the world," in all of which it is the end of the age, or æon, or dispensation, that is meant, and in closing of which the Redeemer's hands are active in all the grand scenes of the resurrection and day of judgment. The hands of the Beloved are now conducting one great dispensation, or æon, to its predestined termination, after which, entering on another æon, he cries, "Behold, I make all things new." Our

planet as a solid globe shall not cease to exist, a cosmos of beauty and glory shall never be wanting, redeemed humanity shall not cease to be; but the dispensation under which we are now living shall come to an end, and then will be realized the law of the new state of things, "He that is unjust let him be unjust still; and he that is filthy let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous let him be righteous still; and he that is holy let him be holy still" (Rev. xxii. 11).

Now, those mighty dispensations our Lord is thus working out are set forth by Ezekiel by vast wheels or rings beside certain living creatures, that are his agents in carrying out his will. Of these wheels, he tells us, "As for their rings, they were so high that they were dreadful"; and over them and over the heads of the living creatures was a firmament, on which was placed the throne of God. In connection with this grand picture, it is interesting to note that three different words in the original of the Old Testament are rendered by our word "rings." The first means a finger or signet ring, worn on some part of the hand; the second means a felloe, or outer rim or circumference of a wheel; and the third a cylinder or cylindrical figure, made by anything moving round like the legs of a compass in drawing a circle, or like the two leaves of a folding door, moved round in all directions so as to outline a circular space. Now, it is the second of these, a felloe, outer rim or circumference, that is used by Ezekiel for the rings of the wheels, whereas it is the third word, signifying a cylindrical figure, that is the word used for the rings in which are the hands of the Beloved, those vast circles

of operation that constitute his various dispensations as he, as Mediator, opens and shuts God's doors, those mighty cycles or æons that our Lord administers in accordance with the Father's appointment. And wonderfully suggestive is one descriptive particular about the living creatures that move the wheels, "And they had the *hands of a man* under their wings on their four sides" (Ezek. i. 18). Their wings were their activity and power of motion, and the wheels moved as the living creatures moved; but the whole movement was under the guidance and control of the man's hands under their wings, showing that, however the angels "excel in strength" in doing his commandments and executing his purpose, our Lord's hands control and direct all their movements. "Have not my hands made all these things?"

Now we can distinguish some of these great cycles or dispensations in which his hands work, as,—

(1) We have the ante-mundane dispensation. Before the foundations of the earth were laid, before "the morning stars sang together and the sons of God shouted for joy," there had been war in heaven and rebellion among the angels, because, as Milton puts it, they had been commanded to worship the Son, as about to become incarnate; whereupon, the Son drove the rebels from the battlements of heaven, and has been driving them from his other works ever since,— a cycle to be completed at the day of judgment. Then

(2) We have the world-creation period, when our Lord created "the visible," as he had formerly created the "invisible," and that in the mightiest rings

we can possibly conceive. In creating the earth and all the hosts of heaven, the ring form was wonderfully exemplified, so that it has been truly and beautifully said of the physical universe that it is "a vast collection of mighty orbs in mighty orbits." Our earth is an orb, and, as said of God by Isaiah, "It is he that sitteth on the *circle* of the earth" (xl. 22). The sun itself is a sphere, with an inconceivably large orbit; and his apparent daily revolution David describes as "going in circuit" (Ps. xix. 6). It is thought by astronomers, now making a photographic survey of the heavens, that at least twenty millions of stars will leave their impress on the sensitive plate, and that each of these may have a planetary system like our own. Now, one of our own largest planets, Uranus, is eighteen hundred millions of miles from the sun, the diameter of its orbit being thus thirty-six hundred millions of miles, and the circumference eleven thousand and eight hundred millions of miles, over which the planet travels with a velocity of nearly fifteen thousand miles an hour; while the largest and most remote, Neptune, almost doubles these figures. In the face of such facts, the mind is lost in immensity; and, with Chalmers in his "Astronomical Sermons," and Dick in his "Sidereal Heavens," we can only in wonder and adoration exclaim, "Thy mighty hands the heavens have made," "That stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in."

(8) Then there is the human dispensation, first by a covenant of perfect obedience, and then under a covenant of grace, the sign of which is a rainbow circle round the throne of God. "And there was a



rainbow around about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald." On earth, the rainbow is only the segment of a circle, because the prismatic drops that produce its colors are formed so near the earth that the lower part is cut off. It is the bow *on the cloud*, and the cloud is too limited to show the circle in full. Not so, however, when the background of the bow is formed some considerable distance above the earth, as by the spray from the Falls of Niagara. Then all can see the bow a complete circle, as seen by John round the throne of God. It is, however, only the sign of a mightier cycle,—a dispensation that unites earth and heaven, and so connects time and eternity as to make them one great ring of gold on the hands of the Beloved. Then (4) there are many other minor circles, as providential dispensations, that come in under the larger and wider, as "a wheel in the middle of a wheel." Some have interpreted this language as if it merely meant mystery; but it has much more meaning than that. The great wheels beside the living creatures no doubt meant those dispensations in which angels are agents, while God is over all on the throne of government; but we can easily conceive of a wheel in the middle of a wheel,—two concentric circles, one wider and larger, comprehending and containing the smaller. So there are larger and wider providences and dispensations, which embrace and contain smaller ones in them, and as handled by the Beloved become part of our most valuable experience. For example, the providence that befell Jacob in the loss of his favorite son was a small circle, bereaving a tender-hearted old man who had endured many sorrows and

afflictions ; but it was in the bosom of one far larger and wider, the preservation of the Church in the future. No doubt many of these are mysterious and incomprehensible, and, like the rings of the wheels which Ezekiel saw, so high as to be dreadful. Moses and Job and David had all found out that long before, and, in contemplating the ways of God felt often like Daniel, "I heard, but I understood not." There is much practical meaning, therefore, in what Ezekiel says on the subject. "As for the wheels, it was cried unto them in my hearing, O wheel!" Many dispensations are so dark, deep, and utterly inscrutable that in their presence we can only stand in holy reverence and awe, and cry, "O wheel!" "Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints." But, while he who sits enthroned over every dispensation is the "King of Saints," our own Beloved, we may well take courage.

3. His hands being as gold rings further implies the infinite perfection of all the dispensations he conducts.

A ring or circle is a very perfect form, every part of the circumference being at equal distance from the centre, a complete whole, having neither beginning nor end. Now, just such is the life of God, his government and work, his authority and law. He being the centre, all things move on under the power of an attraction we can no more resist than the planets could resist the attraction of gravi-

tation. And even when his doings seem partial and unequal (as Israel said of old was sometimes the case,—Ezek. xxxiii. 17), and sometimes appear to be clashing and antagonistic, yet, like the planets, they move on without collision. For example, while the four planets, Mercury, Venus, the Earth, and Mars, move in concentric rings or orbits, so that no collision is possible, others of the planets cross orbits; and yet, so infinitely perfect are the laws that control their motions, that they have from the beginning been rolling on without deviation or danger. And so it is with our Lord's dispensations, so that we can say, "As for God, his way is perfect," even when "his ways are in the sea, and his footsteps in the mighty waters." Three things make his dispensation to be as gold rings. These are purpose, means, and end. "According to the eternal purpose which he hath purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord." This purpose gives unity to all God's doings, and has been compared to the strap that binds and holds together the sheaf of God's manifold works. And as this purpose has always ready the most suitable and effective means, and thus always issues in the contemplated end, for value, beauty, and perfection the hands of the Beloved "are as gold rings set with the beryl."

4. The gold rings on his hands being "set with the beryl" indicates how God mercifully provides that we can contemplate Christ and his works without being overwhelmed.

The beryl was the tenth precious stone in the High Priest's breastplate. It was a deep sea green, and therefore cast no reflection. Its color was

nearly the same as the emerald, which was a lighter green than the beryl. And it is worthy of notice that the color of the stones in the rings on our Beloved's hands is exactly the same as in the wheels of Ezekiel, of which it is said, "The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the color of the beryl; and the four had one likeness" (Ezek. i. 16). The emerald also finds a place in the vision, not by name, but when, in describing the brightness around the throne, he says, "As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about" (i. 28). And it is noticeable that, while the throne is here set in emerald, and is seen encompassed by an emerald bow by John, that very same bow is seen on the head of our Lord. "And I saw another mighty angel come down from heaven, clothed with a cloud, and a rainbow was on his head, and his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire" (Rev. x. 1). In this vision, he had the opened book in his hand, and cried so that seven thunders reverberated his voice; and he is seen in the grandeur of his mightiest dispensations, one foot upon the sea, and the other on the earth, and in the attitude of swearing as to the order of future events. Now, all this is so overwhelmingly grand that we require the beryl of the rings, and the emerald of the bow, to moderate the sight and make it such as we can bear. As the astronomer cannot turn his telescope to the sun at midday without being protected by smoked or colored glass, so as to moderate the rays that would otherwise destroy his vision, so we require, in contemplating the glory of

our Lord's character and operations, that the view may be softened and brought down to our capacity. As Israel in the wilderness could not bear the presence of God directly manifested, and called for a Mediator, so it is, as seen in our Mediator with human nature and human sympathies, that we can bear the display of God's glory. But with the emerald bow on his head, and the beryl-set rings on his hands, we can bear his presence, hear him speak, and see him work, without "his terror making us afraid."

How full of sweet consolation to his people are these views of the Beloved's hands! They assure us, first of all, of the absolute certainty of success in everything which he undertakes. With many crowns on his head and many rings on his hands, he cannot fail in anything he is commissioned to accomplish, or that he has promised to perform. And then how admirably adapted to our condition is his mediatorial character and work! And that his hands are ever lifted to intercede for us, to work for us, and perform all our requests, how encouraging to "come boldly to the throne of grace!"

## LECTURE XI.

### OUR LORD'S IVOBY, SAPPHIRE-SET BODY.

"His belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires."— *Song* v. 14.

**F**OR it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering." The heroes of antiquity are all represented as having some weak spot, as Hercules, Achilles, Goliath, and Samson, whereas he who is "chiefest among ten thousand" is perfect, so as to be "altogether lovely." And with this we are keenly impressed in passing from one figure, taken from the human body, to another to describe his character and work. As from member to member in this elaborate figurative description, we pass in marked succession, we are carried to a point in which, with application to our Redeemer, we can say, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." Already we have examined his complexion, stature, head, locks, eyes, cheeks, lips, and hands; and his perfection in all has been demonstrated. And now we come to consider the ninth descriptive particular of the Beloved's glory and beauty, "His belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires."

First, let us inquire what is meant by the part figuratively described. Many expositors render the word here for "belly" by the better word "body";

and in the Revised Version the whole clause is rendered, "His body is as ivory work, overlaid with sapphires." It must, however, be kept in view that the word is only used in the plural, and refers in different passages to many parts of the body proper, from the shoulders to the lower limbs. Dr. Newman, in his Hebrew Lexicon, says that the word, properly speaking, denotes the different small parts *within* the animal frame, as the heart, lungs, stomach, liver, intestines, or, in other words, the viscera of the three great cavities of the body proper,—the thoracic, abdominal, and pelvic. While many examples of the use of the word in reference to all these parts might be easily adduced, it must be obvious that the words of the description apply to what is outward and can be seen, as the chest, abdomen, and sides, or lumbar regions. This is plain from the fact that the same word is used in Daniel, in the description of the great image which the Chaldean monarch had seen in his dream, the head, breast and arms, belly and thighs, legs and feet, being all mentioned, and their appearance stated, according to the materials of which each part was composed (Dan. ii. 31-33). Very similar, too, is John's description of our Lord's appearance, though not in the same order of the parts. Indeed, with that exception, there is a wonderful similarity in all the three descriptions,—of the Beloved by the spouse, of the image by Daniel, and of our Lord by John. John, however, commences his description with the body proper, then the head, hair, eyes, feet, voice, hand, mouth, and countenance. It is also to be noted that in the Apocalyptic description the body is clothed and adorned. "One like unto the

Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle." In other words, the figures taken from the human body to describe the many perfections of Christ, as the head, hair, arms, hands, etc., are to be taken as they are seen in ordinary social life, clothed and beautified, so that the eye can rest on them with intense satisfaction.

But, in addition to determining the parts of the body indicated by the plural Hebrew word here rendered "belly," it must be kept steadily in view that many of these parts, besides their physical meaning, are used in a figurative sense to denote the mental and spiritual. The viscera of the three great cavities of the body proper, to which we have already referred, as well as the brain which fills the cerebral cavity, are frequently represented as the seat of all our feelings and affections. Thus we have the heart, reins, bowels, inward parts, inner man, etc., put for our feelings, affections, sympathies, memory, acts of the will, and many of our passions. Hence the most frequent translation of the word here rendered "belly" is "bowels," which is a very frequent figure in Scripture for those feelings, sympathies, and passions by which we are so often moved in life. This greater frequency of translating the word by bowels may have been due to the fact that in the abdominal cavity is placed the ganglionic nerve centre and sympathetic nerve, which are specially sensitive to anything having the tendency to produce emotion. An example of this we have in the use of the same word on the part of the spouse to record her own experience, "My Be-



loved put in his hand by the hole of the door, and my bowels were moved for him" (v. 4); that is, her feelings and affections were moved for him. Examples of the term thus rendered, as applied to men, are so numerous as almost to render quotation unnecessary. Thus Jeremiah, bewailing the desolations brought on Israel, declares, "Behold, O Lord, for I am in distress: my bowels are troubled, mine heart is turned within me" (Sam. i. 20). And Isaiah says, "My bowels shall sound like an harp for Moab, and my inward parts for Kir-haresh" (Is. xvi. 11). In the same way the corresponding Greek word in the New Testament (also used mostly in the plural because used for different parts), is also very frequently used in the sense of strong feeling or emotion. Two examples will make this plain. "Put on, therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearing one another, and forgiving one another" (Col. iii. 12). "But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (1 John iii. 17.) But not to man only, but also to God, is the term applied in the same sense of feelings, emotions, and affections. Thus the prophet, addressing God, asks, "Where is thy zeal and thy strength, the sounding of thy bowels, and of thy mercies toward me, are they restrained?" (Is. lxiii. 15.) And God, speaking of Israel, says: "Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a pleasant child? for since I spake against him I do earnestly remember him still. Therefore, my bowels are troubled for

him: I will surely have mercy on him, saith the Lord" (Jer. xxxi. 20). Now these facts as to the use of the word, here rendered "belly," both as indicating different parts of the body proper, and also different classes of emotions, feelings, and affections associated with them, will, we think, enable us to fix the meaning of the expression when applied to the Beloved. It means in regard to him two things:—

1. His perfect, divine, mediatorial personality.

It has long been a favorite way with expositors to explain the word here rendered "belly" or "body," as meaning the human nature of our Lord, which, while sinless, yet was encompassed by many frailties and infirmities that made him capable of undergoing temptation and suffering. To this way of interpreting the expression, however, we have very strong objections. First, because there can be no such thing present to our mind, in forming an idea of Christ, as an unrelated humanity. "He became man by *taking to himself* a true body and a reasonable soul"; but the "himself" of the divine person was always, from the moment of conception, in union with the true body and reasonable soul. His humanity in itself has no personality, nor can we conceive of it apart from the divine person, either as a saviour or an object of worship. And further, let it be observed that it is in saving relation to us, and as actively engaged in the work of our salvation, that he is set forth in all these descriptive particulars. Now, apart from his divine person, his humanity could do nothing for us. His obedience and suffering had only merit from their relation to his divine nature. His blood would have no power to pardon or pur-

chase, but that it is in law reckoning the blood of God (Acts xx. 28). His righteousness could not justify but that it is the righteousness of God, "unto all, and upon all, that believe." His intercession would be an impossibility, his presence with us an unreal imagination, and the judgment of the great day a farce, were he not "God manifest in the flesh"; and so it might be said of everything else which he is either to us or is doing for us in saving relation.

Viewed, however, in his mediatorial personality, how perfect and complete is our Beloved. The "two distinct natures, in one person forever," give such character to his obedience, suffering, righteousness, intercession, etc., that these all possess divine worth as performed by God, and at the same time so bring them within our reach that we can apprehend and lay hold upon them for our salvation. The element of humanity gives us a relation to all he has done, as Paul affirms: "Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death,—that is, the devil,—and deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Heb. ii. 14, 15). The element of divinity on the other hand clothes his whole work with such merit, worth, and power, that he is "mighty to save"; "able to save to the uttermost all that come unto God by him." Thus, too, he is only and admirably adapted to be what Job so longed for, "a daysman" betwixt us and God; one that might "lay his hand upon us both" (Job ix. 33). He has laid

the hand of deity on God, and the hand of his humanity on man, and brings them together in a state of everlasting reconciliation. We are aware that some object to the term "mediatorial person," but we must recollect that all his acts are personal acts. And yet many of them are ascribed to his humanity, as when it is said that "God hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that man* whom he hath ordained" (Acts xvii. 31). Earthly terms, however, at best only make an approach to expressing divine things; and the relation of a human nature to a divine person in Christ is so unique and unparalleled, that it never can be fully defined in human words. It is certain, however, that the language of Paul warrants the use of such a term as "mediatorial person," when he says to the Corinthians, "To whom ye forgive anything, I forgive also; for if I forgave anything, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgive I it, *in the person of Christ*" (2 Cor. ii. 10). Even as we say, "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever"; "Jesus Christ," "humanity"; "the same yesterday and to-day and forever," divinity; the two in personal conjunction "forever." And this mediatorial personality is the body proper of the whole of what Christ is; and if it is not meant here, there is not anything setting it forth in the whole twelve particulars by which our Lord is here described. We have had his complexion, stature, head, hair, eyes, cheeks, lips, hands, in the preceding particulars, and in the subsequent we will have the legs, countenance, and mouth; and not one of these describe this most wonderful of all his perfections, incarnate Godhead,

“God manifest in the flesh.” And, as no beauty of head, hair, cheeks, eyes, etc., can compensate for a body so deformed and imperfect as to spoil personal appearance, and the graces of movement and carriage, so the unparalleled perfection of our Beloved’s personality gives excellence, beauty, and worth to everything he may either possess or accomplish. His body is as bright ivory.

2. The parts mentioned in the passage are also put for all those gracious feelings towards us exercised by this mediatorial personality.

It has already been explained that the word here rendered “belly” is always used in the plural; and, like the corresponding Greek term, is used for many parts of the trunk, or body proper, and also by a figure of speech, for many forms of feelings, affections, and sympathies; and that not only in this figurative sense applied to men, but also to God himself, of which we had several examples. Now the same word and its equivalent is frequently used of the Beloved to express the exercise and outgoing of his gracious feelings and affections towards us as the objects of his love and grace. Indeed, this same plural word here rendered “belly” is used by him in addressing the Father as to his delight in the mediatorial work assigned him, and translated “heart”: “I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart” (Ps. xl. 8). The terrible intensity of his sufferings, “My heart is like wax: it is melted in the midst of my bowels” (Ps. xxii. 14), is also wonderfully set forth by the same word, referring more to his mental feelings and agony than to any mere bodily ills which he was enduring. As indica-

tive of his compassion, also, and all other gracious feelings towards his people, the passages already quoted of God apply in their fullest sense to the Mediator. And Paul, using the corresponding New Testament term, declares in writing to the Philippians, "For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ" (Phil. i. 8), and exhorts them in another part of his letter, "If there be, therefore, any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, fulfil ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind" (ii. 1, 2), and afterwards (v. 5) speaks of these things thus, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Nor can we conceive any description of Christ to be at all complete if this feature of his character is either left out, or not given prominence and eminence in telling what he is to his people. This feature comes into view in almost every reference to him in the law, psalms, prophets, and statements of the New Testament. His love, grace, mercy, pity, compassion, and sympathy, long suffering and ineffable loving kindness, run through every relation and sweeten all his dealings with us. "He can have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way." He is, therefore, "not such a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." Wherefore, "For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted." What compassion he exercised in the days of his humiliation, as he healed the sick, dispossessed devils,

fed the hungry crowd, wept with the sisters of Bethany, and lamented over the foreseen desolation of Jerusalem! In him was fulfilled that loveliest of figures, "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him" (Ps. ciii. 18). And while this feature of our Beloved is not all due to his perfect humanity,—for God the Father pities, who has no human nature,—yet the junction of humanity to divinity in our Lord's mediatorial person greatly enlarges our conception of its exercise. By the assumption of our nature he became our brother, and all brotherly kindness and sympathy are the more to be expected of him. And this gives a pathos and tenderness to all our intercourse with him, more marked than that of Joseph when he wept on the neck of his brother Benjamin, "For our Lord is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and of great mercy. The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works" (Ps. xlv. 8, 9).

Secondly. The description of the parts,— "as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires."

In the Revised Version, instead of "bright ivory," we have "ivory work," with the ordinary rendering in the margin. Perhaps the best rendering is that suggested by Newman, "as ivory elaborately wrought so as to shine, and overlaid with sapphires." Among the nations more advanced in civilization the use of ivory was known from a very early period. The ancient Egyptians and Assyrians used it for various purposes, and Herodotus speaks of Ethiopia as an ivory producing country, and tells that twenty horns or tusks of ivory were paid by way of tribute every year to the King of Persia. Specimens of wrought

ivory have in recent times been found in the excavations at Nimroud, of a date earlier than the invasion of Babylonia by the Persians. Among the Israelites, it was in use before the times of David, who speaks in the 45th Psalm of "ivory palaces." Solomon imported it from India, with "apes and peacocks," and made a throne of ivory overlaid with gold. Ahab also made a house of ivory (1 Kings xxii. 39), and the prophet Amos speaks of couches of ivory being common in his time (iii. 15 and vi. 4). The only ivory known to the ancients was the tusk of the elephant, to which we have added the tusk of walrus or sea horse. The elephants producing ivory are of two varieties, the African and the Indian, the former noted for its larger tusks, which sometimes attain the length of from eight to ten feet, and will weigh from one hundred to one hundred and twenty pounds. When we consider that the importation of ivory annually into Great Britain alone amounts to about one million pounds, we see how largely ivory still is regarded as an article of luxury. It was so also among the Romans, as John speaks of "vessels of ivory" as among the luxuries that would utterly perish out of the Babylon of prophecy (Rev. xviii. 12). Ivory is capable of the most elaborate workmanship, and takes a splendid polish, and is still manufactured into all kinds of ornaments. In India, a Hindoo artist will spend more than a dozen years on one small piece of workmanship in this material, and that with a minuteness of detail that is really surprising.

Now, from all this we can learn how a comparison of the body, or any part of it, to an elaborate piece of



workmanship in this material, beautiful in form, and resplendent in polish, would be such a thing as we would naturally expect; and accordingly we find it entering into the description of the spouse as well as of the Beloved: "Thy neck is as a tower of ivory" (chap. vii. 4). In relation to the Beloved, it indicates the beauty, fulness, and glory of his mediatorial person, especially in the exercise of his grace and saving offices towards his people, and presents us a picture of the Mediating Redeemer almost identical with that of John, "I saw one like the Son of Man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle." Here we have the person of Christ, the God-man mediator, who was dead and is now alive, the Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end; and this person is clothed with a garment which is held in its place by a girdle adorned with precious stones. Now that is just the idea of the spouse as she here describes her Beloved, and it is founded on the appearance of one elegantly dressed according to the times, country, and rank of the individual. Among the Israelites, nobles and persons of means wore robes of the finest, most resplendent linen, which, being loose and flowing, were bound to the body, especially while active and exercised, by a girdle, often set with valuable gems, so as to be the most costly of all the parts of the dress. The High Priest, in ephod and robe, bound to his person by "the curious girdle of the ephod," would give some idea of what is meant by the picture here. With such robes a girdle was indispensable, and therefore manufacturing girdles seems to have been a common in-

dustry among women. Thus Solomon says of the virtuous wife, "She maketh fine linen and selleth it, she delivereth girdles to the merchant" (Prov. xxxi. 24). And therefore we find David, when he danced before the Lord, "was girded with a linen ephod" (2 Sam. vi. 14). The body of our Lord, thus seen as elaborately wrought ivory, will suggest:—

1. The amazing constitution and glorious workmanship of our Lord's mediatorial person. The figure in the description of the Beloved here is not ivory alone, but ivory elaborately wrought, so as to shine. In the days of Solomon, the most precious and valued works of art were made of ivory, as ornaments, vessels, couches, and even the inlaying of the walls of palaces, so that both the persons and the dwellings of the wealthy were adorned with this material, cut and polished and elaborately wrought at an expense of time and effort almost inconceivable, when we consider that all was then done by patient, slow hand labor. Now, what a figure to set forth the inconceivably wonderful constitution and structure of the person of Christ! If it be true of us that we are "his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works," how much more is he God's workmanship in the unparalleled constitution of his person. There is nothing like the person of Christ—"two distinct natures in one person forever"—in the universe. He is literally "the first-born of every creature," has "in all things the pre-eminence," is the masterpiece of creation, the "great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh," and his name "is called Wonderful"! And, as we gaze on this image of the invisible God as exhibited

in the twelve descriptive particulars we are considering, and as fuller and brighter light all along the line bursts from time to time on our vision, how fain are we to exclaim, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart to conceive"! We know of one who ascribed his conversion to a statement, made from the pulpit, that "Christ could not be an invention," and was thereby led to receive the gospel of Christ as true, and "worthy of all acceptation." The conception of such a person as the incarnate Jehovah could only originate in the mind of Godhead. The workmanship that gave being to such an effect as the constitution of the personal Mediator surpasses our thoughts; and of God alone can it be said, in all the mystery of the incarnation, "A body hast thou prepared me." And thus, like John, we behold his glory as exclusively "the glory of the ONLY BEGOTTEN OF THE FATHER."

2. The intrinsic and practical value of the offices wherewith his mediatorial person is clothed.

Elaborate pieces of workmanship in ivory were in the time of Solomon what paintings are with us, often of fabulous value, and possessed only by those whose means were exceptionally large. But who can estimate the value of "the unspeakable gift"? Who can calculate the worth of the offices with which the Father hath invested him? Who can tell the value of the atonement, or the greatness of the price at which he redeemed his people, or the worth of his priestly intercession ever carried on in our behalf? The psalmist could ask, "Who knoweth the power of thine anger?" May we not rather ask, "Who

knoweth the power of his love?" No conceivable figure can set forth, no arithmetic of earth can calculate, not only the worth of the Beloved's person, but also of these robes of office wherewith he is clothed down to the foot, and with which the Father girded him to carry into effect his gracious undertaking.

But not in *inherent* and *intrinsic* value alone, but in *practical* use and advantage to us, who can conceive aright of the offices of our Beloved? We can imagine some things having great inherent value among men, and yet of little practical use in life. Thus Solomon, in his wide observation, speaks of "a man to whom God hath given riches, wealth, and honor, so that he wanteth nothing for his soul of all that he desireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a stranger eateth it: this is vanity and an evil disease" (Eccl. vi. 2). But not so with "the unsearchable riches of Christ." Everything about his person, offices, and saving relations is of the highest practical value, so that we "eat his body," "drink his blood," and "put on the Lord Jesus Christ"; and he is to us everything that can minister to our happiness or secure our highest interests. Pardon, justification, peace with God, a place in his family, the gift of the spirit, sanctification and perseverance in grace and eternal life,—all these flow to us directly from the exercise of his offices, and are more valuable "than gold, yea, much fine gold."

8. The beauty and glory and unspeakable advantages daily resulting to us from the exercise toward us of his tenderness and compassion. Though this

might have been embraced in the foregoing particular, yet, as before noticed, the word for belly or body here, being so much more frequently rendered bowels, pointing to his compassion and sympathy, suggests that special prominence and emphasis should be given to these in interpreting this figure of the Beloved. And who can tell how much we are indebted to the exercise of such feelings towards us on the part of our Lord? Peter says that we should "account the long suffering of God to be salvation," and the Psalms and prophets are full of the kindness, loving kindness, and loving kindnesses of our Lord towards us. And who can tell of all the sweetness and worth of these gracious feelings in their outflow towards us in our daily fellowship with him? How true we feel and know it to be that his mercy is tender mercy, his kindness loving kindness, his grace abundant grace, his love a love that passeth knowledge, and his compassion such as never fails. "It is of the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not" (Lam. iii. 22). And who can tell the full meaning of those words, used again and again of our Lord when on earth, "And Jesus, moved with compassion." In days of sin and sorrow, of doubt and darkness, loneliness and want, how sweet these words, "Jesus, moved with compassion." To taste his love, and feel that the bowels of our Beloved are yearning over us as the bowels of Joseph over his brother, how incomparably sweet! while to be allowed to roll our burden on him, and cast on him all our cares, with the gracious assurance that "he careth for us," is something that often ministers unspeakable com-

fort. The possession of the most prized objects of earth are not to be named in comparison with this gracious tenderness of the heart of the Beloved towards us, especially in respect to our spiritual and eternal interests. Naming the things of earth as matter of joy is often but like holding up a gaudy toy before the closing eyes of a dying child, — a farewell look, and that is all; whereas, "The mercy of the Lord endureth forever."

But an additional particular about the person, offices, and work of our Lord is further given in the statement that the elaborately wrought ivory is "overlaid with sapphires."

The sapphire is a precious stone, next in value to the diamond, and received its name from Mount Sepbar, in Media, where it was found at an early date (Gen. x. 30). It was of great hardness and brightness, and was one of the gems on the High Priest's breastplate. Its color was deep blue, resembling the appearance of an Eastern sky. It is only thrice referred to in Scripture literally as a precious stone, as where Job, in his notice of mining operations, says, "The stones of it are the place of sapphires, and it hath dust of gold (xxviii. 6). And again: "It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx, or the sapphire" (xxviii. 16); also in the description of the breastplate of the High Priest: "The second row an emerald, a sapphire, and a diamond." It was quite frequently, however, used for figurative and descriptive purposes. Thus Jeremiah, in describing the Nazarites of his day, says, "Her Nazarites were purer than snow, they were whiter than milk, they were more ruddy in body than rubies, their polishing was of sapphire" (Lam. iv. 7).

And so in describing figuratively the magnificence of the prince of Tyre, Ezekiel sarcastically says, "Thou hast been in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was thy covering,—the sardius, topaz, and the diamond, the beryl, the onyx, and the jasper, the sapphire, the emerald, and the carbuncle, and gold; the workmanship of thy tabrets and of thy pipes was prepared in thee in the day that thou wast created" (Ezek. xxviii. 13). More interesting, however, is the application of a figure from this precious stone to describe God and spiritual things, which occurs with considerable frequency. When used of God, it always signifies either heaven as the place of his throne, or the throne itself. Thus, after ratifying by blood the covenant at Sinai, it is added, "Then went up Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel. And they saw the God of Israel; and there was under his feet, as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in its clearness" (Ex. xxiv. 9). The fine sky blue or brilliant azure of the sapphire is here taken as a figure for the resting place of God's feet, of which he speaks in Isaiah, "I will make the place of my feet glorious" (Is. lx. 13), that is, of my presence, throne, and manifested glory. And this, in the words of Moses, is said to be "as the body of heaven in his clearness," referring to the body of our atmosphere through which, when we look up some forty-five miles, it appears of sapphire hue. And exactly corresponding is the description of the same scene by Ezekiel: "And above the firmament, that was over their (the cherubims') heads, was the likeness of a throne, as the appearance of a sapphire stone; and upon the likeness of the throne

was the likeness, as the appearance of a man above upon it" (i. 26); and again: "And I looked, and behold, in the firmament that was above the head of the cherubim, there appeared over them as it were a sapphire stone, as the appearance of the likeness of a throne" (x. 1). This sapphire firmament and sapphire throne, under which, and to support which, cherubim and other heavenly beings minister, are no doubt the same as the psalmist speaks of, "Praise God in his sanctuary, praise him in the firmament of his power" (Ps. cl. 1). But it is a mediatorial throne; for he who was seen to sit on it was "as the appearance of a man above upon it," which, like the appearance of a man's hand under the wings of the cherubim, was indicative that the occupant of the throne was to be human as well as divine. Indeed, we cannot recall any example of the appearance of God in human form or likeness, as to any of the persons of the Godhead, but the second. Now there is great beauty in the sapphire here being used to describe the appearance of our Lord's body. His body proper we have seen to mean his mediatorial person. And this person is as bright as wrought ivory with the offices wherewith he is clothed, and the pity, love, compassion, flowing daily through them towards us. Now all these offices and their exercise towards us are divine, heavenly, and governmental, as the sapphire firmament; and as through them, as through the body of heaven "in its clearness," we look up, we can contemplate God himself, like the elders on Sinai, with some measure of composure and boldness. And this exactly accords with the fact that the robes wherewith the High Priest was clothed, when ministering in view of the people, and standing between



them and God, and through whom they looked up to God, were blue, or of sapphire hue. The ephod, breastplate, and girdle all were of blue ground, diversified with gold, purple, and scarlet; while the robe, that more fully covered the body than all the rest put together, was "all of blue" (Ex. xxviii. 31); all of which, in a lively manner, typified the offices of our Lord,—heavenly, divinely appointed, governmental, and indestructible, as blue is known to be the most indestructible of all colors, and can be used for various purposes more than any other without failing or losing its freshness. And therefore, when Christ promises to make his Church in these respects like what he is himself, he employs the sapphire to indicate the change. "O thou afflicted, tossed with tempests and not comforted, behold I will lay thy stones with fair colors, and thy foundations with sapphires" (Is. liv. 11). And so the New Jerusalem, or heavenly state of the Church, has for its first foundation a jasper, and for the second a sapphire (Rev. xxi. 19).

From all which we may learn and feel how inconceivably glorious are the person and offices of our Beloved, how precious his sympathy and compassion, especially toward the ignorant and those who are out of the way,—how the work of salvation by Christ is under the feet of God as a firmament of power in which we find many things to quicken our praise,—and that, if the best things of earth are only feeble figures to set forth his loveliness and beauty, oh, what unspeakable blessedness "to be ever with the Lord," and to be able to say, "As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness" (Ps. xvii. 15).

## LECTURE XII.

### OUR LORD'S MARBLE LIMBS IN SOCKETS OF GOLD.

"His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold."—SONG 7.

AS we pass in figure from one part of the body to another, in this matchless description of the Beloved, it is noticeable that, while some members are here introduced that do not find a place in any other poetic picture of our Lord, sketched by any of the other inspired writers, yet there are others that seem common symbols of his character and work, employed by all who have been privileged to set forth his glory. Of this our present subject is an example. The legs and feet, or lower extremities, are figuratively used, when speaking of God, by Moses, David, Isaiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and by Paul, Peter, and John, so that we may safely conclude that there are some, both instruction and comfort, to be derived from a careful consideration of what is meant by these terms in figurative description. It is on record of the devoted McCheyne that on one occasion, being visited by a friend, and asked what had been immediately before the subject of his thoughts, he replied, "I was trying to feed on that view of the Beloved, 'His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold.'" If for spiritual and devotional purposes we would only study what such passages re-

veal of Christ, it would greatly inure to our spiritual good and comfort. Let us consider,—

First. What is meant by the parts described, his legs and feet.

Our lower extremities, legs and feet, are important parts of our physical system, and we only require to reflect as to what practical ends and purposes these parts serve in the activities of daily life, to understand the sense in which they are used of God and of his son Jesus Christ. Now while they, no doubt, serve a great variety of purposes, and fulfil several important functions, in ordinary life, there seem to be principally two things in which, literally and figuratively, they are spoken of in Scripture as being active. These are:—

1. In *supporting the body* in its various positions and operations.

In this aspect of the natural use of our lower extremities, in performing the functions of daily life, how pathetic the words of Solomon when he mentions as one of the effects of old age, “And the strong men shall bow themselves.” When the lower limbs wax feeble, they “bow themselves” under the pressure of the body, which they have been carrying so long, and a sense of weariness and weakness succeeds the feeling of vigor and ease and elasticity of motion, formerly experienced. And not only have the legs and feet been carrying the weight of the body, but all the weights and burdens that have been laid on the body, with the force and pressure with which all these bear down in many of the violent and oppressive employments and exercises of ordinary life. Therefore, if we disable the limbs by anything that

takes away their power to support the body in its many activities, we in a great measure disable the whole man. Thus in the case of the *impotent* man whom Peter healed at the beautiful gate of the temple, it is said, "And immediately *his feet and ankle bones* received strength; and he, leaping up, stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God" (Acts iii. 7, 8). And so of that similar case at Lystra (chap. xiv. 10). And so of Ezekiel's experience when, having fallen prostrate after beholding the vision of the divine glory, it was said to him, "Son of man, stand upon thy feet and I will speak unto thee. And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me and set me on my feet" (ii. 1).

But besides this purely physical sense, in which we use the words "legs" and "feet," we use them also in a figurative sense of our condition and circumstances in life. Thus not only by prostrating affliction do we speak of a man being literally cast down, but after pecuniary reverses we speak of him as losing his standing, or being staggered, or failing to keep his feet. And when he recovers from his difficulties we say he has got on his feet again, thus applying to matters of business and social life a figure from these members of the body and their use.

Now, in this figurative sense we also speak of God as if possessed of these members, and by them, as in the body, sustaining and supporting all that he bears up in his whole works of providence and grace. Thus David says of his own experience, "He bowed the heavens, also, and came down, and darkness was under his feet" (Ps. xviii. 9), and "Cast thy burden on the

Lord and he shall sustain thee" (Ps. lv. 22). And in wonderful harmony with the figure employed in the description of our Lord we are considering, he says of himself, "The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved; I bear up the pillars of it" (Ps. lxxv. 3). Paul also claims for him, "Upholding all things by the word of his power" (Heb. i. 3), and, "By whom all things consist" (Col. i. 17), and not only declares that Christ's "strength is made perfect in weakness," but of the weak brother he asserts, "Yea, he shall be holden up, for God is able to make him stand." True, "his legs are as pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold."

2. The lower extremities are also put, both literally and figuratively, for the *goings or ways*.

The legs and feet, being the instruments most employed in locomotion, the words are often put not only for those parts literally, but for walking, passing over space, and accomplishing a journey. Thus, in denouncing the judgments of God against Babylon, Isaiah cries, "Uncover thy locks, make bare the leg, uncover the thigh, pass over the rivers" (chap. xlvii. 2). Again, speaking of the instrument God had prepared, he says, "He pursued them, and passed safely, even by the way he had not gone with his feet" (xli. 3). So also Solomon advises, "Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established" (Prov. iv. 26). Thus the legs and feet are so connected with many verbs of motion, and many words signifying bodily activity, as to become a familiar term, for our ways or goings. And of this figurative use of the term, when applied to ourselves, we have also many examples. Thus David prays, "Hold

up my goings in thy paths, so that my footsteps slip not" (Ps. xvii. 5), and Paul, "your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Ephes. vi. 15). David also combines the two ideas suggested by feet—strength or stability and going or way—"It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect. He maketh my feet like hind's feet, and setteth me on my high places" (Ps. xviii. 32). Of old it was regarded an important qualification in a warrior to be swift of foot, like the hind, either in making or repelling an attack. Thus Asahel, brother of Joab, was said to be "as swift of foot as a wild roe," and Homer again and again calls his hero, "the swift-footed Achilles." Therefore, it is added, "Thou hast enlarged my steps under me that my feet did not slip" (36). That the foot should thus be so frequently put, both literally and figuratively, for our ways or goings may be due, as was formerly noticed of the hands, to the wonderful structure and adaptation of the parts to almost every kind of motion. From the point of articulation with the lower end of the two bones of the leg, there are, including the tarsus and metatarsus and bones of the toes, as many as twenty-seven bones in each foot, or fifty-four in the two; and this, with their numerous articulations and wonderful muscular attachments, gives our lower extremities a marvellous power to move the whole body in almost every direction, backward, forward, round, in a straight line, or at almost any angle, right or left. Thus the legs and feet are not only the strong men that bear up and sustain erect the whole system, but the instruments wonderfully adapted to move the whole mass, according to the pleasure of the will,

that so largely dominates the animal economy. And it is worth notice in passing that these two functions of the natural body are very intimately connected. The first thing in being able to walk is to be able to stand erect, which every child has to learn and attain before it develops power of locomotion. How our muscular system can support the body in an erect position can hardly be explained. An image, of the exact figure and proportions of a man, would not stand if set on its feet, because a perpendicular line through its centre of gravity would not pass through its base. To stand, it requires to be fastened to the floor. And yet, such is the structure of our bodies and the power of our muscles that we can, as it were, attach ourselves to the ground beneath our feet, and hold up erect or even stoop and bend at different angles to the earth. And on this depends in a great measure our ability to perform the operations in which we daily engage. And so it is spiritually. We must be able to stand before we can walk, and strength and stability is a necessary prerequisite to being active in Christ's service.

But not of man only, but even of God, we have this figurative sense of feet frequently used, as indicative of locomotion. Thus, "God came from Teman, and the holy one from mount Paran" (Hab. iii. 3), and, "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known" (Ps. lxxvii. 19). So also, "The Lord hath his way in the whirlwind, and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet" (Neh. i. 3). And thus, too, in relation to the Beloved the same figurative way of speaking is employed. Thus John declares, "His

feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace," and then quotes our Lord as saying, "These things saith he that holdeth the stars in his right hand, *who walketh* in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks" (Rev. ii. 1).

Secondly. We notice the figurative description of the Beloved's legs and feet, "Like pillars of marble set upon sockets of fine gold."

Two pillars of finest polished marble, representing the legs, set in sockets of gold, representing the feet encased in richest shoes or sandals, certainly supply a most beautiful and expressive figure of what the lower extremities mean when used descriptively of Christ. Some suppose that there may be here some reference in these polished marble pillars to parts of the priest's dress; but it is more likely that the reference is to the two pillars set up by Solomon in front of the temple, the one of which was called Jachin, "He shall establish," and the other Boaz, "In it is strength," or, taken together, meaning, "He shall establish it in strength," teaching the Israelites to look to the temple, and through it to the God of the temple, for all the permanence and stability which the nation should ever attain. The marble pillars, therefore, and the lower limbs, resting on golden sockets, really mean the same thing,—namely, all that stability, strength, wisdom of counsel, and ways of dealing with us, which comfort us and assure us that in Him all our interests are secure, that no pressure can affect his power or unsettle his purposes and plans. These pillars, Jachin and Boaz, are all-sufficient to bear up and sustain:—



1. Under all that it was necessary he should bear, in accomplishing the great work of our redemption.

A not infrequent view of the work of our Redeemer is that of one bearing up under the pressure of something oppressively heavy, and which no created being could support. Thus we have the Father declaring, "I have laid help upon one that is *mighty*, I have exalted one chosen out of the people" (Ps. lxxxix. 19). Only such a mighty one could undertake what was necessary to bring help to us in our state of sin and misery. Here it is literally true, "He taketh not pleasure in the legs of man" (Ps. cxlvii. 10), and, "If God will not withdraw his anger, the proud helpers do stoop under him" (Job ix. 18). A glance at some of the things our Lord bore, and is still bearing on our behalf, will show how emphatically true it is that "his legs are as pillars of marble." (1) What a load of sin and guilt, sorrow and suffering, he bore for us! "Surely, he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrow." "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." "And he bare the sins of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Is. liii. 4, 6, 12). To these add the testimony of Paul, "So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many" (Heb. ix. 28), and of Peter, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree" (1 Peter ii. 24). Such a load, such a burden, contained many elements no creature could have had laid on him without being crushed and destroyed thereby. For example, (1) who could have borne the righteous displeasure and wrath of God against sin and sinners? Therefore Cain, when expelled from the divine presence, ex-

claimed, "My punishment is greater than I can bear." What, then, must the accumulated guilt and the holy wrath of God and penalty of the law, not in respect to one individual only, but for the whole world, have been to him who took it all upon himself, and was made sin for us and a curse, and who, when no other sacrifice commensurate with the demands of our salvation could be found, cried, "Lo, I come! In the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O God." (2) And then our Beloved bears up the burden of the divine government over all things. And therefore, when Isaiah foretells his incarnation, as "the child to be born and the Son given," he adds, "And the government shall be upon his shoulder." And who is sufficient for such an almost infinite work? The ancients had their fabled Atlas, who was represented as bearing the world on his shoulders, whereas our Lord not only "holds up and stablishes the pillars of the earth," but "upholds *all things* by the word of his power." To preserve and uphold and rule and judge a world would itself be an overwhelming task, but to do so to the whole universe of being is scarcely conceivable, except by omnipotence or the controlling power of the infinite. (3) Besides, our Beloved constantly bears all the wants, cares, and burdens of his people, "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee"; "Casting all your cares upon him, for he careth for you." To know our every want, to sympathize with every sufferer, to answer every prayer of faith, to bless and prosper all our work for him in the world, to supply all our need, to fulfil every promise, and to make all things con-

stantly to work together for the good of all,— what a glorious person must he be who can accomplish all these most perfectly!

2. The legs, being as marble pillars, also indicate the stability and permanence of his church and kingdom from its relation to himself. “The foundation of the Lord standeth sure,” because the superstructure of his church and kingdom rests on a stable basis. Systems founded by man, and on man, decay and crumble through the disorganizing influence of time, and even religious systems of human construction come tumbling to the ground, as the temple of the Philistines when the dying hero of Israel tugged at its principal pillars of support. Whilst, however, Israel’s great king and judge can easily shake to pieces, and overthrow in irretrievable ruins, the proudest systems men can erect, his kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and shall remain to all generations because it rests on the power of one who hath said of the city of God, “She shall not be moved.” Therefore Paul, quoting the prophet, speaks of God’s voice shaking, not the earth only, but also heaven, and declares, “This word, yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore we, receiving a kingdom that cannot be moved, let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear” (Heb. xii. 27, 28). The reason why the great image, seen by Nebuchadnezzar, and representing the world powers, was brought to ruin, was that its feet were partly of iron and partly of miry clay, that had no element of coherence, and

therefore fell asunder — a thing that has happened to every earthly image men have built up, whenever they have been struck by God's judgments. But it was far different with the stone that smote the image. It had the element of coherence, and became a great mountain and filled the whole earth" (Dan. ii. 34, 35), so that this kingdom of stone alone became permanent, the gates of hell not being able to prevail against it. The secret, however, of its stability is what is said of Zion, "The Highest himself shall establish her" (Ps. lxxxvii. 5). "Therefore the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee" (Is. liv. 10). "His legs are as pillars of marble."

8. That these pillars of marble rest on golden sockets also contains much instruction and comfort. As already stated, the sockets of fine gold mean the feet, which are, like sockets to the limbs, a firm and stable basis on which to stand, and in which to move. The slippers and sandals of the wealthy were embroidered with gold thread, and so enriched thereby as to appear as if consisting entirely of that precious metal. Now the feet of our Lord, thus viewed in connection with his legs, are intended to point out:

(1) That all his strength, stability, and glorious goings and unsearchable ways, all rest on the power of his divine nature and character. As has been already noticed, wherever anything in this poem is represented as golden, it always means that it is of God and divine, as we have seen of Solomon's chariot, the bottom of which was of gold, to indicate that all

the provisions of the covenant of grace rest on God himself, or on his divine nature and character, which makes everything he has promised, "The sure mercies of David." And as one of our old expositors on this poem has remarked, "The Beloved in this description has his head of gold, his hands in gold, and feet in gold,—in fact, from head to feet all gold, pointing out that his divine nature and perfections are the source of all the grace and power he exercises on our behalf, and of all those gracious dealings with us that are the subject matter of our spiritual experience." Just as it was with the pillars Jachin and Boaz—stability and strength—to which we have referred above. To a person viewing the temple from Mount Olives, on the east, these two pillars would seem in front of the temple as if actually set in gold. The whole temple being resplendent with gold, and these pillars being of a different color, as they were viewed on the golden background, they would appear as if actually in sockets of the precious metal. So whatever view we may, at any time, have before us the work of Christ, it is always set in deity, both as himself possessing Godhead, and also by being divinely appointed and commissioned and clothed with divine power and authority, as to everything he was to perform. Even in the greatest depths of his humiliation on earth, this wonderfully characterized his whole course; and, using a figure from the feet, he says, "I must walk to-day, and to-morrow, and the day following" (Luke xiii. 38). How many sunbursts of divine glory are seen even in the darkest hours, on that walk, realizing John's words, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among

us; and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." Even when apprehended and being led away as a prisoner he manifested his divine power in healing Malchus, whose ear Peter had cut off; and he so suffered, enduring what was due to the sins of others, and so blessing even his murderers, as to have suggested the expression, "Socrates died as a philosopher, but Jesus died as a God." Without taking into account this element, we cannot conceive aright of the true character and magnificent proportions of what he came to earth to accomplish.

(2) These views of our Beloved's feet being like sockets of gold further assure us of his ability to accomplish all things for his people, both individually and collectively. He has been divinely given "the heathen for his inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession," and he is represented as "going forth conquering and to conquer"; and surely, with feet set in divinity, he cannot "fail or be discouraged till he have set judgment on the earth, and the isles shall wait for his law." Therefore, according to the eastern custom of taking possession — as seen in the act of Boaz in reference to the inheritance of the deceased Elimelech — by pulling off the shoe, so our Lord says, "Over Edom I will cast out my shoe," foretelling the conversion of the Gentile nations, so as to become part of his kingdom. And therefore by another figure, taken from the feet, he is seen removing all the obstacles and hindrances to the progress of his kingdom on earth. "Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet" (Hab. iii. 5), and to him

might, both literally and truly, in the way he is opening up heathen nations to the influence of the gospel in our own day, he applied the boastful language of the Assyrian King, "I have digged, and drunk water; and with the sole of my feet have I dried up all the rivers of the besieged places" (Is. xxxvii. 25). In fact, in smiting the image of the world powers, demolishing old hoary systems of superstition and false religion, breaking down barriers to the progress of the gospel, and setting before us everywhere an open door, he is literally accomplishing what the prophet who sung of his incarnation, ministry, and suffering, so vividly portrayed of his exaltation and reign: "The Lord shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war; he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies. I have long holden my peace; I have been still and refrained myself. Now will I cry like a travailing woman, I will destroy and devour at once. I will make waste mountains and hills, and dry up all their herbs; and I will make the rivers islands, and I will dry up the pools. And I will bring the blind by a way they knew not; I will lead them in paths they have not known; I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight. These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them." And moreover, while conducting these world-wide operations on behalf of his people, he walks with them, and among the candlesticks, "makes the place of his feet glorious" among them by manifestations of his glory and fellowship with himself, and fills them with confidence and joy as they are made more fully to understand his ways and sing, "They

have seen thy goings, O God, even the goings of my God, my King, in the sanctuary" (Ps. lxxviii. 24).

(3) His feet, encased in divine power, are also often used figuratively for the overthrow and destruction of all his enemies. Early in the history of redemption was it announced that Satan would have his head — his kingdom and power — bruised by the seed of the woman, our incarnate Lord; and thus, as John expresses it, "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John iii. 8). Therefore, all things are put under his feet in covenant arrangement; and, though we see not as yet all things made subjectively obedient, we know that he must reign till all his enemies be made his footstool, and that the power with which he is invested, both moral and physical, is abundantly adequate to that end. Therefore was it foretold of him, "Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder, the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet" (Ps. xci. 13). And it is this that gives meaning and emphasis to other descriptions of our Lord's feet. Thus Daniel declares "His arms and his feet in color like to polished brass" (x. 6), corresponding to the description of the same parts by John, "And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace" (Rev. i. 15), both giving form to the assurance, "Our God is a consuming fire." Indeed, the very same word is used in another description of our Lord's feet, when it is said, "And his face was as it were the sun, and his feet as pillars of fire" (x. 1). These feet, in terrible judgment, are on the necks of all his enemies (Ps. xviii. 40).



Surely, then, we may well feel, first, what consolation such views of our Lord's ways, goings, and universal administration are calculated to give to all his friends and followers; and, secondly, that the ways of our Lord, whether viewed in the light of prophecy or providence, should inspire us with a salutary fear: "For the great day of his wrath, who shall be able to stand?" And "Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath" (Ps. xc. 11). And, thirdly, how we should be exercised in having his ways in our heart and being "followers of God as dear children." "Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace."

## LECTURE XIII.

### OUR LORD'S COUNTENANCE AS LEBANON WITH ITS CEDARS.

"His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars."—  
SONG v. 15.

THERE is nothing too great or too small to illustrate the character of God, and especially the glory of the Beloved. We can read it in the mighty, glowing universe at the far end of our telescope, and see it in the infinitesimally minute molecule in the field of our microscope. From the humble little violet, that pours out on our path its stores of fragrance, to the giant cedars that for generations have withstood the storm, and whose towering forms are the growth of ages; from the little terraced mound with a few flowers on its sloping sides to the mountain range whose top is in the clouds, we can sweep the whole circle of God's fairest works and find figures to exalt our conceptions of his glory, and to stimulate our praise. Thus, ten different parts of our bodily frame we have already considered as showing something of our Redeemer's character and perfection; from head to foot in figure we have surveyed him, and have seen much of his ineffable beauty; and yet, so inexhaustible is his fulness that two others yet await examination. These are, first, a figurative description of his countenance, and then a similar description of his mouth.

As to the former, the description of his countenance, as has formerly been noticed, some expositors have thought it strange that any further description of the part mentioned should have been thought necessary, after that we had his complexion, head, hair, eyes, cheeks, and lips already described; and ask why particularize the mouth after his lips had been declared to be "as lilies, dropping sweet-smelling myrrh." A little explanation will make all plain. Let us inquire,—

First. What is meant by the countenance of our Beloved.

We have in the authorized version of the Old Testament the word "countenance" as a translation for no less than six Hebrew words; and it is interesting to know that, while the English word is frequently applied in Scripture to God, it is never the same word in the original as is used in this poem of both the Beloved and his spouse. In the nine or ten cases in which the word is used of God, it is always the same Hebrew word, signifying literally the face; whereas, as applied twice in this poem to the spouse (ii. 14), and once to the Beloved, it is a word formed from the verb "to see," and signifying appearance, form, sight, vision, aspect. By the last of these the authors of the revised version have rendered the word for countenance in the original, "His aspect is as Lebanon." And an exactly corresponding word in Greek, also formed from the verb "to see," is used of the countenance of our Lord as seen by John, "And his countenance (aspect) was as the sun" (Rev. i. 16). The meaning, therefore, of the expression, "His countenance is as Lebanon," is not to be sought

in face and features, but in the personal appearances, or aspects in which he is seen, contemplated, and enjoyed. Just as a person beautiful in face and form, with graceful figure and engaging manners, may be viewed in many different positions and lights, and even photographed in each, so it is with the Beloved as here described. But in whatever light or aspect he is seen, his whole appearance "is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars."

1. There have been *visional* appearances and aspects, in which our Lord has been seen and contemplated.

Abraham saw our Lord visionally when, though at first appearing as a man, he was recognized as Jehovah, and the patriarch stood before him, as before Jehovah, pleading for the cities of the plain. So also Jacob, on more occasions than one, and Moses, and the seventy Elders of Israel, of whom it is said, "And they saw the God of Israel." Afterward, those favored with these visional sights were called *seers*,—a word from the same verb from which we have the word for countenance in the passage before us. Hence the expression, "Thou spakest *in vision* to thy holy one." Daniel and Ezekiel and Zechariah and many others were similarly favored, and generally describe his appearance exactly as does John, "One like unto the son of man." Peter, James, and John on the Mount of Transfiguration, Stephen before the Council, and Paul when caught up into paradise, and John in the visions of Patmos, all had similar experience. Nay, he was a sight or vision even to the angels (1 Tim. iii. 16, Greek), who still find in his suffering and glory many things "into which they desire to look" (1 Pet. i. 12).

2. There were also the *typical* sights and aspects of our Lord, which of old manifested, and even still manifest his character.

Without dwelling on the idea of *typical persons*, under the Old Testament dispensation, as intended to be a manifestation of what the coming Messiah would be in a far more glorious measure, there were many things, such as the passover lamb, the sin offering, the burnt offering, the priesthood and altar, the tabernacle and temple, that must have led up the minds of believers both as to what the coming One was to be, and to accomplish. It was only on this principle that the delight, joy, and happiness produced by a visit to the house of God could be explained. "Blessed are they that dwell in thy house." "Blessed is the man whom thou choosest and makest to approach unto thee." "One thing I have desired of the Lord, and will seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple." If there were not in all the sacrificial services something to be seen of Christ and his work, what beauty of the Lord could be seen in them, and what joy, happiness, and enjoyment could they impart, or how could they, from such observances, "with joy draw water out of the wells of salvation." The spouse furnishes the true answer when she says of her Beloved, "Behold he standeth behind our wall, he looketh forth at the windows, showing himself through the lattice" (ii. 9). These ordinances were openings through which our Lord looked forward to his incarnation and redemption work, and they were lattices of rare

workmanship, through which the spiritual mind could catch a glimpse of his presence and glory.

3. There are also *doctrinal* views and aspects of the Beloved very precious to his people.

Probably we hardly give the saints of the past dispensation as full credit as they deserve for knowledge of Christ, his offices and work. Those who could compose and sing with the understanding such songs as were sung by Israel at the Red Sea, or the song of Deborah, or of Hannah, or such psalms as xxii., lxviii. and cx., or who could penetrate the protevangelium of Eden, or the visions of Isaiah or of Zechariah, or who could reach the meaning of the words uttered by Mary, Zacharias, or the good old Simeon, must have had clearer and more extensive views of Christ and his work than what we sometimes suppose. It is more than probable, as has been suggested, that the Israelites in the days of Paul, whose hearts had been perverted and hardened by their rejection of Christ, were more under the darkening influence of the veil than those of previous generations. But be that as it may, our Lord distinctly intimates that the Old Testament Scriptures, that were within the reach of all, and to be searched by all, could lead to eternal life, and Paul assures Timothy that they were able "to make wise to salvation." But, however twilight in character was the former dispensation, as to all the doctrines and truths about Christ, his offices and work, the true light now shineth; and, though still in a transition state, and only "seeing through a glass darkly," and "knowing in part," we are "going on to perfection." Meanwhile, those doctrinal truths which he has revealed concerning himself give us

some sweet glimpses of his person, offices, and work. The doctrines concerning his deity, incarnation, his atonement, his offices, his surety righteousness, his constant presence and second coming, are full of comfort and joy, and, as constantly apprehended, they make his aspect to us as Lebanon.

4. There are also *prophetical* views and aspects of the Beloved and his work we now enjoy.

While the types were like mirrors reflecting the characters of Christ's work, prophecy is like a light ahead to attract attention to his manifold operations. It has always, therefore, been true that "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." Not only is fulfilled prophecy one of the clearest proofs that the Scriptures are the word of God, but, as we consider how minutely prophecy has described our Lord in his state both of humiliation and exaltation, we have the most convincing proof of his character and mission. And, therefore, when on earth he always appealed to prophecy and its testimony concerning himself, and invited all who would have their faith in him strengthened and confirmed, "Search the Scriptures, . . . for they are they that testify of me." And thus Philip said to Nathaniel, "We have found him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write." And it has been well observed that Philip's mode of dealing with Nathaniel is the only way in which we can bring modern Jews to embrace Christianity. With them the missionary has not, as with heathen, first to teach them to read the Scriptures and instruct them in the first principles of Bible truth. Like the eunuch whom Philip, the deacon, was the means of converting, not only can they read the

Scriptures, but are familiar with their history, philosophy and laws. It is only by taking intelligent Hebrews to the predictions of the Old Testament, and showing them that they are all fulfilled, in the birth, doctrines, miracles, as also in the rejection, suffering, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus of Nazareth, and that if not fulfilled in him they never can have a fulfilment at all, that we can have any success in dealing with this peculiar people. Not that prophecy, whether fulfilled or not fulfilled, is not profitable to believing Gentiles. The image of Christ has no more brilliant setting than that which prophecy supplies. The Redeemer is there set forth in the most rapturous terms and most glowing imagery, and by its presentation exhibits him as an object in every way worthy of our faith, love, hope, and of spiritual comfort and joy. Consequently, prophecy enters into all our worship. The Lord's prayer is full of prophecy, and so are the psalms. We sing and pray and preach and partake of the sacramental seals of the covenant in the terms of prophecy, and its grand but sweet views of our Beloved are often a resting-place for the weary head. And how dear to God's people in every age are those sweet names and epithets, in the setting of prophecy, with which we have become familiar,—as the seed of the woman, Shiloh, Immanuel, Morning Star, Sun of Righteousness, Tree of Life, etc. These all belong to prophecy, and faith in them is to us, as to ancient believers, the very "substance of things hoped for." How glorious also the Beloved, when viewed in the language of prophecy yet unfulfilled, as he administers the government of the Universe,



carries into effect divine purposes, subdues his and our enemies, puts down all authority and rule, and ultimately disposes of the world and all therein as he takes his seat on the great white throne in the glory of the Father and of his holy angels. Truly, such aspects are as Lebanon.

5. Then there are *experimental* views and aspects of the Beloved, sweet and refreshing.

When Job in his deep affliction comforted himself with the assurance that he should yet see God, and adds, "whom mine eyes shall behold, and not another," it is generally admitted that the marginal reading of the clause, "and not another," namely, "and not as a stranger," is the true sense and meaning of the words. But what does it imply? Why, it means that even now Job was no stranger with God, that he had had sights and views of God and intercourse with him that he recalled with joy. Now all believers, in the exercise of knowledge and faith,—the eyes of the new man—have many objective sights of the Beloved, and view him, in providence and grace, in a light in which he is not manifested to the world. As Elijah learned at Horeb, there may be dispensations awful and grand, in which, however, God is not realized as present, as we may enjoy him in other things; but what the Greeks asked of Philip, "Sir, we would see Jesus," is the constant desire of every regenerated soul, in every ordinance and in every providence. And that is the reason why we have so many promises that are as a setting for Christ, and of which he is the substance and the meaning. For example, "Because I live, ye shall live also." "To him that overcometh I will grant to sit

with me on my throne." "I will give to eat of the tree of life." Such promises are like a picture frame, into which we put the likeness of some dearly beloved one. The frame may be rich and costly and valued, but, oh, how much more the image of the beloved one it contains! So precious is the promise, but how much more precious he is, who is its substance and fulness! So also it may be said of the many names given to the Beloved in Scripture, almost two hundred in all, and every one intended to give us some special glimpse of his glory and excellence. Each name also is a promise, and sometimes a whole cluster of promises. They have been compared to so many alabaster boxes of precious ointment, the contents of which are to refresh and gladden the hearts of all those who value his love. "Thy name is as ointment poured forth, therefore do the virgins love thee."

Now, in all these forms we may all have sights, aspects, and views of the Beloved that will always yield new delight and comfort, and lead us daily to pray, "Lord, lift thou upon us the light of thy countenance."

Secondly. We have the description of his countenance, "as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars."

Some expositors suppose that by Lebanon and its cedars here we are to understand the temple which was not only on a mount of considerable elevation, but so much cedar had been used in its construction that one of the later prophets addressed it thus, "Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars" (Zech. xi. 1). While, however, the temple, both in its structure and daily service,

did reflect much of the glory of him who called it his "Father's house," yet we think it contrary to the right use of figurative language to regard Lebanon and its cedars here as meaning the temple on Moriah. It would be an awkward thing to attempt to describe anything by the figure of a figure, or the image of an image, which we would certainly be doing by taking a figurative description of the temple, and using it as a figure to describe something else. Besides, the ideas chiefly connected with the temple were not set forth by figures taken from the Lebanon range. The leading ideas connected with the temple were two, the dwelling-place of God among his people, and the daily worship and service rendered to him there; and these ideas there was nothing about Lebanon and its cedars to suggest. The description, therefore, has much more meaning, beauty, and force when we understand it naturally, in terms taken from the objects within view of all the inhabitants of Canaan, whenever they turned their eyes in that direction. The figure, thus understood, in various ways sets forth the nature and character of those views, aspects, and sights of Christ, which we have both in providence and grace.

1. The countenance of our Lord, being as Lebanon, expresses the grandeur, majesty, and sublimity in every view we get of him, in all his ways and works.

"That goodly mountain, even Lebanon," that Moses prayed that he might be allowed to behold, was within sight of almost every part of the Holy Land. It was originally a name for the whole range of mountains that form the north-western, northern,

and north-eastern boundaries of the land given in promise to Abraham. These, however, are now distinguished into the Libanus range, or Lebanon proper on the west, and the Antlibanus on the east, with Mount Hermon at its southern extremity. The western plain, or Lebanon proper commences with Mount Casius, a huge peak to the south of Antioch, "which shoots up to the heavens its needle-like point encircled with forests." Thence it winds along the shore line of the Mediterranean, from which it is seldom distant more than twenty miles, till it reaches the most elevated part between Tripoli and Acre, thus forming the Mount Lebanon of the Old Testament. Now there are two things about this mighty range that appeal to the imagination as emblematic of sublimity and grandeur. The first is their towering elevation of nearly ten thousand feet above the level of the Mediterranean, and which strikes the beholder with a feeling of wonder and awe. The second is the brilliant, dazzling whiteness of the mountain, especially of its upper part, produced by the white calcareous stone of which it is chiefly composed, and by the snow, which above the snow line, at eight thousand feet, lies the year round. Now all this most admirably sets forth the nature of all the aspects in which Christ can be viewed, and the feelings they should inspire,—majesty, sublimity, grandeur on his part, and awe, reverence, and fear on ours. Thus Elihu, even from a very brief survey of his works, could say, "With God is terrible majesty"; and when the psalmist describes his ascension, he declares, "For the Lord most high is terrible, he is a great king over all the earth" (Ps. xlvii. 2). Contemplated in

any aspect of his person, character, work, offices, threatenings, and judgments, he is as described by Daniel, "The Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping covenant and mercy to them that love him, and to them who keep his commandments" (Dan. ix. 4). Therefore even his coming in the flesh, in the state of humiliation, is said by Joel to be "the great and terrible day of the Lord." And whether it be to subdue his enemies or deliver his friends, "In majesty he rides forth prosperously" (Ps. xlv. 4). Peter also, speaking of the glory of his transfiguration, says, "But we were eye-witnesses of his majesty." And Jude ascribes to him as "the only wise God and our Saviour, glory and majesty, dominion and power" (v. 25). And, to crown all, he is now on a "throne high and lifted up," and "set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high," all of which simply fills up the figure before us, "His aspect is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars."

2. The figure also here applied to our Lord points out his stability, strength, and permanence.

To the inhabitants of Syria, nothing could more readily suggest the expression "the everlasting hills," as an emblem of stability and permanence, than did a look at the Lebanon range. Those wondrous peaks, whose foundations were so deep laid and extensive, and that had glittered in the sun for uncounted ages, what could unsettle them? True, the chariot wheels of the Most High had, at one time, passed over them, and made them slightly quiver under their pressure, so as to "skip like a calf, Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn" (Ps. xxix. 6). But it was only a temporary shock; and there they stand to-day, look-

ing down on the inhabitants of that land they partly enclose, as they looked on Abraham, Lot, Melchizedec, and the patriarchs,—an apt emblem of stability and permanence. But the Psalmist, speaking of God as our Rock, says, “The strength of the hills is his also” (Ps. xcv. 4), and we may well say of every created thing, “Their rock is not as our rock, even our enemies being judges”; for our rock is no less than the Son of God, “Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.” But not of Christ alone, personally considered, is Lebanon and its cedars an emblem of “everlasting strength” and memorable stability, but, from their relation to him, his Church and people are a “kingdom that cannot be moved.” Therefore, of Israel in the latter day it is said, “He shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon.” Lebanon here evidently means the cedars of Lebanon; and when converted Israel is brought into renewed relation to God in Christ, he shall first “grow as the lily” in spiritual beauty and comeliness, and then “Cast forth his roots as the cedars of Lebanon” in attaining a stability and permanence that cannot be moved. The giant cedar throws out far-reaching roots, that penetrate into the ground as far as the top rises toward the sky, and these so anchor and hold it fast that it is almost as stable as the mountain on which it grows. And so all the hostility and persecution his people and cause have endured, no power has been able to dislodge from earth, or extirpate, those who are rooted and grounded in Christ. “There shall be an handful of corn in the earth, on the top of the mountains: the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon, and they

of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth." It would seem, therefore, that in the figure, the cedar, as well as the mountain, indicated stability and permanence. And so it is that while Lebanon remains so do its cedars, not in the wonderful abundance, indeed, as in the days of Solomon, who had so many of them cut down and transported to Canaan, to be used in the many buildings he erected; but there still is on Lebanon a large representation of these noble trees. Pliny Fisk, in his narrative of his visit to Lebanon, tells us that "The cedars now found on Lebanon are mostly of a later growth, but that there are still a few that are supposed to have been there in Solomon's day, some three thousand years ago." He says, "We measured a number of these trees, and found the largest to be in circumference forty feet." And he remarks that, considering that Solomon had eighty thousand hewers on Lebanon felling cedar trees for a considerable number of years, and many others for hundreds, and even thousands of years, robbing its forests, it is only by supposing these vast productions of this "goodly mountain," to be under the special care of God that we can account for their preservation hitherto." But they had been selected at different times figuratively to set forth the stability and permanence of the kingdom and people of God; and, notwithstanding all the desperate attempts to destroy them from earth, they have been preserved from generation to generation to bear witness to the faithfulness of God, and to comfort and console his saints under their manifold trials. And it is something wonderful that, in one respect, it has been, as with the cedar, so with

the church. Dr. Thomson remarks that "under the domination of the Arab and Turk the whole forest may slowly die out, but even in that case the tree will not be lost. It has been so propagated in many parks in Europe that there are at present more cedars within fifty miles of London than in all Lebanon." Now just so by planting his church in new Gentile soil in which she "grows as the cedar," the Lord has preserved alive a more extensive seed to serve him than in Israel, rejected for a time. And in another respect, still, the cedars of Lebanon were well calculated to convey the same idea of strength and permanence. The wood of the cedar is permeated by a resin, or essential oil, that renders it safe from the attacks of worms and insects which often destroy other timbers, and also preserves it from rotteness or decay. It could never, therefore, suffer dry rot from internal failure, nor be injuriously assailed by enemies from without. It is, in fact, both *incorruptible* and *inviolable*,—incorruptible because having no tendency to internal decay, and inviolable because safe against the attacks of enemies. Therefore, beams of cedar have been taken from old buildings, often from eight hundred to one thousand years in use, and yet as perfect as the day they were put in. It was this property of cedar that was chiefly meant when it is said, "King Solomon made himself a chariot of the wood of Lebanon" (iii. 9). That chariot—his nuptial chariot in which he brings home his bride, and a figure for the covenant of redemption, by which he makes us his own—is of materials that can neither decay nor be destroyed. Both parties in that covenant being divine, neither



can fail, and, being omnipotent in power, cannot be successfully opposed in anything by the resistance of the enemy. How delightful, then, to the timid soul is the assurance, "His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars."

8. The figure further indicates that the sight of our Beloved is daily to us the source of our choicest blessings.

Many conceive a lofty mountain range, like Lebanon, as a rocky, barren, desolate scene, except, perhaps, growing here and there some trees of hardier character. It is, however, far different on Lebanon. Some of the sweetest comforts and choicest blessings are sent down by it to all Syria, and that every day. From its great height different temperatures prevail on its sides, so that an Arabian poet thus describes it, "Lebanon bears winter on its head, spring upon its shoulders, autumn in its bosom, while summer lies sleeping at its feet." One who visited Lebanon a few years ago thus writes, "The stupendous size, the extensive range, the great elevation of Lebanon, its towering summits capped with perpetual snow, its fragrant cedars, its olive plantations, its vineyards producing the most delicious wine, its clear fountains and cold flowing brooks, its fertile vales, and its odoriferous shrubs, combine still to form, in Scriptural language, 'the glory of Lebanon.'" When in its glory, Lebanon produced something to gratify every sense. Thus of the spouse it is said, "The smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon" (iv. 11), and of Ephraim, "And the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon" (Hos. xiv. 7). The melting snow also furnished

the inhabitants of Syria those "streams from Lebanon," so cool and delightful that Jeremiah asks, "Will a man leave the snow of Lebanon, which cometh from the rock of the field, or shall the cold flowing waters that cometh from another place be forsaken?" The richest fruits, the most delicious wines, the most fragrant flowers, and the most valuable timber, all brought from Lebanon, enriched the inhabitants of all surrounding countries; while it is said that the mountain contains amazing mineral deposits of silver, lead, and iron, not worked only because of the tyranny and oppression of the Turk. And, looking on such a picture, we can easily comprehend the meaning of the figure, "His aspect is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars." He, in every aspect in which he can be contemplated, is to us "all and in all." He is to us "the fulness of God"; and it is in virtue of union to him that the promises made by language taken from this famous mountain can be understood or realized, as, "The glory of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon, they shall see the glory of the Lord, and the excellency of our God" (Is. xxxv. 2). Or, again, "The glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, the fir tree, the pine tree, and the box tree together, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious" (Is. lx. 18).

4. By the figure here descriptive of our Lord's aspect is also meant the awfulness of his appearance to his enemies. Most of the desolating storms that sweep the valley of the Jordan originate in the Lebanon range. From the widely differing tem-

peratures prevailing at different elevations, at the top below the freezing point, and at the bottom from ninety to one hundred degrees, we can easily conceive how the surrounding masses of air will be in circumstances to generate the most fearful storms, both atmospheric and electrical. A traveller who witnessed one of these storms thus writes: "The thunder storms of Lebanon are terrific. The thick clouds, the dashing rain, the wild mountain blasts, and the rapid lightning gleams make up a scene which one is glad to have to say that he has seen once, but which he would not willingly encounter a second time." Such storms often come down the gorge at the upper end of the Sea of Galilee, through which Jordan passes, and greatly endanger, by their suddenness and rapidity, those who, like the disciples, are quietly pursuing their way on its waters. In the region of Lebanon also was originated the fearful tempest Euroclydon, the fury of which Paul describes as he was being taken prisoner to Rome. Perhaps, however, we have the most vivid and accurate description of what these storms were in the time of David in the magnificent language of the twenty-ninth psalm. There the spectator is supposed to be standing in Jerusalem; and the first point at which the storm is noticed is on the waters of the Mediterranean on the west. Then majestically it moves north, and sweeps round to the northeast, crushing and breaking the cedars of Lebanon. Thence it moves round to the Antlibanus Range and reaches Sirion and Hermon on its southern extremity, and, pursuing its southerly course, it is seen on the south of Judah, or "the wilderness of Kadesh,"

where it deflects westward till it again reaches the Mediterranean, whence it was first seen to issue, having thus almost completed a circle, as thunder storms usually do. Now, if our Lord's aspect can be compared to Lebanon and its cedars, we may expect sometimes to find in it the element of the storm. Nor is it uncommon among men to speak of a stormy countenance, or a stormy scene, when men are contending, being equivalent to that other phrase, "Of a fierce countenance." Thus a pleasant countenance on the part of God is contrasted with fearful storm, according to the character of those with whom he is dealing. "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup. For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright" (Ps. xi. 6, 7). And of the coming of the Lord it is said, "Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him" (Ps. l. 3). In that magnificent description also of our glorious Mediator's reign, how vividly by figures from the storm have we described the social and national judgments he inflicts, "Clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. A fire goeth before him and burneth up his enemies round about. His lightnings enlightened the world, the earth saw and trembled. The hills melted like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth" (Ps. xcvi. 2-5).

Whilst, therefore, there is always something in every aspect of our Beloved to cheer and comfort us,

and persuade us to give him our fullest confidence, there is always much to awaken and keep alive a salutary awe and godly fear, and lead us still in our worship to "Say unto God, how terrible art thou in thy works! Through the greatness of thy powers shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee." (Ps. lxi. 3). "Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of Saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee, for thy judgments are made manifest" (Rev. xv. 3, 4).

## LECTURE XIV.

### OUR LORD'S MOUTH MOST SWEET.

"His mouth is most sweet."—Song v. 16.

IT must be the experience of every one intelligently exercised to understand these descriptions of our Beloved, to cry with the psalmist "Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord, who can show forth all his praise?" "Praise him for his mighty acts, praise him according to his excellent greatness." It will require eternity to enable us to understand the perfections of Christ as a Redeemer, and eternity itself will be too short "to show forth all his praise." Therefore, though the list of his adorable properties and qualities we have been considering is long and extensive, yet one more is still to be added, and one which perhaps, as much as any of the others, "magnifies the Lord."

In this twelfth particular, "His mouth is most sweet," we may at first seem as if going back on a former particular, in which his lips are said to be as lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh; but be it remembered that the mouth is a much more comprehensive term than the lips, including a great number of organs, as the tongue, teeth, palate, tonsils, and even the larynx. And these organs, all belonging to the mouth proper, perform a large number of functions, as tasting, eating, drinking,

breath, speech, voice, music, smiles, frowns, etc. We have therefore many an objective view of the Beloved when we show forth his praise by proclaiming "His mouth is most sweet." Let us consider

First. What is meant by the mouth of our Beloved. And

1. It signifies all his *tastes and desires and the objects he most delights to have accomplished.*

There are some six different words in the original of the Old Testament translated by the word mouth, each one of which has a shade of meaning somewhat different from all the rest. Perhaps the primary idea connected with the word mouth is that of gate or entrance, as the mouth is the entrance to the alimentary canal. And in this sense we have "the mouth of the cave" (Josh. x. 18), and "the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up" (Num. xvi. 32), and "Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning fiery furnace" (Dan. iii. 26). In the same way, we speak of the mouth of a river, of a gulf, etc. The word, however, here applied to the Beloved, is that for *palate*, or the parts of the mouth where the nerves of taste are located; and its force can be seen in Job's use of the same word, "Doth not the ear try words, and the mouth taste his meat" (xii. 11). And Elihu uses the same word exactly to express the same thought, "For the ear trieth words as the mouth tasteth meat" (Job xxxiv. 8). The same word, however, is in a number of passages translated "taste," as in Ps. cxix. 108, "How sweet are thy words unto my taste (palate)! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth." So in Job vi. 30, "Cannot my taste (palate) discern perverse

things?" and so, by the spouse, "His fruit was sweet to my taste" (palate) (ii. 3). From the structure of the palate, as every one knows, the mouth can distinguish many kinds of taste,—the pleasant and the unpleasant, agreeable and disagreeable, the bitter and the sweet, the sharp and the mellow, the stimulating and the flat, the healthful and the dangerous. And from this vast variety the word taste has come, in a figurative sense, to mean a person's preferences, favorite pursuits, and ruling passions, which frequently indicate character, both social and moral.

Now, in this sense of mouth, how sweet is the mouth of our well Beloved! How holy and pure all his tastes, how elevated all his aims, how unselfish and devoted his obedience, how burning and intense his zeal, how fully his heart was set upon accomplishing the Father's will and finishing his work! Especially as to that great work of our redemption, greater than creation, how, even from everlasting, he says of himself, "Rejoicing in the habitable part of his earth, and my delights were with the sons of men" (Prov. viii. 31). That great work, the chief end of Providence, that was not only to restore the lost, but bless with greater glory and happiness even the unfallen angels, how the desire of accomplishing it pervaded his whole being, drew out all his sympathies, so that for this he lived, for this he died, and for this he lives forever! Oh, that our desires, tastes, delights, and pursuits were like his! then would his mouth to us indeed be sweet.

2. The mouth of our Beloved will also include all the *words and utterances* by which he gives expression to his desires and delights.



The mouth comprehends a number of organs which concur in uttering those sounds which constitute articulate language. The lips, teeth, tongue, larynx, and indeed all parts of the mouth proper, all contribute, as organs of speech, to enable us to communicate to others our wishes, desires, wants, and our feelings generally, so that "out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh." And therefore the mouth is often put for the communications made. Thus David puts the mouth for what had been uttered by his organs, as, "I will pay thee my vows which my lips have uttered and my mouth hath spoken when I was in trouble" (Ps. lxxvi. 13), and our Lord, "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings, I have perfected praise"; and so also the promise, "I will give you a mouth and wisdom." Now as God, in revealing himself to us, speaks as though he had certain members and organs of a bodily kind, so he uses, again and again, the familiar utterance, "For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it." And, in relation to our Lord as Mediator, his prophetic office, in communicating divine truth and in making known to the world the glad tidings of the gospel, is often thus expressed, "My spirit that is upon thee, and my words which I have put in thy mouth, shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of the mouth of thy seed, nor out of the mouth of thy seed's seed, saith the Lord, from henceforth and forever" (Is. lix. 21). And so, in the figurative terms of the Apocalypse, it is said of him, "And out of his mouth went a sharp two-edged sword," which, according to Paul, is "the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God." Now, as with us, the voice

that gives forth our utterances varies according to the intensity with which the nerves of the mouth are acting, being loud, bold, strong, weak, tender, melting, sympathetic, or hysterical, according to our condition, so may the communications made to us by the great prophet be distinguished, in many particulars, as differing in some respects, but one, as all proceeding out of the mouth of the same Lord. Thus we have his *didactic* communications, that convey to us the things to be believed, and that are "profitable for doctrine." Then we have the *revelation of his secrets*, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant." Then there are *pledges* as to our security and safety, "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust; his truth shall be thy shield and buckler." Then we have the *gentle whispers of love and desire for communion*, "Open to me, my sister, my spouse"; the assurance, also, of *peace and tranquility*, "In me ye shall have peace," "Ye shall find rest to your souls," "Let not your heart be troubled." Then there are many forms of *warning*, "Take heed to yourselves, watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation." There is also a sanctifying word, "Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth," "Now are ye clean through the word I have spoken unto you." There are *promises also* to cheer and comfort us, "Whereby are given us exceeding great and precious promises, that by them ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." And, besides many others that might be mentioned, there are *threatenings and*

*denunciation of wrath against sin* that remind us of the words of Elihu, when he speaks of the thunder, "Hear attentively the noise of his voice, and the sound that goeth out of his mouth." There are even in the gospel of the grace of God statements and pointed threatenings that have often proved, like the thunder-claps of Sinai, alarming and terrific to the soul lying in sin. These are intended to humble us and bring us to repentance, in which, if they fail, through the hardness of our hearts, they verify the language concerning the rod out of the stem of Jesse, "He shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked" (Is. iv. 4). Many a false system and many a throne of iniquity have been thus smitten and overthrown by the simple preaching of the gospel, realizing Paul's assurance, "Whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming" (2 Thess. ii. 8).

8. By the mouth of the Beloved here are also meant all other ways, by which he makes known to us his gracious regards.

There is something both peculiar and interesting about those organs which, taken collectively, we call the mouth; namely, the manner in which they are supplied with nerves. They are supplied from the eighth pair of nerves, through what is known as the pneumo-gastric or vagus branch. This branch passes down the neck, is distributed through the chest and lungs, intercostal muscles and stomach, and then turns and comes back again, giving nervous force to different parts of the throat till it is lost in the larynx

and different parts of the mouth. Owing to its thus *coming back* to parts it had passed on its way down, it is called the *recurrent* nerve, and connected, as it is, at one point with the sympathetic nerve, exerts a powerful influence over the whole chest and pulmonary region, the stomach and much of the alimentary canal, so that physicians can judge by the condition of the mouth and tongue the state of many of our internal organs. The consequence of all this unique nerve arrangement, then, is that the mouth expresses its feelings as to what is taking place in every part of the system. By the mouth we smile, frown, laugh, cry, groan, shout, applaud, hiss, express sympathy, utter the soft strains of song, or impress the kiss of endeared affection. All these are experiences so ordinary that every one must know something of their nature and power, and they figuratively show in how many ways the mouth of our Lord may be making us communications. Thus, as *breath* is connected with the mouth, he breathed upon his disciples saying, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost" (John xx. 22). As at first "He breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul," and as he therefore claims, "He that spread forth the earth and that which cometh out of it, he that giveth breath unto the people upon it, and spirit to them that walk therein" (Is. xlii. 5), and, "In whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind," so still the spirit is "the breath from the four winds that breathes upon the slain" so that they live, and one of the richest communications from our Beloved's mouth. And, as *sound* is made by the mouth, he makes us to "know the joyful sound," so

that we can "walk in the light of his countenance, and rejoice in him all the day" (Ps. lxxxix. 15, 16). "The voice of my Beloved," how sweet a sound to spiritual ears! In the same way *laughter* is from the mouth, and is ascribed to our Lord, "He that sitteth in heaven shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision" (Ps. ii. 4). His laugh of scorn, derision, and contempt sadly forebode the ruin of his enemies, while his smile of favor makes our blessings, as Isaac, a child of laughter to us, as the church acknowledges when her captivity is restored, "Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing" (Ps. cxxvi. 2). From his mouth also the spouse prays for the seal and assurance of his love, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth, for thy love is better than wine." Among the Orientals there were several kinds of kisses, all having a distinct, though different, sense and meaning. There was the kiss of *friendship* and good will, the kiss of *reconciliation* and restored peace, the kiss of *conjugal love*, the kiss of *majesty* from subject to monarch, the kiss of *worship*, as when it is said, "Let them kiss the calves." Now when our Lord impresses us with the sense and assurance of his love, and gives us the contents of the promises, his mouth is most sweet, and his love felt to be better than wine. And other illustrations also of similar views of our Lord's mouth being put for communications, however made, might easily be mentioned. Thus by his mouth may often be meant the *rebukes* that humble us, and the *praise and approbation* that encourage us, as we see in our Lord's dealing with the seven churches of Asia. Thus, to

one church he declares, "I will fight against them with the sword of my mouth" (Rev. ii. 16), and to another, "I will spue thee out of my mouth" (iii. 16) as something distasteful.

One other point, illustrative of our Lord's mouth and its sweetness, is to be found in the fact that it is the organ in which is located the *power of music*. Most animals can utter cries of pleasure, pain, enjoyment, or terror; but to none has the Creator given the power of music any more than of articulate speech, but to the members of the human family. The larynx, with its vocal chords, is a very delicate but complete musical instrument, and can express, in a great variety of musical sounds, feelings and emotions often more impressive than words. Solomon, therefore, in beautiful figure, calls the ear and the voice "the daughters of music," and speaks of them as being "brought low," when deafness spoils the hearing, and the vocal chords get out of tune. In all ages, the strains of rapturous music have had a wonderful effect, especially on those whose musical tastes and powers have been cultivated and developed; and there is nothing more sad and shameful on earth than the fact that sin and vice have been allowed to appropriate so much of this noble art to render evil more attractive. The mouth of the Beloved may well be taken as the origin, cause, source, subject, and object of all song, and of all adoring, rapturous worship. He is the embodiment of all praise here; and, as the heavenly hosts surround the throne above, they sing "the song of Moses and the Lamb," "The Lord is my strength and my song, he also is become my salvation" (Exod. xv. 2). So Elihu complains,

“But none saith where is God, my Maker, my Creator who giveth us songs in the night” (Job xxxv. 10), and David, in passing through sore trials, is still able to assure us, “In the night his song shall be with me” (Ps. xlii. 8). Our Beloved is at once the subject of our song, and the channel through which it is offered up to God; and, whether a night song or a day song, we all have much to employ our highest powers. And all spiritual feelings, especially the joyous and triumphant, make us all musical; and then there is music in the heart, music in the family, music in the church, music in the world, music everywhere. Till we are brought into a gracious state, we have no real song or music in our experience in life, the music of the world and of the flesh being “like the crackling of thorns under a pot,” “hasty, noisy, and soon over”; whereas, as we live in close communion with our Beloved, and are continually discovering some new excellence and glory in him, we have ever materials for a “*new song*.” As he enters the temple of the heart, and becomes enshrined in our whole being, he brings music and melody with him, so that as Paul and Silas, though in prison, and their backs covered with wounds they had received from the many stripes laid on them, prayed and sang praises unto God, and the prisoners heard them,” so will we “return and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon our heads”; and, while in our diversified experiences there will always be many things to sing about, our “chief joy,” or “the gladness of our joy” will always be, “The Song of songs, which is Solomon’s,” or the Song of the Reconciler.

Secondly. The description of his mouth. "His mouth is most sweet."

The word here rendered "sweet" is, in the original, not an adjective, but a substantive, and that not in the singular, but in the plural number, and rendered literally would be, "his mouth is *sweetnesses*." The reference is to the fact that in physical bodies there are different kinds and forms of sweetness; and, when the word is transferred to the moral and spiritual, we have the same fact equally noticeable. We have mental and moral sweetness, and sweetness of character, and social sweetness in intercourse with others, and experiences that are accompanied by a large measure of happiness and pleasure, and all of which are the opposite of the *bitter*, or that which makes an impression at once disagreeable and revolting. Sweetness, however, like our other sensations, is both objective and subjective. It is objective in the power possessed by objects to produce certain classes of sensations; and it is subjective in the impressions thus made, so that the spouse, in these words, in extolling the Beloved, is also describing and recording her own spiritual experiences.

Sweetnesses in the Beloved must first be something in him objectively, affecting us with the liveliest feelings of delight and enjoyment. In the days of Solomon the most concentrated form of sweetness, namely sugar, was unknown, yet there were many forms of the sweet which they did know. First of all, they were well acquainted with the sweetness of honey and the honeycomb, therefore frequently used as a figure to set forth what gives intense enjoy-



ment. Then there was the sweetness of different kinds of fruit,—“I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.” Also the sweetness of different kinds of wine, as Nehemiah directed the returned captives, “Eat the fat and drink the sweet.” Besides, some objects giving intense enjoyment to other organs are also said to be sweet, as “sweet incense,” “sweet flowers,” “sweet calamus”; but the idea is the same,—something having the power to communicate impressions that will give pleasure and enjoyment. And then, again, the idea of sweetness is at times something wholly subjective, not being excited by anything calculated to affect our organs. Of this, we have a curious example in a statement by Solomon, “The full soul loatheth the honeycomb, but to the hungry soul every *bitter thing is sweet.*” Here we have the *bitter sweet*, something not unknown in the moral and spiritual world, as well as in the physical, as when John records what was said to him about eating the little book, “Take it and eat it up, and it shall make thy belly bitter, but it shall be in thy mouth sweet as honey” (Rev. x. 9). And, moreover, that the term sweetness was used in a moral and social sense and application is fully evident from such expressions as, “Saul and Jonathan were lovely and pleasant (sweet) in their lives” (2 Sam. i. 23), and, “Ointment and perfume rejoice the heart, so doth the sweetness of a man’s friend by hearty counsel.” Now our Lord’s mouth is sweetnesses.

1. As it objectively presents that which the spiritual mind most desires, and on which we live.

“It is written, man shall not live by bread only,

but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. iv. 4). By bread here our Lord means what we eat and drink and by which we have our bodily wants supplied; and every one knows how our desires crave for the things that our wants render necessary. Now even in relation to our bodily necessities God supplies them by the word of his mouth. To Israel in the wilderness he brought manna and water, and even flesh, by the word of his mouth, and it is really nothing different in the supplies provided for us by the ordinary laws of production. Therefore our Lord says, "And it shall come to pass in that day, I will hear, saith the Lord: I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn and the wine and the oil; and they shall hear Jezreel" (Hos. ii. 22). Thus of the God who hears prayer and has made us precious promises covering all our wants, Paul declares, "But my God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." These pledges of his mouth, when apprehended by faith, may be compared to money current, issued by a government or bank. It may be of no value in itself,—a piece of paper with some lines and figures on it, which we hardly take time to ask what they mean; and yet we live by its use. True, we cannot eat or drink those notes, but we can take them to market and procure for them what we daily require. And why have we full confidence that they will be taken for the goods we require to purchase from the merchant? Ah, not because they are marked as representing a certain sum, but because each of them is a *promise to pay the bearer*, endorsed by parties of whose

solvency there is no question. And how precious are the truths, promises, and assurances from God's mouth, as morally and spiritually they serve precisely the same ends! The communications from his mouth are the foundation of all we believe of God, of the way of salvation, of our own immortality, and of all we hope for in the future. They are the directory by which our whole life is to be framed, our comforter and heart's delight in all our trials, our counsellor and guide in all our perplexities; and, as promises, we can take them to the market of free grace, and by presenting them there have in return everything we need. And what shows the "riches in glory" of our Lord when he sends us away, laden with his benefits, is that, like Joseph, he returns our money in our sack's mouth, to be brought again and again, so often as we require a fresh supply. In all these respects there is in all our Lord's utterances something to the spiritual mind "sweeter than honey and the honeycomb."

2. Our Lord's mouth is sweetness as the medium of all our communion with him.

"And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. That fellowship, however, is not like that of a man with his friend, visibly face to face, but rather like correspondence by letter, in which the heart, feelings, wants, and desires are all confidentially expressed. Therefore all that he has to say to us in our fellowship with him, he expresses in the language of the word, or "what the spirit saith to the churches." And all we say to him is in the same language. We pray and praise, adore and worship, confess sin and seek for

pardon, express our wants and ask a supply, all in the words of Scripture. Christ's mouth thus meets our mouth, his desires our desires, his words are our words, his prayer of intercession our petitions, and there is the closest of fellowship, "the unity of the spirit," in all our intercourse with him. And, oh! what a mouth of sweetness is his intercession on such occasions, when "Through him we all have access by one spirit unto the Father," and feel that his assurance to Peter, "I have prayed for thee," is the common privilege of all the saints. When we realize such assurance, we may well say with the spouse, "I am my Beloved's, and his desire is toward me," and, reciprocating his feelings, add, "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon the earth I desire beside thee."

3. His mouth also is sweetness in giving happiness and joy in what would otherwise be sorrow and suffering.

As formerly observed, there is the *bitter sweet* both in nature and grace; but the difference is that, in the one case, the sweet goes first and the bitter last, whereas in grace the bitter goes first, and the sweet goes last. The testimony of Christ and human experience both largely confirm that thought. Thus Zophar remarks concerning the triumphing of the wicked, "Though wickedness be sweet in his mouth, though he hide it under his tongue; though he spare it and forsake it not; but keep it still within his mouth: yet his meat in his bowels is turned, it is the gall of asps within him" (Job xx. 13, 14). Solomon also says that some who "want understanding" may be deceived by being told "stolen waters

are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant," but it is because "he knoweth not that the dead are there, and that her guests are in the depth of hell" (Prov. ix. 17, 18), and assures us "Bread of deceit is sweet to a man, but afterwards his mouth shall be filled with gravel" (xx. 17). And yet, in the face of such statements, how many still, in the language of Isaiah, "put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter." And yet our Lord's words to his disciples will always prove true, "Verily, Verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. . . . And ye now therefore have sorrow, but I will see you again; and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (John xvi. 20, 22). It is true that repentance for sin, mortification and self-denial in following Christ, our being crucified together with him, and our enduring the hatred and contempt and cruelty of the wicked world,—these are bitter indeed; but "blessed are they who mourn, for they shall be comforted," for while "no chastening for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous; nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of righteousness to them that are exercised thereby" (Heb. xii. 11). Now the experience of David in such seasons is the experience of all God's saints: "Remember the word unto the servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope. This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me" (cxix. 49, 50). As we enjoy such consolation, the bitter becomes sweet, and not only does the word and mouth of the Beloved support us, but we can

glorify God in the fires," and "glory in tribulation, also; knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." To a soul thus inspired, there is honey in every flower, joy in every sorrow, sunshine after every storm, and the gracious experience that "His mouth is most sweet."

## LECTURE XV.

### OUR LORD ALTOGETHER LOVELY.

"Yea, He is altogether lovely."—SONG v. 16.

AS the rough diamond is greatly increased in value by cutting all over its surface numerous little facets, each of which under light becomes separately luminous, and reflecting the rays at every angle they make the stone appear the centre of a brilliant glow, so with him whom we call Beloved. Every side and every angle in which he can be viewed in anything, in which "he is made to us of God" a Saviour, he is glorious and perfect, each part having its own glory, and the whole mingling and blending infinitely diversified excellences, so as vividly to make the impression, "Yea, he is *altogether* lovely." In thus expressing herself about the Beloved, after the elaborate description of him in twelve particulars, the spouse evidently means that she felt that the glorious perfection of our Lord is an inexhaustible theme, and virtually says, Why proceed any further? the power of description would fail before I could tell you all he is, therefore let us put all, *besides* what I have said, into one great *et cetera*, and say "He is ALTOGETHER lovely." Or it may be that she recollected that in other parts of her intercourse with the Beloved there were many other names, epithets, and designations given him to ex-

press his beauty and fulness, and that these might be combined with the twelve descriptions just given, further to express all that he has ever proved to those who believe on and love him. We cannot, therefore, perhaps more satisfactorily illustrate the force of her "*altogether*" than by gathering those scattered rays of the sun of righteousness, and, combining them with those already considered, still further elevate our conceptions of him who is "perfect in beauty."

Now, besides the twelve particulars referred to, there are at least ten others, which, when shaded into the portrait of the Beloved, as the colors of the painter are shaded into his pictures, will enable us still more fully to "see the king in his beauty," and understand how he is "altogether lovely."

1. The Beloved is first of all characterized as **THE RECONCILER**,—"The Song of songs which is the Reconciler's."

We have already explained that the word rendered Solomon in the song is not a proper name, but signifies the reconciler or maker of peace,—a view of our Lord's character and work common to both Testaments. As our Shiloh, or "man of peace," or the "prince of peace," he is represented as accomplishing for us, in many ways, all that his name implies. His blood was prefigured by the sacrificial blood that is so often said "to make reconciliation" (Lev. vi. 30 and viii. 15). And therefore Daniel represents, as one end of his coming, "To make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity" (ix. 24). To the same effect are Paul's words, "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness



dwell; and having made peace through the blood of the cross, by him to reconcile all things to himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth or things in heaven. And you that were sometime alienated, and enemies in your minds by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled" (Col. i. 19-21). This reconciliation of enemies to God through the intervention of our Beloved is presented in many of its aspects. Thus, first, it is a reconciliation by making atonement for our sins so that God can pardon them in consistency with his character and government; therefore, "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God" (Rom. iii. 24-26). So it is further stated, "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Cor. v. 19). And then further, besides this legal change in our relation to God, we are subjectively reconciled to him in the spirit of our mind, and fear and love and reverence take the place of hatred and alienation. Therefore he sends forth ambassadors who have "committed to them the word of reconciliation," and who "beseech us, in Christ's stead, to be reconciled unto God." And then, again, this reconciled state is maintained and made permanent by his intercession, "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of God?"

(Rom. viii. 34, 35.) Moreover, this reconciliation brings us back to our lost fellowship with God, and puts us among his friends, otherwise we would have no joy in approaching him. It moreover makes us "willing in the day of his power" to render him new obedience and consecrate our life and all our powers to his service, and thus magnify that grace that hath made us, who once "were afar off, nigh by the blood of Christ." The result of the whole is, "Truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his son Jesus Christ."

2. The Beloved is also in this poem frequently designated **THE KING**.

Thus "The King hath brought me into his chambers" (i. 4). "When the King sitteth at his table" (i. 12). "Behold King Solomon," or "the King, the Reconciler" (iii. 11). "The king is held in the galleries" (vii. 5). The King was from the earliest revelation a name for the coming Messiah. He was the King who was to come from the loins of Abraham. "The King of righteousness and of peace typified by Melchizedek." The King set by God "on the holy hill of Zion," the King that was "to reign in righteousness," who confessed himself a King before Pilate, "the prince of the kings of the earth, King of kings and Lord of lords," and he who, as King at last, shall say to those both on his left hand and his right what will fix their state forever. "For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king; he will save us" (Is. xxxiii. 22). In many respects we are saved by the kingly office of the Beloved. For example, it is as a King he has right and power to call out of the world a people

to himself, subdue them, and make them willing to serve him, incorporate them into a kingdom and bring them under government and law, so that "we are not without law to God, but under the law to Christ." Moreover, as a king, he subdues our enemies, supports us in trial and temptation, orders the dispensations of providence so as to promote our sanctification and growth in grace, and secure our perseverance in holiness to the end. And, besides, our relation to him makes us to be, as the brothers of Gideon. "Every one resembled the children of a king." He "hath made us kings and priests to God and to his Father." In him, like Abraham, we become "heirs of the world," "reign with him on the earth," and at last shall not only by our judge and king be "openly acknowledged and acquitted," but will have "to royal honor raised our heads," in being the assessors with him in judging fallen angels and wicked men. "Know ye not that we shall judge angels?" Thus our Beloved is his Father's King, angels' King, Satan's King, King of saints, King of nations, "King of kings and Lord of lords," "the head of all principality and power." And, as we surround his throne with triumphant hallelujahs, we realize the force of the command, "Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King" (Ps. cxlix. 2).

8. Another character also ascribed to the Beloved in this song is that of a SHEPHERD.

"Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest, where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon? . . . If thou know not, O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherd's tents"

(i. 7, 8). There is here a beautiful view as to how, as the people and bride of Christ, we are associated with him, as the great Shepherd, in caring for his sheep and for his lambs; and from the earliest period has he been known as "the Shepherd and Bishop of souls." Thus Jacob, speaking of Joseph as "a figure of him who was to come," says, "Hence is the Shepherd the stone of Israel" (Gen. xlviii. 24). And David, though himself a shepherd and king, joyfully exclaims, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want," and invokes him, "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph as a flock." Isaiah foretells him in similar terms, "He shall feed his flock like a shepherd," and Zechariah speaks of him as one who, to feed the flock, took unto him his "two staves, Beauty and Bands," or what David calls his "rod and staff." Our Lord himself assumes the name of the good Shepherd, and at the last day will separate the righteous from the wicked "as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats."

Nor is there, perhaps, from childhood to old age, another view of Christ and his offices more calculated to give comfort and joy and a sense of security than that of shepherd. First, assuring us of his proprietary right in us as his sheep,— "whose own the sheep are,"—it emphasizes the promise, "They shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them me, is greater than all; and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (John x. 28, 29). As our Shepherd, moreover, he is not only continually supplying all our wants, but exercises the tenderest care about the weak, the feeble, and the immature. "He

shall feed his flock like a shepherd. He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young" (Is. xl. 11). As a Shepherd, too, he realizes the promise, "I will give you rest," for he "maketh his flock to rest at noon," and "causeth us to lie down in green pastures, and leadeth us beside the still waters." When we are disposed to wander, our Shepherd brings us back, and makes us "to walk in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." With his rod and staff he defends us from the prowling foes that would destroy us, so that the song is ever applicable, "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." By the valley of the shadow of death here is not meant literally the time of our decease, as usually interpreted, but those dangers, alarms, distresses, and terrors that assail us in times of darkness and dismay. And, therefore, with fine judgment, "the valley of the shadow of death" is, in the "Pilgrim's Progress," put, not at the end, but in the very middle of the journey to the celestial city; and the "rod and the staff," or the staff Beauty and the staff Bands in Zechariah, are still our comfort in such seasons. They were the implements usually carried by shepherds where wild beasts were a danger to the flock. The staff was the shepherd's club, a defensive weapon, usually loaded at one end, so as to make a blow of it more effective; and which, against a wolf or wild dog, or even a lion or bear, was more to be depended on in close encounter than either sword or spear. Therefore the champion of

the Philistines cursed David, and said, "Am I a dog, that thou comest to me with staves?" In the hands of the great Shepherd, the staff is the *crushing power* by which he bruises Satan under our feet and delivers us from our dangers and fears, especially as that power is put forth through prayer, the word, and ordinances of grace, by help of which we gain our victories, as our Lord himself did in the hour of temptation, therefore called by the prophet "the staff Beauty." The rod, or staff Bands, was a name for a long, limber pole, like the staff of a goad, with a crook at the end, usually known as the shepherd's crook. It was for the purpose of more easily laying hold of sheep or lamb that was sick or diseased, and required treatment, and was a lively emblem of our covenant relation by which God apprehends us and draws us near to himself. The breaking of these two staves, as in Zechariah, meant his removing from his people Israel his ordinances for a time, just as when he threatens to remove our candlestick, and his disowning them as no longer in covenant relation, two great evils they have been long enduring because of their rejection of the great and good Shepherd, while Gentiles have become "his people and the sheep of his pasture."

4. The Beloved is also in this song figuratively called a "BUNDLE OF MYRRH."

"A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts" (i. 13). Myrrh, though bitter to the taste is a most fragrant plant, and yields a gum called stacte. The former, myrrh, was one of the ingredients in the holy anointing oil (Exod. xxx. 23), and the latter, stacte,

with frankincense and other spices, was a perfume to be placed continually before God in the tabernacle. The gum, either in a bag or in liquid form, was often carried by women in the bosom, and that by night as well as by day, as were also dried stalks of the myrrh plant itself, so delicious was its perfume. Its value may be inferred from its being part of the present sent by Jacob to conciliate the governor of Egypt, and was among the gifts presented by the wise men from the East to the infant Jesus. Now to this precious and highly valued perfume our Lord is here compared, whose "name is as ointment poured forth." The "*bundle of myrrh*" to which our Lord is compared is likely put for a bag or casket, in which were enclosed different pieces of the pure gum; and it shows in how many different ways and connections the name or names of our Beloved afford, especially in our nights of darkness and sorrow, the purest consolation and enjoyment. The names given him in the Old Testament and New almost all express some relation he sustains to us; and how replete these all are of comfort and hope. Moreover, in his dealing with us continually, how many sweet pieces of the precious fragrant myrrh we enjoy. His tenderness, pity, compassion, love, faithfulness, patience, long suffering, and all those gracious pledges he has given us for the future, oh, how all these, to the spiritual senses of the exercised believer, are "a bundle of myrrh," a casket of fragrance, an oil of joy and gladness, making our Beloved in our estimation all that the prophet expresses, when he calls him "the plant of renown."

And of this casket, or bag, it is said that it shall

lie all night in our bosom. The word lie here literally means to lodge or make home in any place, and is precisely equivalent to the expression by Paul "That Christ may dwell (make home) in your hearts by faith." In the time of Solomon, women who could afford it used perfumes of various kinds, not only to make their apartments more pleasant, but carried them in the bosom, as they supposed they promoted the healthy action of the heart. And, truly, Christ dwelling in our heart by faith does promote its healthy, spiritual action, filling and purifying all its thoughts, imaginations, and desires, and "bringing every thought into obedience to Christ." And what cheering company it is to have Christ making home with us in our hearts, hearing his voice, feeling around us his everlasting arms, and assuring us, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." And, sweetest of all, this lasts throughout "all night." In our nights of darkness and sorrow and suffering, then it is we most need his presence, and then it is that it is most frequently promised: "When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee; and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee" (Is. xliii. 2).

5. But the Beloved is also in this song likened to a **CLUSTER OF CAMPHIRE** in the vineyards of Engedi (i. 14).

From the earliest attempts to explain the figures of this poem, it has been acknowledged that the expression, "cluster of camphire in (or from) the vineyards of Engedi," as a description of the Beloved, is, among things obscure, perhaps the most obscure, and consequently various interpretations have been pro-



pounded. Some regard camphire here as meaning the island of Cyprus, in the Mediterranean, and suppose that grape-vines of the most excellent sorts had been brought from thence, and planted in Solomon's vineyards at Engedi, on the west of the Dead Sea, which yielded clusters of the largest size, and grapes of the most delicious flavor. Accordingly a "cluster of camphire" would mean a cluster of grapes of the choicest varieties, and would harmonize with our Lord's own figurative description, "I am the true vine." And assuredly our Lord does produce many most excellent kinds of fruit to the spiritual nourishment and comfort and refreshment of the longing soul. As, however, in the only other passage in which the word occurs in the original, it is a name for a plant in an enclosed garden, and enumerated among a list of spice plants, we think that the camphire was not a fruit-bearing plant, like the grapevine. "Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates with pleasant fruits, camphire with spikenard, spikenard and saffron, calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense, myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices" (iv. 13, 14). Others therefore suppose the cypress-tree is meant, and so is the word rendered on the margin of our authorized version; while others think the sweet balsam is intended. And as the original word is the one used for atonement (copher), some Jewish rabbis, with an ingenuity which they often exhibit in fastening strange meanings on many passages of the Old Testament, by dividing the word for cluster (eshcol) into two, make the cluster of camphire mean "the man who expiates," or the Messiah. Later expositors, how-

ever, are now generally agreed that by camphire here, and in chapter iv. 13, is intended the henna plant, the alhenna of the Arabs; and therefore the revisers of the translation of the Old Testament render the passage, "My Beloved is unto me as a cluster of henna flowers in the vineyards of Engedi." The henna is a plant of considerable size, growing often ten or twelve feet high, and bears large and dense masses of lilac-colored flowers that are greatly prized for their exquisite fragrance, and that very much resemble in appearance a cluster of grapes. A modern traveller says that these clusters are still greatly prized, especially by ladies in Egypt, and that one of the common street cries in Cairo is, "O odors of Paradise! O flowers of the henna!" Especially during marriage festivities it was the custom to fill the house, when the festivities were celebrated, with henna flowers, as indicative of the happiness and enjoyment the event brought, both to the parties more immediately concerned, and to their friends assembled on the occasion.

Now, as a figure to set forth still further the glories and beauties of our Lord's character and work, it is extremely suggestive. It first points to the fact that there is in the Beloved a fulness of all the spiritual mind craves to satisfy its most boundless desires. The gum of the myrrh gratifies only one sense, but in the henna we have the eye filled with beauty, and the smell with the odors of Paradise. Then again the figure suggests the indescribable fulness and variety of the graces and excellences in the Beloved's character. Not separate or single graces, but a whole cluster of all we most need and should daily

seek out of "the fulness of him who filleth all in all." It is the same idea suggested by "the tree of life in the midst of the paradise of God," which bare twelve manner of fruit and yielded her fruit every month,"—infinite variety, and endless perpetuity, and incalculable preciousness and value. And besides, all this is to be found "in the vineyards of Engedi." Engedi was a district on the west of the Dead Sea,—its name literally signifying "Fountain of the goat," because, leaping down the rocks that formed on one side its boundary was a considerable stream, at which the wild goats and Syrian chamois were wont to quench their thirst. The name is still retained in the modern form "Ain Jiddy," and the country still presents to the eye of the observer many aspects because of which it received its name at first. The terraced hillsides of Engedi were peculiarly favorable to the growth of the grape-vine, and Solomon had vineyards there, and still the remains exist of huge cisterns, which he built to supply with water the plants cultivated in them. And still in the places where he waters his flock, and cultivates his "plants of righteousness," is our Lord's presence enjoyed, making us feel, "All my well-springs are in thee," and "My Beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of Engedi."

6. Again we have the Beloved's beauty further set forth when he is said to be "THE ROSE OF SHARON AND THE LILY OF THE VALLEYS" (chap. ii. 1).

Of these two epithets, forming a compound figure, it may be said that all expositors do not think that they were spoken by the Beloved, but rather by the

spouse in continuance of the last verse of the foregoing chapter, in which she is the speaker. They suppose that figures taken from such lowly plants were better suited to describe believers, who are lowly and mean, while the grandest and more majestic terms are required to unfold the glory of Christ. But there is no degree of lowliness and humility, or of terms to express these qualities, that are not found in many of the aspects in which our Lord may be contemplated. Nor is it anything against the application of such figures as rose and lily to the Beloved himself that he uses one of them to characterize the church (v. 2); for, "as he was, so are we in this world," and "for I am meek and lowly." But what decides the application of the words is this: that they descriptively *praise* their subject, whereas the spouse in this song never praises herself. Our Lord, on the other hand, is often, both in the Old Testament and the New, represented as speaking of himself in the most lofty terms, as when he says, "I, the Lord, that speak in righteousness, mighty to save," or, as he says to John, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last," "I am the root and offspring of David, the bright and morning star." Such things he speaks of himself that he may draw all men unto him, and fill us with joy and confidence in his service, as "I am the true vine," "I am the good Shepherd."

But, taking it for granted that the words here are descriptive of Christ himself, what plants are meant by the "Rose of Sharon and the lily of the valley"? As to the former,— "the rose of Sharon,"—as the word for rose here only occurs once besides, when

Isaiah says, "The desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose," there is little opportunity, by comparing passages, to ascertain what the exact meaning of the term really is. Some think that, by the word rendered rose, is meant the Malva or Mallow, which produces abundance of bright flowers, and is of many varieties, as also found growing very plentifully in the rich plains of Sharon. Some, from the supposition that the Hebrew word denotes some sort of a bulbous plant, think it meant the narcissus. There is, however, no good reason for supposing that the rose did not flourish abundantly in Palestine in the days of Solomon, and that many varieties were cultivated, as there are hundreds in the present day; and that the rose of Sharon—a rich plain extending from Joppa to Mount Carmel, on the shore of the Mediterranean—was the finest known, and therefore cultivated by the king in his pleasure gardens with other plants of beauty and fragrance. Taking, with our best expositors, this view of the meaning of the word, it presents with great elegance and beauty the perfections of our Lord. The rose has in all countries been regarded as a royal flower, worthy to be presented to kings, and an emblem of love and warm affection. And so is Christ, in the estimation of every spiritual mind, rich and beautiful above all competition, both in personal character and official rank and position. The rose—white, red, yellow, variegated and mixed in endless variety of color—is therefore no mean figure of him who is to every believer "fairer than the children of men." It is only to the worldly and sensual, "who have not the spirit," that "there is no beauty in him why we

should desire him." Besides, the rose has, though not the strongest, the most gently delicious fragrance of any flower; and even a small portion of its extract, in the form of rose-water, is regarded as a true luxury,—a figure of how the Beloved is the very acme and rapture of soul happiness and delight. Moreover, the rose is perennial, and in warm climates flowers perpetually all the year round. So our Lord is an unfailing source of enjoyment, "a fountain whose waters fail not." "The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory."

But our Beloved is also said to be "the lily of the valleys," which, with the Rose of Sharon, makes a compound figure that strikingly sets forth his praise. One, long resident in Palestine, says of the Huleh lily, which he considers to have been the variety of which our Lord says that "Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these," that it is of considerable height, and the flowers very large, and that the three inner petals meet above and form a gorgeous canopy, such as art never approached, and king never sat under, even in his utmost glory." He adds that it delights most in valleys, is often found growing among thorns and prickly shrubs, and that those seeking to gather the flowers have often their hands lacerated in reaching them, and separating them from the plants by which they are surrounded, and that gazelles and others of the deer tribe love to feed among them, as the Beloved is said to "feed among the lilies." Now in all these particulars these lilies wonderfully set forth some of the most glorious features of our Lord's character. Like the lily, he was in his incarnation "a root out of a

dry ground," as was the gravelly soil of Sharon, and stooped low for our sake that he through his humiliation might lift us up. But even in the depth of his humiliation he was beautiful beyond compare, and in his character and life, teaching and example, often extorted from his enemies a tribute of admiration. But, like his people, he grew up and lived among thorns, among men ignorant, unbelieving, hypocritical, and fanatical, men injurious and persecuting, full of jealousies and dissensions, from which even his own disciples were not free. The crown of thorns these men plaited to torture his blessed head, and all the injuries they otherwise inflicted, as well as his betrayal, denial, agony, and death, all conspired wonderfully to realize this picture of him in the song. But when we understand that all this was for us, how sweet to be near him and enjoy his presence as "he feeds among the lilies"!

7. The Beloved again is characterized as "THE APPLE-TREE AMONG THE TREES OF THE WOOD" (ii. 4).

It is generally agreed that by the apple-tree, three times, with its fruit, referred to in this poem, we are to understand the citron apple, which once grew very abundantly in Palestine, and which for size, shade, fruit, and fragrance far surpassed what is known as the apple-tree of Europe. Indeed, our apple-tree was unknown in the East till the monks introduced it from Europe in the fourth century, nor is it found indigenous to any country bordering on the Mediterranean, as it is in the wild crab of more northerly regions. The citron apple, however, is the representative of a large class, including the orange,

lime, lemon, shaddock, and many others, and which class differs from the two families of the apple tribe we grow, in that it yields citric acid, while ours yields malic acid. Besides, in subtropical countries, the apple of the song (Teppuach) is an evergreen, and yields fruits in different stages of ripeness the year round,—a type of the tree described in the first psalm that “bringeth forth fruit in his season, his leaf also doth not wither.” The foliage of the citron was very dense, and therefore its shadow was a good protection from the scorching rays of the sun; and its leaves were highly fragrant and made the air around very delicious to breathe, while fruit was not only abundant and within easy reach, but agreeable and often medicinal. Accordingly, through a good part of the year these trees would be a delightful resort; and those seated beneath them would at the same time have three of their senses refreshed and charmed,—the eye, the taste, and the smell. No wonder, then, that the spouse says, “I sat down under his shadow with great delight.”

Now, how apt a figure to set forth Christ and his benefits! He is the tree of life, and “the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations.” And in four different ways we are represented in this poem as saved by our relation to the apple-tree. Taking these in the order of gracious experience, we are, first, born and brought up under it. “I raised thee up under the apple-tree: there thy mother brought thee forth; there she brought thee forth that bare thee” (viii. 5). Christ superintends our new birth; and, “when he writeth up the people,” he counts that “this man was born there,” and enters his “name in



the Lamb's book of life." Then, we are stayed, strengthened, supported, and comforted in all our weakness by partaking of the fruit of the apple-tree. "Comfort me with apples" (ii. 5). Again, our breath Godward, in prayer, praise, and spiritual exercises, is perfumed and made fragrant by eating of Christ's fruit. "And the smell of thy nose like apples" (vii. 8). As the breath is affected by the smell of what we last ate, so of all spiritually who feed on Christ. And then, we enjoy shade, protection, and spiritual refreshment as we habitually sit under his shadow. "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste" (ii. 3). By four things, casting a shadow, our Lord is said to protect and comfort us. By the shadow of *his wings*, a figure from the protecting wings of a parent bird, "In the shadow of thy wings I will make my refuge until these calamities be overpast" (Ps. lvii. 1). Then by the shadow of *a cloud* he reduces our sorrows, "even the heat with the shadow of a cloud" (Is. xxv. 5). Also by the shadow of *a rock*, "As the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (Is. xxxii. 2). And also by the shadow of *a tree*, "They that dwell under his shadow shall return" (Hos. xiv. 7). Of all these, however, none is so enlarged in the comfort it gives as the shadow of the apple-tree, affording as it does, such a variety of enjoyment, protection, healing, fragrance, revival, nourishment, and support. Happy experience, then, to be able to say, "I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste."

8. But, moreover, the spouse often in this song

declares her Beloved to be like "A ROE OR YOUNG HART."

A great many varieties of deer at one time existed in Canaan, some wild on the hills, and others tame, and kept in proximity to human dwellings. That to which the Beloved is compared is the family known as the gazelle, and the pet name given to it was one signifying stateliness and beauty. It was called *a beauty*. As a type of animal beauty, it has often been celebrated by poets, who have praised its glossy hair, its graceful figure, its comely shape, its gentle head, brilliant eyes, and flexible ears, as well as easy motions, and have borrowed some of their sweetest figures from its typical beauty. The comparison, then, of the Beloved to this beautiful specimen of animated nature was not at all out of place; and it is noticeable that many of the mutual commendations that pass betwixt him and his spouse borrow their terms from the same source. Thus he compares his Church, as an organization actively at work, to a "company of horses in Pharaoh's chariot," to "a flock of sheep," "her eyes to dove's eyes," and her "hair to a flock of goats that appear from Mount Gilead"; and at the same time she not only draws upon the vegetable world, but also upon the animal, to set forth the glories of his character. When the animal known as *the beauty* is referred to to help the description, it reminds us of the promise, "Thine eyes shall see the king in his beauty." In his person, work, offices, grace, love, care, wisdom, and all his relations to us, how beautiful is our Beloved! and every spiritual mind whose thoughts are much exercised on him must sympathize with David's sur-

passing desire, "that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." "For how great is his goodness and how great is his beauty!" But, besides the idea of beauty, the roe or gazelle was celebrated for its great swiftness and rapidity of motion, "leaping on the mountains and skipping on the hills," bounding over chasms, and ascending with ease what to other animals would be inaccessible heights. These all indicate the readiness of our Lord, and his holy eagerness to be engaged in the work of our salvation. "Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God!" Also the blessed quickness wherewith he answers prayer and comes for our deliverance from troubles. In him was fulfilled, "He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me on my high places," in the celerity with which he conquers his enemies, and the rapidity of his final coming to judgment. "He that testifieth these things saith, surely I come quickly."

9. By another term also is the Beloved known in this poem; namely, that of BROTHER.

"Oh, that thou wert as my brother," "My sister, my spouse," are expressions — one on the part of the Beloved and the other on the part of the spouse — which clearly imply the relation in which he is here known. Nor is this designation of what our Lord is in saving relation unknown or uncommon. Thus Solomon speaks of "a friend that sticketh closer than a brother," usually interpreted of Christ; and Paul says, "Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise

took part of the same." The term "brother," first of all, indicates children of the same parents, but, like most other words, is used in a much wider sense, and is often used for members of the same church or of the same community. Thus our Lord says of his followers, "All ye are brethren"; and John addresses the churches, "I, John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ." Now, our Beloved fulfils all the conditions of brotherhood in both what he became and what he does for us. He has the same Father, who is "the head of the whole family in heaven and in earth." He is God's "first-born," to whose care and management the whole family is committed. With him, as "joint heirs," we inherit all things. He became our surety and discharged all our debts, and in our nature ever lives to make intercession for us. He is our kinsman Redeemer, who takes charge of all our interests, has married our widowed nature, restored our inheritance, and avenges our blood. He is our Brother, who, as he sojourned on earth, sucked the breast of our mother in the constant use of the ordinances of grace; and there is no name for his redeemed Church sweeter than, "My sister, my spouse."

10. And, still further, the Beloved is represented as a VINEYARDIST, letting out his vineyard to others.

"Solomon had a vineyard at Baalhamon. He let out the vineyard unto keepers. Every one, for the fruit thereof, was to bring a thousand pieces of silver. My vineyard which is mine is before me. Thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand, and those that keep

the fruit thereof, two hundred" (viii. 11). Every reader of the Scriptures must be familiar with the frequency with which figures are taken from the vineyard to describe the state and condition of the Church planted on earth. In the 80th psalm the Church is "a vine brought out of Egypt." Isaiah sings of the Church, "My well-beloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill" (v. 7), and foretells, "In that day sing ye unto her, A vineyard of red wine: I the Lord do keep it; I will water it every moment" (xxvii. 2). And exactly in the same line of thought is the parable of our Lord about the vineyard let to husbandmen, to whom the proprietor sent to receive of the fruits of the vineyard (Luke xx. 9). In this parable we have exactly the same leading thoughts as in the language of the spouse. The vineyard the Church, the property of God, as in the person of the Father; the Son, "the heir and possessor by the gift of the Father, and by him let out in its interests and privileges to those who at any time constitute her membership. These members of an active working church have their own interest promoted and well-being secured, for "they that keep the fruit thereof must receive two hundred"; while the chief return is to the Beloved, heir and proprietor, who "must receive a thousand." This, moreover, explains the wifely interest which the spouse, representing believers in the song, manifests in all her lord's interests and possessions, as when she tells us, "I went down into the garden of nuts, to see the fruits of the valley, and to see whether the vine flourished and the pomegranates budded" (vi. 11). "For we are laborers together

with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building (1 Cor. iii. 9).

Now, taking these ten additional figures by which our Lord is described, and two others, "Beloved" and "Friend," yet to be considered, how truly it may be said *altogether* lovely! He is so.

1. In that he is lovely as an object of desire, *without any defect.*

We can find in no human relation any one we can pronounce perfect. There is always something in the most beloved relative or most esteemed friend that we could wish away, and something wanting we could wish present. But our blessed Redeemer, the Captain of our salvation, is "made perfect through suffering," and in him is neither defect nor excess, but in every respect is he *altogether* lovely.

2. In that there is in him enough to meet and *satisfy every right desire.*

The word here rendered "lovely" signifies "all desirable," something that provokes desire and makes us long to possess and make it our own. Such is our Beloved,—the "desire of all nations," who invites us to open wide the mouth of desire, and he will fill it abundantly. There can be no beauty to us in anything we do not desire; and, therefore, the promise runs, "He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him"; "for he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness."

3. In that he is *unchangeably and inexhaustibly* lovely.

Many things on earth are very lovely and pleasant, but are all subject to evils and drawbacks that greatly lessen our satisfaction in them. They may

decay and their beauty depart, or they be taken away and lost to us, or they may disappoint our expectations and cease to give us any pleasure. Therefore Jeremiah exposes the folly of "forsaking God, the fountain of living water, and hewing to ourselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water." As the water, stored up till needed in an imperfect cistern, will either drain away, escape and be lost, or become foul and disagreeable, so are the joys of time, whereas God in Christ is a fountain of living water, ever flowing and ever fresh, and ever satisfying without satiating the longing soul.

4. In his perfect *adaptation also to all our necessities and capacities of enjoyment*, he is altogether lovely. There are times and circumstances in the life of every one in which all wealth and abundance of earthly things cannot reach or relieve our wants. Sickness, misery, a heart broken by trouble, cannot be reached by gold or precious stones, or put to flight by placing us in a palace. So our spiritual necessities can only be met by something adapted to our condition. Ignorance, sin, guilt, crime, the agony of an accusing conscience, and the fear of death and the dread of hereafter, cannot be met by the pleasures of sense, nor the skill of the physician; but they are all met and relieved by the work and offices of our Beloved. Moreover, where capacity of enjoyment ends, there pleasure ceases. The blind cannot appreciate and enjoy the most beautiful combinations of light and color. The deaf cannot enjoy the most rapturous and entrancing music, nor those racked with pain the pleasures of life. But our Lord "Opens the eyes of the blind, and unstops the

ears of the deaf; makes the lame to leap as the hart, and the tongue of the dumb to sing." He gives capacity to receive enjoyment, and then ministers to the new-born power what fills it with unspeakable comfort. And thus in every respect he is *altogether* lovely.



## LECTURE XVI.

### OUR LORD OUR BELOVED AND FRIEND.

“This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem!”—Song v. 16.

AS we contemplate any object of value and desire, as the eye falls upon its outward appearance, and the imagination is conceiving what may be its worth, the thought soon arises of its relation to ourselves, either in the proud feeling, It is mine, or in the secret wish, Oh, that it were mine! In the great International Exhibition in London, the famous Kohinoor diamond was exhibited under glass; and a young country girl, having heard of its fabulous value, after gazing on it with intense earnestness, was heard to whisper, “If that were mine I would be wealthy all my life.” Now, so also in this wonderful exhibit of the value of the Beloved. In twelve descriptive particulars there is an objective display of him in many attractive aspects; and the spouse sums up these and every other thing that can be said in his praise in one grand “altogether”; but in the concluding verse she speaks of all this as subjectively her own, “This is *my* Beloved, and this is *my* Friend.” The two names by which she here distinguishes him, Beloved and Friend, in addition to the twelve in the previous verses, and other ten found in other parts of the song, make in all twenty-four objective views of

Christ and his work. And it is noticeable that, in using these two last epithets, notwithstanding that it was with her an hour of darkness, there is the sweet satisfaction that all she admired was her own, and that she had an interest in all which she viewed with so much delight in her Beloved and Friend. Let us consider these two epithets of our Lord in their order; and

First, my Beloved.

Two different Hebrew words in this song are rendered by this term, the one occurring twice in the first chapter (vs. 14 and 16), and the other twenty-six times in the other chapters. They have both pretty nearly the same shade of meaning, and in every case have a possessive pronoun attached,—*my* when the spouse is the speaker, and *thy* when she is spoken to. In three other passages, known as the refrain of the song (chap. ii. 7, and iii. 5, and viii. 4), we have a somewhat different word rendered “my love”; but, as the “my” is wanting, being supplied by the translators, the opinion of some expositors and of the authors of the Revised Version is likely correct, that in these passages “love” is to be taken in an abstract sense, and not as a personal epithet. The term Beloved presents our Lord

1. As the object which, most of all, we admire and love to contemplate.

“Whom have I in the heavens but thee, and there is none upon the earth that I desire besides thee,” is the loving soul’s response to the inquiry, “What is thy Beloved more than another Beloved?” He is objectively something I fondly admire, and whom I ever desire to contemplate. To this state of mind,

two things are needed. First, spiritual taste and power to appreciate his transcendent merits. It has been often noticed that many things, such as natural scenery or works of art, may have strong attractions for some minds, while to others they afford little if any pleasure; and we explain the matter by difference of taste. Now, "the spiritual man judgeth all things" because of his spiritual insight, and his desire to understand divine things as objects of delightful contemplation. But, besides the capacity and desire, there must be something objectively on which the mind can be exercised with a feeling of enjoyment; and, as we dwell on this object, our desire becomes a passion, and we feel that to lose it would be to be deprived of the chief happiness of our life. "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple." Love sees no defect in its object, but clothes it with beauty, and adorns it with every conceivable perfection, and then bows before it and worships it with unbounded admiration. So it is in the highest form with the soul that, fired with holy passion, admires and adores above all things him who is "chiefest among ten thousand."

2. He is also our Beloved, as we feel that his love toward us is such as has never been equalled or paralleled.

"We love him because he first loved us." In the feeling of admiration or desire toward any object, it must at least seem to us to possess some perfections that make it attractive, and which draw out our regards. Now, the love of God toward us is in this

respect unique and unparalleled, and it has ever been one of the mysteries of godliness how, with his character for holiness, he should have loved us, polluted and steeped in sin as we are, with an everlasting love. "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God." That creatures such as we should have engaged the thoughts, and entered into the purposes, and enjoyed the love from dateless eternity, of Him who is of "purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and cannot look upon sin," is a mystery of mysteries, a problem we can never solve. We can love our like, love them that love us; but "God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us." And, as we attempt to realize any comprehensive idea of such love on God's part, we can only exclaim,

"Oh, wondrous love,  
Love nowhere to be found less than divine!"

We can conceive that God should have regarded us with pity and compassion as helpless and miserable, for he is "full of compassion," and "his mercy endureth forever"; but that he should have loved those laden with guilt, steeped in iniquity, loathsome and vile, and the very opposite of himself in every respect, will be a theme exciting wonder and surprise throughout eternity.

But, practically considered, when God reveals himself to us in such an inconceivable attitude, and the heart is made to apprehend and feel the breadth and length and depth and height of the love of Christ, it becomes a mighty attractive power, so that there is

realized in us what is said of Israel of old, "I drew them with the cords of a man, and with the bands of love." How beautifully these words express what every one feels, on whom the power of divine love has been put forth! "I drew them with the cords of a man," something that will act on human feelings, control human passions, and resemble human affections, such as we, as men, are familiar with in the relations of life. And "with the bands of love," a love divine, yet human, acting on the mental and spiritual in the human constitution, not compelling and coercing, but sweetly drawing and inclining and attaching us to God by "the bands of love." Love felt, love shed abroad in our heart, love constraining, love yoking us to Christ, his cause, people, and work, it is this love that fills the whole soul with his image, on which the thoughts linger with sweet satisfaction, and murmur with sweet affection, "This is my Beloved." As the strong tide setting in from the ocean drives the waters far up the rivers, and makes them swell and flow to greater depth and power, so it is the fulness of love from the infinite ocean of God's boundless immensity that sends the living current pressing up into the regenerate heart, and "fills it with all the fulness of God" (Eph. iii. 4). It is true the tide does not ascend equally far into every river, but the fault is not in the tide, but in the river itself. A few rocks, or a sand-bar at the mouth, or drift from the land filling up the channel, will account for the difference; and a good thorough dredging will go far to remove its cause. And just so a good spiritual dredging, effectively applied to heart and life, "cleansing us from all filthiness of the flesh and

spirit," will enable us to realize and enjoy more fully the love of God. "Keeping ourselves thus in the love of God," we will know practically what is meant by "This is my Beloved."

3. He is also our Beloved, as his presence and fellowship with him is our greatest happiness and enjoyment.

Persons exercised in strong mutual affection feel a powerful and often irresistible tendency to come together, and to that end seek to remove and overcome what would keep them apart and prevent their mutual fellowship. How the heart responds to this statement every endeared human relation bears witness. Who has not experienced a feeling of loneliness, restlessness, and anxiety when the beloved object is away, and we have neither his presence nor means of communication to keep up our fellowship? And how often we may be heard wishing in our difficulties that some trusted one were present to aid us in our anxieties, reminding us of the sisters of Lazarus, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother would not have died." How often, also, in this song is the spouse exercised to procure and retain the presence of her Beloved! How passionately she pleads, "Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where thou feedest." "The voice of my Beloved, behold, he cometh leaping on the mountains and skipping on the hills." "Let my Beloved come into his garden, and eat his pleasant fruit." "Oh, that thou wert as my brother, that sucked the breasts of my mother!" and how she deploras that slothful delay that drove him away from her door, so that she charges her companions to tell him that she is sick

of desire for his speedy return. And it was probably from her passionate language that the author of the "Pilgrim's Progress" represents Christian, when he slept in the arbor on the side of Mount Difficulty, and lost both his precious time and roll of assurance, as bewailing his folly, and crying, "O sinful sleep!" And yet, alas! such mistakes are still made even by the most watchful. What darkness fell on Job when he cried, "Behold, I go forward; but he is not there: and backward, but I cannot perceive him" (xxxiii. 8). And therefore God promises, "I will make darkness light before them," and, "Then shall thy light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noonday." There are seasons of darkness, desertion, and felt absence still to which all are subject, and in many forms we all pass through "the valley of the shadow of death." There are personal afflictions, sore temptations, cruel persecutions, unprofitable labors, discouraging fears, often involving in darkness and distress; and the sweetest consolation in such seasons is simply, "Fear not, for I am with thee." Our darkness may be like that once in Egypt, "such as might be felt," and the storm like that in which his followers cried, "Lord, save us: we perish!" but a realizing sense of the Beloved's presence, and a "Nevertheless, I am continually with thee," still the throbbing heart, and bring in a measure of light and peace. And if so much of his presence, to our happiness and joy, can be realized on earth, what will his second coming prove, and how unspeakable the joy in the thought that "we shall be ever with the Lord!"

4. Our Lord is also here styled "my Beloved" be-

cause the mutual love betwixt him and his cannot be lost or destroyed.

“What is thy Beloved more than another Beloved?” is a question not only answered by the whole of the foregoing description, but specially by the fact that to his love there is no end, and from it no separation. From the instability of the human heart, and from the ever-fluctuating current of perpetually changing circumstances, we can reckon on no form of human affection, even the most pure and hallowed, as having in it any element of permanence. How often the most solemnly uttered vow of fervent, never-dying, eternal affection is rudely and hastily snapped asunder, like the withes which bound Samson, when some powerful passion awakes to energy; and how often the pressure of providential changes violently severs ties which we would have supposed would have lasted forever! Like the goodly ship which has encountered the terrible hurricane, even though surviving the severest strain on her powers of endurance, yet, as she comes out of the fearful contest, how broken and shattered her appearance!—her sails torn, her cordage rent to pieces, her rudder disabled, and some of her crew swept overboard; so human life is often a shipwreck of rent relations, feelings, and affections, and often so sudden and unexpected as to remind us of the words of God to the prophet, “Son of Man, behold, I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke. . . . So I spake unto the people in the morning, and at even my wife died” (Ezek. xxiv. 16, 18). But so much the more will the love of Christ be precious, which changes not, for “having loved his own, he loved



them to the end." How vividly Paul sets forth the unchangeable and inseparable nature of the love of Christ as compared with all human affections, when he asks, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" First, by a figure of speech, he asks, Can it be accomplished by one or all of seven different things which he specifies,—“tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, or sword?” and, having declared it an impossibility which any one or all of these could not effect, he adds ten others, “death, life, angels, principalities, powers, things present, things to come, height, depth, or any other creature”; and, having thus spread out before us the united forces and powers of all creation, even though agglomerated in one great mass, and brought to bear upon us in one great blow that would seem powerful enough to shatter every relation, yet proves impotent to affect disastrously our safety as assured by the unchangeable love of Christ. Nor can the inseparable love specified in the passage mean exclusively God’s love in Christ toward us, but also our love toward him. This is obvious from the fact that tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword are things that affect us, and not Him; that they are often brought to bear against us, if possible, to rupture the bond of our affection, whereas they can have no influence on him in his glorious exaltation. But the fact is, *our* love is but *his* love shed abroad in our heart, and by the indwelling power of Christ’s continual presence there ever maintained, and so strengthened as to overcome all tendency to change. Indeed, it becomes more intense in seasons of persecution, and more pure in the

furnace of affliction ; and, instead of being like " the love of many, that waxes cold " when passing through tribulation, it enables its possessor to say, " And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope ; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our heart by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us " (Rom. v. 3-5). Under the influence of such a love, we will always know both how suitable and true, as a name for our Redeemer, is " This is my Beloved."

Secondly. " And this is my friend."

There is no sweeter name to designate any one whom we love than that of FRIEND ; and, accordingly, we find it both in Scripture and in ordinary life used in a great variety of applications. Those in natural relation or pleasant intercourse, those who belong to the same rank, society, or party as ourselves, in whose well-being we are deeply interested, and to whom we have shown kindness and have received kindness in return, and who have our confidence, we designate our friends. And, when the term is transferred from ordinary life to express some relation in the spiritual world, these radical ideas, suggested by friend and friendship, still adhere to its use and application. Thus Abraham is three times called " the friend of God " (2 Chron. xx. 7, Is. xli. 8, Jas. ii. 23), and the Baptist speaks about being " the friend of the bridegroom " (John iii. 29). Our Lord also appropriates the name to his disciples, " Henceforth I call ye not servants, but friends " (John xv. 15). " David prays for my brethren and compan-

ions' sakes" (Ps. cxxii. 8), and the spouse invites, "Eat, O friends!" There is, therefore, enough in the spiritual phraseology of the Old Testament and of the New to enable us to understand the designation of the Beloved, "And this is my friend."

1. As our friend, he possesses all the qualities and features of character that can promote our happiness and good.

We choose our friends from a variety of motives. Sometimes we are influenced by similarity of tastes and pursuits, sometimes from the enjoyment we feel in their society, and at other times from the good and advantages their friendship is calculated to secure us; but, from whatever motive we select, it is always true that a man is known by the company he keeps, as his choice of friends determines his own character. "He that walketh with the wise shall be wise, but the companion of fools shall perish." Now there are three qualities we look for in a friend which eminently meet in the character of our Lord and fulfil all the conditions of the truest friendship. First, his character is in the fullest sympathy with the tastes and desires of our renewed nature. Between friends there must always be some measure of similarity of character, leading them, from taste and preference, to take pleasure in each other's company, and feel toward one another sympathy and affection. Therefore Solomon declares, "A friend loveth at all times." Now our Lord claims to love us with such an affection: "This is my commandment, that ye love one another as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever

I command you" (John xv. 12-14). Greater love was his than that of Jonathan to David, though "he loved him as his own soul," with a "love that was wonderful, passing the love of women"; and as this surpassing love is felt in all its sweetness and power, our souls are in liveliest sympathy with all that our Beloved is in closest fellowship, and all he has done for us as "a Friend that sticketh closer than any Brother." And a second quality we look for in a friend is *practical wisdom*, able to advise and counsel us in our difficulties. How sadly Rehoboam suffered from the folly and indiscretion of his youthful counsellors, whose advice being followed, to the rejection of the counsel of the old men, led to his losing a good part of his kingdom, and almost cost him his life (1 Kings xii. 1-19). But our Beloved is "Wonderful, Counsellor," "the only wise God and our Saviour," and who in addressing the churches says, "I counsel thee," which counsel alone can free us from the mistakes that are ruinous. Then a third quality we desire in a friend is *reliability*. We want a friend sufficiently powerful to protect us, and who cannot fail us in our emergencies, as Jonathan failed as he pleaded with his father for David. And therefore of our Lord it is said, "He shall not fail nor be discouraged." We want a friend to be rich and wealthy, and able to help us in our wants; and of our Beloved it is said, "The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof," and in him is realized in the fullest measure, "Wealth maketh many friends, but the poor is separated from his neighbors." The expressions, "The unsearchable riches of Christ," "The riches of his grace," "According to his riches in glory," all

indicate how reliable in this respect is our Beloved. Truthfulness and fidelity are also necessary to reliability, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful." In this respect, also, our friend is perfect.

2. A friend is one who will always be ready to help us, even when requiring sacrifice and self-denial.

While, as already stated, we are often told what a friend *should be*, Solomon tells more particularly what he *should do*. "He that hath friends must show himself friendly." This expression evidently means, first, that the true friend will always be doing something, as he has opportunity, to testify the reality of his kind regards to those whom he calls his friends. There is nothing more contemptible than that style of friend spoken of by Solomon, "He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him." That noisy, vociferous, over-demonstrative form of pretended friendship, which is always saying but never doing, is next to the kiss of Judas in the contempt it excites. Our Lord exposes the hollowness of such friendship when he describes the case of one going to a friend at midnight and asking, "Friend, lend me three loaves." "And he from within shall answer and say, Trouble me not," etc. And, when at last he does rise and give, it is only because of the other's importunity, and to free himself from further trouble, and not from any friendly feeling. Now, of such cheap friendship our Lord knows nothing. He was a marvel of self-abnegation in everything he did on earth; and, there-

fore, in his mediatorial prayer, he says of his disciples, "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John xvii. 19). He experienced every want, submitted to every temptation, endured all necessary sufferings, was misunderstood, persecuted, forsaken, all that he might do us good and crown us with manifold proofs of his friendship. And still, how constantly he is bestowing on us the choicest blessings of his unchangeable friendship! He clothes us with his own robe, his unspotted righteousness, which cost him dear, and is of infinite value; he gives us his spirit, that our heart might beat in unison with his own; he introduces us into his family, and puts us among the children, and gives us the "spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!" He takes us into his confidence, and reveals to us his secrets, as he did to Abraham, "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him," therefore, "Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his Lord doeth; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you." He also keeps up a correspondence with us, and graciously visits us, so that, like Enoch, "we walk with God." And still another friendly service he performs for our good is to rebuke and correct what he sees amiss in our character and life. "Faithful are the wounds of a friend." He would not be worthy of the name if he did not correct our errors of judgment, faithfully point out our mistakes, reprove our faults, and warn us against what would involve us in suffering and sin. All this he does in his harmony with the command in the

divine law, "Thou shalt not suffer sin upon thy neighbor." He also pleads for us, as a man would plead for his friend, sends us tokens of his love and faithfulness, provides for us a home, and receives us to be with himself forever. How sweet, then, to be able to say, "This is my Friend."

3. Our Beloved is also our friend, because, either expressed or implied, there is between us a bond of amity and covenant relation.

Some relations are natural, we being born into them. Others are voluntarily entered into, and formed of our own choice. And, be it observed, all voluntary relations imply a covenant as their basis. Society is held together by a social compact, which, though not written, is so well understood that a failure to live up to its conditions is regarded as both wrong and dishonorable. And this is true in a special manner of parties in the relation of friends. Of this we have a striking example in the story of Absalom's undutiful rebellion against his aged parent. Hushai, the Archite, David's friend, went in outward show to offer his services to the young, would-be king, when even Absalom could not help exclaiming: "Is this thy kindness to thy friend? Why wentest thou not with thy friend?" We have also a wonderfully beautiful example of how friendship rests on a covenant basis in the case of Jonathan and David. That friendship, so ardent, sincere, and lasting, was thus inaugurated, "Then Jonathan and David made a covenant, because he loved him as his own soul"; and on two different occasions afterwards they swore to each other an everlasting covenant of amity. Now, all that our Lord has done or

is now doing for us always rests on a covenant foundation, and is the result of covenant relation; and in all his dealings with us he has always "respect to his covenant." Thus we are secured against another deluge by covenant transaction; and many hundreds of years after he had set his bow on the cloud he declared: "For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth, so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee" (Is. liv. 9, 10). To Abraham and his seed also was the gift of Canaan made in covenant form, and also the priesthood to Levi, and the kingdom to David and his posterity. Isaiah, however, extends the application of this principle to all of the Gentiles who should afterwards be called, saying: "Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and *taketh hold of my covenant*; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer. Their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for my house shall be called a house of prayer for all people" (Is. lvi. 6, 7). Now, in keeping with these facts in the Old Testament, we have in the New every blessing, whether in providence or grace, represented as coming to us through the channel of covenant relation. Thus in



all our access to and fellowship with God, Christ is to us "the Mediator of the New Covenant"; and Paul represents "the covenants of promise" as at the foundation of all the blessings we enjoy. And, indeed, in harmony with that idea, we are all in the habit of calling our daily blessings, "covenant blessings," "the sure mercies of David." And surely such expressions are full of meaning; for, if the blessings of night and day, of summer and winter, of seedtime and harvest, come to us through covenant transaction, how much more shall those that come through Him whose blood, shed for us, is "the blood of the everlasting covenant," and who promises: "This is the covenant I will make with them in those days, saith the Lord. I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people" (Heb. viii. 10). And the relation, in which the Beloved and the spouse stand in this Song, strongly suggests this element in their mutual friendship. There is no so intimate and tender relation in life as that of husband and wife; and yet it is a covenant relation, with all its responsibilities and enjoyments. It originated in covenant transaction, and therefore Malachi says to the erring priest, "Yet is she thy companion and the wife of thy covenant" (ii. 14). And how greatly this aspect of our relation to the Beloved enlarges our views of what he is to us. He represented us of old in the everlasting covenant, has betrothed us to himself in righteousness, protects all our interests, makes good all promises, and stands pledged for our safety and happiness in all that is yet before us, so that we can

“rest in his love,” and be filled with consolation and peace as we say of him, “This is my Friend.”

4. Our Beloved may also be regarded as our friend because of the claims he has on us.

“He that hath friends must shew himself friendly”; and we have seen how, in every respect, our Lord filled up all conditions and requirements of the most genuine friendship. But friendship is mutual; and surely, if with the spouse we glory in being able to say, “This is my friend,” it must be with an enlarged sense of obligation. It would be altogether unreasonable to suppose that we can enjoy the privileges, and yet neglect the duties of such a relation. Nor has our Lord kept it dark or obscure as to what, in this respect, he expects of his faithful followers. “Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.” He, at all hazards, cost, and sacrifice, has proved our friend in a manner never to be forgotten, and has therefore claims on us we can never justly set aside. First, he has a rightful claim on our *fullest confidence*. Even when his ways are dark and mysterious, we should be satisfied with what he said to Peter, “What I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter,” believing him implicitly, accepting with the fullest assurance his promises, casting upon him our cares, and committing our souls to him in well-doing. “Let not your heart be troubled, ye believe in God, believe also in me.” *Frequent intercourse and correspondence* are also due to him as our friend. “And truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his son Jesus Christ.” Therefore our Lord remonstrates with the spouse when her communicating with him

was too scanty and imperfect, "Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely" (ii. 14). And again, to make *common cause and relation to his people* is surely due to him as our friend. Like Ruth, when proselyted to the true religion, we will not be able to bear the thought of being separated from the people and church of God. "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee; for whither thou goest I will go, and where thou lodgest I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (Ruth i. 16). Fidelity in following the Lamb whithersoever he goes, and keeping close by "the footsteps of the flock," are duties implied in being his in a covenant of everlasting friendship, otherwise even the Judas kiss of outward relation may still be but the mask of a deceitful and treacherous heart. And how sadly this is at times realized in the manner in which the professed followers of our Lord treat one another. He has very clearly declared it to be his will, If ye love me, love my friends, "Love one another." And yet his friends, instead of showing that charity, tenderness, and loving concern about one another he has a right to expect, are often found loading one another with reproaches, indulging in wrath and strife, and even, in some cases, with hatred and cruelty; so that the words of Zechariah still apply, "And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thy hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends" (xiii. 6). Oh, it is sad to think that Israel, that claimed to be exclusively his friends, insisted even on the Gentile

governor that in the shameful death by crucifixion they should "pierce his hands and his feet," but still more sad when now those who have clearer light as to his character and claims wound him in wounding his members, and by undutiful jealousy and unseemly strife, break up and mar the work of his hands. Better counsel is hinted by Solomon as to the way of profiting by our friends, "As iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend" (Prov. xxvii. 17). As frequent communion with God will sharpen and brighten our face, as it did that of Moses on the mount, so much loving fellowship with his friends sharpens us like a file, so as that we act and react on one another to the increase both of our growth in grace and our usefulness in the work of Christ. And blessed results to others in the world would also flow from such a spirit on the part of Christ's followers. Envy, bitterness, and strife among Christ's friends disgust the men of the world, and prejudice them against religion, whereas good has always resulted from "brethren dwelling together in unity." It is recorded that Dionysius, tyrant of Syracuse, was so affected by the fidelity of two friends,—Damon and Pythias,—the one having voluntarily offered to die for the other, that he remitted the sentence of death that he had capriciously pronounced on one of them, declaring that now he was convinced that there was still such a thing on earth as real friendship. And yet, such are the capriciousness and instability and treachery of man that sometimes, even in the Church, we might exclaim with Socrates, the Athenian philosopher, "Friends! there is no friend!" Ah! but

there is. "This is my Friend," is true of the relation of every believer to the adorable, unchangeable Redeemer, and true religion often develops an unselfish friendship among his followers, that is the comfort of earth, and will reckon as an element among the joys of heaven.

"For all our friends in heaven, all faithful friends,  
And many friendships in the days of time  
Begun, are lasting there and growing still;  
So grows ours evermore, both theirs and mine."

—*Course of Time.*

May we not, then, learn from the glorious claim, "This is my Beloved, and this is my Friend, O ye daughters of Jerusalem," first, that all true religion is personal and possessive? A right use of the possessives, *my* and *thy*, lies at the foundation of all experimental godliness, and is the very life and soul of all spiritual comfort and joy. Secondly, that the obligations arising from our relation to Christ are mutual. Everything done by him to us and for us is so much a claim on our love, gratitude, and obedience. And, thirdly, that our mouth should ever so abound in praise of our Beloved as to give others the benefit of our experience, and draw them nearer to Christ. "This is my Beloved and this is my Friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."

