

Heaven and Earth.

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"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." The scene of the divine handiwork was twofold; and, accordingly, "in the dispensation of the fulness of times," God will display Himself again, both in *heaven* and on *earth*.

I would begin my meditation on this divine subject with Genesis 1 - 47, which presents, I judge, a beautiful view of the Lord acting, by turns, as in heaven and on earth, till, at the close, we find them together in a way typical of what their connection and yet distinctness will be in that coming dispensation of the fulness of times. May our meditations be always submitted to His truth and Spirit, and conducted in the temper of worshippers.

GENESIS 1, 2. — It was only of the *earth* that Adam was made lord. The garden was his residence, and he was to replenish and subdue the earth. This was the limitation of his inheritance and of his enjoyments. He knew of heaven only as he saw it above him, and by its lights dividing his day and his night. But he had no thoughts which linked him, personally, with it.

GENESIS 3. — But Adam transgressed and lost the garden, and became a drudge in the earth, instead of being the happy lord of it. Gen. 3: 17-19. He was now to get a bare existence out of it, till he was laid down in death upon it.

GENESIS 4, 5. — Such was his changed condition. To cling to the earth now as one's delight and portion was to act in bold defiance of the Lord of judgment. And such was the spirit of Cain and his family He thought the earth good enough for God, and desired nothing better for himself. He gave God the fruit of it, and built a city for himself on the face of it, furnishing it with desirable things of all sorts, unmoved by the thought of the blood with which his own hand had stained it, and of the presence of the Lord, on whom he had turned his back. But such was not Adam, or Abel, or Seth, or that line of worshippers who "call on the name of the Lord." They have in the earth only a burying-place. But grace having provided a remedy for them as sinners, and righteousness having separated them from a cursed earth, they believe in the remedy, and seek no place or memorial in the earth, and the Lord gives them a higher and a richer inheritance, even in *heaven* with Himself, as signified in the translation of Enoch.

GENESIS 6 - 9. — But though the Lord is thus removing the scene of His counsels and the hopes of His elect from earth, to heaven, yet the earth is not given up. It is, we know, destined to rejoice, by-and-by, in the liberty of the glory; or, as I have already quoted, in "the dispensation of the fulness of times." Eph. 1: 9, 10. And, accordingly, this purpose the Lord will at times rehearse and illustrate, as He does now, in due season, in the history of Noah.

The heavenly family, as we have just seen, only died both to and in the earth. They could speak, it is true, both of its coming judgment and blessing. Enoch foretold of the one, and Lamech of the other. Jude 14; Gen. 5: 29. But they were, neither of them, *in* the scenes they thus talked about. But

Noah, who comes after them, is a man of *the earth* again. In his day the earth re-appears as the scene of divine care and delight. God has communion with man upon it again. It has passed through the judgment of the water, and God makes a covenant with it, has the prophet, priest, and king upon it, providing for its continuance and godly government. Noah's connection with it was quite unlike that of either Cain or Seth. He did not, like the former, fill it and enjoy it in defiance of God; nor did he, like the latter, take merely a burying-place in it; but he enjoyed the whole of it under the Lord. The Lord sanctioned his inheritance of it, his dominion over it, and his delight in it.

GENESIS 10, 11. — Thus the earth, in its turn, again takes up the wondrous tale, and is the care and object of the Lord. But again it becomes corrupt before Him. Noah himself, like Adam, begins this sad history, and the builders of Babel, like another family of Cain, perfect the apostasy, seeking to fill the earth with themselves independently of God. They were mighty hunters before the Lord. They scoured the face of the earth, as though they asked, "Where is the God of judgment?"

GENESIS 12 - 36. — This, however, was not allowed. Another judgment comes upon them. They are scattered, and the whole human social order is awfully broken up. But Abram is called out to find his fellowship with God, apart from the world. His family dwelt in Mesopotamia beyond the Euphrates. He came from the stock of Shem, but was a worshipper of idols, as all the nations were. But sovereign grace distinguishes him, and the God of glory calls him forth from kindred, from home, and from country.

It is a call, however, that does not interfere with the order of the earth, or government among the nations. He is called to be a *stranger*, and not a rival of "the powers," or a new-modelled governor of any people. He walks with God as the God of glory — a higher character than that of the one by whom "the powers that be are ordained." He is a pilgrim and stranger on earth, and walks as a *heavenly man*. He has promise that *his seed and inheritance in the earth* shall become linked together by-and-by; but he, with Isaac and Jacob, dwell in tents all their days, and a tent life is that of a stranger here, of one that is not at home and at rest.

Here, then, we have a heavenly people again — heavenly in the character of their walk, and heavenly, like Enoch or Lamech, in their intelligence about the earth's future history, and the promise to their seed of inheritance in it in due season. But we have still deeper and fuller mysteries in the history of him who comes after them.

GENESIS 37 - 47. — Through the wickedness of his brethren, as we all know, for it is a favourite story, Joseph is estranged from the scene of the promised and covenanted inheritance, and becomes first a sufferer, and then a husband, a father, and a governor, in the midst of a distant people; till at last his brethren, who once hated him, and the inhabitants of the earth, are fed and ruled by him in grace and wisdom.

Nothing can be more expressive than all this. It is a striking exhibition of the great result purposed of God "in the dispensation of the fulness of times." Joseph is cast among the Gentiles; and there, after sorrow and bondage, becomes the exalted one, and the head and father of a family with such joy, that his heart for a season can afford to forget his kindred in the flesh. This surely is Christ in heaven now, exalted after His sorrows, and with Him the Church taken from among the Gentiles, made His companion and joy during the season of His estrangement from Israel. But in process of time Joseph is made the depository and the dispenser of the world's resources; his brethren, as well as all beside, become dependent on him; he feeds them and rules them according to his pleasure. And this as surely is Christ, as He will be in the earth by-and-by, with Israel brought to repentance and seated in the fairest portion of the earth, and with all the nations under His sceptre, when He will order

them according to His wisdom, feed them out of His stores, and re-settle them in their inheritance in peace and righteousness.

Surely the heavens and the earth are, in type, here seen, as they will really be in "the dispensation of the fulness of times," when all things, both in heaven and on earth, shall be gathered together in Christ. Surely this is a rehearsal of the great result, and the heavens and the earth tell out together the mystery of God!

And I cannot but observe the willing, un murmuring subjection which the Egyptians yield to Joseph. He moves them hither and thither, and settles them as he likes, but all is welcome to them; and so, in the days of the kingdom, the whole world will be ready to say, Jesus has done all things well. What blessedness! Subjection to Jesus, but willing and glad subjection! His sceptre getting its approval and its welcome from all over whom it waves and asserts its power!

And again I observe that all this power of Joseph is held in full consent of Pharaoh's supremacy. The people, and the cattle, and the lands, are all bought by Joseph *for* Pharaoh. It is Pharaoh's kingdom still, though under Joseph's administration — as in the kingdom of which this is the type, every tongue shall confess Jesus Lord, to *the glory of God the Father*.

These features give clear expression and character to the picture. But there is one other touch (the touch of a master's hand, I would reverently say) in this picture which is not inferior in meaning or in beauty to any. I mean, that in all this settlement of the earth, Asenath and the children get no portion. They are not seen; there is no mention of them even. Jacob may get Goshen; but Asenath, Ephraim, and Manasseh, nothing. Is it that the wife and children were loved less, and the father and brethren more? Nay, that cannot be. But Asenath and the children are heavenly, and have their portion, the rather in and with him who is the lord and dispenser of all this, and they cannot mingle in the interests and arrangements of the earth. Even Goshen, the fairest and fattest of the land, is unworthy of them. They are the family of the lord himself. They share the home, and the presence, and the closest endearments of him who is the happy and honoured head of all this scene of glory.

Is not this the great result, in miniature or in type? Have we not in all this that promised "dispensation of the fulness of times," when God will gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth? Are not the heavens and the earth here seen and heard together in their millennial order? I surely judge that they are. "Known unto God are all His works, from the beginning of the world."

But as we go on in the course of the divine dispensations, earthly and heavenly scenes and purposes still unfold themselves. Israel, in their turn, and after these scenes in the book of Genesis, become the witness of God, and an *earthly* people. A portion of the world is sanctified for God's possession and dwelling-place again. As the deluge had purified the whole of it for the divine power and presence in Noah's day, so the sword of Joshua now purifies a portion of it for the same divine power and presence in Israel. God has His sanctuary and His throne in the land of Canaan. He is worshipped in Jerusalem, and there His law is dispensed. The glory is again in the earth. As Lord of the earth, the God of Israel keeps court and rule on the earth again. But all is corrupted again, Canaan was defiled by the apostasy of Israel, as the Noah-earth had been defiled by the tower of Babel. Ezekiel, who was set as a watchman in the day of this apostasy, sees therefore the glory on its way from Jerusalem to *heaven*. It does not seek any other spot on earth, but, being disturbed at Jerusalem by the defilements there, it retreats to heaven. Ezekiel 11.

Up to this day of Ezekiel the glory had communicated with Israel *in power*. It was a glory, or divine presence, that had judged Egypt, guided the camp through the desert, smitten the nations of

Canaan, divided their land among the tribes, and then seated itself in the temple and on the throne at Jerusalem. All this was the glory *in power*. But, as we have seen, Israel had now forfeited it, and it returns to heaven. But it had another character in which to show itself. This same glory, or the divine presence, God Himself, returns veiled in the person of Jesus; in whom, as a rejected Galilean, or carpenter's son, having not where to lay His head, worse off in the world than the birds or the foxes, it went about in the land of Israel in fullest grace, healing, preaching, toiling, watching; poor, yet enriching others; thirsty and hungry, yet feeding thousands, and in every thing as simply and surely declaring itself to be the glory, as it did when it divided the waters of Jordan, or threw down the walls of Jericho. Only it was the glory in its *grace* now, as it had been the glory in its *power* then. In this form, however, Israel, or the earth, forfeited it also, though it did not leave the earth in the same way. Of old, when rejected in its power, it left the earth, of itself, in righteous anger resenting the affront done to its majesty, and withdrawing itself in judgment (Ezek. 1 - 11); but now, being rejected in its grace, it is at last rather sent away than withdraws itself. But still, whether we see the glory in' power or in grace, the earth has forfeited it, and it is now hid in the heavens. See Acts 7: 55.

This is the history of the glory since Ezekiel 11 to the ascension of Jesus. And it is again where the prophet of God saw it going in that chapter, that is, in heaven. Only it is now gathering the fulness of the Gentiles there, receiving to itself the "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." The Holy Ghost has come forth to tell us here of the glory there, to form us into association with its own wondrous history, or to make its portion our portion.

Such is the place, and such the action, of the glory now.

But there is another stage in its history still. Ezekiel sees it return to the very spot from whence it set out. Ezekiel 43. It had never sought any other place on earth. If Zion be unprepared for Jesus, the earth must lose Him, for of Zion alone has He said, "This is my rest for ever." But the glory does return, as we see in that chapter of Ezekiel. And then will arise that system commonly known by the name of "the millennium," when Jesus will become the centre, the true ladder which Jacob saw, the sustainer of all things in heaven and on earth, reconciling all by His blood, and then gathering all in Himself to spread His glories over all. See Isaiah 4: 5, 6.

Thus the two parts of the future kingdom, the heavenly and the earthly, have been pledged again and again from the beginning; one witness after another, called forth in the dispensations, has, as we have seen, been telling of His counsels; and the millennium will be the owning of these pledges, and the accomplishment of the promises of these heavenly and earthly witnesses.

It has been grateful to my own soul to think of the *intercourse* of heaven with earth, in the progress of this varied and wondrous history. I mean in the visions, or the dreams, or the angelic visits, which at times the people of God have enjoyed. The audiences of divine oracles are of this character also. All these show that the heavens had access to the earth, and had but to pass through a thin veil to meet or reach it.

While the earth was undefiled, the Lord God walked in the garden. And afterwards, though He was in some sense estranged from earth, yet He was ever ready to visit it in the behalf of His elect, as in the histories of Abraham, Joshua, Gideon, and others. The ladder which Jacob saw, with its top in heaven and its foot on the earth; the passing and repassing of Moses in and out between the Lord and the people; the elders going up and seeing the God of Israel; Solomon's ascent from his own house up to the house of the Lord, these are notices of intercourse between the heavens and the earth in the days of the kingdom. So that bright and memorable hour, when Jesus was transfigured, in company with Moses and Elias, in the sight of Peter, James, and John. So the occasional appearances of Christ to His

disciples after He had risen. And so the vision of the descending and ascending sheet. The heavenly things at such moments unfold themselves to the eye of man, and give sweet notice of their nearness to us. We do not as yet perceive this nearness, for the glory is not yet in its millennial place over the city of the Jews; but faith reads these notices of this nearness, and understands them Isaiah 4. Faith, in Elisha, knew that the Lord of hosts was nigh, and he prayed that his servant might have his eye opened to see that the mountains around him were filled with the chariots and horses of heaven; and in the millennial kingdom all this will be to sight. The heavenly glory, or glory of the golden city, will shine over the Jerusalem of the land of Israel. On all her habitations it will be a covering. The ladder will be erected, with its head in the heavens and its foot on the earth; the same blessed Lord will be the centre of all things; and, as in the different parts of one temple, the services of praise and joy will be celebrated, every tongue confessing Jesus Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The *pure moral happiness* that will be enjoyed by reason of this intercourse, is also sweetly pictured in different types and prophecies. As at the meeting of Jethro and Moses, of Solomon and the Queen of the South; as in Isaiah 60, or on the holy Mount, or in the holy Jerusalem. What right affections do we find in all these intercourses! What pure social pleasures are, as I have said, pictured before us! At the mount of God how naturally Moses at once takes the place of the inferior, and Aaron too; and how gracefully Jethro, representing the heavenly man, fills the duties and wears the honours of their superior! And with what joy of heart, and praise on his lips, does he listen to the tale of God's mercies to Israel! In the Queen of the South what unenvious and ungrudging generosity of soul we witness, and in Solomon what readiness to make her happy! He tells her all that was in her heart, and more besides, filling her with such light and joy, that, it is said, there was no more spirit in her; and she returns home, not to envy his greatness, but to spread the report of it. From Isaiah 60 we learn how gladly will all the nations, in the day of the kingdom, wait on Jerusalem with their treasures. Even like the flight of doves to their windows will be the willing-hearted journeys of the dromedaries of Midian, or the voyages of the ships of Tarshish, with their treasures and their spoils, to nourish the joy and glory of Zion. They will delight to do her honour, and all will be with the glow and fervency of a free-will offering. As afterwards, in the case of Peter on the holy Mount; when he awoke to the sight and sense of the heavenly glory, such joy filled his soul as, at once, and by its own necessity, expelled all selfishness from his heart. It was not Peter properly who spoke, but the virtue of the place, the spirit of the scene. He was, as in the twinkling of an eye, so filled with the air and breath of heaven, that he was ready to labour and let other men enter into his labours. "Master, it is good for us to be here," said he; "let us make three tabernacles, one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias." And, again, in the holy Jerusalem, what is the commerce there between the families of God? All that is most blessedly of the same great and generous character. The kings bring their glory and honour up to the light of the city, counting it their place and their joy to do her honour, not lightly approaching her, but, as owning her holy dignity, bringing only *their glory and their honour up* to her. And she dispenses her treasures with the same gracefulness. The leaves of her tree, the light of her glory, the streams of her living river, are all at the welcome disposal of the nations.

All these shadowy expressions of the social delights of millennial days will be deeply prized by us, if we love the exercise of pure, unselfish affections.

But in this intercourse it is the heavens that will visit the earth, and not the earth the heavens — the people of the one will come down to the other, but not the contrary — the people of the earth will only have to receive and welcome the visitants from heaven.

The kingdom of nature, as we may call it, exhibits this. For the earth gives nothing to heaven, but receives from it; as the sunshine and the rain come down to bless the earth, but the earth adds

nothing in return.*

*The saints of the present age, being heavenly in their calling, should be heavenly also in the spirit of their mind, and consciously, in all their tastes and desires, only as strangers, and not at home, in the earth; a people, as another once said, not as looking up from earth to heaven, but as looking down from heaven to earth.

But in this coming intercourse of the heavens and the earth, when the people of the heavens go up and down the mystic or millennial ladder, I have thought that Scripture leads us to judge that there will be change of raiment, or a certain veiling of their proper glory, when they come down, and have communion with the earth beneath them and under them.

The expression of this we get in the Lord's appearances after He rose from the dead. For then He could assume any veil which suited the business He had to do, whether that of the gardener to Mary, that of a travelling companion to the two going to Emmaus, or that of a courteous stranger on the banks of the lake to the fishermen. In such appearances He could not be seen in heaven; but He could thus veil Himself when the business He had in hand to do on the earth required it. As of old, Moses was the unveiled Moses in the presence of God, but the veiled Moses in the sight of Aaron and the congregation. One suit of raiment was fitted to heaven, another to earth. And as also, in the case of the priests, they had such apparel as became them when they were *within*, and they had another dress wherein to appear *without*. They suited themselves differently to the presence of God and the people. See Lev. 6: 11; Lev. 16: 4, 23, 24; Ezek. 42: 14; Ezek. 14: 19.

And, besides, we see this changeful appearance of the Son of God in old times. He had various suits wherein to show Himself, and wherein to veil the brighter glory which was fit only to the higher regions. He was in a burning bush at Horeb, in a cloudy chariot through the wilderness, and as an armed soldier under the walls of Jericho. Joshua 5: 13. The business of the kingdom, the concerns of the earth, called Him here; and He appeared in a way suited to the business He had to do. And all these are notices of the change of raiment, in which those who are to govern "the world to come," and to do the matters of the kingdom on earth, may wait on their ministry here, and then return to appear again unveiled in their more proper heavenly places.

But in addition to this doctrine of heavenly and earthly places and peoples, in the days of the coming glory, and in addition to the truth of there being blessed and wondrous intercourse between them, as I have been shortly stating, we might meditate on some of the joys and glories *peculiar* to each of them.

To rise and meet the Lord in the air is the hope which is the most immediately upon the heart of the believer. Then the going with Him to the mansions in the Father's house. As He says, "I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." And that house will give exercise to all those family affections which the heart so well understands. The Father will be there, and the Firstborn among many brethren, and the many brethren themselves. And to extend these relationships, and awaken affections to the full, there will be the marriage there, and the now espoused or betrothed Church will become the bride of the Lamb. Rev. 19.

There are scenes of glory also, and occasions of other joy, accompanying this. In those heavens there will be the "Holy Jerusalem," the dwelling of the saints as a royal priestly people, the place of *government* and of *worship*. And there will be the Tree of Life, and the River of Life, and the Light, and the Throne of God and the Lamb. And the saints will be there as harpers, not having cymbals and timbrels of merely *human* skill, fitted to raise the joys of earth (Ps. 98), but having "harps of God," instruments of divine workmanship, fitted to awaken melody worthy of heaven itself And the

enthroned elders will be there, casting their crowns before the throne, and the angels delighting to ascribe all power and authority to the Lamb that was slain.*

*Another once observed, that the moment of highest rapture in heaven is not when the saints wear their crowns, but when they *cast them down* before the throne. Rev. 4: 10.

And throughout all this there will be nothing to trouble or to hinder. As on earth, in those days, "nothing will hurt or destroy in all God's holy mountain," so, in the heavens, there will be no entrance to anything defiling. There can be no enemies, for they have been judged; no serpent, for he has been trodden under foot. There will be no weariness of heart, no coldness or dulness of soul, no fainting of spirit; but the servants will serve without fault, and night and day there will be the happy worship, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty."

This heaven too will be one scene of God's own rest or sabbath; and the saints, in their measure tasting the same refreshing, will dwell in that rest in bodies fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body. They shall be like Him in His glory, seeing Him as He is. They shall shine "as the sun" in the kingdom of their Father. In mind, body, and estate they will be conformed to the Beloved. And there will be the seeing or understanding of all the precious revelation of God, not as through a glass, darkly, but as face to face, knowing even as we are known. And there will be the white stone; the hidden manna; the morning star; the white robes, wherein to stand before the throne of God; the white garments, wherein to walk with the Lord through the dominions; and the white raiment, wherein to sit on their own thrones. Rev. 2, 3. All these will be ours then.

But this leads to a scripture which is very fruitful in notices of heavenly joy and glory. I mean Rev. 2, 3. The promises there made will be found, I believe, to unroll before us, in holy and exact order, the things which await the saints of the heavens in those coming days.

EPHESUS. — "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

Those outside shall have the *leaves* of this same tree for healing (Rev. 22), but the saints of the heavens shall have more — the very fruit of the tree itself, gathered, as it were, immediately from it, where it grows in the midst of God's own garden; not the fruit brought to them, but gathered by their own hands off the very tree. Strong intimation of the freshness, the constant freshness, of that life which is theirs. As Jesus says (and what can pass beyond such words?), "Because I live, ye shall live also." Here, in this promise to Ephesus, is the tree of life partaken of immediately by the heavenly saints. For this is their portion, to receive life from the very fountains and roots themselves. and there also to feed and to nourish it.

SMYRNA. — "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life. He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death."

This is something beyond what had been said to Ephesus. Life was regarded as *imparted* in its richest form to Ephesus; but here we see it *gained* by Smyrna. For Smyrna was sorely tried. Some were cast into prison, and all of them were in tribulation. They were to suffer many things, but they are promised, on being faithful unto death, a *crown* of life. As James in like manner speaks, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love Him." Here the crown of life is promised to them who endure trial. And this is beautiful in its season. The Lord delights to own the faith of His saints; and if they have shown that they loved not their life in this world unto death, it shall be as though they had gained it in the world to come. Life shall be a crown to them *there*, as the glorious reward of their not having

cared for it *here*.

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

We have another source of joy disclosed here. *Life* is possessed, and that abundantly and honourably, as we saw, at Ephesus and Smyrna; but there is here the promise of another *joy* — *the sense of the Lord's personal favour and affection*; communion with Him of such kind as is known only by hearts closely knit together in those delights and remembrances with which a stranger could not intermeddle. This is here spoken of to the faithful remnant in Pergamos. They had held His faith in the midst of difficulties, and clung to His name; and this should be rewarded with that which is ever most precious — tokens of personal affection, waking the delightful sense and assurance that the heart of the Lord is knit to their heart. He will kiss the saint "with the kisses of His mouth;" or, in the midst of it all, give that pledge which shall speak it. It is the *hidden manna* which is here fed upon; and the stone here received has a name on it, which *none know but he who receives it*. This, as another has said, expresses individual affection. It is not public *joy*, but delight in the conscious possession of the Lord's love. How blessed a character of joy in the coming days is this! *Life* possessed in abundance and in honour we have already seen at Ephesus and Smyrna; but here at Pergamos, we advance to another possession — not *glory* in any form of it as yet, but the blessed certainty and consciousness of the Lord's *personal affection*.

THYATIRA. — "He that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of My Father, and I will give him the morning star."

Here we reach *public scenes, scenes of power and glory*. This is not merely life, though enjoyed never so blessedly, nor simple personal affection and individual joy, but here is something displayed in honour and strength abroad; here are power and glory in the first character in which the glories of the saints are destined hereafter to be unfolded; *i.e.*, in their being the companions of the Lord in the day when He comes forth to make His enemies His footstool; or, according to the decree of the second psalm, to break them with a rod of iron, to dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. This will be His power just as He takes the kingdom. This will be His ridding out all that would have been inconsistent with the kingdom. This will be the girding of the sword upon the thigh, like David, ere the throne be ascended, like Solomon. Psalm 45. It will be the Rider's action, ere the reign of the thousand years begins. Rev. 19. And in that exercise of power, and display of glory, the saints (as we are here instructed and promised) shall be with Him. This is blessed in its place, and given to us in due season; for, *after the life*, and the *personal, hidden joy*, the *public glories* begin to be ushered forth.

SARDIS. — "They shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. . . . He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before My Father, and before His angels."

This is a stage onward in the scenes of glory. The vengeance has been taken, the sword of Him who sits on the white horse has done its righteous service, the vessels of the potter have been broken, and the kingdom has come. Jesus here promises to His faithful ones that He will confess them before His Father and His angels. This is not redeeming them from judgment, or saying their souls (as we speak), but *publicly owning them before the assembled dignities of the kingdom*. He promises them that they shall walk with Him in white, for they are worthy. That hand which now in grace washes their feet, will then take hold of them in holy, happy intimacy, and own full companionship with them

in the realms of glory. They shall *walk* with Him.

What a character of joy is this! To be *publicly* owned, as before (as we read of Pergamos) privately and personally caressed. In how many ways does the Spirit of God trace the coming joy of the saints! The life, the love, the glory, that are reserved for them; the tree of life, and its crown too; the white stone, carrying to the deepest senses of the heart the pledge of love; and then companionship with the King of glory in His walks abroad through His bright and happy dominions. But even more than this the same Spirit has still to tell.

PHILADELPHIA. — "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God, which is New Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from My God: and I will write upon him My new name.

We have just seen the heir of the kingdom as the companion of the Lord of the kingdom, abroad in the light of the glory, walking there in white with Him, owned before the Father and before the angels. Here the promise is, that *the faithful one, shall have his place in the system of glory itself*, that he shall be of that glorious order of kings and priests who shall then form the character of the scene, each of them being a pillar in the temple, and each enrolled as of the city High and holy dignities! Each of the faithful ones filling his place in the temple and the city, a needed member of that royal priesthood then established in their holy government in the heavens, where the New Jerusalem abides and shines. What honour is put on them here! Owned *abroad* in companionship with the Lord, walking through the rich and wide scene of glory; and also owned *within*, as bearing, each in himself, a part of the glory, every vessel needed to the full expression of the light of the New Jerusalem, and formed as the vital part of the fulness of Him who is to fill all in all! A king and a priest, each of them occupying his several rank and station in the temple and the city, the Salem of the true Melchisedec. What a place of dignity! Surely love delights to show what it can do, and will do. If we had but hearts to prize these things, chiefly because of their telling us of this love which has thus counselled 'for us! For what higher, happier thought can we have, even of glory itself, than that it is the manner in which love lets us know what it will do for its elect one. Poor, poor *heart* that moves so little at these things, while the *mind* stirs the conception of them!

LAODICEA. — "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne."

Here *the highest point of glory is reached*. This is the bright and sunny elevation up to which this passage through the joys and honours of the kingdom has conducted us. Here the faithful one enters into the joy of his Lord, sharing His throne; not only owned by Him abroad, and established with Him within, walking in white with Him, or fixed as a needed and honoured portion of the great system of royal priesthood, but with Him seated in the supreme place.

These pledges and promises may now end. They have told of blessedness indeed.

Exceeding great things have surely passed before us in this wondrous scripture, Rev. 2, 3. The tree and crown of life — the white stone — the morning star — the walking abroad with Jesus through the realms — residence in the temple and city — a place on the throne itself! Surely, if Jesus Himself be prized, then will all this be welcomed by us. And then, as we are further told, the joy of dispensing to the earth the streams of that living river, and the leaves of that living tree, which rises and grows in our heavens (Rev. 22); with access, moreover, to the ladder which lies between the upper and lower regions, in order, as I have been already observing, to do the business of the kingdom, in conscious royal dignity, and full priestly holiness.

The glory also shall be revealed in us, each saint shall bear it or be a vessel of it, and each of them shall be a child of light and a child of the day, and each a son of glory, glorified together with Christ, so as to join with Him in shedding light, beyond that of the sun or the moon, upon the creation beneath, that the present earnest expectation of that creation may be satisfied in the then manifestation of the sons of God."

"And they shall see His face, and His name shall be in their foreheads." They shall be intimately near Him, speaking face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend, without fear or suspicion, for their title shall be signed and sealed as with His own hand. He will have appropriated them to Himself; and this they shall know, because His name shall be on them. And there, as within all veils, they will walk in their heavenly temple, and look on their Lord, and love, and wonder.

And to all this, we may add, that everything will be according to our mind, as we speak; all will be right in our eyes; all will equally and entirely please us, and be just as we would have it. This we see in the book of Revelation, in the progress of which the heavenly family, wherever they are seen or heard, are always found in the fullest concord with the action that is going on. In Rev. 4 the throne is getting itself ready for judgment — lightnings, thunders, and voices proceeding from it; but the elders and the living creatures have their doxologies to the name of the Lord God Almighty, who sits and orders all. In Rev. 5 the Lamb takes the book, and they again rejoice, taking their harps to celebrate Him, and to make merry at the prospect which this sight opens to them. In Rev. 11 the seventh angel announces judgment, but they have only to fall on their faces, and worship, and give thanks. In Rev. 12 the war in heaven and its issue is just as they would have it; and with a loud voice they publish "Salvation!" In Rev. 15 God's works *and ways*, all things of His *counsel* or His *strength*, form the theme of their song. And in Rev. 19 the judgment of the woman who corrupted the earth calls forth again and again the hallelujah of the glorified family, Thus all, from beginning to end, is equally and altogether right in their eyes; all is exactly as they would have it. They as loudly triumph in the Kinsman *Avenger* (Rev. 19), as they do in the Kinsman *Redeemer*. Rev. 5. Everything is to them beautiful in its season. The marriage of the Lamb, and the judgment of the great whore, are equally and entirely according to their mind.

Different, far different indeed, from what is now felt by the believer. As far as he is spiritual, nothing is fully right around him here. And this is only increasingly so, as the world gets fuller of its own inventions, and increases with the increase of man. And a judgment this affords as to the state of our affections. For we may ask ourselves, How are we moved by the present advance in the improvements of the world? Are we congratulating ourselves and the age upon them, or are they sickening to our hearts? This may be a touch-stone of the condition of our souls, whether indeed Christ be our object or not. The great tower in the plains of Shinar would have been the boast of a Nimrod, but Abram would have turned from it to weep. Just as the merchants of the earth bewail that which the heavens rejoice over. Rev. 18.

And this is the great inquiry for us now — Is Christ the object of our hearts — the One that we long for? For that He will be ours, and near us and with us for ever, will be the highest point in all our rich happiness in this future heaven which we have been looking at. Provision for the *heart* is always the dearest thought we can entertain. As with Adam at the beginning. He was put into the possession of a goodly estate, which carried with it all that could gratify the sense. There were the trees and the fruits of that garden, pleasant to the eye and to the palate. The desire of the one and of the other, and of all the senses and faculties of man, might be holily indulged, for the tree of knowledge had not been then eaten. The Lord God was in the supreme place, the creature was not then worshipped and served more than the Creator, and all the senses might righteously take their enjoyments, and the divine

Planter of Eden had provided for them. Gen. 2: 9. Yea, and more than this. Adam received *dominion* from the same hand. The natural — nay, the divine — delight in power and dignity was thus provided for; for as the Lord God in the upper world called the stars by their names, thus owning them, so did He give Adam on the earth to call the cattle and the fowl by their names, thus taking headship of them. And in this way he was set in the midst of these divine provisions for his eye, his ear, his tastes, and his desire of dignity. But the heart was as yet unfed. The day of his *coronation* was not the day of his *espousals*. And the Lord God knows him. He knows the creature whom in His love and perfections He had formed. It is not good, says He, that he should be alone, I will make him an help meet for him. And Adam receives Eve from the same hand which had given him Eden with its fruits, and dominion in the earth. And then it is that his lips are opened. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." "This is now bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh," says Adam, expressing his deep satisfaction, and that he now needed no more. Eden could not, with all its delights for the senses, nor could his vast and unrivalled dominion abroad, as "monarch of all he surveyed," do what Eve did for him. She unsealed his lips with a confession that *now* he was satisfied. And so with us in possessing Jesus, above all glory, in our heavenly Eden, for ever.

These, and the like notices of heaven scattered through the Word, it is blessed to take up and ponder. And, as one has said, "The Holy Ghost, who is called the earnest of our inheritance, acts upon these notices, and makes them living to our souls." And it is these notices and attractions which make us, in a divine sense, strangers and pilgrims here. Abraham, it has been observed, became a stranger in the earth, not from any sorrow or pressure in Mesopotamia, for we read of none such, but because "the God of glory" had spoken in the language of "promise" to him. He was drawn out from kindred and home and country by something before him, and not urged or driven out by anything behind. This was heavenly strangership here.

Is it thus, beloved, or are we desiring that it may be thus, with our souls? Are we pondering the prospect, and following out the distant glimpses of it, with fixed and interested hearts? These are the present questions for the stirring and guiding of our souls. The search will lead to humbling and rebuke, but it will be an excellent oil.

And, as if to give us full ease of heart in the enjoyment of this our future heaven, the Lord has taught us to know that we are in some sense *wanted* there, however unimportant we may deem ourselves. For each is to be a vessel of the glory, as we have already said; of larger or smaller quantity it may be, but still each is a *needed* vessel in that house of glory. We commonly think how necessary the Lord is to us. True indeed. We shall celebrate the fact that we owe everything to Him throughout eternity. But it is also a truth (to the praise of the riches of grace be it spoken) that we are necessary to Him. "The woman is the glory of the man." Not in the same way, surely. He is necessary to us for life as well as for joy, for *salvation* as well as for glory; but we are important, of course, only to His joy and glory; as it is written, "That we should be to the praise of His glory;" and again, "That in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." Eph. 2: 7.

The Lord God consulted for Adam's joy when He purposed in Himself to form Eve. Eve, we may know full well, was abundantly happy in Adam; but still the concern of the Lord was about Adam being happy in Eve. So it is even now in the dispensation of the Gospel. The true Adam is still consulted for. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his *son*." And so will it be still in the dispensation or age of the glory. It is called "the marriage of the Lamb" — not, as once observed to me, the marriage of the Church or of the Lamb's wife, but *of the Lamb*, as though *the Lamb* were the One chiefly interested in that joy.

And so it is. The Church will have her joy in Christ, but Christ will have His greater joy in the Church. The strongest pulse of gladness that is to beat for eternity will be in the bosom of the Lord over His ransomed Bride. In all things He is to have the pre-eminence; and, as in all things, so in this — that His joy in her will be greater than hers in Him.

And all the foreknown to that end, and none less than *all*, will form the Eve of that Adam, and be the Bride or the Woman destined thus to be the Man's joy and glory. *All* here are *now* "fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth," and no less *then will* the *all* be demanded. Oh, how the Lord not only prepares the heaven, but in this way prepares the heart for it, that we may enjoy it with *entire ease*, seeing ourselves a needed portion of the holy furniture of the place! As Joseph would comfort his brethren by telling them that it was God who had sent him into Egypt before them, that life might be preserved by a great deliverance. Their wicked hands had done it, it is true; but God's purpose had done it also, and it is this He would have them now think of, and not the other. For this is the way of love; and "God is love." Love will not only spread the feast, but do what it can to let it be tasted with all confidence and joy of heart. Love will make the guests *sit* at the table, give them a plentiful board, and ease while enjoying it.

Can we, beloved, read these notices of the heaven that is to be ours by-and-by, and for ever, and, as we read, wish our hearts joy that it is so? Can we count ourselves happy, having such prospects as these? As the miser can bear the scorn of the world without, in the thought of his treasures at home, can we in the hope of this joy of heaven live above the earth and its promises?

Such things, however, as these, excellent as they are, have something still further with them. The *air* of a place is more important to us than its *scenery*. If we can get both, of course the better; but if we can have but one, the good air will be surely preferred.

Now, heaven, I may say, will have both. It will be filled with a moral element or atmosphere, as well as furnished with glories; and the former (I speak as a man) will be more in the account of our joy than the latter.

I have found it well at times to ponder this, and to learn something of that moral element that is to be the air of heaven. Scriptures which I have already noticed test and prove the purity of that air. The millennial atmosphere both in heaven and on earth will indeed be ever fresh, laden with balmy fragrance. If we are now wearied with our own selfishness, and with the tempers of "hateful and hating" human-nature, we must long for a change of air, such as the land of the glory is said to know, the land of the voice of the turtle. If the brightness of those regions, or the scenery of the place, have its attraction (and what heart can conceive it?), what must be the atmosphere of it to our happy souls, where social life, through all its relations, as between heaven and earth, and as between Jerusalem, the land of Israel, and the most distant islands, moves and kindles continually with the most generous and delicate affections.

It is not that nature will be triumphed over merely; — nature will not be there; at least, not in the heavens which we are approaching. We shall not have to speak of saints carrying themselves towards each other in a good spirit. Such security is well in its place, and while we sojourn in our "vile bodies." But there the element itself will be good. The fervent currents of pure and happy minds, flowing from each to all, will form it.

The moral dignity and beauty, the various and yet consistent perfections that will animate us then, will all be bright and lovely before the divine mind. God shall survey the work of His fingers through the different spheres of glory, and rest with delight in it.

It is a thought much to be cherished, that our eternal ways will thus be the divine delight, and more than make up to God (I speak again after the manner of men) for the grief which, by us and in us, His Spirit is now so continually put to.

Such will be the *moral* enjoyments in the realms of glory; no small part of that banquet at which the Lord will seat His guests, when He comes forth and girds Himself to wait upon them. Luke 12: 37. We may be but little able to comprehend the glory itself, but we can appreciate these moral characteristics of the heaven we are reaching.

While still here, in the conflicts of flesh and spirit, we are, in some sense, under the guardianship of *conscience*, that principle which judges of "good and evil." But conscience will not keep heaven in order. Our *passions* and our *righteousness* will there be one. Little do we now advance in a heavenly direction by the gracious current of affections. But what bliss, when the very energy which bears us *speedily* will also bear us *rightly* onward — when the very gale which fills the sails will regulate the rudder; the passion that engages and delights the soul being the very rule and measure of all that is worthy of the presence of God!

May we cherish in our souls these notices of heaven! Faint is their impression; humbly indeed do some of us know this; but we may entertain them, and bid them welcome, grieved that our welcome is not more warm and affectionate.

But the earth is still remembered, and kept in store for great purposes yet to be accomplished. The rainbow was, of old, as we know, made the pledge of this. It is a token of the covenant between God and all the earth, and every living thing upon it. The Lord says, that when the cloud comes, the bow shall be with it — when the portent of judgment lowers, the sign of peace shall shine.. And, as we see to this day, the earth has not been again destroyed. It may not be the residence of the glory, as it once was, and as it will be again, but still it is preserved, according to the promise of the rainbow. And Scripture is diligent and exact to show us, that in every variety of the divine procedure, this promise has been, is, and will be remembered.

Thus it was surely remembered all the time the Lord had His seat in Zion; for then the Lord made the earth His habitation. But when the throne of the Lord leaves Zion, and the holiest of holies loses the glory, because the earthly people had, by their sin, disturbed its rest, and all returns to heaven (Ezek. 1 - 11), we see the throne and the glory carrying the rainbow with them. That is, though the earth was then stripped of glory; though Jerusalem, the throne of the Lord, was then for a season laid on heaps, and put under the foot of the Gentiles; still the Lord would be mindful of the earth, and make it the object of His faithful care, according to His promise. And thus we see the glory, though it leave the earth, bearing with it the remembrance of the earth: *the rainbow accompanies it to heaven*; this telling us, that though the Lord leave the earth as the scene of His power and praise for a time, He has it still in recollection before Him Accordingly, when the heaven is opened to our vision in Rev. 4 we see the faithful bow encompassing the throne there. How blessed this is! The Lord in the heavens is still mindful of the earth. He has thrown the very pledge of its security around His throne on high, so, that though the earth see not that throne, and is no longer the place of that throne, that throne sees the earth and remembers it, and longs, as it were, for its natural footstool.

This shows us the security of the earth during this heavenly dispensation through which we are now passing. The Lord is now gathering a people for *heaven*. It is true, He is not filling the earth with glory yet, but gathering an elect family out from it, to have communion with Himself in heaven; but still He is mindful of His promise. He looks on the bow, and preserves the earth, keeps the seed-time and the harvest, the cold and the heat, the day and the night, the summer and the winter, in their stated

rounds and seasons. Gen. 9.

How simple all this is. When the throne went first from earth to heaven, we saw it bearing along with it the recollection of the earth; and now in its place in the heavens we see it still clasping to its breast and encircling across its brow this fond and loved token of the earth's blessing. Ezek. 1; Rev. 4.

But there is still more. For let the Lord come down in the judgments that are by-and-by to visit the earth, we shall find Him as fully mindful of His promise not to destroy it, as now He is, or has been hitherto. This we see in Rev 10. The mighty angel, the angel of judgment, comes down; and he is clothed with a cloud, the fearful vessel of wrath, and token of judgment; as was said at the beginning, "When I bring a cloud over the earth." But even then the rainbow is with Him; as it was added, "The bow shall be seen in the cloud." It is not simply with a cloud He comes down, but with the cloud and the bow accompanying it. See Gen. 9: 14; Rev. 10: 1. As much as to tell us, that at the very end He remembers His word, and will debate with judgment. He will say to it, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further." The cloud is to descend, it is true; the judgment must come, the vials of wrath must be poured out; but it is only to judge those who corrupt or destroy the earth, and not to destroy the earth itself; for the mighty angel, as we see from this scripture, who comes down "clothed with a cloud," has also "a rainbow upon his head." And the cloud, as it executes its commission, and pours out its water or its judgments again, must stay itself in obedience to the bow that is to measure and control it. The present course of things may cease, as in the days of Noah, but the bow shines in the eye of the Lord. His promise lives in His heart, and the earth shall be the happy scene and witness of its rich fulfilment.

Thus, then, we see that even the judgment itself shall not touch the ancient promise to the earth. It is still beloved for Noah's sake, of whom it was said, This same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands, because of the ground which the Lord hath cursed (Gen. 5). that is, for His blessed sake whom Noah typified; and we need not say, beloved, who He is. Therefore it survives the judgment, it stands the shock of the descent of this mighty angel, though clothed with a cloud, planting his right foot on the sea, and his left foot on the land, and crying aloud as when a lion roars.

And what is it reserved for? For even more than the rainbow had promised it. For this is the way of God. He takes up His pledges, and is faithful *abundantly*, doing more exceedingly than He had spoken. And so is it in this case of the earth. It is not only preserved, with its seed-time and its harvest, its day and its night, but it is brought into the "liberty of the glory of the sons of God." This is more than had been pledged to it. The holy city descends out of heaven, to take its connection with the earth; and, shining in due sphere above it, forth from its bosom it sends the leaves of its living tree, the streams of its living water, and the rays of its indwelling glory, to beautify and to refresh the earth and its creatures below. Rev. 21, 22. The rainbow need not now appear, for the cloud is gone. The bow would do well enough while there was the cloud, the promise and the pledge might comfort, while there was place for judgment, or for fear of evil; but now judgment is over The cloud is scattered, and the bow has therefore no place. But the holy city descends out of heaven from God, to do more, much more, than merely to redeem the divine pledge. For it is glorifying, and not merely preserving, the creation. It shall then *rejoice* in the presence of the Lord, when He cometh to govern the earth.

Would not time fail to tell of all the types and prophecies of the *earth's* blessing in the days of the kingdom? The trees and the fields and the floods, in their order, will then rejoice before the Lord. The creation itself shall be delivered into the liberty of the glory of the children of God. Psalm 8, with many a kindred voice, proclaims it. The voice of every creature on earth, under the earth, and in the sea, heard in vision by the prophet, anticipates it. Rev. 5. And the promised day, when "the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose," when "the leopard shall lie down with the kid," and when "the

heavens shall hear the earth, and the earth shall hear the corn and the wine and the oil," will realize it. Isaiah 35; Hosea 2.

And *the nations*, we know, will fill their place in this approaching system of glory. They will turn their swords into ploughshares; and instead of learning wax, they will learn the ways of the Lord, and walk in His paths. At the appointed season they will wait, each with his offering, on the King in Zion, holding their high and joyous feast in the presence of His greatness there. Then from the uttermost parts of the earth shall be heard songs to the Righteous One. And then shall the call of the prophet be answered by the willing hearts of all the people: "Sing unto the Lord. a new song, and His praise from the end of the earth, ye that go down to the sea, and all that is therein; the isles, and the inhabitants thereof. Let the wilderness and the cities thereof lift up their voice, the villages that Kedar doth inhabit: let the inhabitants of the rock sing, let them shout from the top of the mountains. Let them give glory unto the Lord, and declare His praise in the islands."

Israel then shall dwell safely — "every man under his vine. and under his fig tree." They shall be "all righteous;" they shall be all united; they shall call every man his neighbour. "Ephraim shall not envy Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim." The two mystic sticks shall become one in the prophet's hand. They shall be "one nation in the land upon the mountains of Israel." And, as in the shadowy days of Solomon, it shall then be said, "Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and making merry." Their merriment, too, shall be holy. It shall be the joy of a sanctuary. "They shall abundantly utter the memory of Thy great goodness, and shall sing of Thy righteousness. . . . They shall speak of the glory of Thy kingdom, and talk of Thy power." Within themselves, towards the nations around, and under the God of their fathers, the God of their covenant, all shall be blessing with Israel. For thus saith the Lord God, They shall dwell in the land that I have given unto Jacob My servant. . . . I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant with them: and I will place them, and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in the midst of them for evermore. My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And the heathen shall know that I the Lord do sanctify Israel, when My sanctuary shall be in the midst of them for evermore. Ezekiel 37.

All this tells the tale of millennial joys on the earth. But in this system of earthly glory, beyond the *creation* itself, *the nations*, and *Israel*, there is a spot still more illustrious, an object distinguished in the midst of even joys and dignities like these. I mean *Jerusalem*.

And I have before now asked myself, Why is it that Jerusalem is made so much of in Scripture? Why is it that "the Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob"?

It was *His court* — the place of His presence both as the God and the King of Israel. His palace and His sanctuary were there. The administrations of His laws and the ordinances of His worship were there. The thrones of judgment, the testimony of Israel, and the eucharistic service of His name, were all known there Psalm 122. It was the place where Jehovah had recorded His name, and where the glory dwelt, the symbol of His presence.

It was *His home*. The whole land was the Lord's demesne; but Jerusalem was the mansion-house, the family dwelling. The children were placed out here and there through the tribes and divisions of the land, which was the family estate, but Jerusalem was the family mansion. It was the father's house, the common home, where, at stated holy days, the children met, according to the common way of the affection of kindred.

This, I believe, was Jerusalem's first attraction in the eye and to the heart of the Lord of Israel. He sought and He found a home at Jerusalem, saying, "This is My rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I

have desired it." And He left it, when sin had defiled it, with all the hesitation and lingering which disappointed affection so well understands. Ezekiel 8 - 11.

Jerusalem was all this — the house of the Father, the palace of the King, and the temple of the God of Israel. For Israel were His children, His people, and His worshippers, and the affections of a Father's heart, and the joys and honours of the Lord and King, found their object and their sphere at Jerusalem. And this is more than enough to account to us for her high distinction. And all this is she to be again. It will be the palace, the temple, and the family mansion again. It will be the place of prayer — for all nations. It will be the seat of legislation, worship, judgment, and government. It will be the fountain, too, of the virtues of the new covenant, from whence the living waters will flow, to make her, in those days, the mystic mother of the family. Psalm 87. And the glory of the heavens will shine on her from above, doing for her the service of sun and moon, while she is lifted up and exposed, that she may bask in the full light of it, and dwell under it as her native air. Isa. 4: 5; Isa. 60: 1; Zech. 14: 10.

And she shall be the bride of the Lord of the earth, and the queen in the day of His power. He will clothe her with ornaments as such, rejoice over her, impart His name to her, and have her so honoured and cherished by the whole world, as to treat despite of her as indignity done to Himself. Psalm 45; Isaiah 60; Jeremiah 33; Ezekiel 48; Zeph. 3.

All this may well account for the place which Jerusalem holds in the thoughts of the Spirit. His prophets, those who spake as they were moved by Him, address her again and again as the bride, the queen, and the mother, in the days of the approaching glory. But what shall we say of Him, who has thus decked her with all beauty and dignity, and given her such relationship to Himself? Is it not wondrous and happy to see the circle of human sympathies thus seating itself in the divine mind? Is *friendship* only human? How can I say so, when I see Jesus and the disciple whom He loved walking in company? Are the affections of *kindred* merely human? How can I say so, when I think of Christ and the Church, and a thousand witnesses from Scripture? Is the heart's fond delight in *home* a divine as well as a human joy? How can I doubt it, when I thus see the Lord and Jerusalem? Surely the divine mind is the seat of all the pure and righteous sensibilities of the heart, and "the Man Christ Jesus" tells me so. The Lord God of Israel has known, and will know again, the affection that lingers round the homestead of many a family recollection and joy.

Such will be Jerusalem, and such the earth itself, the nations, and Israel, in the promised days of the presence and power of the Lord. Faintly traced by the hand, more feebly responded to by the heart. But yet true," though "surpassing fable."

All Scripture, however, shows us that such joy cannot be had on earth, or in the circumstances and history of the world, in their *present* state, nor till the earth is made the scene of righteousness; and such it is not to be, till the Lord have ridded it of all that offends, and all that does iniquity. *The sword of judgment* must go before *the throne of glory*. The earth must be cleared of its corruptions, ere it can be a garden of holy, divine delights again.

The Gospel is not producing a happy world, or spreading out a garden of Eden. It proposes no such thing, but to take out of the world a people, a heavenly people, for Christ. But the presence of the Lord will make a happy world by-and-by, when that presence can righteously return to it.

The close of the Psalms shows us this. Beautiful close! All praise — untiring, satisfying fruit of lips uttering the joy of a filled heart, and owning the undivided glory of the Blessed One! But this had been preceded by the sorrows of the righteous in an evil world, and then the judgment of that world. For that Book gives the cries of the righteous in an evil world, the joys of the Spirit in the midst of that

evil, the varied exercises of the soul by the way, and the end of the righteous in the joy of praise. All, however, forbids the heart from entertaining, the thought of joy *in the earth* till the judgment have cleansed it; the *rest* is to, be prepared for *Solomon* by the *sword of David*.

The proper thought of this will keep the heart from being tossed by disappointments, and take it off from the expectation of any progress to rest and stability for the world, or in it, till the Lord have executed judgment. Our joy now is to be in Himself, in spirit, in the thought of His love, and the sense of His peace, helped onward, day by day, in the hope of full and righteous joy with Him, when the wicked have gone from the scene for ever.

How sensitively does the Lord's mind recede from the thought of joy in the earth, when the people were wondering at all things that He did! Turning to His disciples He said, "Let these sayings sink down into, your ears; for the Son of man shall be delivered into the hands of men." But this, I may say, was only a sample of all His mind, as He looked to the earth in its present condition. It was ever in His thoughts connected with trial.

Psalm 75 strikingly utters this. There Messiah looks on the earth as all dissolved and disordered, about to drink the cup of judgment at God's righteous hand. For the present He expected nothing from it. But then, after the exhausting of that cup, He does look on it as the scene of joy and praise and exaltation of righteousness, He Himself bearing up its pillars, and leading its songs.

I feel it, however, to be a very solemn truth, that God is allowing man, giving him space and time, to ripen his iniquity, that the judgment may fall upon him in the height of his pride, and crush the system which he is raising in its point of greatest pretension and advancement. It is surely a solemn truth. But even in such a purpose, as in all others, "Wisdom is justified of all her children." The believer may be awed by such a fact in the divine dealings with man, but he approves it, understands it to be a fitting thing, that man should be allowed to produce the fully ripened fruit of his own departure from God, to present it and survey it in the pride of his heart, and then receive his righteous answer to all his boasted and enjoyed apostasy, from the signal judgment of God. The iniquity, of the Amorites was to be full, ere justice should overtake it. The Lord bore with Babel till the cry of it went up to Him. Nebuchadnezzar had built "great Babylon," as he gloried, by the might of his power, and for the honour of his majesty, when he was driven from his high estate; Haman was full when God emptied him even to the dregs. And the great man of the earth, at the last, shall come to his end, just as he has planted the tabernacles of his palaces in the glorious holy mountain.

It is solemn; but it is as wisdom would have it, and as faith deeply approves it. God is justified in His sayings, and overcomes when He is judged.

Happy I desire to find this meditation. Where there is much conflict of thought and judgment among the saints, it is grateful to the soul to turn to subjects of common interest and delight; and when the scene around is getting full of man's inventions and man's importance, it is well to look to those regions of light and purity, where God, supreme and all-sufficient, will gather together all things, in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth. Regions of light and purity indeed, where all will tell of intimacy or nearness, and yet of the full sense of the position of the Creator and the creature, the Sanctifier and the sanctified. In many a delightful page of God's Word is this brightly reflected. The Lord dwelt in the midst of the camp of Israel while at rest, and, as it took its journey, went along with it, whether by night or by day, whether the road lay right onward, or turned back to the mountain or the sea. But still He was God, the Lord of the camp.

How does all that commend itself to our souls! We bow to this. We rejoice to know that He dwells in a light that no man can approach unto, and yet that He has walked through the cities and

villages of earth; that He is One whom no man hath seen, nor can see, and yet that none less than the One who is in His bosom has declared Him to us, been in the midst of us, our Kinsman in the flesh, as well as Jehovah's Fellow.

His supreme authority, as Lord, is infinite; His distance and holiness, as God, are infinite. And yet He is "Head over all things to the Church," and God Himself is "for us." At the very moment of His commanding Moses and Joshua to take their shoes from their feet, because of His presence, He was manifesting Himself to them in symbols or characters significant of the deepest sympathy, and of the most devoted service. Exodus 3; Joshua 5.

But enough. I will not pursue these thoughts any further. Yet in the days of increasing gloom and perplexity, like the present, the soul is the more sent to the sure hiding-place of safety, or to the sunny Pisgah heights of hope and observation. It gets the more accustomed to meditate on the strength of those foundations which God has put under our feet — the intimacy of that communion into which He has even now introduced our hearts — and the brightness of those prospects which He has set before our eyes.

I only ask, beloved, Are we pressing, in desire, after this portion? Are we unsatisfied with all in comparison with it? Are we refusing to form any purpose, or to entertain any prospect, short of this? In Psalm 84 the heart of the worshipper is still on *the way*, unsatisfied, though he have "pools," and "rain," and strength " of the Lord, till he reach Zion. In Psalm 90 all which the man of God sees is the vanity of human life and the "return" of the Lord. He does not anticipate changes and improvements in the condition of things, but looks to being "made glad" and of being "satisfied" at the "return" of Christ.

Is this our mind? I again ask. Are we still prisoners of hope, refusing to let anything chance the expectant attitude of the soul? The Holy Ghost is given to us, not to change that, but to strengthen it. His very presence does but nourish present dissatisfaction of heart, and the longings of hope and desire. He causes the saint to "abound in hope," and gives breadth. and compass to the cry, "Come, Lord Jesus." Spirit of truth, the other Comforter, as He is, He does not show Himself for the Bridegroom, nor propose to make His refreshings "the marriage supper of the Lamb." The energy of hope, the desirings of the soul after our still unmanifested Lord, only speak the Spirit's presence in us the more clearly and blessedly. It is His very design and workmanship. He draws us forth to hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought to us at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

And is He, beloved, our object? The heart well knows the power of that which is its object. Do we make Jesus such? Do we find, in ourselves, anything of that sickness of hope of which we read in Scripture? And are we able to say, "When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?"

May the Spirit shed abroad more and more, in the heart of each of us, these and the like affections. And to Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, be glory and dominion for ever! Amen.

Bride of the Lamb! awake, awake
Why sleep for sorrow now?
The hope of glory, Christ, is thine,
A child of glory thou.
Thy spirit through the lonely night,

From earthly joy apart,
Hath sigh'd for One that's far away,
The Bridegroom of thy heart.
But see, the night is waning fast,
The breaking morn is near,
And Jesus comes with voice of love,
Thy drooping heart to cheer.
He comes; for, oh, His yearning heart
No more can bear delay,
To scenes of full, unmingled joy
To call His Bride away.
This earth, the scene of all His woe,
A homeless wild to thee,
Full soon upon His heav'nly throne,
Its rightful King shall see.
Thou too shalt reign, He will not wear
His crown of joy alone,
And earth His royal Bride shall see
Beside Him on the throne.
Then weep no more, 'tis all thine own,
His crown, His joy divine,
And sweeter far than all beside, He,
He Himself is thine.