

THE AGE OF AGES.

THE great theme of scripture is *Christ*. He is the Centre of all the ways of God in relation to man, whether in time or for eternity. Old Testament scripture teems with figures, shadows, and types concerning Him. But in the New Testament the Son appears in holy Manhood, the brightness of God's glory, and the exact expression of His substance (N.T., J.N.D.). Being rejected, He is now glorified at the right hand of God. In Him, Christ Jesus our Lord, is formed the eternal purpose of God; around Him circle all the counsels of divine grace and glory; and He is the appointed Heir who shall administer the coming kingdom (Heb. i. 2).

It is of immense importance for the Christian to enter, in the power of the Spirit, upon *the whole scope* of God's ways in Christ. We are very apt to limit our thoughts as to their fulness and extent, and to confuse things which are distinguished in His Word. The range of Christian blessing revealed by God is *very extensive*. Speaking broadly, there are *at least five orders of blessing* in which He associates us with Christ, for the consummation of which we await as we tread the pathway of faith on earth, viz. : enthronement as a royal priesthood, coupled with association with Christ in the administration of the kingdom; a place in the home circle of the Father's house in perfect communion with the Father and the Son; part in the blessing of the bride whom Christ shall present to Himself glorious; display as the

holy city when the kingdom shall be established in His hand ; and part in the scene of universal righteousness when time shall be no longer, as the church, the tabernacle in which God shall dwell, to all generations of the age of ages (Rev. xxi. 3 ; Eph. iii. 21).

Having glorified God at His first coming as to the whole question of sin, Christ lives at His right hand, the delight of His heart and the object of the faith of men. The Holy Ghost, sent into this world, engages our affections with a heavenly Christ in another world, and teaches us to await His promised return. We wait for God's Son from heaven (1 Thess. i. 10). He is now hidden in the heavens, but we look for His appearing. " For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry " (Heb. ix. 37). Before He is manifested in power and great glory, He will descend into the air with assembling shout, and summon His ransomed ones home. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, His sleeping saints shall be raised, and we which are alive and remain shall be changed (1 Thess. iv. 15, 16) ; we shall be caught up together *to meet Him* (v. 17).

Two spheres of blessing are set forth in scripture as immediately following upon this marvellous event. One is in Rev. iv. 5, the other in John xiv. 1, 2. In the former we find the heaven opened, and the prophet John, in spirit, perceives the throne of God and the glory of Him who sits thereon. Round about are four-and-twenty seats (or thrones) occupied by four-and-twenty elders, who represent, as is pretty generally recognized, the whole company of the heavenly saints in their kingly and priestly

character. The prophet sees them as glorified, crowned, enthroned, and endowed with wisdom and dignity in God's holy presence. It is both precious and instructive to remark that these thrones are occupied by the saints, not only before the seals of the roll of the mysteries, counsels, and judgments of God are broken (Rev. iv. 4), but before even the symbols of judgment are mentioned (v. 5). The saints come not into judgment (John v. 24). The Lord will give grace and glory (Ps. lxxxiv. 11). And this is true in the highest sense of Christians now. We stand in grace, the true grace of God (2 Pet. v. 12). *Glory is ours also (John xvii. 22). So much so, that the last action of God in grace toward us is to glorify us around His throne, ere ever the thought of judgment becomes uppermost in His mind.*

Without pursuing all the details, we find that the glorified saints in Rev. iv. celebrate the worthiness of Him who sits upon the throne in connection with His creatorial power, etc. And in Rev. v., where the Lamb is viewed in the midst of the throne in ascension glory, with all power and wisdom and intelligence (signified by the seven horns and seven eyes), they sing the new song of redemption, rejoicing in the blessing of others of a later day, who are called to share in kingly and priestly blessing (see N.T., J.N.D., Rev. v. 9, 10).

The heavenly saints or elders occupy this privileged position in relation to Christ and the coming kingdom during the beginnings of sorrows and the hour of tribulation on earth,* until the marriage of the Lamb (Rev. xix. 4),[†] which is followed by the appearing of Christ personally

with His saints in judgment (Rev. xix. 11). He will then sit upon His own throne, set in the heavens over the earth (as well as reign in Zion), and the saints shall reign with Him (2 Tim. ii. 12). During the period of His established kingdom, the glorious age to come, when He shall publicly administer all things in heaven and upon earth, the saints shall also sit upon thrones and share with Him in sessional judgment. Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? (1 Cor. vi. 2). Do ye not know that the saints shall judge angels (1 Cor. vi. 3).

On the other hand we have the heavenly home circle. Christ has promised to return for His own (John xiv.), and to receive them *to Himself*; that where He is, there they may be also. Blessed, glorious prospect! He has gone away to prepare a place which we shall share with Him. He has returned to the Father who sent Him, and abides now in His blessed presence. From all eternity the Son *dwelt* in the unity of the Godhead in the bosom of the Father. He came into holy Manhood in a prepared body (yet ever dwelling in His bosom), and declared Him (John i. 18). He glorified the Father on the earth, and finished the work He gave Him to do (John xvii. 4). And He has gone again on high, the risen and ascended Man, into that wondrous sphere of divine affections. He has gone to prepare a place for us in the Father's house. It is there, too, through boundless grace and love, that He will surely bring His loved ones and His own, whom the Father has given to Him (John xvii. 24). It is the home circle of holy love, unsullied light, perfect peace, and untold

joy. There we shall share uninterrupted communion with the Father and the Son for evermore. It will be our abiding and eternal home. We shall be fitted to share it with Christ, His Son, through the exercise of His power. Already the subjects of His blessed work of grace in the soul, we shall then be changed by His mighty power. This body of humiliation, in which we now dwell, shall be fashioned like unto His glorious body (Phil. iii. 21). We shall be clothed with our house which is from heaven.

“ High in the Father’s house above
Our mansion is prepared,
There is the home, the rest we love,
And there our bright reward.”

The third marvellous order of blessing to which we are called in grace, according to the eternal purpose of God, is that of the bride of the Lamb. The Lamb of God, the rejected and holy sufferer, is viewed in the scripture as the Bridegroom. He came out of heaven, and He has gone back into heaven. A heavenly bride, the church, shall share with Him all that is given into His hand. “ He that *hath* the bride is the bridegroom ” (John iii. 29). He “ loved the church, and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church ; not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing : but that it should be holy and without blemish ” (Eph. v. 25, 27). The church (composed of all-time Christians) is the richly blessed object of His heart’s affection. In glorifying God in His finished work, Christ laid the foundation for the

deliverance from Satan and from sin, by the Holy Spirit, of all who were marked out by God in eternity for Himself and His heart's joy, and who form the bride of the Lamb. Christ and the church are one by the Holy Ghost. The angels are learning the manifold wisdom of God in this great secret. So soon as the ways of God in this day of grace are brought to a close, Christ (as we have seen) will claim His saints. Shortly after, and prior to His taking the kingdom and reigning over all, He will present the church to Himself glorious. The marriage of the Lamb will then be consummated. Rev. xix. 6-9 gives us the details of this marvellous event. No human thought can fathom the searchless depth of blessing involved in the glorious destiny of the church as therein set forth. If John, the forerunner of Christ, rejoiced to hear the Bridegroom's voice, who shall describe the joy of the bride when she shall hear it? In that day, presented to Himself glorious, she shall share the joy of eternal union with that all-glorious One, the Christ, our Lord, the Man whom our God delights to honour. The heart of Him who loves us and gave Himself for us can never be satisfied until He has His chosen bride with Him in that marvellous scene of inconceivable joy, to share in all that God has given to Him, the Man after His own heart and of His everlasting purpose.

The glorious union of Christ and the church is elsewhere viewed in the writings of the Apostle Paul as "*the great mystery.*" Nothing whatever is revealed about the church in Old Testament scripture, nor do we find it in the gospels, unless

predicated as a future thing. It was not until God had been glorified in Christ, and Christ had been glorified on high, that the Holy Ghost proceeded from Him, and formed at Pentecost the nucleus of the church as the body and bride of Christ, and as the house of God. Paul was God's chosen vessel to announce this glorious truth. It was hidden in God (Eph. iii. 4-9), not made known in the ages which are passed, but *now* is made manifest to His saints. In this blessed secret of God, now revealed, we learn that the church is composed of all true Christians—all who have the Spirit, by whom also they are one with Christ in glory and with each other on earth—one body, of which He is the living Head on high (Eph. i. 22, 23). So soon as the purpose of God in relation to the church down here shall have been fulfilled, she will be translated by divine power to the heavenly sphere to which she has been called. As the heavenly bride that Christ will present to Himself, she will share with Him an eternity of bliss, and will be displayed with Him during the thousand years of His manifested glory.

Fourthly, Christ, having espoused the church, shall take the inheritance as the appointed Heir of God. All the heavenly saints of the Old Testament, as well as of the New, shall share it with Him. Alone, a stranger on earth, alone and forsaken of God and of men on Calvary, He shall come forth surrounded with the trophies of His splendid victory—a victory wrought not by a display of power, but by being crucified through weakness. He shall make His foes His footstool. He shall sit upon the throne of His glory, crowned

as universal King and Lord. Yea, He shall wield the sceptre over all. His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace (Isa. ix. 6). The kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of Jehovah and His Christ (Rev. xi. 15). God shall head up all things in Him in heaven and in earth (Eph. i. 10). A King (Christ) shall reign in righteousness during a thousand years, and all shall be compelled to submit to His all-powerful and beneficent sway.

In that glorious day the church, the bride, the Lamb's wife, shall descend out of heaven from God as *the holy city*, Jerusalem. Through disobedience Eve, the first bride, conjointly with her husband, Adam, the first man, robbed God of His glory. But the bride of Christ, the second Man, shall reflect His glory in the future, as the vessel of the glory of God. Her light is like unto a stone most precious, even like a jasper stone, clear as crystal. And the "Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." A magnificent description of her glory in that day is found in Rev. xxi. 9-27.

Fifthly, we come to the subject more immediately before us, viz., the universe where righteousness dwells, *where time shall be no longer*, and when everything shall be in harmony with the presence and nature of God. The millennial kingdom, the glorious world (or age) to come, is more or less abundantly treated of throughout scripture, but of the age of ages, when time shall have ceased, comparatively speaking little is said. Still with regard to that wonderful and ever-abiding scene, God has graciously revealed in a few comprehensive

sentences a depth of meaning and blessing of untold moment. Here we have to do with God Himself, the invisible and eternal God, who is a Spirit, love, light, righteous, perfect, matchless in all His ways, the One whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, the high and lofty One whose name is holy, who inhabiteth eternity, outside of all the dispensations of time. His moral ways with man on this earth during the short span of time (between, so to speak, a never-beginning eternity and a never-ending eternity) will have ceased. Having reigned till He hath put all enemies under His feet, Christ shall deliver up the kingdom to the Father. And then the Son shall also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that *God may be all in all*. We are apt to pass lightly over this wondrous statement. Much as we should rejoice that our beloved Lord, the Man of sorrows, the faithful and holy sufferer of Calvary's cross, who was forsaken both by God and men, shall have His rights, and be publicly honoured of all, and that the whole scene, both of heaven and earth, shall be filled with the glory of His name, there remains something still more blessed and wondrous. Evil will still exist during the kingdom, though suppressed by Him who will be all-powerful. A final outbreak of man's wickedness under Satanic leadership will also take place at the close. But having dealt with every foe, either upon the earth or else at the great white throne (the present heaven and earth, the sphere of defilement, fleeing from before His face, and being destroyed by fire), a fresh scene—the new heaven and earth, where sin can never enter, and which is far beyond the

reach of Satan (then receiving the due reward of his deeds in the lake of fire), shall be fashioned by God. There *absolute righteousness shall dwell universally, and God shall be all in all* (1 Cor. xv. 28).

Peter, in the words of the Spirit, writes, "Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, *wherein dwelleth righteousness*" (2 Pet. iii. 13). Isaiah treats of the new heavens and the new earth, but the context clearly shows he is prophesying of the kingdom (Isa. lxvi. 22). Whilst Peter, led by the Holy Ghost now that Christ has died and is risen, and the heart of God towards men has been told out, gives a wider bearing to it. Isaiah treats of *the day of Christ*. Peter looks on beyond, and speaks of *the day of God* (2 Pet. iii. 12).

Rev. xxi. 1-8 is the only scripture where it has pleased God to give us much *detail* of that glorious timeless epoch, the age of ages. Other passages no doubt refer to it, as for example the one we have cited from Peter. Three things in relation to this scene are shown to the Seer at Patmos (ver. 1). Firstly, the heavens and the earth are to have an entirely *new* character.* God makes all things new.

* It is all-important in the study of scripture to notice the different applications of the word "heaven." It is clearly used of different spheres. The firmament is called "heaven" (Gen. i. 8). The *heavens* (i.e. the starry heavens) declare the glory of God (Ps. xix. 1). Christians are viewed as seated in Christ *in heavenly places* (Eph. ii. 6). And we sustain conflict with Satan and his hosts, who occupy that sphere (Eph. vi. 12). They will soon be expelled from it (Rev. xii. 7, 8). Paul was caught up to *the third* heaven (2 Cor. xii. 2). The *heaven of heavens* cannot contain God (2 Chron. vi. 18). In Rev. xxii., of which we here speak, it is the heavens connected with this earth (and this earth) which have passed away, and God fashions entirely new ones.

Secondly, every trace of the scene where Satan and sinful men have wrought such fearful havoc and disorder is to *pass away* for ever. There is a new heaven and earth, where all is in accord with Himself. It is the perfect handiwork of God, a sphere of absolute righteousness, established on the basis of the blessed truth that in the midst of the awful wreck wrought by Satan through the first man, God has been glorified in Christ the second Man, all His holy claims on account of sin and the sinner having been once and for ever met in His death. In this glorious scene all who believe God will have their blessed and never-ending part.

Thirdly, "there was no more sea." It appears from this that the sea, which is necessary for the maintenance of man in his present condition and circumstances, will then have been removed by divine power. We are not told how, but with God all things are possible. He who called it into existence for His own purposes, can as easily remove it. In this new scene the sea has disappeared. No doubt also there is a moral lesson to be learnt from it. In more than one scripture the wicked are compared to the sea (Isa. lvii. 20; Rev. xvii. 15). Man's history has been one of restlessness, turmoil, strife, rage, etc., and the sea is a very fit emblem of it. But in that scene where sin is not, everything will be fixed, stable, abiding, and eternal. This is aptly set forth in the contrast between the solidity of the earth and the restlessness of the sea. We are introduced, therefore, to a wonderful scene, wholly new, and divine in character. All trace of the present order of things

will have gone for ever. Everything will be stamped and characterized by divinely given stability.

Next we read, "And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away" (Rev. xxi. 2-4).

These three verses are inseparably bound up together. What a wondrous theme for our soul's contemplation! First, John in his exile is privileged to see the city (to which we have already referred in speaking of the manifestation of the kingdom) coming down a second time from God out of heaven (or, out of the heaven from God. (N.T., J.N.D.). It is the church again in view. The day of her display in relation to angels, Israel, and the nations will then be over. It will be the delight of Christ to show to all the beauty and glory of His bride, a beauty and glory wholly derived from Himself by the Spirit. She comes forth when time is no more, not merely as *the holy city*, but, like the sphere she is going to occupy in eternity, she will then be designated "*the new Jerusalem*" ("new" is not mentioned in the millennial description, Rev. xxi. 9-27). Heavenly in her character, and divine in her origin, prepared as a bride

adorned for her husband, she will still be clothed with the beauty and adornment which befitted the day of her espousals. What a marvellous range of blessing our God has prepared for His people! As each Christian is now created in righteousness and true holiness (or, holiness of truth, Eph. iv. 24), so the church shall come forth into a scene of righteousness as *the holy city*. The history of the old Jerusalem, with its long and sorrowful past, closes—notwithstanding a thousand years of blessing and privilege—by an awful attack of a host numberless as the sand of the sea, with Satan as their archleader (Rev. xx. 7–10). With it will pass away for ever the present earth; for the earth (probably the whole surface) and the works which are therein, shall be burned up. But the church, the heavenly bride, shall come down as *the new Jerusalem*. From whence shall she proceed? From *heaven*. She is *wholly heavenly*, as well as *holy* and *new*. She is composed of a heavenly people (1 Cor. xv. 48) of those who formed the body of Christ on the old former earth, one with a heavenly Christ in glory, proceeding from Him by the gift of the Holy Ghost, the fulness of Him which filleth all in all (Eph. i. 23). Who brought her into existence? God. Her origin is divine. Divine love created and prepared her to be the bride of Christ, the Lamb. In that scene her bridal adornment for her husband shall be manifest to all. It is a marvellous grouping of blessing! Holiness, newness, a heavenly character all of God, an adorned bride!

The desire of the heart of God for the church

is that this should now shine forth morally in His people. Having created us by divine power, all this is true of us now in Him. We are holy in Him (1 Cor. i. 30). We are a new creation in Him (2 Cor. v. 17). We are heavenly ones (1 Cor. xv. 48). We come from God (John xvii. 16). We are adorned with all the beauty of Christ (Eph. i. 6). And this being true of us in Him, He would have us answer to it practically and experimentally in the power of the Holy Ghost. We should walk in holiness (1 Pet. i. 15, 16); in newness of life (Rom. vi. 4); as a heavenly people, as He walked (1 John ii. 6); with God (Gen. v. 22); and in the sense of our adornment in Christ the Beloved.

Then follows a great voice out of heaven! One can picture the rapt attention of the prophet as he seeks to catch this marvellous communication from the sphere of the presence of God! "Behold!" Whenever we get this word "Behold," it is always to call our attention to something important. It is surely no exception here. "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men." The student of scripture cannot fail to be familiar with the thought of a tabernacle. It was the dwelling-place of God of old in the midst of Israel (Exod. xl. 34). And the church is His tabernacle or dwelling-place in the Spirit in christianity. In the coming age of ages, the tabernacle of God will be *with men*. Following upon ver. 2, we judge that beyond question this description refers to the church, the new Jerusalem, although viewed in another aspect. The church will be God's eternal dwelling-place in relation to *men*. In that

scene all distinctions between Israel and the nations will have ceased. But there will be men on that abiding earth. The question arises naturally, Who will they be? We are not told. But the inference is, after weighing other scriptures, that they are the millennial population redeemed and preserved by God in an unrevealed manner, and found on the new earth, after the destruction by fire of their former home—the heavens and the earth which are now.

Sin having been entirely removed as the result of the death of Christ, who came to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb. ix. 26), all moral distance between God and men shall cease. And His tabernacle, the church—wherein He now already in Spirit dwells (Eph. ii. 22), “is *with men*.” It is an ancient thought of the blessed God, which shall have its perfect and abiding fulfilment in a scene where there is no contrariety, and where all shall for ever redound to His glory and praise. Besides this, it adds, “and He will dwell with them.” Not only His tabernacle is with them, but He who from eternity to eternity is God (Ps. xc. 2, N.T., J.N.D.). *He* will dwell with men. Not with some as now, but with *all*. All distance and estrangement shall have disappeared for ever. The great breach with God made by man will then be perfectly healed. Nearness, communion, peace, and joy will surely be uninterrupted. It is a scene where all that God is will be known and enjoyed without let, and all that Satan is will be for ever excluded, God dwelling with His people. How could there be ought else but perfect bliss, not only in the sphere of the tabernacle, but among

men on the earth. "And they shall be His people." That which distinguished Israel in the history of this world, shall be the future portion of men generally in that world. All shall enjoy His presence and the attendant blessing. "And *God Himself* shall be with them." Mark well, *God Himself*, the triune God, God who is a Spirit, love, light, the Holy One, who inhabiteth eternity, shall be with *them—men*. Wonderful blessedness for the race of beings that God originally created for His own glory, and which has so deeply dishonoured Him through self-will. Though He shall have waited thousands of years in His inscrutable and all-patient ways, in that great age of ages, when time shall be no more, God Himself, who was before all time, shall have the purpose and desire of His heart fulfilled. *God Himself shall be with men.* "Their God." How intensely blessed! *Their God.* The glorious, eternal God, the God of the angelic hosts, the God of creation, the God of Adam, the God of the patriarchs, the God of Israel, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God and Father of Christians. *God Himself* shall be the God of all men in that endless scene of blessedness!

And not only so, but everything which has made the life of fallen men so painful and sorrowful on this present sin-stricken planet—the earth—the world which lieth in the wicked one (1 John v. 19) shall be eternally removed. There shall be no longer a vale of tears, a valley of the shadow of death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain. "God shall wipe away *all tears* from their eyes." Misery will have no place in this universe of bliss. Mourn-

ing and death shall cease for ever; funerals and cremations shall be unknown. Suffering, pain, and languishing on the bed of sickness, in the hospital, or on the battlefield shall be no more. God will surely bring all this to pass. It shall be one long day of bliss, an endless age of joy, where God is all in all. In the blessed energy of love and grace, God will have removed everything which formerly made men unhappy (and "the misery of man is great upon him") (Eccles. viii. 6), and He will then make him supremely happy for evermore, "for the former things are passed away" (Rev. xxi. 4). The things which characterize the present scene, and to which the whole human race is subject, will then have passed away for ever. An entirely new order of things will be introduced, as the next verse clearly shows.

"And he that sat upon the throne, said, Behold, I make all things new." This, we judge, is the all-glorious One of Rev. iv. 2, Whom to look upon was like a jasper and a sardine stone, and whose glory is celebrated by the four living creatures, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come" (v. 8). He is the eternal God, Jehovah, Elohim, Shaddai. The One who called into existence the first creation—the heavens and the earth—and formed and fashioned the earth for the abode of man, shall *make all things new*. Everything will be re-fashioned for His own glory according to an entirely *new order*, after that Satan and his hosts have been cast into the lake of fire, and sin has been finally put away. No foe, no evil, shall ever enter or defile that wondrous scene of blessedness.

There all shall be of God. In the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness, He shall be all in all (2 Pet. iii. 13 ; 1 Cor. xv. 28). "And He said unto me." That is, this all-glorious One said to John two things. First, "Write, for these words are true and faithful." Secondly, "It is done." Then He declares *Who He is*. These words, which we take to refer to the whole of that which we have looked at in this passage, were to be written, that they might be read and enjoyed by God's saints, for they are true and faithful ; the words of Him who cannot lie, and who is faithful to every promise which He has revealed. Hence they are to be relied upon without question, for all must surely be fulfilled. "And He said unto me, *It is done.*" All that God had conceived in His heart of love before worlds were, will then be fully and finally accomplished. It will be established for eternity on the righteous foundation of the work accomplished by His Son at Calvary, which brought infinite glory to His great Name, so that He sums all up in that graphic, simple, and blessed statement, "*It is done.*"

Then follows the repetition of a statement at the commencement of the Revelation of Jesus Christ (Rev. i. 8). "I am Alpha and Omega," with the addition of the words, "the beginning and the end." The One who there was about to do all that follows, is the same who says here when all is accomplished, "It is done." He is before all, and after all, for He is *eternal*. He is the Alpha and the Omega, the A and the Z. Wonderful and inscrutable as are all His ways, He Himself is infinitely greater still. Whether we

cast a glance backward, or forward into eternity, He is there—the Omniscient, the Omnipotent, and the Omnipresent God. He is the Beginning and the End.

This description of this glorious age of ages, and wonderful presentation of Him who is the Source, Author, and Upholder of all, closes with a threefold word of vital and eternal importance addressed to all men. Firstly, a blessed presentation of the Gospel. Secondly, a precious promise to the overcomer. Thirdly, an awful threat to the ungodly.

The Gospel promise is one of the freest, if not the freest, presented to men from the heart of Him who is love. “I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely.” It is not here, “Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely” (Rev. xxii. 17), but as though His blessed heart and eyes were searching the world for thirsty souls, and, so soon as He perceives one, He gives to him that which quenches and satisfies his thirst. He does not invite him to come, or to take, but He Himself brings, as it were, the very fountain of the water of life to his parched lips, and pours in its life-giving streams. “I will give unto him . . . of the fountain.” Could God’s surpassing grace be more free? Alas, that any should neglect or despise such infinite mercy!

The promise to the overcomer is also one of the richest. “He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son” (Rev. xxi. 7). The one who overcomes (or gets the victory) in this world of sin over the power of evil, and lives to God, walking in the Spirit’s power and holiness, in separation from all that

dishonours His holy Name, shall inherit all things (or, these things). This, we judge, is the normal thought for every true Christian. It is not a portion here during the 1,000 years of the reign of the Son of Man. But inheritance of the blessings God shall be all in all, in the age of ages, which has no end. The overcomer inherits all. And, He who is the Alpha and the Omega, adds, "I will be his God, and he shall be My son." Thus, the overcomer is singled out for special privilege and blessing. To an everlasting age God shall be known to him, and enjoyed by him as his God, and he shall enjoy all that is involved in those precious words, "*My son.*"

The threat to the ungodly is one of the most awful contained in the revelation of God. Eight classes are designated as having part in eternal woe. All unconverted men are embraced therein. First on the list are the fearful, *i.e.* the timid, the shrinking, those who never confess or bear testimony for Christ for fear of the consequences. They doubtless know that God is, and that He has spoken to men, but the fear of man which bringeth a snare holds them back from bowing to Him and to His Word. Secondly, the unbelieving. Infidels have always abounded, and they are vastly upon the increase. Thousands even of lifeless professors are throwing over even the form of godliness, and questioning every foundation-truth of Christianity. Next follow three classes of men yielding in different ways to the lusts in their members, continuing in unjudged sin,—abominable (*i.e.* those who make themselves abominable, N.T., J.N.D.), and murderers, and whoremongers.

Then sorcerers and idolaters. The former would include, we judge, those vast classes who give way to dabbling with Satan through evil spirits, witches, necromancers, spirit-mediums, etc. (Deut. xviii. 10, 11). The latter includes all who bow down to and worship idols, whether in the so-called heathen world, or whether within the privileged sphere of enlightened Christendom, where, alas, millions are doing the same thing in a modified, veiled, or falsely Christianized manner. Lastly, "all liars." Mark the word "*all*" is added. It is a searching word, for lying is widely practised, not only in the lands of stocks and stones, but also in the ways and dealings of the religious and commercial world, where Christ is professed to be known. The word is clear, distinct, uncompromising. God says precisely what He means, and means precisely what He says. All such "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death." It is the same lake that was prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. xxv. 41). The passage closes with the words, "which is the second death." Now the fact that there is *the second* death proves unanswerably that *the first* death, the death of the body here, is not the extinction of its inhabitant, as many would have us vainly believe. And as the first death is clearly not a cessation of existence, for man at the outset received breath from the Lord God, and became a living soul, henceforth to live for ever,—neither is the second death. It is the lake of fire, the sphere of torment and misery, for every class of those who live and die in sin and ungodliness. It is a state of moral dark-

ness and separation from God which has no end. It is where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched ; where there is weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth ; a place where men will be filled with awful remorse and wretchedness without hope, the solemn judgment of Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and who, for the glory of His great and holy Name, must have an eternal witness of His absolute holiness and hatred of sin.

It is deeply solemn also to note that this awful threat is made, when time shall be no longer, when the first heaven and the first earth shall have passed away, when every possible refuge has been proved to be vain, and when the offer by God in the freest way of Gospel blessing has been refused, or neglected, or despised by the mass of mankind. It is God's last word to men in view of a never-ending eternity, a most solemn warning from Him who is swift in mercy, and who declares that judgment is His strange work (Isa. xxviii. 21).

In the midst of affliction in this present world, the Christian gets a blessed word of encouragement in view of the invisible world and the glory thereof, in 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18. It should be more correctly rendered, "Our momentary light affliction worketh for us *a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory* ; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen ; for the things which are seen are temporal ; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Who but God Himself could have led the apostle to pen such a marvellous statement ? It is the fruit of His abundant grace (v. 15). The

comparison between the present momentary light affliction and that which it worketh for us in relation to the coming glory exceeds all human apprehension. Not only unsearchable blessing in the age to come awaits His tried ones, but an eternity of inconceivable blessedness in the age of ages, when time shall be no more.

And, lastly, in Ephes. iii., where the apostle bows his knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole (or, every) family in heaven and earth is named, he prays that God's saints may be led into the conscious enjoyment of the magnificent blessings, extending like an ever-widening circle, of which Christ is the Centre. Language fails him when he seeks to describe its fulness and extent. He closes with the marvellous statement, "Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen." (Or, as it should be more correctly rendered, "in the church in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the age of ages. Amen.") Who can search these unfathomable depths? The mightiest intellect is utterly at fault. The most spiritually minded believer finds himself but on the border of blessing inconceivable. He discovers that he has to do with One infinitely greater than himself in thought, word, and deed. One whose might and power surpass exceeding abundantly everything that our lips might ask or our minds conceive. With Him all things are possible! His power is almighty. And it is that power which works in His saints,

and brings them into His assembly in Christ Jesus, in which glory will redound to His all-glorious Name unto all generations of the age of ages (an age distinct from all others, as having no end), and where all is perfection. God is there, inhabiting eternity. The church, composed of saints who were in His purpose ere worlds were, shall be the vessel of His glory in the risen glorious Christ in a scene of untold blessedness to an age of everlasting day.

We cannot close writing on this wondrous theme, every detail of which we would invite our readers to compare carefully with the Word of God, without citing the words of the Apostle Peter, whose thoughts are led on to that scene where righteousness shall no longer reign, as in the Kingdom in display, but *dwell* throughout, "What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness" (2 Pet. iii. 11). "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (2 Pet. iii. 14). And again, "Ye, therefore, beloved, *seeing ye know these things before*, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and for ever. Amen" (2 Pet. iii. 17, 18).

E. H. C.