

CHRIST AND HIS BRIDE

AN EXPOSITION OF THE SONG OF SOLOMON

BY

CORA HARRIS MACILRAVY

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PREFACE

For some time, God has been moving upon me to send out a simple Exposition of the Song of Solomon, inasmuch as He has been revealing to me some of its hidden treasures, and thereby my own life has been enriched, my heart has been made more tender, and my soul has been drawn closer to my precious Lord. The earthly and earthy have receded as he has led me on through this storehouse of rich things from His own table.

From time to time, different articles have appeared in the ELBETHEL paper that were written upon portions of the Song of Solomon. God has used these articles to stir up many of His children to a deeper hunger for the knowledge of God and of the Truth as it is in Jesus; He has planted in their hearts a greater determination to enter into all He has prepared for them. He has aroused in many hearts a deep desire to know the interpretation of His precious book, which desire they have expressed in the letters that have come up. Through this increasing hunger and the desires thus expressed by the leaders of the ELBETHEL paper God has confirmed the leading which I received some time ago, as coming from Him.

This labor is, in the strictest sense, a labor of love; first of all, toward my precious Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who is becoming more and more the Beloved of my heart and my all and in all. Next, it is a labor of love toward those whom He has redeemed through His own precious blood, and whom He is calling to follow on more swiftly as His appearing draws nigh. It is undertaken for the sake of those in ELBETHEL, who have been edified and uplifted as we have meditated together upon portions of the Song of Solomon. It is undertaken for the help and edification of all who have come in touch with us through the paper, and who are really a part of the ELBETHEL work, although they are able to meet with us occasionally. The food which God has given us, however, is for all His hungry children everywhere, whether they are in touch with us or not. And we know that only those who are hungry for God and the things of God, will care to partake of these deep things that God has prepared for those who love Him; and which He reveals to us through the Spirit.

God is not leading me to write a learned Commentary upon this book; neither am I qualified to go into it in a way that would satisfy a merely intellectual craving to know its meanings, according to the interpretations of different expositors. I deeply feel my own insufficiency for an undertaking of this kind, and I approach this ministry which God entrusted to me, with a keen realization of my own weakness. But I have the help of One who is mighty, I lean upon Him who alone can reveal the meanings of His own Word.

I look to Him to lead and anoint me as I gather up some of the precious thoughts and truths that are hidden away beneath the surface of the Song of Solomon. I would be the channel through which may come uplifting and edifying interpretations, which will encourage every hungry soul to rise higher into the pure atmosphere of God's presence, and to sink deeper into Christ and His love, than they have ever gone before.

The meanings of the Song of Solomon are by no means exhausted in this Exposition, for every page and the line is freighted with heavenly manna for hungry souls. In these last days, when the Coming of the Lord is so near, there is a longing and reaching out in the hearts of God's children who are deepest in Him, and who are

following closest after Him, to know more of the interpretation of this book that deals exclusively with the love and vital relation between Christ and His bride.

May those who read this Commentary loose sight of the frailty of the earthen vessel that God is using, and may they be brought by the Spirit to a closer walk with their Heavenly Bridegroom, until they walk Home with Him and sit down with Him upon His throne, as He sat down with His Father upon His throne.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

There has never been any serious doubt concerning the Canonicity of the Song of Solomon, although to those who do not understand the spiritual meanings underlying the surface, there arises a question as to how this book could find a place in the Holy Scriptures. To one who sees only the surface meanings, it appears to be a setting forth of earthly love, expressed in a too florid and oriental style. When the real significance of the Song of Solomon is revealed to the heart, however, all such questionings fade away; and the surface meanings also fade away, leaving only those that are spiritual. That this book is inspired and has a place in the Canon of the Scripture, is proved by the fact that it is found in all the Hebrew manuscripts, and was accepted by all the oldest authorities.

With the most of God's children, the Song of Solomon has always been a closed book; none has been more neglected. With the exception of a few verses here and there, there has been but little opening up of the real meanings; but even the few verses that have been understood, have proved and abiding blessing. As in all spiritual things, we see in the interpretation of this book that "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them because they are spiritually judged."

The real exposition of the book is not to be found in itself alone, but in connection with the other Scriptures, and by the illumination of the Holy Spirit. While there are not as many Expositions of the Song of Solomon as of many of the other books of the Bible, there have been many and varied Commentaries. Those that were written some centuries ago are for the most part, more spiritual and nearer the real interpretation than many of more recent date.

This is a significant fact, which shows that the leaders and teachers, and through them the people of God, are not drawing nearer to God and becoming more spiritual; but are drawing away from God and becoming more materialistic. One cause of this is that Higher Criticism has crept in and is leading God's people away from the spiritual and belief in the supernatural, into the material and unbelief in the supernatural. This has had a marked effect upon some of the late Commentaries, not only the Song of Solomon, but of all the Word of God. The Bible is being honeycombed with materialistic interpretations; and skeptics, not only among sinners, but among those who are called by the Name of Christ, are rejecting much of God's Word as not being inspired.

There are three general lines of thought brought out by Expositors of the Song of Solomon. The first is advanced by the Jews and has to do with the history of their own people. They believe that the book is a portrayal of the relation between Jehovah and Israel; that it is an allegory setting forth God's choice and guidance of His Ancient People whom He led out of Egypt. It pictures their journey through the wilderness and into Canaan, where they are left looking for their Messiah.

The second interpretation held by the Christian church is, that the Song of Solomon is an allegory setting forth the relation and love between Christ and the church. It begins a short period preceding the birth of Christ, and closes with the call of the Gentiles; it leaves the church waiting and looking for the return of Christ. This

exposition is extended to apply to the church throughout the dispensation, which will close at the Second Coming of the Lord. Those who give this line of exegesis, also see in the book a revelation of the love the church should have for Christ; as well as the great love of Christ for the church, for which He gave Himself that “He might present the church to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.”

The third exposition also held by the Christian church, is that it is a revelation of the love, dealings, and relation between Christ and each believer who will make up His bride. The last two expositions are closely allied, as the individual believers make up the body of Christ. The intimate relation and ecstasy here portrayed, are not found in the lives of any but those who are counting all the things but dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, and who are following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.

The fact that the experiences set forth in this book are not applicable to every believer will at once show that not every believer will be in the bride. God provided so that all the redeemed could be in the bride of Christ, it was not His best will that only a few should be chosen out of the many who are called. He planned an “Uttermost Salvation” through Christ’s redemptive work, and all can be saved and become overcomers; none are excluded if they are willing to yield to God.

No doubt there is ground for each of these three lines of interpretation, as the symbolism in the Old Testament is many-sided. But, without going into the merits of the Jewish Exposition, I will say that the one which is of interest to us, will be found in the last two lines of thought. A touch of the historical, and reference to the Jewish interpretation will be given from time to time, as we proceed throughout the book.

In quoting the text, I have not confined myself to one translation, though I have used the American Revision the most. I have, however, reserved for myself the liberty of using any other translation that brings out the underlying thought with the most clearness. Occasionally I have quoted the King James, and a few times I have given a literal translation of the original text.

The word “virgin” as used in the Song of Solomon, has the same meaning in the Book of Revelation. It means those who have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb; those who are not guilty of spiritual adultery. It is those who are running the race that has been set before them and are in the company of overcomers who will make up the bride of the Lamb, and will sit down with Him in His throne.

There are three division of time in the Song of Solomon. The first two Canticles are represented by Night because of the absence of the Bridegroom. This first night was just before the first advent of Jesus Christ, when the Jews were looking and longing for the coming of their Messiah. This night was long, but as those who knew God, diligently searched through their own prophets, they found the time was nearly ripe for the Messiah to come.

The third Canticle is Day because of the Bridegroom’s presence. At last He came and is with the virgins of the bride for one brief day, which is set forth in this third Canticle. The last two Canticles are again represented as Night because He has withdrawn again. This second night will be ended by the return of Jesus Christ, which will usher in Eternal Day; and then there will be no more night.

There are four vineyards, or gardens (these words being synonymous), and they always mean the Kingdom of God. There are four mountains especially mentioned. The mountain of Bether (ch. 2:17), meaning separation, or division. These are the Mountains

of Separation from God, caused by man's fall and God's broken law. Over their high peaks and deep chasms, none could pass excepting the Lamb of God.

The Mountain of Lebanon (ch. 4:8) is a borderland between the enemy's country and the Promised Land. These mountains are the hiding place of wild beasts, symbolic of the world, of sin, and of the enemy. It is a dangerous ground, which is neither with the enemy nor with God; neither in the world nor separated unto God.

The Mountain of Myrrh is the sepulcher of our Lord; and the Hill of Frankincense is Calvary (ch. 4:60). From these arise the Mountains of Spices, which is the fragrance of Christ's finished work upon the Cross of Calvary.

There are five Canticles, or Cantos (which means "songs") in the Song of Solomon. I have referred to these briefly as we have come to them.

One striking feature of this book is that, to the casual reader, there appears to be much repetition. Of course this would lead to apparent repetition in the Exposition; but it is well for us to take special heed to those portions that appear to be repetitious. The Holy Spirit, who inspired this book, is not like man who repeats himself because of his incapacity and imperfections. When the Holy Spirit deals and speaks of the same thing over and over, it is because we need special dealing along that line. It is "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little."

For example; much is said in the book about our speech, and well may God impress upon us the urgent necessity of letting Him control our lips, when His Word is filled with warnings and instruction along this important line. Much is said also of the vineyard and the need there is for faithfulness in tending the vineyards of our own souls; and we can see the love and wisdom of God in this and in all other apparent repetitions contained in the Song of Solomon, or in any other portions of the Word of God.

Another striking feature in this book is the unquestioning obedience and fidelity of the bride. We may well take heed to this marked characteristic of the bride of the Lamb, but it sounds a solemn warning to those who are in the race to be in the bride of Christ.

An epitome of the Song of Solomon is found in the forty-fifth Psalm; and many snatches along the same line of revelation and prophecy are found in portions of other psalms. In other books in the Bible, noticeably in the writings of Isaiah, we find kindred thoughts and expressions, which show that the same Spirit was the Author of all.

This book is a Heaven sent Song of holy love. In its language, which the Holy Spirit has given us, we find a treasure house of expressions through which we can pour out our adoration to our Beloved; through which we can express the love, which we could never utter with our own poor language and with our faltering lips. The Song of Solomon consists of the heart-converse between the soul and Christ and between Christ and the soul. It is not only the expression of the heart-cry of the bride toward Christ; but it pictures the soul journey of the bride, from the first experiences she has as a babe in the Lord, to that mature, intimate relation, which will merge into glorification at the Coming of Jesus Christ.

In this book, the inspired writer portrays the love and the hunger that will be found in the hearts of the company of virgins who are attaining into the high calling of God to be the bride of His Son. But the love of Christ is also set forth; and we begin to realize a little more fully, that He has loved us with an everlasting love, and because of His great love He died and redeemed us.

Only as we receive that which is revealed of the beauty of the bride, of her fidelity, of her preparation, and as we continually apply it to our own lives; only as we hasten to make ourselves ready, shall we reap any benefit from understanding the meanings of this precious book.

Not only is there an unearthly perfume wafted from every verse in this incomparable book, but throughout its pages, perfumes, spices and oils has a most prominent place in order that we may apprehend the place that the attributes of Jesus Christ hold before the Father; and the place that they must hold in the lives of His followers. Let us not undervalue these marked repetitions and prominent points which the Holy Spirit seeks to impress upon our hearts, and which must be lived out in our lives.

CANTICLE ONE. CH. 1:1 TO 2:7

CHAPTER II

THE INEFFABLE SONG OF CHRIST'S INEFFABLE LOVE. 1:1-3

1:1 “The Song of songs, which is Solomon’s;” or “Which pertained to Solomon.” Although by inspiration, God gave us this precious book through Solomon even in the introductory verse, the Holy Spirit does not mention him in his own person; which proves that the personality of the earthly King Solomon does not enter into the book. The book may have been brought forth through some incident in Solomon’s life; but, inasmuch as the incident never appeared in sight, we can scarcely say that it is lost sight of. Many conjectures have been advanced as to which of Solomon’s many marriages, this song celebrated: but the fact that the Holy Spirit is silent on this point and does not speak of Solomon in his earthly character, is an indication that God would have us lose sight of the earthly Solomon, and look beneath the surface for the spiritual interpretation.

The authorship of the Song is not the thought that is made prominent in the first verse; but the expression, “pertaining to Solomon,” points our vision to the great Prince of Peace. The wording of the verse conveys a hint, that the book is more than a series of love songs written to commemorate the marriage of an earthly king.

The name, “Solomon,” means “peaceful,” or “prince of peace;” and God ordained that Solomon’s reign of peace and plenty, should foreshadow the reign of Him who is true and the only Prince of Peace.

The name “Solomon,” as used in this book of the Bible, is not a mere type of Jesus Christ in the same sense as the earthly kings, Solomon, David, and others in the Old Testament, were types of the Messiah. The meaning here is not figurative, but literal.

It was through Christ and His death on the cross, that peace was brought to the earth. His name was called “Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” His name is called Prince of Peace because He is our Peace; for He came and preached peace to them that were afar off, and peace to them that were nigh.

God dropped these songs down into the heart of the earthly Solomon; and of the one thousand and five songs which he wrote, only these five, comprising the Song of Solomon, have been preserved and have found a place in the Holy Scriptures. Just as the “Holy of holies” was the Holiest place of all, so the “Song of songs” is above and beyond all the songs that have ever come from human heart and human lips. This is the Song that is above all other songs; a Song sent down from the courts of Heaven, from the throne of God; a strain from the Heavenly choir.

This is the ineffable, preeminent Song; ineffable because it is of the ineffable love and relation between Christ and His bride. Preeminent because it is of Him who is “The Head of the body, the church;” because it is of Him, “Who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence. For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should all the fullness dwell.” It is a strain from the eternal Song which we shall sing of our Beloved in the ages to come, as we realize more

fully how He loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood; and as we apprehend what God has done for us through Him, and what He is to us.

No other song can compare with this Song that tells of the slain Lamb, that portrays His slain bride. Although it speaks only of the Prince of Peace, or Solomon, in this first verse, and the bride is not named; we see a deep significance in this silence. The church is the body of Christ, who is our Prince of Peace; and when we are told that this Song is concerning Solomon, it must include those who are His body. There is more in this book about the bride, than concerning the Bridegroom; and it is she who does most of the speaking. If we would join in the Song of Moses and the Lamb, we must have our hearts and voices attuned to Heaven while we are still upon earth. We cannot use our voices unworthily, lending them unholy, fleshly words, and hope they will be prepared to give forth heavenly melody around the throne of God.

Are our voices kept for Him alone? Do we refuse every word that would dishonor His Name? Are we speaking the language of Heaven and keeping our voices so exclusively from communion with Him and singing His praises, that all huskiness and sharpness are gone:

Even while in the body of our humiliation must our voices be concentrated to the worship of God. Every harsh word, every cutting word, every deceitful, flattering word, every murmuring, complaining, selfish sound will leave the impress upon our voices, and make them weak, unmusical, uncertain in sounding forth the praises of our God and of His Christ. But as our voices go up in praise and thanksgiving, in love and worship, all the sharp, cutting notes will die away, until our voices will partake of the music of that voice which is the sound of many waters. Then, when He calls upon us, we can join in the song of the Blood-washed virgins.

Do our voices have a touch of heavenly music in them now? Does the sound of our words savor of Christ, and point to the heavenly country of which we are citizens? Have we the language of Heaven and are we putting away the language of the earth and of our flesh? If we are doing this and hastening after our Lord, taking up our cross daily to walk after Him, our hearts will open up to the Song of Solomon; and we shall know that it is the Song of our Beloved.

1:2 “Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth.” When the bride is near the Lord and longing to have greater access to Him, she forgets to mention the name of the One for whom she is longing. It is a significant fact, that throughout the Song of Solomon, the bride never mentions the name of her Bridegroom; but describes Him as her Beloved or the One whom her soul loveth; she speaks of Him as though there were none other but He on earth.

It is when she has drawn near enough for Him to be her whole thought and the only One on earth to her, that she speaks of Him thus. He is the first, the last, the only One in her heart and thoughts; and she is unconscious that she has not mentioned His name. Those who love, unconsciously assume that all others must know and see the beauty and preeminence of the one who fills their own lives and thoughts. The bride's words reveal that the Bridegroom is not with her visibly, yet He is not far off; He is absent and yet He is near.

Historically, this portrays the longing of the Jews for their Messiah. For centuries, the faithful remnant of God's ancient people had looked and longed for the

coming of their Messiah; they had searched the Scriptures, their cries had gone up to God. Most of the Jews knew the prophecies concerning their Messiah; but when He came to His own they knew Him not, they received Him not. In the Psalms, and in other portions of the Old Testament, the longing for the first advent of the Messiah, and for the deliverance which He was to bring to His people, is like a heart-cry. This heart-cry has never ceased, but has come down through the ages, finding response in God's people; and it is going forth again from the hearts of those who are looking and longing for Christ's Second Coming.

The Jews had had the prophecies concerning His coming, they had had the temple worship and the law through Moses. God spoke to the fathers in the prophets by diverse portions and in diverse manners (Heb. 1:1), but all of this did not satisfy their hearts. Only God could satisfy their hearts; only He, of whom the prophets spake, could fill that void which God had left within them to be filled by Himself alone. They were looking eagerly, yearningly, for "The sun of righteousness to arise with healing in its wings," they were waiting for Him to come who should redeem Israel. Their cry was, "let me not only hear about Him, but let Him come near Himself! Let me behold Him! Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth."

This is also the heart-cry of the soul who would receive the kiss of reconciliation, which only the Son can give. The meaning, however, which finds a deep response in the hearts of those who have already met the Prince of Peace, and who have accepted Him as their Saviour, is the expression of that deep longing for a closer touch with the Lord.

The bride knows that He is near her, but He is unseen; there is not the close intimacy into which he would enter. She longs for the kiss of love and communion, which comes after the kiss of reconciliation and peace. She longs to enter into the closer relation that He is offering her; to be in the place where she will behold the King in His beauty; where she will abide in His presence continually. She desires that all shall be wrought upon her that must be done, to make her a worthy bride of a Heavenly Bridegroom. So her heart cries out with eager yearning: "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth."

How our hearts have cried to the Lord that we might approach Him and enter into such fellowship, such humility, as would constrain us to abide continually at His feet!

It is precious to have received the kiss of reconciliation and to know that the Son is not angry, neither shall we perish by the way (Ps. 2:12); but there is another longing in the hearts of those who are girding up their loins and pressing on to go through with Jesus. This longing is for the kiss of betrothal, which will bring us nigh into Him in a deeper way, in a closer relationship. Do you know what separation it means? There can be no flirting with the world; there can be no dallying with the flesh; both the flesh and the world must be put away. This relation between Christ and His bride is going to begin down here on earth, and will reach perfection in the overcomers.

How many, who have been redeemed by the Blood of the Lamb, are satisfied with little more than nothing. How many are satisfied with themselves and their attainments; but God is not satisfied with them when they are walking beneath the light He has given them. Let us not be satisfied with any place or attainments with which He will not be satisfied.

With certain foreign nations, it is customary to kiss their own hands when they meet their intimate friends, instead of kissing one another upon the lips, as is the custom

with us. How many of God's people are following after manifestations, visions, revelations and new sensations that are of the flesh; in the place of longing for a greater revelation of Christ and His love. This attitude can well be symbolized by "kissing their own hands."

The "kisses of the mouth," is the symbol of the close relation that is between a bride and a bridegroom. There may be kisses upon the hand, signifying respect and friendship; but the mouth is kept by the bride for the bridegroom, and the bridegroom keeps these kisses for his bride. Here it is a token of the highest, closest communion and relation that one can have with the Lord. She is longing for the kiss of betrothal, which will be an earnest from Him that she is to be His bride. Who can tell the joy of those who approach close enough to receive the kiss, which is the seal of the closer relation with the Lord!

1:2 "For Thy love is better than wine." Literally: "Thy love tokens," or "Thy caresses." In this place, the word, "love," means the continual proofs and tokens of His love, which are said to be better than wine. Wine is a figure of prosperity and of all good and desirable things. The wine from the grape exhilarates and gives strength, but it only strengthens for a time; while the love of Christ is better than all earthly good, and gives divine strength that abides. It is not only the love that He had to usward when He came and died for us; not only the love that he has for those whom He has redeemed; but that enjoyment of His love, which each of those may have who have felt His kiss of reconciliation.

It is entering into deep communion with Him; it is lying at His feet during those moments that are spent alone with Him; it is the consciousness of being well-pleasing to Him and having His love upon us; it is the holy familiarity with which we pour our own love at His feet, and tell Him all things concerning ourselves. It is at such times that our enraptured souls cry; "Thy love is better than wine!"

No earthly good can allure the one who has pressed close to the side of her Beloved, and has tasted and found that the Lord is good. All the joy and delight, all the pleasures a thousand worlds could offer, are as dust in the balance when weighed against one hour of this mutual exchange of love and communion with the Lord. Nothing counts with those who have found by a continual abiding in the presence of the Lord, that His love is more excellent than all delights and joys that earth can offer. It is as we travel through this wilderness that we must experience the sweetness of His love. Though we have not beheld Him with our physical eyes, we have beheld Him by faith with our spiritual eyes; and we have entered into His presence and have drawn close enough to Him to begin to delight in His eternal love.

We feel His love enveloping and moving within us; we experience His drawing with cords of love; and His love puts new courage and boldness within our hearts as we enter into, and yield to it more fully day by day. Our prayers go up more fervently that we may apprehend with all the saints, "What is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge." We wonder at the depth of His love, which could reach down and snatch poor sin-cursed man from the edge of the pit, which could lift this man from such a depth and seat him upon the throne of Jesus Christ. We rejoice in the love, which is so long and broad, that it can lift redeemed humanity and give them life everlasting.

God's only purpose in strengthening us with His Spirit in the inward man is that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith; to the end, that we may know the love of Christ that passeth knowledge and be filled into the fullness of God. We are like little earthworms, when God would have us cast off the earthly and unworthy, and soar up into the atmosphere of His presence. He would have us get our eyes upon the heavenly, and see the unseen and eternal. He would have us face the light until our eyes become piercing and strong to endure His greatest light. He would have us breathe the air of the heavenly, of the divine presence until we can breathe the rarest, purest air that is found above the world.

The love of God changeth not; and, from the time we are born again, is upon us with the same warmth and power; but it is a different thing for us to enter into it. It is not that the love of Christ increases, for with Him is no variableness. We have proved that our whole beings are invigorated by entering into and abiding in His love. It is here that our poor, puny love begins to grow and be perfected. "We love, because He first loved us." We could no more love the Lord if His love had not first been given us, than a plant can grow and blossom without the gracious warmth and rays of the sun. It is only because He first loved us, that one spark of divine love can be kindled in these cold, dead hearts of ours. As the wind from the grape exhilarates the body, so does the love of Christ uplift and pour life and strength into the soul.

Even here on earth, the bride of the Lamb has her cup filled to overflowing with the New Wine of the Kingdom, with the joy of deep, hidden communication with her Beloved, whom not having seen she loves. What then will it be when she is at home in her Father's house, when she is forever with her Lord! Come quickly, Lord Jesus!

1:3 "Thine oils have a goodly fragrance; Thy name is an oil poured forth."

The very name, "Christ," means the "Anointed One." When the wise men came from a far country to search for the Messiah, they brought to Him gold, frankincense and myrrh. It did not just *happen* that the wise men brought these gifts to Him. Nothing ever *happens*; for our God is over all things. They brought to Him the gold, which symbolizes divinity; they brought to Him frankincense, which is an emblem of His glory and fragrance, together with the praise toward God which came through Him. They brought to Him the fragrant, but bitter myrrh, which is a symbol of His fragrance, and of the bitterness and suffering through which he would pass. Those who brought these gifts saw no significance in them; but the meaning is very clear to one who sees the symbolism in the metals, the sweet spices and gums which were used in Jewish worship.

Twice, during His life on earth, the virgins of the bride anointed him with costly oils, emblems of the fragrance, preciousness and perfections of His character and attributes, and also the anointing of the Holy Spirit. The first to thus anoint Him near the beginning of His ministry, was the one to whom He had forgiven much because she had sinned much. The other virgin who anointed Him was Mary of Bethany, who sat at His feet and listened to His words; this was near the end of His ministry, an anointing for His burial.

It is when we have sinned much, when we realize our great need of a Saviour because we have much to be forgiven, that we can partake of His attributes through faith in His great work upon Calvary; and we pour out upon our Lord's feet this oil which He has first given us. It is when we cling to a place low at His feet and hearken unto His

words, that we gather His fragrant oils in our alabaster boxes. It is when he has broken the alabaster box, that the oil is poured out upon His feet. Broken and contrite means broken and powdered, made so small it can never again come together in its first shape. The more broken and contrite the heart and spirit become, the more abundantly are the fragrant oils spilled at his feet.

If we could look into our own hearts, we would be dismayed at the small, weak love we have for Jesus Christ. We do not love Him more because we have not sought Him diligently, we have not walked close to Him, we have not dwelt in His presence continuously enough to feed the flame of love, which He has planted in our bosoms.

Many of God's children come to God when they want something, and pray when they need something; but this is the least, and the subordinate relation which should be between Jesus Christ and His redeemed ones. We should seek Him because we love Him and talk with Him because of His preciousness to us. We should listen to His voice because we are in relation where we are not continually saying, "Lord, give me this," or, "Do that for me;" but where our hearts are "Jesus, reveal Thyself and Thy love to me more fully and help me to love Thee more fervently." We should have such hunger for Him that, though we are bringing to Him our needs and prevailing for other things along other lines, the heart-cry for a deeper revelation of His love and Himself would never cease.

We hardly realize how ill-smelling our own attributes are, and how many flies have gotten into the oil which the great Perfumer has commenced to put within is, until we have drawn close enough to him to discern the fragrance of His pure oils. It is when we smell the goodly fragrance of His humility, that we begin to detect the offensive odor of our pride. It is when the sweetness of His purity and holiness, His submission to God's will, and His love and longsuffering break in upon us that we smell the vile odors of our flesh, our stiffneckedness and willfulness, our lack of love and our shortsuffering. It is when we remember the perfume of His patience and forgiveness toward us, when we have come back to His feet after going aside in disobedience, and dishonoring Him, that we get the real offensive odor of our impatience and unforgiving spirit toward one another.

It is always the odor of His attributes that we need the most, which smells the sweetest, and which we desire the most ardently; those that are the opposite of our weak places. If we are beset with pride, no attribute of Jesus appears so beautiful as His humility. We think it is the loveliest and most desirable because we need it most. And so it is with every other need in our lives.

1:3 "Thine oils have a goodly fragrance;" and as we say this to Him, we hear Him say: "Mine oils are thine; and I would have this fragrance ever upon thee that others, through thee, may know that Mine oils have a goodly fragrance. My garments smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia, and I would have all thy garments smell of myrrh, aloes and cassia.

1:3 "Thy name is as oil poured forth." He is the source and fountain of all the fragrance in heaven and upon the earth. Not only do His oils have a goodly fragrance, but He was the Christ, or "The Anointed One," of God. Mary broke the alabaster box and poured the precious oil upon the Lord's feet, the fragrance filling the whole house.

And He said: "She hath done what she could; she hath anointed My body beforehand for My burial." Thus it was when the alabaster box of His body, which contained this precious perfume, was broken; the oil and fragrance flowed out, filling Heaven and earth. It was when His body was broken, when His flesh was rent, that Heaven's perfume came down to earth.

He opened up a new and living way into the Holy of holies, pouring out His life a ransom for many; and the fragrance from the redemption which He brought to mankind, ascended unto the Father. When He shed His Blood, a Fountain was opened to the house of David for uncleanness and for sin; and though the Jews, as a nation, have not yet been brought nigh to this Fountain, the Gentile church was washed in it and proven in it.

It is when He said: "It is finished," that the perfume ascended unto God; and there commenced to ascend from Calvary the continual incense, symbolized by the continual incense that was burned before God in Jewish temple. It is He who pours out the Holy Spirit, with all His workings and blessed indwelling, upon those who have first been cleansed by the blood.

1:3 "Therefore do the virgins love thee." The word "virgins" means the pure in heart, and the same word is translated in Ps. 83:3, "Thy hidden ones." Only as the Holy Spirit reveals to us the Christ, and the Christ reveals to us the Father, is our love drawn Godward. "Therefore;" because the odor of His oils is beginning to steal over us; because we begin to fathom a little His great love, and what it meant for His life to be poured out that His Name might be as oil poured forth; because of all this does our love increase and burn more brightly. Only as we behold Christ do we love Him, and none but the pure in heart see Him. It is when our robes are spotless, that we can draw close to Him; for none but the "Virgins" follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, and the "Virgins" are they who love the Bridegroom.

It is not to those who are defiled, who have never come to the Fountain and been washed from their sins, that His Name is as oil poured forth. Their hearts do not leap with love and devotion at the very mention of His precious Name, for they know Him not and love Him not. No! It is to those who have seen their vileness and have turned to Him, through whom, alone, their stains can be washed away; it is to those who have seen Him hanging upon the cross, that His Name is as oil poured forth. It is to those who are no longer sin-stained, defiled, rebels against God; to those who have washed their robes and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb, that His name is as oil poured forth. It is to the virgins who will make up His bride and sit with Him upon His throne; to those who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth; to those who love Him, that His Name is as oil poured forth. It is His precious perfume that feeds and increases the love of the bride.

When the high priest who, with the holy anointing oil upon him, had been ministering before God in the Holy of holies, came out and passed among the congregation of Israel, the fragrance of that holy oil enveloped him. No oil like unto this could be made by any man or be put upon any flesh; it could be only upon those who ministered before God, and only upon them did this holy perfume linger and ascend before God. So with those who draw close to their Mercy seat, Christ, minister before Him; His oils are upon them. His likeness and fragrance surround and emanate from them; and all who come near know that they have been abiding in the presence of the Lord.

Do you long to be fragrant, dear child of God? Hasten to Him whose oils have a goodly fragrance; call upon Him whose Name is as oil poured forth; put off all the attributes and weaknesses of self, and put Him on. Put Him on! Clothe thyself in Him, let God forevermore hide thee away in Him. Then shall those about thee smell such fragrance as has never before been discerned upon thee; and they shall know that His oils have a goodly fragrance, and that His oils are upon thee.

CHAPTER III

THE DIVINE DRAWING INTO THE KING'S CHAMBERS

1:4

1:4 “Draw me and we will run after Thee.” When the bride has commenced to smell His oils, she is filled with a greater hunger and she cries, “draw me and we will run after Thee.” The bride knows that her Lord is not far off, though she does not see Him; and her heart goes out that she may rise up and run after Him faster than she has ever done. She feels she is helpless in herself, but that He has power to draw her, and He alone can do this. “I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with loving kindness have I drawn thee.” “No man can come to Me except the Father that sent Me draw him.”

Already has she been drawn unto Him in deeper hunger; already has she longed for the kisses of His mouth, those tender moments of communion and prayer, which reveal His love. Already has she smelled the sweet odors of His oils; already has she beheld Him upon the cross for her, she has beheld His life poured out for her. This but increases her desire to be drawn with greater power, with stronger cords of love, with greater call to separation, and even with the greater suffering, that she may arise to run after Him. She is more and more realizing her helplessness to run unless He draws her.

She would have every band that binds her, cut and cast aside; she would have every weight or earthly attraction that holds her down, forever swept away by the voice of her Beloved. Her heart's cry and prayer are that her Lord will draw Her aside unto Himself in greater separation; that He will lay hold upon her by His mighty power, and draw her until with ever-increasing speed, she runs after Him, and runs clinging to Him.

Each one of the virgins who make up the bride, must be drawn by God's personal dealing and working in the soul; and as each one yields to God's drawing, they will all find themselves in the midst of those who are following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. Not all who profess the Name of Christ cry to God to draw them that they may run after Him. Many stop running when the first stone cuts their feet; when the first weariness seizes them; when the first separation from loved ones comes; when the first persecution arises, or when their names are cast out as evil.

But the few, who are chosen from the many who are called, will only cry to God the louder as they nearly faint with weariness, as their feet are cut and bleeding by the stones along the path. These are they who will pray the more fervently for the Lord to draw them that they may run after Him the faster, as they see those who have loved them dropping away, as they suffer persecution and hear their names evil spoken of.

As the bride feels the approach of her Lord, her feet are made like hinds' feet to run and meet Him. As she hears His voice calling to her to come aside with Him a while and rest, her heart is drawn with cords of love, and her soul pants for Him as the hart pants after the water brooks. She hastens to obey and come aside that He may speak to her more intimately; though it is in chiding or reproof, His reproofs are sweeter to her soul than the flattery of all others.

She not only hastens toward her Lord as he comes to meet her, as He sheds about her the fragrance of His presence; but when He seems to withdraw, she runs the faster that she may overtake Him. When “He makes as though He would go further,” she presses after him and constrains Him to come in and sup with her, and she with Him. Her hunger goes out to Him, and she cries with the psalmist (Ps. 63:8): “My soul follows hard after Thee (Literally: “Runs clinging to Thee”), Thy right hand upholds me.” When her Lord would withdraw, like Jacob, she will not let Him go; she clings to Him in prayer and communion, in obedience and separation, in devotion and worship; she clings to Him until He blesses her.

She runs faster and faster clinging to Him, hardly knowing that it is because His right hand is upholding her that she goes so swiftly she is able to cling to Him and not fall. As long as she clings to Him, He clings to her; “Jehovah is with you, while ye are with Him; and if ye seek Him, He will be found of you.” Many times, it seems as though she is doing all the clinging and all the running herself; but it is because he is upholding her by the right hand of His righteousness, that she is able to run and not weary, to walk and not faint.

The Word reads: “Draw me and I will run after thee.” The drawing of God is upon each virgin and will make up the bride; His hand is cutting and shaping each living stone for the habitation in the Spirit, which He is building for Himself. It is as each soul is drawn that all run after Him; it is as he perfects each one, that all come forth in perfection, it is as each one is put into His purifying fires that the gold in each life comes out pure and shining, and the glory of God shines out from the whole.

When our hearts are towards our Heavenly Bridegroom, there is a hunger in our souls and a going out within us that He will draw us and cause us to approach closer to Him. We are not satisfied with the place to which we have attained nor with the hunger which we have. It is when His drawing is upon us, that our hearts cry out with the greatest yearning for His drawing to increase; and nothing, no one, counts but Him.

Not only does He draw us through the yearning and hunger, which He puts within our hearts; but through chastenings and testings, through hard things does He draws us. The sheep that are being whipped always press closer and closer to the shepherd’s side. The child of God whose heart is set on Him always presses closer to God when he feels His chastening rod; and it is this chastening rod, when yielded to, that comforts us in the end. How often we pray for God to draw us closer to His side; but when He begins to chasten us, and we come into testings and hard things, we do not recognize that He is answering our prayer and drawing us.

We little realize that mighty unseen power that is drawing, drawing, drawing us like an irresistible, supernatural magnet. We speak of our hunger for the Lord, we tell of the longing that we feel for Him, we pour out our hunger and longing at His feet as though He did not know they were in our hearts. We comprehend but little that all this is the drawing of God; that if He did not graciously put the hunger in our hearts, we should be cold and barren; we should be satisfied with but little of that into which He is constraining us to enter.

Let this sink down into our hearts and ever abide there, that every heavenward impulse in our souls, every upward desire, is the drawing of God. No sinner could be saved if God did not convict, deal with, and draw him. So many times we lose sight of

this. We could not desire His will nor His best, we could not love and hunger for our dear Lord if God did not graciously put within us a hunger for Him and His will.

Dear child of God, if you feel the drawing of God in your soul, cherish it as you would cherish a great treasure. If you feel a deeper hunger, if you are entering into a closer walk with Him, do not look upon it carelessly, nor treat it lightly. If you do not feel the divine drawing and hunger for God, cry to Him that he will give it to you; and ever remember that the desire for hunger is the beginning of hunger, and that you cannot feed upon Jesus Christ until you are spiritually hungry.

In the natural, if the stomach is in poor condition, the best food is loathsome. So it is with spiritual food and feeding upon Jesus Christ; if we are not living near God and are not where we should be, we neither have an appetite for spiritual things, nor can we feed upon Christ who is the living Bread. When God pours into you a hunger for your Beloved and begins to reveal more clearly your privileges in Him, rejoice with great joy and gratitude toward God. If He did not put into our hearts the longing to know Him better and to have His very best, we would be satisfied with the least we could have to be saved, and perhaps lose our salvation altogether.

How wondrous are the workings and drawings of God upon the human soul! How little do we behold or know that which He is doing, as day by day He works down in the depths of our beings. The most favored place a child of God can be is to continually feel the drawing of God urging and constraining him to greater hunger and to greater abandonment to Him. There is nothing we should praise Him for with such gratitude, but for every touch of hunger that He graciously gives us. "O the depth of riches does the wisdom and the knowledge of God; how unreachable are His judgments, and His ways are past tracing out."

Our Beloved is calling us to gird up our loins more firmly, to cling to Him more prayerfully and continuously. He is calling upon us to run faster, faster; to believe that if we will not let go of Him, He will lift us over all the hard places, and make of all the stumbling blocks, steps upward and heavenward on our homeward journey. As long as we cling to Him, His hand upholds us and keeps our feet from falling or even stumbling.

1:4 "The King hath brought me into His chambers." The King brings us in. We cannot bring ourselves into the smallest of the King's chambers; for we do not know the preparation required nor the testings necessary to perfect such preparation. Only the Lord knows when we are ready for an advanced step; for every onward step means greater suffering. The bride's prayer for a stronger drawing of God is not because He has not brought her into any of His chambers, for He has. As a result of the longings, which have just been poured out at His feet, she has entered into a further chamber. She does not say, "The King has brought me into His chamber," but, "into His chambers." The plural of the word, "chambers" holds out such vistas of the inexhaustible revelations of God, and closer approaches to God, that we hear the Spirit speaking in our hearts: "Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

The chamber of Salvation is the first chamber that must be entered before a soul can go into those wonderful chambers of the King, which are prepared for those who love God. The door into this chamber is Christ. "I am the door of the sheep." There is no other door, "for there is no other name given under heaven whereby men can be saved."

The next chamber into which our newly acknowledged Lord and Master leads us is in the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. No tongue can express the joy of these first two chambers nor the praise and happiness with which our hearts overflow as we pass through the door, Christ, and find the peace of God flooding our souls. No words can express our peace and joy when we feel all the condemnation, with which we have been tormented taken away; and is in this place that we hear the voice of God saying "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

As soon as we are new creatures in Christ Jesus and have come into Him, and He has come into us, He leads us into the next chamber of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit. This is not, as many think, taking something by faith and going on; neither is it merely getting blessed; nor is it an influence. It is the coming in of a Person, the Holy Spirit, who is the Third Person of the Trinity; it is receiving Him according to the Scriptures, and in the same way in which the saints received Him in the apostolic days. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit has always been, and will always be received in the same way, from the first outpouring on the day of Pentecost to the end of this dispensation.

When we have entered these first two chambers, so great is our joy and so wonderful is the presence and power of God with us, that we feel we must have come into possession of all God could have for us. But our Lord does not let us be satisfied and rest here; and those who do this fail God and never get His best. As soon as our first rejoicing is over, the Spirit, who is abiding within, begins to stir us up to reveal to us our Lord Jesus Christ in a new light and beauty. He speaks to us and tells us: "Whom God foreknew He also foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren" (Rom. 8:29).

We begin to see that God did not save us only that we might be filled with joy and go shouting and rejoicing up to Glory. His supreme purpose was that we might be conformed to the image of His Son; and the Spirit gently points out to us the lack in our resemblance to our Solomon, the Prince of Peace. Then our Lord calls us to enter into the chamber of Humility, through which we must pass before we can put on the attributes of our dear Lord or go from chamber to chamber into those things, which God has prepared for them that love Him. Many of God's children never go beyond the first chamber, and in the end are saved as by fire. Others enter into the second chamber of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit and do not see the need of going on unto perfection.

There is a place that one must enter before every onward step, a hidden place of meeting with the Lord, which is described in the sixth chapter of Matthew as the "Inner chamber." It is that place within our beings where our Lord ever dwells, where we go in and shut the door, where we meet Him alone in communion, prayer, contrition, and fellowship. It is in this secret closet of prayer and communion that we find grace to pass through the lowly door, which leads into the chamber of Humility. Many never enter into this place of humility. They see that the door is very small, and very low; they must stoop so low to pass through it into this next chamber, that they turn back and will not enter that way.

They try to find some other way to go on, some other entrance into that which the Lord has for them, but only that low door appears; and to pass through it they see they must surely stoop very low and, perchance, lie down in the dust and creep through into the chamber of Humility. Sometimes the Lord sees that they really desire to go on, although they do not know how to humble themselves; and in His love and mercy, He

brings them down by some dealing of affliction. Then, when they are lying low in the dust, they hear His voice calling them to follow Him; and low at His feet, clinging in despair to Him, they go through into this precious chamber of Humility.

From this place are then trances into all else that God has for us; for here we go on into the ever-increasing transfiguration into the image of Christ. This chamber leads into the clearer revelation of our Lord, into all the experiences that He holds out to those who will pay the price. We go into the chamber of unbroken communion, into the chamber of entering into fellowship with Him in His sufferings. We enter the chamber of hiding away in Him from the strife of tongues, unmoved by all the winds and tempests that come against us; we abundantly enter into the chamber of endurance, becoming strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. All the great and small, the highest and least experiences that God has for us, we entered through humility and we find that the chamber of Humility itself is really the High and Holy place of God. "Thus, saith the high and lofty One who inhabiteth Eternity, whose Name is Holy; I dwell in the high holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, to revive the heart of the contrite" (Isa. 57:15).

Reader, do you see how God, by coming and dwelling with them, exalteth those who humble themselves? Are you longing for a continual consciousness of His presence? Then must you pass through that lowly door into the chamber of Humility and there must you evermore abide. There you will find your Beloved waiting to reveal Himself to you more clearly; waiting to take up His abode with you more intimately; waiting to lead you into every chamber of His treasure house, and to lead you on from faith to faith, from victory to victory, from glory to glory.

"We will be glad to rejoice in Thee; we will make the mention of Thy love more than of wine: rightly do they love Thee." It is when the King has begun to lead the bride into His precious chambers, that she says: "We will be glad and rejoice in Thee." There was a time when she rejoiced in that which He was doing for her; when she sought the experiences, looking upon them and rejoicing in them. But when she has passed a little further into the chambers of the King, love for Him fills her heart and arises up within her like mighty, increasing fountains. She no longer looks upon what He is doing as being the object of her search; she loses sight of all experiences apart from Him. By faith her eyes are fastened more continually upon Him, and she is glad and rejoices in Him.

How many times we grieve the heart of our dear Lord because we do not make Him the supreme source and object of our joy and gladness. There are times when we are full of joy and gladness, and our lips are praising Him with such a loud voice, that we think we are glad and rejoicing in Him; when we are really glad and rejoicing in our surrounding, in circumstances, or in His blessings and gifts. But if in His wisdom He sweeps away the conditions that have given rise to this joy, we find we are cast down and overwhelmed, often unto despair. We must remember His benefits but be glad in HIM. We must make mention of His wonderful acts to the children of men but rejoice in HIM. We must eat and be filled when He breaks the bread to us in desert places and multiplies the meat until so many basketfuls may be gathered up that they have overflowed from His bounty. But we must seek Him and Him alone; love Him and Him alone; be glad and rejoice in Him and Him alone, regardless of the loaves and fishes. Our hearts must so embrace Him, our love be so pure and unselfish, that our hearts will still be glad and rejoice in Him, though His benefits seem to be withdrawn; though His wonderful acts

appear to cease; though we are in a dry and weary land where no water is, and the heavenly manna does not fall.

O precious Bridegroom of our souls, though Thou slayest us, yet will we trust Thee. Though Thou dost let our springs dry up and dost withhold Thy benefits, Thou dost never take Thyself from the soul that obeys and loves Thee. In the darkness, we will walk in Thy light; in the desert, we will feed upon Thy love. We will rejoice that with Thee there is no variableness nor shadow which is cast by turning. Though circumstances change, Thou changest not. Though blessings fluctuate, Thou art the same yesterday, today and forever. Dear Lord, "We will be glad and rejoice in Thee."

"We will make mention of thy love more than wine." Though He conceals Himself from the bride, He has been leading her on and has brought her to the place where she finds joy and comfort in the remembering Him. She finds her solace in thinking of His love, which she will make mention of rather than anything she has experienced of any earthly good. All that can be given or desired of earthly good and benefit, which is represented by "wine," is forgotten as she is glad and rejoices in Him and makes mention of His love. It is His love that has brought strength to uplift her. It is His shed Blood that has delivered her and covers her.

He has loved her with an everlasting love. While she was yet a sinner, He loved her and died for her. While she was yet keeping the vineyard of the world, black, scorched with the sun, bent down and deformed by the yoke of bondage to sin, He planned to break that yoke that she might walk uprightly. He planned to cleanse away all blackness that she might be comely in His righteousness. How often He has forgiven her when she has not walked uprightly, and when she has lingered along the path instead of walking in obedience and hastening after Him. When she remembers all of these tokens of His great love, she would make mention of His love more than all earthly good; and her heart cries, "Thy gentleness has made me great."

There is no child of God that has set his face to go through with Him who has not grieved over the weakness of his love for the Lord. Our hearts have mourned, and we have suffered when we realized our selfishness and mixed motives, the weak, unstable love we have for Him. Truly, none of us can rejoice in *our* love for him. But when we begin to apprehend His great, eternal love for us, our hearts are filled with joy. And we praise Him for His love, His longsuffering and patience and magnify His name for that love which never fails. It is as we draw near to Him in communion and obedience that we learn to know Him. It is as we keep his commandments that our love increases and is perfected.

Those who do not know Him, cannot love Him; only those who have come to Him and know Him can be glad and rejoice. Gladness is the inward joy and satisfaction; rejoicing is the outward expression of the inward condition. In the Revised Version, we are told that "rightly do they love Thee." None of the redeemed who have had a revelation of Christ and of His great love for them can do otherwise than love Him. If all the love God can put into the human race could be multiplied by the ages of Eternity, it would be all too small to offer to Him who is the Lord of lords and King of kings.

CHAPTER IV

THE BRIDE, BLACK IN HERSELF, BUT BEAUTIFUL IN CHRIST. 1:5, 6

1:5, 6 “I am black, but comely, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar, as the curtains of Solomon. Look not upon me, because I am swarthy, because the sun hath scorched me. My mother’s sons were incensed against me; they made me keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.” It is not the sinner who says, “I am black;” it is not when the heart has been untouched by the grace of God, that the stain and blackness, which sin has brought upon the soul, can be seen by the one who is not saved. It is when the convicting power of the Holy Spirit strikes the sinner, that he sees his blackness; it is when he gets a vision of the spotless Lamb of God, that he sees himself as black as the tents of Kedar. But as he comes to the Cross of Calvary and finds forgiveness and cleansing, he becomes white through the Blood of Christ, although in himself he is as black as the tents of Kedar. His sins, which were scarlet, are as white as snow; though they were red like crimson, they have become like wool.

When the bride has commenced to enter into a closer walk and touch with her Lord, the beauty which she thought she had, she sees wither up and drop off. The natural attractions in which she has rejoiced, disappear under the searching light of His holy presence. With clearer vision than ever before, she sees her own blackness and unworthiness in herself; and she knows that those who are beholding her and hearing of her love for Him, must see how unfit she is, as yet, to be His bride.

As she sees herself in this light, God makes her know that she must be brought under the control of the Spirit; she must live and walk in the Spirit. He shows her that all unworthy motives and desires, all the words and actions that are not Christ-like, mar her beauty and must be put away if she would be a living epistle seen and read of all men. She has been telling the daughters of Jerusalem that He has taken her into His chambers, and her unworthiness stands out before her. She fears they must see that she is not like Him; that she is not yet perfected; that all the darkness of the natural, which the sun has left upon her, has not yet been taken away.

In her humility and consciousness of her own unworthiness, she declares that she is as black as the tents of Kedar. The dark skinned Arabs of the desert covered their tents with black goatskins, a fitting figure of the blackness of sin, which, in the unsaved, is within and without. These black tents are a striking contrast to the princely white tent of Solomon the Bridegroom. It is also a fitting expression of the feeling of unworthiness, which sweeps over every soul who, day by day, is drawing nearer to God.

When our hearts really draw near to the Lord, and we begin to breathe the pure air of His presence and to see light in His light, we see our own unworthiness; we hear our own words; we behold our actions; and, but for His sustaining hand, we should faint with dismay and distress. Words and actions, feelings and motives, which appeared worthy and harmless when we compared ourselves with ourselves, and measured ourselves by ourselves, stand out in all their imperfection and self-marred darkness. How vain is the self-complacency and confidence of him who has not had a vision of Christ, and a revelation of His high calling. How futile is the rejoicing and boasted victory of the one who has not entered the battles and contests, through which the overcomer is perfected. How puerile is the assumption of knowledge and attainment, in him who has only viewed

the land of promises and villages from the mountain; and who has never walked up and down through the land.

But they who will make up the bride of the Lamb shall not be content with a vision of Christ. They will take away every veil that is between them and their Lord. And with unveiled face, they will behold His glory until they are transfigured into the same image, from glory to glory. The bride will not be satisfied with imaginary victory, which is really the deceptive peace of not entering in. She will strengthen herself in the Lord and put on His armor. She will fight the good fight and finish her course. She will not mistake the call and revelation of God, for possession. She will not be content with the visions and passing glimpses of the land of promises, but by faith she will walk up and down through the land and begin to possess her possession. She will become more than a conqueror through Him who loved her.

The bride wonders how He can love her. She sees her lack of showing Him forth in His spotlessness and beauty. She feels the need of having the Father's hand mold her into symmetry and comeliness, and bring her into a more perfect likeness to her Lord. She feels her lack of perfection; she sees the wrinkles of the natural, marring her beauty; and she exclaims, "I am as black as the tents of Kedar!"

Then His worthiness comes before her; and God shows her she will never be anything but black in herself, she will never be anything but unworthy apart from Him. She remembers that God sees her in His Son and in Him she is white, in His worthiness she is worthy; and she exclaims, "I am comely as the curtains of Solomon." The Spirit continually urges her to put away everything that would bring reproach upon His name. He calls her to die daily that the life of Christ may be manifested in her mortal body.

There is a deep significance in the "curtains of Solomon," the least of which is the reference to the curtains of the royal tent of the earthly King Solomon. The precious reference is to the curtains of the Jewish Tabernacle, which were made of pure white linen. It was in the Jewish Tabernacle that Jehovah, the Heavenly Solomon, the real Prince of Peace, traveled in the midst of His Ancient People. His presence filled the Holy of holies: at times His presence filled the temple so that none could enter. He wrapped Himself in the cloud by day, He covered Himself with the pillar of fire by night. He rested upon the tabernacle when they were encamped; and when they journeyed, He went forward in the cloud and in the pillar of fire by night. He rested upon the tabernacle when they were encamped; and when they journeyed, He went forward in the cloud and in the pillar of fire, with the Ark of the Covenant, to seek out a resting place for His people.

The pure white linen curtains, inwrought with the purple, blue, scarlet and gold, were emblems of Christ in His different aspects and attributes. His spotless humanity was symbolized by the white linen; and His divinity was symbolized by the gold which was worked over it. The blue showed forth His heavenly character, and the scarlet was a symbol of His suffering. The purple symbolized His royalty. He was a heavenly, suffering Savior, and He is the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

Not only does the white linen show forth the spotlessness of the Bridegroom, but we are told in Rev. 19:8 that it has been given to the wife of the Lamb, "That she should array herself in fine linen, bright and pure; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints." The literal meaning of "bright and pure" is "radiant and pure." The word translated "bright" is from a word meaning "flaming torch." This is the wedding garment

that has been prepared for the Lamb's wife. It is not only pure and holy, it is glorious, shining, radiant.

The bride of such a Bridegroom must be arrayed in the same spotless raiment, and have the same attributes of the heavenly, the suffering and the royal. Her robe must be pure and bright, without blemish or wrinkle. It is through faith in His work on the cross, that, little by little, she puts on the wedding garment. It is through being identified with Him, that there is power to put off every adorning or raiment that is not of Him, and to put on His spotless garment of righteousness. He is made unto us righteousness; and it is really putting Him on for there is no righteousness apart from Him. Only when she is clothed in Him will she appear in His likeness.

How wonderful that, in Himself, He provides for us the wedding garment; and through the work which He did upon the cross, and we are able to put it on; but we must do this day by day for it is not all done at once. The more we put Him on, the more we see our own blackness and uncomeliness in ourselves. We see ourselves more clearly in all our unworthiness as the life of Christ begins to be manifested, as we behold small portions of that bright, shining garment taking the place of the weakness and unloveliness of our own nature. And we give Him all the glory and rejoice that with Him all things are possible.

The "daughters of Jerusalem" represent those who are not among the virgins, but yet are not enemies; therefore, they may be won for Solomon if they do not see our blackness too plainly, and lose sight of the beauty of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. The bride entreats the daughters of Jerusalem that they will not look upon her blackness, nor see her apart from Solomon. How the consciousness of our shortcomings increases as we draw nearer to our blessed Lord. Surely, every one who looks at us, must see only our unworthiness! We long that they shall see Solomon, that they shall look only upon as much of His comeliness as is appearing upon us; that they shall not be blinded to His comeliness and beauty because they see our darkness and lack of beauty.

When we are living near God, we behold the beauty of our Beloved more clearly; and there is a holy fear that through our weaknesses and failures, others will be turned aside and get a wrong conception of our Lord. It is a means of humiliation, and the way to a most precious place of humility down at His feet, when we reach the place where we can see our weakness and unloveliness apart from Him; and at the same time apprehend and appropriate His power and enabling at every step. We then begin to comprehend that all that has been done in us and for us, is through unmerited favor; and that the glory all belongs to Him who has wrought it. At the same time that we see ourselves as we would be apart from His imputed merit, He helps us to behold ourselves in Him; righteous and beautiful through our union with Him in the work of His great Salvation.

It does us no good, but only discourages us if we see our failures and shortage and do not behold the beauty of Christ, and apprehend and experience our sufficiency in Him. On the other hand, if we see only what we are in Him and do not discern our defects; if we do not apprehend that which must be appropriated and worked out in us; if we do not see all that must be put off, and that Christ must be put on in actual control and manifestation, we become self-satisfied and pulled up.

1:6 “The sun has scorched me,” which is the darkness that remains from the effects of exposure to the sun. We are new creatures in Christ Jesus as soon as we are saved; but through the control of sin, there are warped and weakened places left in our human nature and upon our members and faculties, which will hinder God in carrying out His plans in our lives. It is to these defects and wrinkles, we must die daily. The Holy Spirit, in the sixth verse, likens these defects to the tan that is left on the skin from exposure to the sun; and sunburn does not disappear as soon as exposure to the sun ceases. The defects and wrinkles, which have been left upon our human nature through being controlled by sin, and through tending the vineyards of the world, do not disappear as soon as we become new creatures in Christ Jesus.

If this were so, we would be faultless at once, and there would be no necessity nor room for going on unto perfection. There would be no need of the cross, there could be no progress nor going from glory to glory. At the new birth, we become new creatures in Christ Jesus, and every faculty and member, every avenue of our beings, is delivered from the yolk of bondage and sin; and we begin to walk uprightly. Each faculty, member and power begins in a Spiritward and Heavenward journey, traveling toward the place where they will all be brought under the control of the Spirit.

1:6 “Her mother’s sons were incensed against her, they made her keeper of the vineyards.” The mother of the bride is Humanity, represented by Eve; and it is the mother’s sons, the offspring of the human race, who have enticed, tempted, and made her keeper of the vineyards of the world. She did not remain in the place of obedience and purity where God first put her; and as she kept the vineyards of the world, the flesh, the devil, the sun of the world and sin beat down upon her. She forgot the vineyard of her own soul and beauty; it was neglected, overgrown with thorns, thistles, with noxious weeds; the soil was rocky and unfertile.

Not only the sinner neglects the vineyard of his life and soul; but how many times those who have been saved, do not keep the vineyards of their own souls and lives. Many who are called to have oversight over, and work in some part of the Great Vineyard of the Lord, become so taken up with their work, that they forget that the husbandman must first partake of the fruit. They forget that they cannot lift a soul higher than they have gone themselves, anymore than a man can lift a heavy weight to a place above his head. They forget that it requires more consistent vigilance and care to keep their own vineyards free from nettles, weeds, and stones; to keep the fences up and the gate shut; to see that there may be an hundredfold of fruit of the Master, than it does to keep the portion of the Great Vineyard that has been entrusted to them by the Lord.

He, whom the Lord cannot trust with the faithful care of his own vineyard, will not be trusted with the tending of God’s Vineyard of living, immortal souls. How shall we face the Owner of the Vineyard, if we have neglected our own lives; if we have not entered into that which God has shown us; if we must say, when He asks us about the lack of fruit and the neglect which is so evident: “Lord, I was so busy tending THY VINEYARD, that MY OWN VINEYARD I have not kept.”

CHAPTER V

LONGING FOR COMMUNION WITH THE BRIDEGROOM 1:7, 8

1:7 “Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth, where Thou feedest Thy flock; where Thou makest it to rest at noon.” As she remembers the scorching sun, and the yoke of bondage which was upon her, and how He has broken the bars of the yoke that she may walk upright; she longs to find that rest beside still waters, which He has provided for those who believe and obey. As she meditates upon His drawing; and recalls the chambers into which she has already entered; and that which she has already received, her desire for His presence and for divine fellowship increases; her love goes out with more fervor, and there is deeper intensity in her prayer that she may know where to find Him.

He has kept Himself hidden away from her vision, although she can speak to Him and knows that He hears; but she longs to behold Him, she longs to draw nearer. She has not had the revelation of Him which, as the bride, she will have later; but God putting within her preparation and reaching out for this. With him who follows on unto the full fruition of God’s plan, this love and desire toward Jesus Christ begin when he is a babe in the Lord; and increase to the full midday of revelation and entering in, at His Second Coming.

She is one of the virgins who will make up the bride of Christ, but she no longer speaks of the “virgins” who love Him; the time is past when she speaks of the bride impersonally. She can only feel the love that fills her own heart; and to her, it is as though she were the only one who loves Him. Is it not so? How our souls go out to our precious Lord when we have drawn nearer to Him! It seems that He is ours alone, that we alone belong to Him; it is as though there were none other in the bride, as far as the longing and love which we feel toward Him, are concerned. Now the cry of our hearts is: “O Thou, whom my soul loveth.”

All that the world or any creature can give, is as ashes to that hungry soul who is longing for revelation of her Lord. Nothing else can satisfy, nothing else can bring peace and joy. All other love is as husks, to the love and companionship of God, and to the love which He draws from the heart that is yielded to Him. Truly has His Name become to the bride as oil poured forth; and her hunger for divine fellowship and communion has increased, so that she longs to be fed by Him, and Him alone. She would know where He is feeding His flock, that she may join that company which is close to Him; and, by faith, behold Him all the time.

It was that fervent love and abandonment that caused the bride to cry out: “I have suffered the loss of all things that I may know Christ, . . . that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, becoming conformed unto His death.” And as this virgin neared the end, and the time of his departure came; he exultantly cried: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith.”

It was this fervent love and longing in the breast of one of the virgins of the bride of the Lamb, which made her hasten, while it was yet dark, and go to His tomb; and when she found His body gone, she went and told Peter and John. Her heart was filled with the

love and anguish as she stood without the sepulcher weeping. She remembered how tenderly Jesus had defended and protected her when Simon stood by, scorning her, not only because she had been a sinner, but because she was a woman; despising her Lord because He let her approach Him; because He let her wet His feet with her tears and wipe them with the hairs of her head; because He let her kiss and anoint them. To her, Jesus had forgiven much; to Him had her love gone out in consuming fervor.

And when the Lord appeared to her outside the tomb, and she mistook Him for the gardener, it was this fervent love that made her say: "Sir, if thou has borne Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him, and I will take Him away." She did not remember that she was but a weak, despised woman; she did not stop to think whether she had strength to carry away His body or not. Her love was so great that, though mountains stood between her and her Lord, she would have tried to rush them aside that she might come unto Him, and bear away that precious body, pierced and bleeding; the body of Him who had spoken peace to her soul and brought to her purity and Heaven.

Jesus knew the love in her heart, and it was to her, He entrusted the first message to the brethren announcing His resurrection. He could have sent this message by Peter or John; for while Mary Magdalene was standing outside the sepulcher, they were near by looking into the empty tomb. It was not to them, He first appeared; but to this despised woman, who loved much because she had been forgiven much. It was not by the great Apostle Peter nor by that Apostle whom Jesus loved, that He sent to the brethren this first message of the Gospel, and of His Finished Work on Calvary. He sent it by this woman who loved much; this despised one who, through the darkness, came first to the tomb; and who was the first to find He had risen, and who announced it to Peter and John. It was to this one, whose heart's cry was: "O Thou, whom my soul loveth!"

How puny, how weak, how miserable at best, is our love for our dear Lord! Oh, that He would melt us down, that we might cry to Him with a voice that would go right up into His heart: "O Thou, whom my soul loveth, tell me where Thou art feeding Thy flock, that I may ever keep step with Thee; and not be lingering over food that is dried, withered and ultimately, even though it may once have been fresh. Guide me, that I may walk in every ray of light and continually feed upon Thee who art the Bread of life; feed in the trial and perplexity, in temptation and difficulty; that from Thee, who art my strength and my Redeemer, I may get the uplifting power for everything that comes into my life."

"Tell me where Thou feedest Thy flock," is the fervent cry in the heart of the bride. Her hunger and desire for Him have increased as she searches for, and follows after Him. He has not yet made Himself manifest to her; she talks with Him, but she cannot find Him; there is a veil between them. She cannot lay hold upon Him, nor does she seem to be able to overtake Him; at times she hears His voice, although she does most of the talking. She goes forward, but He is not there; and backward, but she cannot perceive Him; on the left hand, when He doth work, but she cannot behold Him; He hideth Himself on the right hand, that she cannot see Him (Job 23: 8-9). Yet she hears Him whisper, "Ye shall seek Me and find Me, when ye shall search after Me with all your heart."

It is a wonderful, supernatural intercourse that the bride holds with her beloved Lord; He, unseen, yet hearing and speaking. Even the weakest child of God can talk with Christ; and, though he may hardly know the Lord's voice, the Lord hears his cry and

answers. Some of the greatest things that come into our lives, come through our weakest cries not weak from negligence, but because of our inability to do anything ourselves. He knows the way each one takes, He knows every heart-cry that goes out to Him. As we see others getting closer to Him and into a higher place than we are in, and we cry that He will bring us there too; He knows it all because he put it all within us.

It is not to the half-hearted that our precious Lord reveals Himself in sweet intimacy; it is when we seek after Him with all our hearts, that we find Him. It is not they who follow in an intermittent way, that find Him; but He finally reveals Himself to those who press on with unwavering love and determination; to those who obey, though it seems to lead to a greater separation from Him. The bride prays that He will open up to her the treasures of His Word; that He will teach her to feed upon the Hidden Manna. How her words reveal her helplessness to feed herself or find the place where He is feeding His flock. She would have Him not only lead her in the green pastures of His Word; she would not only feed in the company which is nearest Him, but she would be so close to Him that every moment her eyes may rest upon Him; so that when she has fed to the full and lies down to rest, He would be near her and fill her vision.

It is when the flock has fed to the full, that they lie down, but the shepherd is with them all the time. Thus would she have it continually in her life. When we have fed upon the living Word and upon the written Word so that faith has arisen in our hearts, we can lie down upon the Word in rest and confidence, knowing we are in the pasture of the Great Shepherd. As we lie down upon the promises of God, and hide away and feed upon Him who is the Bread of life, we shall find peace and rest in our souls.

She would feed in the green pastures, not only in the cool of the morn and at eve when the dew is upon the grass, but she longs for the rest that abides even in the hottest hour of the day, when the sun is beating down, and there is no breeze stirring. She would be so nourished and built up by heavenly manna, that the heat cannot make her faint, nor the storms dismay and make her afraid.

There is a relation that we can have with our Lord, in which we are hidden away and draw upon Him for all enabling and for strength in every time of need. Not only this. There is a relation where He will cause us to lie down and rest when all is turmoil around us. Even in the worst testings and the hardest things that can come upon us, He is able to make us rest beside *still* waters. Though the sun's rays are hot, and, in ourselves, we would be overcome; He will hush our fears and cause us to rest. He will spread His wing over us, and in its shadow we shall rest. In the covert of His presence will He hide us from the plottings of men. He will keep us secretly in His pavilion from the strife of tongues, for He is our keeper. He is our shade upon our right hand, the sun shall not smite us by day nor the moon by night. He will keep our going out and our coming in. He will keep us from all evil, for He neither slumbers nor sleeps.

It is a good thing for us to lie down upon the Word, and let God bring back to us what we have heard. When we have fed as much as He wants us to, He makes us know that He would have us lie down and chew the cud of rich food, which He has helped us gather. When He takes one portion away, some other comes; and many times He brings the same word to us over and over, and each time we get more nourishment out of it than we did the first time we meditated upon it. It is very significant that the word, meditate, means "to chew the cud, to talk to one's self, to ruminate."

The smallest light I get out of any part of the Word of God, is that which I receive the first time I come to it in meditation; and every time I come to it afterward, I receive more and more light. God will open up a portion of His Word and give such sweet nourishment; and perhaps remind us of some other green pastures, through which we passed on our way to one we are now in. Then He will lead us through that again; always given in great abundance to the soul that will follow Him and feed where He leads and directs.

1:7 “Why should I be as one that is veiled beside the flocks of Thy companions?” The bride looks upon those who have been chosen by Him to lead and feed part of His flock, and she can see that they have been in His company. She sees that they know Him, that they must enter into His presence as her heart longs to enter in; and she feels that she is as one that is veiled. This either signifies that she doesn't appear to know His voice, and thus does not appear to be a true sheep (for Christ says that His sheep shall know His voice); or that she is shut out, as by a veil, from close intimacy with Him.

Many times has she seen some of the virgins get their eyes off the Lord, through the shepherd whom the Lord has put over them; and she does not want to look nor listen to any one but to Him. How many times, those whom God has chosen to feed the flock, draw the sheep to themselves instead of guiding them to the Chief Shepherd. How many times, man takes the place of the Lord in the hearts and lives of those he is feeding. Therefore, the bride does not want the under-shepherds to lead her; and when she does not yield to them, she appears as though she were a stranger, as though there were something between her and the Lord. There really is a veil hiding her Beloved from her vision, but not a veil caused by sin and disloyalty to Him.

How often there seems to be within our reach, a place of entrance into deeper communion and feeding upon the living Bread which came down out of Heaven; a place that our souls desire, yet a veil appears to cover our faces so that we cannot see our Lord clearly. There seem to be bands which hold us back from going through into this place of deeper vision and revelation.

1:8 “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 shepherds' tents.” At last she hears His voice more clearly. “If thou knowest not.” As though He would say to her: “Have I been so long time with thee and dost thou not know Me? Thou shouldest know from the Word how to draw closer to Me. Thou shouldest know, but I do not chide thee for I have chosen thee. Because thou art My fair one, I will lead thee gently on when thou dost not know how to go. Therefore, if thou hast not yet found the way to those green pastures in which I feed My flock, if thou has not yet found the still waters where I make them to lie down and rest, if a veil separates us and holds thee back from coming even to My side and abiding there, then: ‘O thou fairest among women, go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock, and feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents.’”

There is a love in His voice, there is tenderness; yet His answer is a test for it is not that for which she has longed and asked. She has cried to Him that she might join the company of those who have drawn the nearest to Him. He bids her feed the little flock of kids, which He has entrusted to her, beside the tents of the under-shepherds whom He has made the tenders of some of His sheep. She has asked that she might behold Him, that

she might abide in His presence and lie down beside the still waters. He tells her to go her way forth by the footsteps of the flock. If she does not know where He is feeding His flock, she must look carefully and follow Him by the footsteps of those who have been following Him. She must lead the kids that are in her care, and come along the path over which the other sheep have passed as they have followed close to Him. As Paul says: “Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ” (I Cor. 11:1).

She must bring her little flock and feed them and feed herself beside the tents of those shepherds who have been with Him and learned of Him; those who have proved trustworthy, and whom He has set over the sheep; those whom He will use to feed her. The most important part of this little flock of kids is made up of the members and faculties of her own body and Life. These must be fed and nourished in His own pasture and with His own food is if they are to be His glory. It also means the ministry, whether little or great, which He has give her for other souls.

He bids he take care of all He has entrusted to her; but to follow, follow, ever follow in the footsteps of the flock, if she would receive the answer to her prayer and come near Him. If, at this point, she fails to discern the narrow path made by His flock, or fails to obey and follow in that narrow path, she will never enter into the intimate relation described in the rest of the book. If she lets her time and attention be engrossed by feeding her powers in faculties in any pasture upon which she may chance; if she becomes uplifted and busy with any soul or souls which God has given her a ministry; if she stands still instead of following on, she will never become one of that company that are following the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.

She must hasten on after the flock that follow Him; she must see that very one in her flock of kids is with her in the same path; she must take the same care of the kids, that the under-shepherds take of the larger sheep. She must feed them beside the tents of His faithful shepherds. She must not despise those shepherds who are chosen by Him and are faithful; for they are dear to His heart and suffer many things for His sake.

Already she has been drawn and has gone into some of His chambers; and she can lead and minister to those who have not yet been drawn, and with whom the Lord is just beginning to work. She can minister to those who have only entered the first chamber of Salvation, and who do not know of the second chamber of the baptism in the Holy Spirit; who do not know that there are many chambers beyond these two. Already she has smelled His oils and tasted the New Wine of the Kingdom; she has had a revelation of His beauty and her unworthiness, of His suffering and her need. Into these experiences, she can lead other souls who have not tasted and seen that the Lord is good.

But she must be sure and lead them along that path over which His faithful under-shepherds and true sheep have gone; she must feed them beside the tents of “His companions.” She must not take them to strange pastures, nor can she hunt out fields according to her own whims. She can take no responsibility, but must always have it before her that she must give an account of her own faculties and members, and how she has used them. She is responsible to the Chief Shepherd for any souls He entrusts to her care. They are not her sheep they are His sheep. She must not draw them to herself, but lead them into His presence. He must increase, but she must decrease.

Though His voice is heard, and the answer is not that for which she asked, her heart rejoices that He calls her the “fairest among women.” She has told of her blackness, of her swarthy; she has seen her darkness, which has been more apparent

as she beheld the white, spotless curtains of Solomon, but He, the One whom her soul loveth, the One who is becoming her all and in all, He has called her the “fairest among women.” She has been telling how unlovely and uncomely she is; and He, looking down upon her and seeing His own robe of righteousness, calls her the “fairest of women.” There is nothing so beautiful in the Father’s eyes as the robe of His Son’s righteousness.

How many times we are unlovely and uncomely, how many times we are unwise and fail to show forth our Beloved in our words, actions and lives. How many times, when the Spirit points out these defects to us, we cry out: “Jesus, I am black as the tents of Kedar. I shall never be beautiful and shine forth in thine image. Thou dost see how I stand forth in my own blackness and unloveliness, in the place of shining forth In Thy beauty.” And when we come to Him in deep humility, realizing our shortage and needs, He lets us see that we shall never be worthy in His worthiness; nor beautiful in His comeliness. He lets us see that we shall never be righteous but when clothed in His own robe of righteousness, but He lets us see that He loves us! That to Him we are fair!

This is a solace to the bride, as she obeys His voice and follows in the footsteps of the flock; as she hastens on, guided by Him though unseen, along that path which grows plainer as she goes forward. She leads her kids along with her; she feeds them beside the tents of the faithful shepherds who have been with Him and have been taught for Him.

One peculiar feature in this book, is the obedient and teachable spirit the bride of Christ always has. Whether the answer comes as she had asked and hoped or not, she listens, yields, and obeys, at the first sound of His voice.

It is amazing to see how God is drawing those who are willing to pay the price and go through with the Lord. His hand is upon them, and He is drawing them to Himself in a deeper way. There is no self-satisfaction with those whom God is drawing and making hungry for Himself. Though we are always satisfied with Jesus, it seems that the more we feed upon Him and the more satisfied we become in belonging to Him, the hungrier we are for Him. The more we drink the living waters, the more satisfied we become, and yet the thirstier we are. The closer we draw to God, the more Jesus is revealed to us, the more satisfied we are, and yet the more fervently our hearts pant of Him. The reason many of God’s children are not hungry, is because they are not feeding at all, or are eating impure food, and drinking muddy water.

CHAPTER VI

THE BRIDE'S ZEAL AND BEAUTY. THE NUPTIAL CROWN 1:9-11

1:9 "I have compared thee, O my love, to a steed in Pharaoh's chariots."

The Jewish historical allusion here, is to Israel as they feed before the horses and chariots of Pharaoh. None knew better than the Jews how swift were those famous horses; but by the strong arm of Jehovah, the Israelites outran and outstripped them. There were many steeds in Pharaoh's chariots, and the virgins who will make up the bride, while they are few compared to the many who are called, are as a great company.

Pharaoh's horses were famous for their value and beauty. They were the swiftest and the surest footed of all horses. They could go up over the hills and down through the valleys; they could leap over obstacles, and they never fell nor stumbled. In battle they obeyed though they plunged into the face of the enemy and into death. They bore the chariots of war, they drew the chariots of the pomp and glory, the grandeur of the king.

As the Israelites outstripped the horses and hosts of Pharaoh, so the bride of the Lamb has obeyed her Lord's command with such fervor, that she has overtaken and passed the flock whose steps she has been following. As Pharaoh's horses were famous for their speed and beauty, as they were sure-footed and bore the pomp and grandeur of the king, so the bride's speed and beauty are becoming marked, and she bears the glory of the King. It is through us, that the power of Christ's salvation is manifested upon earth. It is through us, that this salvation is put to the test, and men see what it will do. It is in our lives, that its power to give speed, strength and victory is manifested.

It is because the bride has pressed along after Him so swiftly, and been obedient to His voice though He has likened her to these famous horses. He has been teaching her that to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams. She has hearkened to each command of His voice and taken each step He has pointed out. So fervently does she obey the voice of her Beloved, so eagerly does she pursue after Him, that finally she hears His voice saying to her: "I have compared thee, O My love, to a steed in Pharaoh's chariots."

Some translators make the word, steed, plural and some make it singular. Whether singular or plural, it shows forth the perfect unity of the bride of Christ. Though there are many virgins, they are only one bride, and are bound together in perfect unity, speaking the same thing and having the same mind.

She could not have told how it was that she fled along after Him so swiftly, how she really ran clinging to Him. Unseen by her, unknown by her, His hand has upheld her as she ran. He has lifted her over all the hard places. He has upheld her steps that they should not be moved. He has kept her feet from slipping. He has lifted her over the precipices, so that many times she has not even seen them. Then after supporting her, and bringing her on according to the desire of her heart toward Him, He compares her to the swift steeds in the chariots of Pharaoh.

How tenderly and graciously does our Lord address us. He keeps us faithful, and then He says: "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." He spoke to, and dealt with Gideon so gently and encouragingly, when he was hidden in the winepress beating out wheat. The angel saluted him with: "Jehovah is with thee, thou mighty man of valor." Gideon did not appear to be either a mighty man or a

man of valor, for he was hidden away for fear of the enemy. But it was not anything in Gideon that made him mighty; it was because Jehovah was with him. And the Lord led him on until His gentleness made Gideon great, and he really became a mighty man of valor. How precious God woos us on; and if we yield that He may work in us, He ascribes to us the fruit of His own working upon and within us.

Oh, that He might tell us that we are obedient and sure-footed as the steed in Pharaoh's chariots! Oh, that He might commend our zeal and swiftness in running after Him! Oh, that we might be so obedient and sure-footed, that when He calls us to follow Him down into the valley, we shall not stumble through despondency and unbelief; when He leads us up on the mount of vision and revelation, we shall not become elated and fall into the chasm of pride. May He hold us with a firm rein so that we may not go into forbidden pastures, so that we may not turn aside after our own wills and desires. But, hastening like the wind at the command of our Lord and Master, may we be so faithful and obedient, that we shall hear His voice saying: "I have compared thee, O My love, to the steeds in Pharaoh's chariots."

It is when He appears to be withdrawing, that we follow swifter, swifter. This is the way the Lord often works; and one purpose He has, is that His presence shall not become common. He is not pleased for us to settle down, taking it for granted that He is always waiting to reveal Himself to us when we take time to ask Him. Another purpose is, that He may draw us to go faster; and one way He takes to draw us along more swiftly, is to go faster Himself. Many times it does so little good for Him to tell us to hasten.

Have you heard His voice urging you to come after Him more swiftly, telling you there is not time to trifle away? When you have felt Him withdrawing, have you commenced to run after Him faster, seeking Him day and night, humbling your heart before Him, crying unto Him? Have you been in the place where everybody and everything dropped out of sight, because you are hastening and panting after Him as the hart pants after the water brooks?

Dear child of God, have you had this close, mysterious intercourse with your Lord? Have you so longed to break through the veil into the glory of His presence, that your soul has cried to Him, "Lord, brush the veil aside, that I may enter in and behold You in all Your beauty?" Have you heard His voice commending your beauty in Him? Has He told you that you are following swiftly? Have you felt His pleasure upon you because you have been faithful, because you love Him with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind? Have you hastened along the path over which His flock follows Him, and faithfully fed beside the tents of the under-shepherds: Have you been so obedient to the least word from your Master, obeying each sound and touch, each movement of the rein, that you have heard Him say: "I have compared thee, O My love, to the steeds in Pharaoh's chariots"?

1:10 Already He sees His comeliness beginning to appear upon her, and He says: **"Thy cheeks are comely with plaits of hair (or "jewels"), thy neck with strings of jewels."** Eastern women enhance their beauty by strings of jewels hanging down upon their cheeks, giving their faces the appearance of being framed in jewels. It is this custom that is here used to describe the bride's face, ornamented with the attributes and graces of her Lord; for the jewels are symbolic of the comeliness of Christ.

As God reveals to us the beauty of Christ's attributes, our rejoicing may be so great that we will mistake revelation for possession; but if we have really put them on, we shall not know it. Just as a man cannot look upon his own face, so it is with the bride of Christ; we will not see her face when it is framed in the beautiful attributes of Christ.

It is when the jewel of humility, "Which is in the sight of God of great price," is appearing upon her, that she is the least conscious of it. It is not those who claim to have the humility, faith, love, longsuffering, and other fruits of the Spirit perfected in them, that have really put them on. I doubt if the virgin is conscious of it who is clothed with the incorruptible apparel of a meek quiet spirit. It is the *hidden man* of the heart that is thus clothed; and it must be put on within before it appears without; then it is only manifested in the eyes of others and not in the eyes of the one who is thus adorned.

The one in whom faith has been much perfected, does not boast of his faith. It is when we begin to put on the jewels of Christ's attributes, that we begin to see our nakedness and poverty. With each jewel put on, comes a deeper revelation of Christ's fullness and our shortage; and we see our lack of adorning more clearly as the transfiguration goes on. It is when our Lord is the only One before our eyes, that "We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, we are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Spirit of the Lord."

When the bride is following hard after the Lord, she is being separated more and more from those with whom she was once traveling. Many times her heart has ached and bled as these separations came; but the faster she runs after Him, the quicker will God bring her to the place where she does not notice when people drop away. The desires she once had, have gone; and in their place, she finds God's desires, which He is working within her. In the place which friends had held in her heart, she finds only, and always, Christ. She wants Him only she finds satisfaction nowhere but in Him.

The closer the bride draws to her Lord, and the clearer she sees Him, the more she sees her own unworthiness and blackness; but to Him who loved her and washed her from her sins in His own blood, she is beautiful. The Father sees her in Christ, and the attributes of Jesus Christ and the graces of the Holy Spirit are already beginning to be manifested, Christ looking upon her sees His own robe of righteousness; He died that she might wear it, He became sin that she might become the righteousness of God in Him, and He sees that robe which covers her through His death. This robe is Christ, for He is made unto us righteousness.

In the Revised Version, the first clause is translated: "Thy cheeks are comely with the plaits of hair;" the last two words in both translations are supplied by the translators. Whether we accept the Authorized Version, "of jewels," meaning the comeliness and beauty of Christ, or that of the Revised Version, "of hair," meaning the separation of the bride of Christ (see notes on ch. 4:1), the result and meaning are the same; for only as the bride separates herself unto her Lord, can His attributes and beauty be worked within her and appear upon her.

It is alone with our Lord; it is when the strife and opinions of the human have ceased; it is when earth has receded and Heaven and Eternity have drawn near enough for us to begin to see the unseen that the voice of our Lord is heard in our hearts, and His beauty appears. It is in such separation and communion, that His image begins to be manifested. If the bride's locks of separation are short and thin, uneven by being cut off by the world, there can be no beauty of Christ upon her. How many times God's children

try to walk with the world and Christ at the same time. It is then, that their separation is marred, and His jewels never ornament them; that which should be a chaplet of grace unto their heads and chains about their necks is not theirs. Do you know that in the place of the yoke of sin, which we once wore, God will adorn our necks with the jewels of the attributes of His Son, held together by the gold chain of His divine nature? Do you know that in the place of bondage of any kind, God is waiting to make us free in Jesus Christ? And the way He makes us free is by making us love slaves of the Lord? "Sin shall not have dominion over you." God would have us adorned with humility, patience, longsuffering and His faithfulness, where the yoke of bondage to sin and the flesh has dragged us down. He wants us to be free and walk upright, and then He will ornament our necks with the divine nature and beauty of Jesus Christ.

Have you thought that sometime, in some mysterious way, God will change everything about you that is not pleasing to Him? Do not deceive your own heart. He only changes us as we take up our cross *daily* and follow Christ; as we die daily that the life of Christ may be manifested in us, and His beauty look out from every thought, word, and action.

As each virgin of the bride enters into this place and experience of transfiguration, the yoke of sin and bondage which she has worn, will be taken away; and her neck will be comely with golden chains, or chains of jewels. His nature and the freedom which is in Him, will take the place of the yoke of sin. As she takes up her cross daily and follows after Him, going forth unto Him without the camp with ever-increasing separation, His attributes will appear, held together by His divine nature; and about her neck will hang those priceless jewels, which come through her union with Him, and her faith in the work which He has wrought upon Calvary.

The attributes of Jesus Christ and the graces and fruit of the Spirit must not only surround, frame and control every look and expression on our faces; but they must hang from our necks, held together and perfected by putting on His divine nature; they must cover our hearts, out of which are the issues of life. We must be controlled and held by His life and power, bound to put on His attributes, just as we were held and controlled by the yoke of sin. "As ye presented your members as servants to uncleanness and iniquity unto iniquity, even so now present your members as servants to righteousness." The yoke that love puts upon our necks, is sweet and never chafes; it hangs down, protecting and filling our hearts, out of which comes every moving and action in our lives.

Her heart had been filled with such a yearning for her Lord, that, with increasing speed, she has fled along clinging to Him. She has caught such glimpses of the King in His beauty, that, unconsciously to her, the reflection remains; and at last she hears that voice which is like the sound of many waters. He does not remind her of the swarthy, which the sun had left upon her; He compares her to the swift steeds of Pharaoh's chariots, He is made glad that she is becoming beautified by separation unto Him, by putting on the jewels of His attributes; He is pleased that His divine nature is adorning her neck.

More than ever before, she begins to apprehend that God's supreme purpose is being wrought out within and upon her. "For whom He foreknew, He also foreordained to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."

Before we can put on the likeness of Jesus Christ, we must see ourselves and know how we look; we must be brought to the place where we are not dismayed nor cast down when we discover how little we are conformed to His image. We cannot put on His attributes over our own attributes. The golden chains and the jewels cannot be put on over any yoke; the jewels cannot surround the frame and face, above which is hair that the world has haggled and taken away. It is only as we see our need, that it can be supplied.

God looks down with the pleasure upon the bride as He beholds her face ornamented and framed with the attributes of His Son, and sees her neck adorned with His likeness and the graces of the Holy Spirit. To have our Lord manifested upon us in this way means death and suffering to the flesh; and most people will not pay the price for these precious jewels. As we realize the near Coming of the Lord and see our flesh run rampant many times, as we discern upon us ornaments that are not of Him, manifestation that are not in the Spirit, God makes us to know that we must put them away and wear only those ornaments that are provided by and in our Beloved.

1:11 “We will make thee plaits (or circles; viz. a crown) of gold with studs of silver.” “We” –meaning the three Persons of the Godhead–will crown the bride of Christ with a crown which is of gold and silver; it is the Lamb’s *Wife* who will be crowned. The same meaning is brought out concerning Jehovah and His Ancient People, to whom He has a husband. “I decked thee with ornaments and I put bracelets upon thy hands and a chain on thy neck... and a beautiful crown upon thy head. Thus wast thou decked with gold and silver, thy raiment was of fine linen and silk and brodered work” (Ezek. 16:12, 13).

Although Jesus Christ died for lost humanity that He might redeem them from sin and death, each person in the adorable Trinity has a part of this work of perfecting, preparing, and ornamenting the bride of Christ. God the Father, has planned this uttermost Salvation, and it has been carried out and finished through the work of Jesus Christ upon the Cross of Calvary. It is being made flesh in us through our faith in that work, and through the teaching, leading, and power of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit convicts us and reveals to us the Lord Jesus Christ and His wonderful work of redemption. He reveals the power that is to usward, according to that working of the strength of God’s might which He wrought in Christ Jesus when He raised Him from the dead, and made Him to sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority, and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.

It is not through only one Person of the Godhead, that the bride is ornamented and crowned. An old translation gives it: “A crown which is of gold *We three* will make for thee.” The crown is already prepared and laid up for whosoever will overcome.

Many crowns are spoken in the Bible, but only those who overcome and sit down with Christ in His throne, even as He overcame and sat down with His Father in His throne, will wear the crown which the three Persons of the Trinity promise to make for the bride. It is a crown, the description of which would not appeal to any earthly queen; and from a human standpoint, it does not appear that it could be very beautiful. But when the imagery is known, none could be more beautiful or precious.

If all the splendor of Heaven could be brought together and molded and changed into a string of jewels for the bride's neck; if all the stars of the heavens, and all the glory of things in Heaven, could be made into a crown for her head, they would be as tawdry tinsel to the beautiful chain of His divine nature, in which are set the jewels of His precious attributes; and to the glorious crown wherewith she will be crowned.

The gold means the divine nature of Jesus Christ. In the Jewish temple, with its curtains, furniture, and clothing of the priests, the gold always symbolized Christ in His divine nature. This crown, which the Godhead will make and put upon the brow of the Lamb's wife, will be made of the precious divine nature of the Heavenly Bridegroom, who died that she might partake of His nature and become a fit bride for such a Bridegroom. This is not all; this crown of gold is ornamented with studs of silver. "Silver" is the symbol of the atonement (Ex. 30:11-16). The silver that was used in the Tabernacle, was from the half shekel that the Israelites gave "to make atonement for their souls." There is deep, precious meaning in this crown that God is making for the bride of the Lamb; the whole foundation shows forth His divine nature, which, through the working of the Holy Spirit, is more and more crowning her.

Only the Son of God could come down and become a man that she might be redeemed; and the crown that He gives his bride, the nuptial crown that she must wear if she would sit with Him upon His throne, is His own nature in the place of her sinful nature or her flesh. She becomes bone of His bones and flesh of His flesh. The silver studs that appear upon this glorious crown, show forth the atoning work of Christ, through which, alone, she can put on His divine nature and wear the crown. The beauty of the golden crown is in the silver studs.

The very nature of Jesus Christ, together with His attributes, is adorned with the silver studs; for it is through the wonderful plan of Redemption, that He will get eternal glory to His name. When the Second Person of the Trinity came down and died for you and me, it was the greatest proof of His holiness and righteousness, His love and mercy; the greatest manifestation of Himself and all He is, that He could give. Already His divine attributes and the adorning of separation unto Him, begin to appear upon the bride, His life and beauty ornamenting her and crowning her through the atonement of His blood. "Because thou didst keep the word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of trial, that hour which is to come upon the whole world to try them that dwell upon the earth. I come quickly; hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown." "Hold fast all the dealing wherewith I deal with thee, hold fast every downward step into humility and upward step into my presence over which I have brought thee. Hold fast to every revelation of My will, to every call to a greater separation; hold fast to every chastening and scourging; yield to all the purifying processes into which I have put thee, lest, having gone thus far, this heavenly crown be taken from thy head. Not only that; hold fast all the fruit, which all of these dealings and workings upon thee have caused to come forth; guard them until they have fully ripened, and then preserve them that thou mayest present them to Me at My coming. Thy head must be crowned with the manifestation of My divine nature; thou must have all held together and ornamented with the working of the atonement which I have made for thee, if thou wouldest wear the nuptial crown and sit with Me upon My throne. Only those who are faithful unto death shall have a crown of life."

It is Jesus, Jesus, all the time. God's will that He shall have the preeminence in all things, is beautifully portrayed. Our putting Him on, through which He become all things to us and we become full in Him, is pictured so vividly in this description of the adorning of the bride, that our hearts swell with longing to enter with all fullness into this which God has prepared for us. The same divine nature holds the jewels of His attributes together and frames the bride's face. The same divine nature and attributes ornament her neck, falling down over her heart and filling the place, whence springs the fountains of her whole life. The same divine nature is a crown upon her locks of separation. But on the crown appear the silver studs, through which all the other adorning of the person of the bride is put on.

If we would finally wear that crown which is laid up for those who love His appearing, we must ever have upon our heads the helmet of salvation, which this silver studded crown also symbolizes. There is such satisfaction in our hearts, when we know that the three Persons of the Godhead are interested and are working for us. At the time of conviction, when we were sinners, and the Holy Spirit first pointed our eyes to Jesus Christ, and we beheld Him hanging, bleeding, dying there upon the cross, God in His tripersonality began the work of preparation and bringing us Home. It is only when the attributes of our Lord begin to appear, that the Holy Spirit speaks of, and promises the crown. And it is much later in the Song, that the bride attains to the place of the overcomer.

Let us yield to every dealing of the Lord, let us not miss nor lose one. Do not let any indifference or unrest get upon you, for the time is short; you cannot afford to loiter by the way. If we linger over trivial things; if we let ourselves be taken up with anything but our dear Lord, the hope of Him calling to us, and the prize set before us, we shall fall short and not be found ready.

To know the teaching concerning the coming of the Lord will never take any one up to meet Him in the clouds. To teach and rejoice over His coming, to testify and talk about it, will never secure for any one the glorious nuptial crown. "To Him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me on My throne." It is the overcomers who will wear this crown, who will be His bride and sit with Him upon His throne.

Sometimes we see our shortage so clearly, that we almost despair of even God getting us ready. We have cried to him in real self-abasement, "Lord, can You get me ready? Can even You prepare me? Can You hold me true to You until my locks of separation grow long and beautiful and perfect? Can You protect them, so that they shall not be haggled nor shorn by the shears of the flesh of the world? Can You take the attributes of Jesus Christ and adorn my face, so that I will look like Him? Can You enable me to ever wear them upon my neck; and over, and in, my heart? Can You crown me with these attributes and the full working of the power of Christ's atoning work? Through His finished work on Calvary?" And we hear Him say, "All things are possible with God." "Faithful is He who calleth you, who will also do it."

The Lord's purpose in commanding her to follow in the footsteps of the flock and feed near the tents of the under shepherds was not only to direct her feet into the path which would lead to Him and to the answer to her prayers, but to test her obedience and humility. He has not purposed that she as all always follow others as they follow Him; but she has confessed her inability to find where He is feeding His flock, and where He is making it to lie down and rest at noon. So He tells her to watch the steps of those whom

He is leading, and listen to those whom He has taught and chosen to feed the sheep. She must not follow every voice nor walk in every track that appears, she must not feed by every tent she finds. He will guide her so that she shall not be deceived nor be put to shame; He will protect her from the hirelings and the wolves in sheep's clothing; He will guide her to His chosen ones.

CHAPTER VII

THE BRIDEGROOM'S TABLE AND HIS PRECIOUSNESS 1:12-14

1:12 “While the King sat at His table, my spikenard sent forth its fragrance.” He has told her how she may find Him, He has upheld her in her eager search; and as she hastens forward toward the sound of His voice, casting all else aside in her eager desire for Him and Him alone, she suddenly finds herself beside His tent. She sees a table spread before her, and she sees her Beloved sitting at His table; she finds herself sitting with Him in sweet fellowship and communion. As is always true of the faithful persevering one, she finds He has given her more than she asked.

At last she has attained the object of her earnest prayers and search, and He has brought her into His presence, even to His own table. He does not come and sit with her at *her* table, but He invites her to come to *His* table; He invites her to listen to His voice and follow and obey it until she finds the table of continual communion and close fellowship. He has spread a table before her in green pastures, He has revealed to her fountains of living water; He has brought her to rest beside the cool, still streams: and He, the Great Shepherd of the sheep, is there beside her. The table is in the presence of all her enemies, and her cup is overflowing with His loving kindness and His grace.

She has entered a place of communion and with Him such as she has never had before; communion that is deep and full of peace and feeding upon Him in uninterrupted quiet. A fellowship that abides, and where he sits with her; not the fleeting communion that does not abide nor satisfy, but a fellowship where she both feeds and rests in His presence. An intimacy in which He sets before her in hidden manna and fills her cup to overflowing with living water. A holy familiarity, which floods her soul with joy and peace; peace that flows like a river and passes all understanding.

The first taste we have of the Lord's Table, is when we enter into our secret closet and close the door; shutting out everybody and everything; all our thoughts and desires, and all sounds from the world. It is upon the door of this closet of communion, that He comes and knocks; it is there He enters; and when we have shut the door, He spreads a table before us and we sup with Him and He with us. He spreads this table with heavenly viands; and we not only taste of the hidden manna, but we learn to feed upon it more continuously, we drink of the living water more abundantly.

We cannot sit at this table with our voices clattering and every avenue of our being filled with unrest. We cannot abide at His feet and hear His voice when our opinions are rampant, and our thoughts are wandering to and fro like the tramps in the ally that feed upon the refuse in the garbage cans. We must yield to Him in quietness and confidence and seek Him diligently. We must follow every direction He gives us if we would find this table and abide there; for we can only sit at this table when we have commenced to partake of the grace of the silence within and without.

When the Lord was on earth, He told His disciples that He had meat that they knew not of; and He added: "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent me." Are we letting the will of God be our meat and drink? Are we gaining strength through this precious provision? It is only as we get still before Him, that we learn to know and do His will.

This hidden feeding upon Him, this hidden table of communion, at which none ever sits with us but our dear Lord, is outwardly set forth as we sit with one another at the Communion Table. We partake of the bread and wine, which are emblems of His broken body and spilt blood; the outward tokens of our inward communion with Him in His death and resurrection, and of feeding upon Him. As we partake of these sacred emblems, we do it in remembrance of Him, and we show forth His death until He comes. We show forth the spiritual relation, which God has put between Him and us.

We sit at His table when we are alone with Him and meditate upon His Word, and our souls are fed and nourished by the deep meanings and truths which He opens up to our hearts.

There is one point we must not overlook if we would find this table of hidden manna, if we would feed upon the Bread of life and drink deeply of the Water of life, if we would be strengthened by doing the will of God. In order to enter into this close relation to the Lord and into all it brings, we must sit at the King's table. Only when He is King of our lives can we enter into these privileges and experiences. We cannot be king of our own lives and expect He will reveal to us His secrets, or take us into His confidence. If Christ were sitting upon the throne of our lives continually, we would be sitting at His table continually.

The Spikenard, which is precious, fragrant, and most costly, is sealed in an alabaster box or cruse, which must be broken before the fragrance comes forth. It is a figure of that humility, with which only God can clothe the hidden man of the heart. It is when we sit at the feet of the Lord, and like Mary, "keep hearing His words," that He can put within us the precious Spikenard of Humility. It is in this lowly place, that we can see our nothingness and unworthiness. The further away we are from his feet, the more seldom we shall sit at His table; and the less humility do we have, to send forth its perfume.

Not only is this fragrant Spikenard a figure of Humility But it is a figure of the gratitude and praise that came from a humble heart, which knows it deserves nothing in itself. It is the gratitude the bride feels as she realizes that it is only through pure grace, her Lord has brought her to the place in which she finds herself; which thanks Him for doing exceeding abundantly above all she could ask or think. It is all that inworking of the Holy Spirit that gives her Lord all the glory, and worships Him in deep rest and confidence. It is the fragrance of rejoicing that He is worthy though she is unworthy; that is satisfied to know that, though in herself she is black, in Him she is white and pure; and that she is beautiful in His comeliness.

She finds, as she has been communing with Him, that He has been putting within her the Spikenard of Humility, which His presence draws out until it is poured out at His feet; and the fragrance goes out not only to Him, but is discerned by all who come in contact with her. They do not come with her into this secret closet, for the door is closed. They do not see the table nor her precious Lord; they do not know that she is sitting at this

wonderful hidden table of communion with Him; but they smell the fragrance that comes from the Spikenard of that secret relation and secret communion.

When we go into the Holy of holies within us, where our Lord ever dwells, we must close the door; but in order to close the door, everything that is of the flesh or of the earth must be put out of our hearts; for there is only room in there for Him and us. As soon as the door is closed and our Lord is sitting there with us, He begins to impart to us this precious Spikenard, which is being continually poured out at His feet. It seems that the more it is poured out before Him, the more it increases within us.

God would have us dwell in His presence until it is the atmosphere we breathe, the breath and source of our lives and joy; until it is so a part of us that we are hardly conscious of this holy relation with God, unless, through some carelessness, it is interrupted and we miss it. Let us remember that the Lord does not pour the Spikenard of Humility upon the evil odors of our pride or arrogance. It is easy to ask God to adorn us with humility and enable us to be lost sight of in Christ. But the process, through which we must pass to receive the answer to this prayer, is the way of the cross and suffering. It is ever taking sides against ourselves; it is refusing to pity our own suffering; it is taking sides against all the working and evil odors of our pride, self-confidence and self-seeking. For only when the alabaster box is cleansed of these self-workings, can it be filled with the Spikenard of Humility.

1:13 “My beloved is unto me as a bundle of myrrh that lieth betwixt my breasts.” Not only does He draw out the perfume of her Spikenard so that her humility appears to Him self and others, but He is so precious to her that she says: “My Beloved is unto me as a bundle of myrrh that lieth betwixt my breasts.” An old translator has given it: “A little bundle made of myrrh, which doth always abide.”

In eastern countries, much is made of costly oils and perfumes. The women use these costly perfumes freely, concealing in their bosoms little bags of aromatic herbs, or a small cruse of aromatic oil, which perfumes their whole person. But it is not such myrrh, aloes or cassia with which the bride’s person is perfumed; deep in her heart dwells her Beloved. Jesus Christ is pictured here as a bag of Myrrh, a cruse of sweetness, or preciousness; of fragrance, of perfume, that will perfume every part of her being. He, in whom is all the perfume of Heaven and earth, has taken His abode within her, and He has not come in for just a little while, but He will stay there through all the dark night of this dispensation.

The word, “lieth,” means to “remain over night; to abide permanently.” “Night,” in the Song of Solomon, always signifies the absence of the Bridegroom. Though He has gone to prepare a place for us, and we are left apparently alone, He is dwelling within us, hidden away in our hearts where He took up His abode when we came to Him and were born again. He has been there ever since, whether we have been conscious of His presence and yielded to Him or not. “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.”

The “breasts” of the bride are the same as the “breast-plate” of the Christian, which we are told in 1 Thess. 5:8, is “faith and love” (See notes on ch. 4:5). It is through faith and love that He comes into our hearts when we are saved; it is through faith working by love, that we are kept and go on to perfection. It is by faith that Christ dwells in our hearts, and we become rooted and grounded in love. It is by His indwelling

through faith and love, that we become strong to apprehend the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge, that we may be filled unto all the fullness of God (Eph. 3: 17-19).

It is during our journeyings through this wilderness, while we are in these bodies of our humiliation, that our precious Lord is dwelling in our hearts as a little bundle of Myrrh. He is abiding within us through the darkness of the night of His absence; and will abide until the day breaks in His Second Coming, and the night and shadows of this dispensation flee away. It is through faith and love that He dwells there; it is faith and love that hold Him there, and through which we discern His presence and perfume, and are thereby refreshed.

He is our precious bundle of Myrrh; He is the secret treasure whose perfume fills our hearts and is for us alone. All the perfume that is ever perfected in us, comes from this Hidden Heavenly Myrrh. We are told here that it is all the night this little bundle of Myrrh abides. It is during our Lord's absence that He sheds forth his perfume within us, encouraging, comforting and revealing to us His love. When the Eternal Day breaks, then will He be manifested and will no longer be hidden away, but we shall see Him as He is, and we shall be like Him. We shall not need His encouragement and comfort then, for all shadows will have fled away, and we shall forever be with the Lord.

Our Beloved is calling us to dwell in touch and communion with Him in that secret meeting place within us, until His perfume is manifested to us, through us to those about us. It is as we do this and treasure this Holy One who is the Fountain of all Heaven's perfume, that His presence and preciousness become sweeter to us day by day. How precious is the secret of His presence! Such sweet communion do we have with Him, so sweetly does He abide within us! How gentle is His voice, how He speaks to the hearts in which He has taken up His abode!

At first, when we begin to experience this relation with our dear Lord, we want to tell everyone about the treasure that we have found. But as we go on, there is a holiness about it, which we guard with jealous care; and we shrink from speaking of it to any one unless the Lord leads. This place of meeting and ascending incense within our hearts, where we begin to meet our Lord and finally dwell with Him there, becomes to us a real Holy of holies. Are we not the temples of God, and should we not guard that sacred inner place where His presence ever dwells, and where we must go to when we would hear from God and reach the mercy seat? This is not imaginary, as all of God's most consecrated saints have proved down through the ages.

When Christ is really having His way in our lives, and we are seeking His face and obeying Him, we shall not need to tell others that He is dwelling in our hearts as a little bundle of Myrrh, for they will catch a little odor now and then; and this is all they can receive or understand until He begins to be the bundle of Myrrh in their own hearts. But all who smell this mysterious fragrance are attracted to our Lord, though they may not know whence the odor comes that surrounds our lives.

Myrrh is not only fragrant, but it is bitter; the bitterness is an emblem of suffering. Fragrant and bitter, setting forth our identification with Him in the bitterness of partaking with Him in His death; through which bitterness we put on the fragrance of His life and attributes.

If we would have our Lord dwell in our hearts and have full control, if we would ever live in the atmosphere of His perfume and be sending forth His precious odors

ourselves, we shall find that it is not all joy; but there is an entering into the fellowship of His sufferings. There is the bitterness that comes through our union with Him as we remain in the place of death, dying to all that is unworthy that His life may be manifested. As we partake with Him in His death, and yield to the cross at every step, how His perfume goes forth and refreshes our souls, and attracts others.

Only as the Myrrh is crushed and pierced, does its fragrance go forth; and it is not easy to yield to the crushing and piercing process. This, truly, is bitter, though it yields fragrance in the peaceable fruits of righteousness. As we meet Him in this hidden place, He reveals to us that the slain Lamb must have a slain bride; and we hear His voice calling us to join that Blood-washed company who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. We hear Him calling us to be willing to suffer the loss of all things that we may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and become conformed to His death.

How sweet would He be to our own souls if we yielded and ever remembered that He was dwelling within. He is all the perfume we have, for there is nothing sweet about us. He is all beauty and fragrance. As we take up our cross and follow Him, or Spikenard is a sweet odor before Him, and He is more and more the little bundle of Myrrh, which, through faith and love, is hidden away in our hearts.

As Christ fills this place within us, there is not room for anybody or anything else. More than all other attractions is He to us. His perfume is most precious to us, as we always bear about in our bodies the dying of Jesus that the life also of Jesus may be manifested. His fragrance refreshes and encourages us in the darkest night of the trial and testing. How many times when our hearts would cry, "Why hast thou forsaken me!" do His odors steal over us; and are we conscious that, however dark it is and however alone we feel, "Closer is He than breathing and nearer than hands and feet." As He thus refreshes us with His presence, those about us detect this divine hidden Myrrh, and He is glorified.

1:14 "My Beloved is unto me as a cluster of Henna flowers in the vineyards of Engedi." Not only is He hidden away in the bride's heart through faith and love, not only does she meet Him there in the Holy of holies within her own breasts, but He is also unto her, "As a cluster of Henna flowers in the vineyards of Engedi."

The Henna flowers are heavy with fragrance and hang in beautiful cream white clusters against their bright green leaves. The flowers and leaves present such richness of perfume, and diversity of color and beauty, as are a fitting emblem of Christ, who embraces all the power and wonderful attributes of the Godhead. "For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily."

Just as the myrrh was hidden away in the bosom and perfumed the person from within, so the henna flowers were used by oriental women to deck and adorn their persons without. The fragrance of the myrrh is perceptible of others, but they neither see nor know what it is nor where it is hidden. The henna flowers are not only smelled, but seen and admired by all. The Beloved, as the cluster of Henna flowers, is that decking and ornamenting ourselves with His attributes in our daily walk, which is seen, recognized and enjoyed by all about us. But before we can be adorned with this outward adorning, He must become to us as the little bundle of Myrrh.

The word "Henna" in the Hebrew means the "Ransom price," and He is our "Ransom price." Only our precious Lord, in all His fullness and perfection of attributes,

could pay the ransom price to redeem our souls. He is the “Light of the world,” He is the “Way and the Truth and the Life.” He is “full of grace and truth” and is “made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” He is our High Priest, and He is our Sacrifice: “He ever liveth to make intercession for us,” and He is our “Advocate.” He is the “Bread of life,” “The Hidden Manna” which came down from Heaven. He is the “Rose of Sharon,” the “Lily of the valleys.” He is the “Fairest of ten thousand,” the “One altogether lovely.” Words fail to express His innumerable graces and attributes.

Though He is One, Eternity will fail to reveal His manifold beauties and graces. He is the one Christ, yet His body is made up of many redeemed souls. He is the true Vine, yet are there many branches. He is the only begotten Son of God, yet is He leading many sons to Glory. He is the only Savior, yet is He full of grace and truth. Though He is One, and there has never been, nor will ever be another like Him; so manifold and wonderful are His graces and attributes, that to her who love Him, He is a cluster of Henna flowers in the vineyards of Engedi. Engedi was famed for the aromatic flowers and shrubs that abounded there. But all that have ever filled those fragrant vineyards could never convey even a shadow of the meaning of Christ’s beauty and fragrance.

It is as we partake of His death and feed upon Him, that we are able to put on these Henna flowers through His ransom price. He would have us put on these blossoms of His attributes, bought at such a price when He became a ransom for us; and in order to do this, we must put away the vile weeds, the thistles and nettles of our flesh. The adorning of Christlikeness must appear in our looks, our words, and must adorn our every action. The many blossoms that make up one cluster, show forth His attributes which are upon the one Stalk, Christ. Every one is for us to put on, for when people know that we are called by His Name, they expect to see Him when they look at us. They judge our Christ by the way we look, and by what they see in you and me.

If they see upon us the Henna flowers, those flowers which come through His ransom price, and which we can put on because He paid the ransom price, they will know that they are not natural, but supernatural. They will see the beauty and smell the fragrance of our Lord, and then, and then only, can we say that our Beloved is unto us, “As a cluster of Henna flowers in the vineyards of Engedi.”

God has given perfume a wonderful place, not only in this book, but in the worship of the Jewish temple. All the perfume in the incense and in the holy anointing oil, pointed to Christ. That oil, which could not be put upon human flesh, neither could they make any like unto it, showed forth Jesus Christ as the only perfume, together with the graces of the Holy Spirit. It pointed to Christ as the only One acceptable unto God. The incense, which was made of aromatic gums beaten small, and which ascended continually before the face of God, symbolized the fragrance of God’s only begotten Son, in whom He was always well pleased.

There are all kinds of imitations of the heavenly perfumes and precious attributes of Christ; but all that anybody puts on which are imitations of the real Christ, will never look nor smell like Him. We may put on the human humility, but it is no more like the humility of Jesus Christ than anything else that is human is like God. We may put on longsuffering unto stoicism, but it is no more like the longsuffering of Christ than any human attribute is like an attribute of God. We may put on human sweetness and attractiveness, which may seem fragrant to those who cannot discern the difference; but

none of these are any more like the fragrance of Christ than the odor of ill-smelling weeds is like the pure fragrance of the lily of the valley.

God would have us put on these attributes, He would have us decked in that beauty which comes from our Beloved alone, and which will adorn us as we have faith in Him. Only these divine flowers, which have been bought for us with such a price, are beautiful and fragrant; and they should adorn us so that all others may behold Him in our words and actions, in our thoughts and feelings, in everything about us. At every step in our lives should He be more manifested to those around us. If we are protecting our flesh, giving way to ourselves and to our own ideas and desires, clinging to our old habits of the natural, we cannot be ornamented with these flowers from His great ransom. Jesus will not let us put on these Henna flowers over our old dead leaves of covering or over our vile-smelling attributes. This adorning is done little by little, blossom by blossom.

CHAPTER VIII

MUTUAL LOVE. THE ETERNAL HABITATION 1:15-17

1:15 “Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thine eyes are as doves.” The Bridegroom is speaking to the bride. Have you heard the Lord speaking to you and saying: “Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair”? In the original, the word, “fair,” means “bright, beautiful.” It is Jesus speaking, not only to the bride as a company, but to each virgin in the bride. If we have Him abiding deep in our hearts as a little bundle of Myrrh, if we are decked with the Henna-flowers of His attributes, He will look down and see His own beauty and detect His own fragrance, and can say: “Behold, thou art fair.”

God has provided that, as we behold the glory of the Lord, we shall be transfigured into the same image from glory to glory. This was the supreme purpose of His creating and foreordaining us, that we might be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29). The wedding garment which He has provided for us, is Himself in His beauty and with all His attributes; and He is grieved when we are walking unworthily and living beneath our privileges.

The bride of the Lamb does not walk with outstretched neck and wanton eyes, as is spoken of the daughters of Zion (Isa. 3:16). Her eyes are not wandering to and fro in infidelity to her Beloved, but they are chaste, constant; they are not only *like* the eyes of the dove, but they are “*as doves*.” Of all the figures that are used to describe the character of the bride, this is one of the most expressive. The dove is always constant to one mate, and there is such love and devotion between them as is found with no other bird. Though they quarrel, they make up with a love and intelligence that is found in no other creature excepting with man.

The dove’s constancy to one mate is an emblem of the Christian whose eye is single to Christ and to His glory. We are not told that the bride’s eyes are as hawks’ eyes, or like vultures’ eyes, which are looking for carrion and are cruel and relentless; but they are as doves. She is not going around with wandering eyes, and untrue to her Lord, but her eyes are patiently fixed upon her Lord; and with wide-open eyes, untouched by slumber or heaviness, does she watch for the first ray of the dawn of His appearing.

It is as we look at Him, that we are transfigured into His image; for we become like that which fills our vision, and reflect that which is set before our faces. Those who are looking at the world, who desire the flesh, who are looking to man, will reflect the image of the world, the flesh, and man. But those who behold as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, will be transfigured into His image from glory to glory, but the Spirit of the Lord.

The dove knows the seasons and the time of her return, she always comes to meet the sun and the balmy air of spring; and the bride of Jesus Christ knows the times and seasons. While she does not know the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man cometh, she is not a child of darkness that that day should overtake her as a thief. She, too, will come back to meet the summer of His presence; to greet the warmth that will come to all creation at the return of the Sun of righteousness.

Even at this time, the bride of Christ is discerning the signs of His Coming on every side; and when He comes, it will be the time for her to go home. In these dark and

perilous days, she is watching with wide-open eyes for the first dawn, the first ray the first indication of the daybreak.

The striking feature and beauty of the bride of Jesus Christ, is that her eyes are as doves, gentle, pure, and faithful to Him; not looking to the right nor to the left. She is not looking behind her, as did Lot's wife, thus being changed into a pillar of barrenness. She has not put her hand to the plow and looked back, thus becoming unworthy of her Lord. She is not casting one glance over her shoulder at the world, at the things and the friends she has left, and regretting that she had to give them up. Her eyes are fixed upon her Lord; they are fixed upon the everlasting hills, upon the light of day that is beginning to break a little in the east.

The dove is also the emblem of repentance. Of all miserable creatures, the bride is the most miserable when there is anything between her and her Lord. She cannot lie down too low at His feet, nor humble herself too much if there is a thing that has come between Him and her. She draws near to Him in love and repentance, and gets everything out of the way as fast as possible. She will not walk in rebellion nor in her own ways, but in obedience and in His ways.

Again the Bridegroom calls her "fair" and her heart is thrilled as she feels His approval upon her. How little everybody else becomes, and how trifling is their approval when compared with having the approval of Jesus Christ resting consciously upon us. Especially is this so, when by obeying and walking with Him, we incur the displeasure and disapproval of those who name His Name. But joy and satisfaction fill the heart of the bride when He speaks of her purity and fidelity to Him; when He calls her fair, and even tells her that to Him she is beautiful.

If our hearts are satisfied to be fair in the eyes of our Beloved, though we are black and unlovely in the eyes of all others, we shall become much fairer to Him; and His words of approval will fall upon our hearts more continuously.

1:16 "Behold, Thou art fair, my Beloved, yea, pleasant: also our couch is green." Her heart rejoices and is encouraged to call Him by a dearer, closer name as she hears Him call her His love; so she addresses Him as her Beloved. "Behold, *Thou* ("Thou" is emphatic in the text) art fair, my Beloved, yea, pleasant." Her love is drawn out by His words of love and commendation. She thinks of her blackness in herself, she remembers how unworthy she has felt as the eyes of the daughters of Jerusalem were upon her. She remembers how the sun of sin had scorched her when she was tending the vineyards of the world, and she cries out: "Not I, Lord, not I, but *Thou* art fair! Without Thee there is no beauty in me, without Thee I would be but black and scorched. But Thou, my Beloved, art fair, Thou art bright and beautiful, and it is Thy beauty that is upon me. Thou hast died that I might be fair; that I might become the righteousness of God; that it might be given to me, as Thy bride, to array myself in fine linen, glistening and pure, even righteousness acts through Thy power."

Always undone apart from Him, but in Him more than conqueror. Always black and unlovely in herself, but in Him "A glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

Oh how tender and gracious is our dear Lord! It is only as the bride, with unveiled face, beholds as in a mirror His glory, that she is changed into the same image from glory to glory. She has commenced to behold Him with unveiled face. Only a little

while ago, there was a veil between her and Him; but obedience to Him, following hard after Him, communion with Him, have taken away the veil.

She is now entering into such close communion and touch with her Beloved, that more and more clearly she is beholding Him in His glory, and is beginning to be changed into the same likeness. *He* does not remind her that her fairness is only the reflection of His beauty. He imputes that reflection of His glory to her and calls her fair; but she knows and owns that it is the reflection of His own comeliness upon her. She glories in having no beauty of her own.

He is not only fair, but He is delightful, sweet, and restful; or, as it is translated, “pleasant.” All who came to Him shall find rest, all who seek Him shall be refreshed. “Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart; and ye shall find rest unto your souls.” Nowhere else can a soul find rest excepting by coming to the Lord, looking to Him, beholding Him as “pleasant.”

All the storms and hurricanes that come up against us, will not be able to dismay nor cast us down when we really see our Lord as “pleasant,” and abide close to Him.... In turmoil, when things have not gone as they should, when there may have been mistakes and blunders, how unspeakably precious it is to settle ourselves in the Lord. Such sweet assurance and holy stillness come over our spirits from His pleasantness, as is a foretaste of Heaven. The voice of our Beloved speaks to the billows. He quiets us upon His own bosom; and God’s peace takes the place of the tension that has held us.

It is not when things are going smoothly, that we need to know His pleasantness, but when all around is in a whirl and in unrest, then, if we go into our secret closet and shut the door; if we get still before Him, His pleasantness will steal upon us and He will comfort us as friend comforteth friend. Yea, manifold more than any friend could comfort us. It is then we receive grace to say of every persecution or cause of unrest and distress, “This does not concern me; it is no affair of mine; He will take care of it.” And as we look away from the things that are not pleasant, and behold Him who is “pleasant.” The rest and peace of God that passeth all understanding, shall enter into our souls.

There is but one place where a human heart can find food and rest, that is in Him who is the Bread from Heaven. There is but one place where there is holy quietness and pleasantness, that is in Him who is the source of all quietness and confidence, of all rest and pleasantness.

“Also our couch is green.” He makes us to lie down in *green* pastures. He does not bring us into pastures that are dried up and parched. The Great Shepherd does not lead us in pastures where there are nettles and thistles, where the grass is scarce and sickly, where there is anything that will make the sheep sick or weak. He opens up to us the Word of God; He points out to us His exceeding great and precious promises; and we rest upon the Word of God, which He is ever quickening within us, and which He keeps fresh from His own hidden springs.

It is a pasture that is cool, fragrant and nourishing. We rest in His everlasting arms and find that His mercies and lovingkindness are new every morning and fresh every evening. “This is the rest and this is the refreshing,” that we have in the very heat of the day, in the hottest part of the day. He would have us lie down upon a couch that is always green and fresh, which is fragrant and watered.

1:17 “The beams of our house are cedars, and our rafters are firs.” The bride is speaking of the eternal house, which the Bridegroom has planned, and which He is building for Himself and her; and it is here that she has found rest. First, there are the beams; those heavy timbers that form the foundation, and which uphold the superstructure. Then there are the rafters, which support the covering of the house. The beams are made of cedars, which are an emblem of the pure, spotless manhood of Jesus Christ; and the rafters are made of the red fir, which is the emblem of the Blood of the Atonement.

When the permanent Jewish Tabernacle was built, all the wood was of the cedar. The cedar is a figure of the manhood of Jesus Christ. It is the hardest, most durable wood, and in it no worm will work, neither will rot destroy it. This is also true of the fragrant, red fir. These two kinds of wood are used to symbolize Christ and His redemptive work.

The beams, which form the foundation of this heavenly habitation, and which uphold the rafters, are the pure humanity of Jesus Christ. “Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood. He also Himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death He might bring to naught him that had the power of death, that is, the devil... Wherefore it behooved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (Heb. 2:14-17).

The first step in His redemptive work, was becoming a man. Only as He became a man could He die for the world; and this was the foundation of the Atonement. His pure, and spotless manhood was the beams which had to be laid before the superstructure could go up; and before God could finish this house which He is building for Himself, this eternal habitation in the Spirit built out of living stones.

Not until these beams of His pure humanity were laid, could He go up to the cross and die, thus laying the rafters which cover the whole building. The rafters are of fir, that hard, durable wood, which shows for the Christ’s redemptive work through its red color, and symbolizes the eternal character of His redemptive work by its hard, durable quality. The atoning work of Jesus Christ is over us all the time, supported by the beams of His spotless human nature. And through Christ and His finished work upon the Cross, is built the New Jerusalem; He and His church make up the “House.” “To whom coming, as unto a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (I Pet. 2:4,5). This is the house which God has purposed for us to dwell in, even out Lord; and we are the living stones from which God is making a house for Himself to dwell in.

We feed at His table upon the Bread that God has sent down from Heaven, our Home-country; we drink of the New Wine of the Kingdom. We recline upon the green pastures of His precious word and the many promises which are found therein. We rest beside the still waters and drink abundantly of the water of life. It is not only *His* house, it is *our* house; and we dwell in it and are a part of it. This is the house which God is preparing; for “We are no more strangers and sojourners, but we are fellow-citizens with the saints, and of apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom each several building, fitly framed together, groweth into a holy temple in

the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for a habitation of God in the Spirit (Eph. 2:19-22).

Not only has God been our dwelling place in all generations; but He is building out of us a house for Himself, which is supported by the cedar wood of Christ's pure, spotless human nature; and the rafters that support the covering are of the fir of His finished work on Calvary. "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid which is Christ" (I Cor. 3:11). Truly, "the beams of our house are cedars, and our rafters are firs." Oh, how our hearts rejoice as we remember; "That if the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal, in the heavens. For verily in this we groan, longing to be clothed upon with our habitation which is from Heaven; if so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked."

CHAPTER IX

PREMINENCE OF CHRIST AND HIS BRIDE 2:1-3

2:1 “I am a rose of Sharon, a lily of the valleys.” “Sharon” and “the Valleys” were the most fertile districts of the land of Israel, and all that grew there was in great luxuriance and perfection. Coming after the descriptions of our Lord as our Shepherd and our protection there is deep significance in this setting forth of His character and relation to us as Myrrh, Henna-blossoms, the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valleys.

He is portraying Himself as the source of all joy and delight, of all beauty and fragrance to His bride. The rose is the most beautiful for all flowering shrubs, and yet is not valuable for its usefulness. It has only its beauty and fragrance to recommend it. All the value there is in the rose, is the pleasure it brings to those who look upon it. There is an attitude that many of God’s children take toward Him, which is not the highest; and they do not receive as much as they would if they beheld Him in every relation in which He is waiting to reveal Himself to them.

Though we bring to Him all our cares and ask Him for all that we need, though we tell Him of all our difficulties- and He is able to take care of them all- he wants us to let Him be “pleasant” to us; He is waiting to reveal Himself to us as the “Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valleys.” He would have us see Him more than the source of our supplies. He would have us delight ourselves in Him and not in His gifts.

Oh that God may give to us the grace and spiritual vision to see Jesus Christ as the beautiful, fragrant Rose of Sharon; Oh to have Him, the divine Rose, sweet to our souls; to sit before Him and let His fragrance settle down upon us! When He says He is the Rose of Sharon, it means that as the rose is preeminent among the garden flowers, so He is preeminent in beauty and fragrance. We cannot see Him in this light when we only look upon Him as somebody from whom we are trying to get something, and whom we need to help us along.

Let us commune with Him and love Him, let us talk with Him and sit before Him in stillness until we are ravished by His fragrance as the “Rose of Sharon.” Though He heals all our diseases and supplies all our needs, though he fights all our battles and delivers us from the hand of our enemies; from time to time, let us get our eyes off of His gracious “Rose of Sharon” and remember how altogether lovely He is, apart from all His acts to usward. Let us cry to Him that we may know Him as we have never known Him before. Let us rejoice that, apart from all His gracious acts, He gives Himself to us to delight our spiritual eye and refresh our souls.

When He takes His place in our lives as the Rose of Sharon, every other relation will be deepened and become more precious; and we shall receive more from Him than we have ever been able to get before. Sometimes, when I am holding on in prayer concerning the Lord’s work, concerning my own needs and the filling out of my life, when I am prevailing for the needs of others, I hear His voice saying to my heart: “Am I sweet to your heart? Am I beautiful in your eyes? If I do naught of all this you are asking, shall I be beautiful and sweet to you? Above all that you ask and all that I do, I would have you experience and rejoice in my beauty and fragrance. Then all other things shall be added to you.”

He is waiting to be the adored object of our admiration. He would have our spiritual eyes anointed and the love in our hearts so unselfish, that we shall be ravished by His beauty, which can only be revealed by close contact. In the rose is all beauty and fragrance, in Him is all beauty and fragrance.

He is also “the Lily of the Valleys,” that white, spotless lily that grows down in the fertile valleys; the lily, which is so humble and yet so stately, so full of perfume and yet hidden away. It was when our precious Lord emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant; when He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, that He became the Lily of the Valleys. Who knows the depth into which He went, and the suffering through which He passed? Who can fathom the waves and billows that went over his head as He went down into the darkness and brought back His own?

He would have the bride rejoice in the goodly fragrance of His name and oils, but He would also have her see Him as the pure Lily of the Valleys. He would have her see His humility and behold in Him the beauty of that lowly flower that grows in the Valleys. He would have her smell the delicate fragrance of that meek and lowly spirit, which had its source in Him and was manifested as He learned obedience by the things He suffered; which sent forth fragrance before the Father when He was reviled and He answered not a word. This humble plant is found growing in the fertile Valleys, but its blossoms are found in the courts of Heaven.

2:2 “As a lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters.” The Lord would have her follow in His footsteps; and as she beholds Him in His beauty, in His fragrance, and in His humility, she hears Him say: “As I am, so are ye in the world. He that saith that He abideth in Me ought himself also to walk even as I walked.” To be like unto Him, she must go down into the fertile Valleys, and there must she abide. She must draw strength and nourishment from the hidden springs and the rich soil of His Word, and His life must flow into her until she blossoms out in His likeness.

The Bridegroom not only tells of His own attributes, but He again shows forth His love for the bride, and describes her with the same figure which He has just used to describe Himself. All the beauty of the daughters of men, could not be used to describe her who is the bride of the Lamb; and who, through Him, has received adoption unto God.

All other daughters are but thorns, and they are surrounded by thorns; but the beautiful lily has no thorns grown upon her. In other words, there is nothing which is sharp, and wounds her Lord and those around her. There are no unkind actions growing upon this plant that is being prepared for the Garden of Heaven. There are no unworthy, uplifted attributes found upon the one whom God will choose as the bride of His Son. He has invited many to be the bride; but though many have received the invitation, only a few will He choose. In the Song of Solomon, the descriptions of the virgins who make up this company, must apply not only collectively, but individually to all who find a place in that blest company.

He has just told her that He is the Lily of the Valleys, then He describes His bride as a lily among thorns; harmless, yet upright and beautiful; spotless and fragrant. As He is, so must she be. He would have her conformed to His image, with His every attribute adorning her and with every likeness to Him perfected; with every perfume and beauty manifested upon her and in her life. As He is the Lily of the Valleys so would He have

His spouse a lily. He would have her so perfectly partaking of this likeness that she shall be as a lily among thorns. She must be harmless, yet steadfast. She must be humble, yet standing in pure dignity. She must be upright and beautiful, contending earnestly for the Faith once for all delivered unto the saints. She must be spotless and fragrant, each lily in the company standing for His glory and His delight alone.

All that would wound, all that is unworthy, all that is uplifted must find no place in her. She must be tender, worthy in His worthiness, humble before God and man; and thus she grows more beautiful and harmless, more and more to His glory. It is as He leads her down into the Valleys, where she is hidden away from the eyes of man, and where the living waters flow, that she is nourished and becomes as the lily. Only down there is the soil fertile; only there is the moisture found that flows down from the Everlasting Hills. Only down in to the Valleys of humility, of meekness, of lowliness can these eternal lilies be found.

As our precious Lord emptied Himself of His glory, so must we be emptied of all that would hinder us carrying out the will of God. He went down into these Valleys of humility and depths of suffering, that He might plant in the Valleys pure lilies like unto Himself. He ascended to Heaven that He might transplant these lilies from the earthly wilderness to the heavenly terraces, where they will forever bloom in the Garden of the Lord. Down in the Valleys does He tend and water them. He waters them every moment: lest any hurt them, He keeps them night and day.

If our Heavenly Bridegroom should come today to see whether we are found among those whom He has just described in this second verse, I wonder what He would find in each one of us. Does this description apply to us? Would He find the thorns all gone from our lives? Are we pure and spotless, are we gentle and longsuffering do we consider one another to provoke unto love and good works? Are we as wise as serpents, and yet withal as harmless as doves? Do those who look upon us, expecting to find the fruit of the Spirit and the likeness to the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valleys find only leaves and see no fruit? Are those who come near us, pierced by the thorns in our lives and speech?

Do you know where we find humility? It is down in the Valleys, not on the highest mountain peaks. If we follow our Beloved down there, He will adorn the hidden man of the heart with the incorruptible apparel of a meek and quiet spirit. When we catch glimpses of the inward adorning, how our souls long to go down into every valley into which our Lord would lead us. As the heart pants after the water brooks, so our souls pant for the waters of life; and it is down in these Valleys of lowliness and abasement, that fountains of living water are found gushing forth from the Rock. These Valleys are ever watered from Eternal springs, and the soil is rich and fertile.

There is a precious truth in here, which seems like a contradiction. The deeper we go into the Valleys of humiliation, the higher we go into the Mount of God. The more we abide in these precious Valleys, the higher we go into the Mount of Revelation and well there. It is by going down into this place, that we become like Him, and are lifted higher and higher into His presence.

May the Holy Spirit bring home to our hearts every characteristic of the bride that is brought out from the first verse to the last verse in the Song of Solomon. And may the search-light of God be turned upon us until we see how much or how little we are

measuring up to the portrait of the bride of the Lamb, which the Holy Spirit has pictured for our guidance and for our admonition.

2:3 “As the apple tree among the trees of the wood, so is my Beloved among the sons. I sat under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste.” The word “apple,” in this place, means orange, pomegranate, citron, as well as apple, and it is applied to this entire family of fruit trees. Though one searched through all the forests of earth, he would not find one fruit tree; and though one searches through the whole forest of humanity, there is no one tree that can bear any fruit excepting that which is poisonous and bitter. “There is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved,” excepting the Name of Jesus. Before the bride found the one fruitful Tree, Christ, she searched throughout the forest, seeking life, seeking food, seeking fruit; but upon no tree, did she find anything but leaves.

How she searched through the forest to find a tree that had fruit on it! How she looked around for a tree that could give and sustain life. Weary and worn, discouraged and hungry, she went from forest to forest, from tree to tree. She looked for peace, but she found it not; she looked for happiness, but she found it not; she looked for a “Daysman” among the forest of men, but she found none. Neither in man’s theories and teaching, nor in their philosophy did she find peace. Neither in her own works nor in those of any other did she find rest. How she traveled and looked for salvation and could not find it.

At last, by the guidance and grace of God, she came to Him who is the only “Apple Tree” in the whole forest of humanity; the Tree upon which all kinds of fruit grow. She came and tasted and found that the Lord was good. She has partaken of the fruit of the Tree of life; she has found fruit, refreshing and sweet, both nourishing as food and satisfying to thirst. She has found the Tree upon which there is every manner of fruit, and fruit all the time; the greatest of all being that of eternal life. Then there is wisdom, righteousness, love, joy, peace, and every fruit that prepares her for God and Heaven; for Eternity.

Have you come to the one Apple Tree and partaken of eternal life? Is your soul longing for more joy to well up within you? Do you want the love of God to be perfected within your life? Do you want to be filled with longsuffering, with faith and hope? Then come and feed upon this one Tree, Christ. This is the Tree that was in the bosom of the Father throughout eternal ages. This is the Tree that was planted on earth when Jesus hung on the Cross of Calvary; and God planted It here that we might have access to It, and upon it we find all we need.

How we rejoice that we have proven there is fruit upon Him; and by feeding upon Him, we too bear fruit to His glory. He is our Storehouse, He is the only fruitful Tree, and we can get nothing outside of Him, but we can get everything in Him. The more we feed upon Him, the more we abide in Him. The more He feeds and nourishes us, the more He becomes manifested in our lives to the glory of God. There is none other like Him among all the sons of men, neither among the archangels in Heaven.

“I sat down under His shadow with great delight, and His fruit was sweet to my taste.” Not only is He the one fruitful Tree in all the forest of the sons of men, but it is only under this Tree that man finds refuge from the wrath of God, which tested upon the world because of sin and God’s broken law. It is only under the shadow of this Tree that,

we find protection from, and victory over the enemy. Christ has interposed Himself between us, and the wrath and condemnation which were our due, and which rested upon us; He alone can shelter us from the sentence which has been pronounced upon us because of sin and disobedience.

The bride is not standing under his shadow, which would show a lack of rest and permanency; but she has *sat down* under His shadow, which shows uninterrupted abiding in Him, and feeding upon Him. It is when she has been drawn near enough to experience a close touch with Him, not only at times, but a continual communion and abiding in Him, that she partakes of His precious fruit and is refreshed in her soul by deep draughts of life more abundant. She need fear no foe if she remains under His shadow for in that place, there alone, she is safe. There she finds food, shelter and all she needs.

It is when the bride dwells in the secret place of the Most High, that she abides under the shadow of the Almighty. It is when sitting under His shadow, that she finds delight; it is when she takes refuge in Him, that she is hidden away from the enemy, from the plottings of men, from the strife of tongues, from the heat of the day. It is a wonderful thing to make the shadow of the Almighty our dwelling place. It is a wonderful experience to sit down under His shadow and let Him be our Shade on our right hand, our Covert from the heat of the day, our Rock in a weary land, our High Tower and our Fortress. He will not suffer our feet to be moved; and it is when abiding under this Tree, that we can claim all the promises of God, and become partakers in the divine nature. "If ye abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatsoever ye will, and it shall be done unto you."

The longer we sit under His shadow and trust in the protection which it affords, the greater becomes our confidence and delight. It matters not how the devil roars and rages, we know that he cannot touch us in our safe Retreat. Though evildoers come upon us to eat up our flesh, our adversaries and foes, they shall stumble and fall. Though a host encamp against us, our hearts shall not fear. Though war should rise against us, even then will we be confident, because we are dwelling in Him all the days of our lives, beholding His beauty and inquiring in His temple. In the day of trouble, we are kept secretly in this Pavilion; he lifts up upon the Rock, and our heads are lifted up above our enemies round about us.

It is not only to find the one Apple Tree, but it is to take up our abode under its shadow. It is not only to taste of its fruit, but it is to eat and be filled with all the fruit that grows upon this divine Tree; it is to feed upon Him continually until we are strong in Him, and in the power of His might.

O wonderful Tree that dwelt in the bosom of the Father throughout eternal ages!
O precious Tree that was first planted upon earth on the Hill of Calvary, of whose fruit millions have partaken, and whose fruit is ours as we partake of it through faith! O eternal fruit, which He will gather for Eternity, as He leads many sons to Glory and brings them home to His Father's house! How sweet is this fruit to our taste, how satisfying in every morsel of which we partake! And we can feed to the full for the fruit is ever growing, ever being revealed to us always perfect, and never grows old nor decays.

He is the beautiful Rose of Sharon, which gladdens and beautifies every desert and wilderness, which refreshes us in the time of our greatest trials and suffering for His sake. He is the Lily of the Valleys, which is the purest, the most fragrant and yet the

humblest among the flowers. But He is not only the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valleys, He is the one fruitful Tree among all the trees of the forest. He is the source of all beauty, and the Storehouse of all fragrance, purity and humility. He is the only supply of all food and nourishment, He is the only Fountain of living water, He is the Water of life. He is the shade upon our right hand, we sit down under His shadow with great delight and His fruit is sweet to our taste.

CHAPTER X

THE BANQUETING HOUSE 2:4-6

2:4 “He brought me to the banqueting house, and His banner over me was love.” Many times, the dear children of God, not understanding the significance of the “Banqueting House,” have thought that the Lord has brought them to the Banqueting house when He has not. They apply this wonderful Scripture to ever blessing and experience, to ever anointing and joy. This is like naming a small pond, the Atlantic Ocean. It is a very significant fact, of which we should take notice, that this is the only time in the Song of Solomon where the bride is brought into a Banqueting House. It means far more than many of the children of God have apprehended.

We can see how wonderful has been the soul’s progress toward God during the first part of this precious book. In the beginning, she has had some precious experiences with the Lord. She has longed for Him and for a closer walk with her Beloved. She has had sweet experiences with Him, and He has brought her into some of His chambers. He has put a hunger in her soul for Him, and a cry that she may be drawn to run after Him. He has drawn her, and she has run after Him like the steeds in Pharaoh’s chariots. He has brought her to His table, which He Himself has spread in green pastures and beside still waters.

It is not a small thing to have this sweet intercourse at the table of communion, where she tells that He is to her, and He tells what she is to Him. If the soul goes on, this precious communion table merges into the Banqueting House. But there are many of God’s dear children who come thus far, and never go on into the fuller, deeper experience. They are so filled with the joy when they first sit with the King at His table, that they mistake this beginning of intimate fellowship and communion, of the “Banquet of Wine.”

It is most important that we should see the path over which the bride came to the Banqueting House; also that we should remember, that though her Beloved brought her to the Banqueting House, she was not yet perfected when she had this experience. With the one who is going through and will be in the bride, it seems that very often, the Lord gives her this experience in the early part of her Heavenward journey, in order to cheer and encourage her to press on until she reaches the goal.

The same hand that was with her from the first, is leading her on; and her Beloved now brings her into the most intimate communion and fellowship with himself that a soul can have. This passage can only be a description of such an experience as is granted to those alone who will go all the way with the Lord.

All who are redeemed must enter into some of the chambers of the King. All who are redeemed have more or less desire to go on with the Lord and to know Him better. All who are redeemed sit at His table in the green pastures; though they may not abide there, though they may partake of but little and have only a little Spikenard to give forth fragrance. At times, every soul that is saved, beholds Christ as lovely and desirable, as the only source of life, light and salvation. But only those virgins who go all the way with Him and abandon themselves to Him, does He take into His Banqueting House.

The bride first supped with Him out in the green pastures beside the still waters, but now He spreads before her a banquet. His Banqueting House is that relation with Him, into which He brings those who have followed hard after Him and are counting all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Him; those who are willing to go all the way with Him, no matter where it brings them or what it means. It is a foretaste of the revelation of Himself and His everlasting love, which only Eternity can fully reveal.

This is the espousal banquet, which He gives to her as His spouse. It is a banquet of wine, where she drinks to the full of the New Wine of the Kingdom, where she is filled until she would almost cry that He would stay His hand, lest her life must go out because of the exceeding great revelation of Himself, and the preciousness of His love which He pours in upon her.

One virgin of the bride was caught up even to the third Heaven, into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for man to utter. And my reason of the exceeding greatness of revelations, he received a thorn in the flesh that he should not be exalted overmuch.

The bride sees His banner floating over her, which is His own Name, "Love." It was through love that He conquered her and carried her away a love captive for Himself. "We love because He first loved us." "While we were yet weak, Christ died for the ungodly." "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." He went out into the darkness to find her and deliver her from the dominion of sin and Satan, and He brought her back after redeeming her by His own precious blood. Because of the great love wherewith He loved her even when she was dead through her trespasses and sins He made her alive through Christ (Eph 2:4-9).

Not only does Christ's banner over us show that we have become His through His great love and the work that He wrought, but the protection of His banner is ours. It is the banner of the country of which we are citizens; and the King of that country will avenge all injuries done those who are under His banner. Whoever opposes and fights those who are under the banner of God, is opposing and fighting GOD.

No foe, either spiritual or human, dares to approach us or attack us when we have over us the banner of the king of Glory, the God of Heaven and earth. It is when the banner of God is not manifested, that the flesh and the enemy dare to approach, for they are not afraid to attack us in ourselves. But when the love of God is resting upon us, the foe knows that we are the property of God, that He is fighting our battles, and that the protection of His banner is upon us; then does he fear to attack us.

It was so with our precious Lord. Many times when they would have taken Him, He went forth out of their hands because of a mysterious fear upon them, which they did not understand. It was God's unseen banner of love and approval resting upon Jesus Christ that brought this fear upon His enemies. When the hour had fully come in which He was to be offered up and God gradually withdrew His protection until it appeared that He was not with Him, then this fear departed; and those who hated Christ reviled Him and did with Him as they would. Even on the cross, when the face of the Father was turned from Him, they say: "He trusted on God; let Him deliver Him now, if He desireth Him" (Matt. 27:43).

Do you know, if you are walking in obedience and humility, that the banner of your Beloved is floating over you all the time? When you are going through the hardest trials, if your eyes were anointed and you looked up, you would discern His banner,

“Love,” floating, shining, gleaming through the darkness. We do not always see it and we do not always remember that it is there, but it is ever over us. In the night seasons, in the day seasons; in the dark places, in the light places; in the hard places, in the easy places, the banner of our God is still floating above us.

Not only is His banner over us, but His angels are encamped round us, His armies are stationed so as to protect His own. And where His people and armies are, there His banner is floating. Over the dwellings of His people, is the banner of the King of Glory. It matters not how poor and shabby or how large and spacious these dwellings may be, if the elect live there, the banner of their King is ever floating.

2:5 “Stay ye me with flagons (or “raisins”), refresh me with apples; for I am sick from love.” Not when we are following the Lord afar off do we have such hunger and desire for Him as is characterized by being sick from love. It is when we are drinking deep of the Wine of the Kingdom and feeding in fullness upon Him, that the yearnings and cravings increase unto real soul-sickness for our Beloved.

There is a way in which our Lord would have us sick from love for Him; and when we have this intense love and desire, nothing can satisfy but to get closer to Him. It is then that He brings us into His Banqueting House, and He satisfies us with such revelation of Himself and of His love as ravish our souls, and we cry with increasing desire and hunger: “Stay ye me with flagons, refresh me with apples: for I am sick from love.” It is at this time that our love is drawn out to Him as never before. “As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.”

The bride does not ask Him to withdraw the revelation of Himself and His love, but to strengthen her that she may endure, not only these, but even greater revelations. She cries to God in His tripersonality (“Stay ye me with flagons”) that He will make her stronger by giving her greater draughts of the Wine of the kingdom, by giving her more abundantly the apples from the one fruitful Tree, Christ. It is as she partakes of the fruits of the Christ-life that she is strengthened and drawn into a place of deeper revelation of her Lord and of His love for her.

“O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee: my soul thirsteth for Thee, my flesh longeth for Thee, in a dry and weary land where no water is.... When I remember Thee upon my bed and meditate on Thee in the night watches. For Thou has been my help, and in the shadow of Thy wings will I rejoice. My soul followeth hard after Thee: Thy right hand upholdeth me.” (Ps. 63:1 ff.) There are many times when we are fainting in our souls for a fuller approach to God, fainting in our souls to know His love better. We have a longing, which is like a real swoon in our whole beings, that we may pass out from the place in which we are, and be lost in the love of God. We are spiritually sick because of our longing and love for Jesus.

Do you know that one reason God’s children do not feel this spiritual hunger any more than they do, is because they have not taken the steps that went before? With the things of God, there is a progression just as there is in any school; and if we do not take the first steps, we shall not take the last steps. Every lesson we skip or neglect, we shall have to go back and learn before we shall be able to go on; for every advance step is a foundation for the next advance step. The reason that many of God’s children have never been brought into the Banqueting House of the king, the reason many lack power and are not where they should be, is because they have not taken the steps as they came to them.

They have not perfectly endured that which God called them to pass through, in order that they might reach this place upon which we are meditating in this precious passage.

Some of God's people try to leap into the Banqueting House experience; but if they have this experience granted them, it is only when they have taken the first steps of obedience, abandonment, and devotion to their Lord. There is a precious, and peculiar secret concerning our relation to our Lord; the more we feed upon Him and draw near Him, the stronger we become. As each new revelation of Him and His preciousness is given us, like Daniel, we find that our comeliness is turned to corruption, and we have no strength. But His hand always touches us and lifts us up, so that we can endure all He would give; and we are strengthened by the presence of the Lord, so that His presence may become more manifested.

Only as the bride is made strong in Him by feeding upon the food which comes from Him, can she enter in and endure such exceeding great revelations of His love. But to the devoted soul, the heart's cry is, "Bring me more of this New Wine of the Kingdom, which has made me sick from love, for I would drink it to the full. Bring me more of the fruit from this divine Apple Tree, that I may eat to the full, and be refreshed to endure greater revelations." She has already been sitting under this Tree and has found its fruit sweet to her taste, but she would ever more abide there under its shade and eat and drink abundantly.

2:6 "His left hand is under my head, and His right hand doth embrace me."

It is He who ministers to the bride and gives to her the needed support; He holds her up by His left hand, which is God's hand in His less manifest working. Some expositors take the meaning of the left hand to be the hand of God's judgment and wrath; which, in the place of being over and upon man, has been put under him through the work of Jesus Christ. The most precious significance, however, is that it is the less visible working of God in His providences, support, and care; in His upholding and undertaking for us in temporal and common ways, and in all the ways in which many of God's children do not see the hand of God.

It is the left hand of God under our heads that sustains and supports us when the billows are running high and the winds are contrary and raging. We are not always conscious that it is His hand that keeps us from sinking, for the working of His precious left hand is the least seen. But without that, we could not receive all that He would give and do for us with His right hand.

The right hand is the hand of manifest grace, inward love, and joy in Christ, the smile of His approval, the hand with which He molds and fashions the bride. The left hand holds us fast while the right hand deals and works upon the clay of the earthen vessel. The embracing of His hand is so precious, as He lets His love fall upon us like dew, as He leads us into deeper revelations of Himself and of that which He has prepared for us. As we see the King in His beauty and behold the land of far distances that lies before us, we are truly overcome with soul-longing for that beautiful land.

This support and embracing of the Bridegroom's hands, are not always the unalloyed bliss that many think. Sometimes it means such pressure and shaking as only His left hand could hold us steady in. It is the working of His right and left hands which brings us to perfection. How many times God brings us up to something, which, it seems, we cannot go through; but unseen by us, His left hand holds us fast. How we

should praise God for that left hand, which sustains and supports us, which comforts and encourages us, which holds us steady when God puts us on the wheel. How we praise God for this precious hidden left hand, which holds us as God's wheel turns round and as His right hand molds and shapes us; as He perfects that which concerneth us and gets us ready to shine forth in His image.

Let us see and not despise His left hand; let us yield to His right hand though He would use the knife upon us and pour the wine into the wound; for He will then pour in the oil and soothe us; He may wound us, but He will heal us. Our hearts have rejoiced as we have remembered that "He will hold us fast," and this appears to us as unalloyed bliss and joy. Let us not forget, however, that He not only holds us fast and comforts us in trial, but He holds us fast in the fiery furnace, and on the swiftly moving wheel of His purifying and molding processes. How many times we would get out of His hands if He did not hold us fast when He puts us into the purifying furnace, to of which we would take ourselves if it were possible. It is His precious unseen left hand that tenderly holds us still as the dross is being consumed.

When we begin to lay hold of that for which Christ laid hold on us, His embracing brings love and tears of adoration, as we behold our unworthiness, as we see our shortage. We not only behold Him in His beauty, but we see ourselves in our blackness. It is when we enter into the most intimate touch with Him, that He lets us see Him as He is; and only as we see Him as He is, can we see ourselves as we are. Only in this place can we behold that which must be done in us before we shall be like unto Him.

Many of God's children never enter into the relation which is here set forth, for there is a condition and a price to pay which only the chosen few will meet. They have gone into some chambers and think that they have been in the Banqueting House; they have sat at the table of communion and think that it was the Banquet of Wine, the espousal banquet.

The one who will enter in, is that one who will cast himself upon the Lord in utter abandonment, joyfully suffering persecution and keeping step with his Lord. Though his name is cast out as evil and he has despised and rejected as Christ was despised and rejected, he will lie upon the left hand of God's providences and support, and will be passive under the right hand of His loving dealing and caressing. And God will take him into a place which is sacred between him and his Lord. He will not go about and tell others of that which passed in the Banqueting House, it is too sacred.