

Song
of
Solomon

Printed by
Eureka Press Pty. Ltd. South Australia

Song
of
Solomon

ROMANCE FOR ETERNITY

**THE
CHRISTADELPHIAN
EXPOSITOR**



**A VERSE-BY-VERSE EXPOSITION
OF THE SCRIPTURES**

by

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South Australia 5024.

The Characters of the Song

THE BRIDE

She is called the Shulamite (or Shulamith), the feminine form of Solomon, meaning "peaceable" (Ch. 6:13).

She is also given the name of the Beloved (Ch. 5:2), which is from a common root with that of David, and is expressive of the warmth of love.

She is also given the title of sister-spouse to her royal Groom (Ch. 5:1).

She was selected and taken out of Egypt — Ch. 1:9.

She is praised by the Groom (Ch. 6:9), and ultimately by the world (Ch. 6:10).

Numerous titles are given to her throughout the book, each of which provides some aspect of her character and destiny.

THE GROOM

He is called Solomon (peaceable — Ch. 1:1), and also the Beloved, David's name, which is expressive of one who is warm in love, or full of feeling.

Many other titles are given him throughout the book.

His description is given in Ch. 5:10-16, and is summed up in the statement:

"He is altogether lovely; this is my beloved and my friend, O daughters of Jerusalem."

THE MOTHER OF THE BRIDE

She is sympathetic to the courtship (Ch. 3:4), and types the Abrahamic covenant, or Jerusalem from above (Gal. 4:26).

THE DAUGHTERS OF JERUSALEM

These are the attendant virgins, and therefore part of the Bridal party. They relate to individual members of the multitudinous Bride, whilst she represents the whole community.

They are found admiring the Bride; seeing in her their ideal; questioning her; attending on her.

They are warned against artificially stimulating love — Ch. 2:7.

They are invited to behold the King and the Chariot paved with love for themselves — Ch. 3:9-10.

They are instructed to inform the Groom that the Bride is lovesick — Ch. 5:8.

They seek to know the Groom better — Ch. 5:9.

They are anxious that the Groom should come — Ch. 6:1.

They ardently desire the manifestation of the Bride in full glory — Ch. 6:13.

THE DAUGHTERS OF ZION

They watch the Bridal procession as it moves out of the wilderness — Ch. 3:6-11; 8:5.

They represent Israel after the flesh — Isa. 3:16.

QUEENS, CONCUBINES, VIRGINS

The world without, which ultimately is compelled to praise the Bride — Ch. 6:9-10 (cp. Rev. 3:9).

WATCHMEN

They represent those in power.

They have the Bride under inspection (Ch. 3:3); and are found persecuting her — (Ch. 5:7).

THE YOUNG SISTER

She has not yet reached maturity, and evidently types those in the Kingdom who will be honoured if found worthy — (Ch. 8).

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The Bride of Christ

Many beautiful figures are employed in the Scriptures to describe the close and affectionate relationship between Christ and his people, but there is none more beautiful than that of marriage. What is marriage? For an answer we must turn, not to the unhappy alliances which obtain on all hands, but to God's ideal of the institution. God made "male and female" that they twain should be "one flesh" (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:4-5). Where this oneness — this Divinely intended unity — exists, men nourish and cherish their wives, they love them as their own bodies (Eph. 5:28-29). Thus it is, says Paul, with Christ and the Ecclesia. He allowed himself to be cruelly slaughtered for her sake — he now yearns for her well-being, as the Scriptures teach. As we think upon the revealed mystery we feel that we miserably fail in our appreciation of Christ's love, of his deep-down fondness of us — and of the joy which little acts done in his name and for his sake must yield to him. But he doubtless bears with us. He knows well the deadening influences of sin which press so heavily upon all of us. Our deficiencies are not to last for ever. How often should we blush at our callous and unfeeling behaviour, if we did but think, as we should, on this matter! O Lord, "Increase our faith," and forgive our shortcomings. Exaltation to Spirit-nature will right matters. The Kingdom of God will see a perfect (multitudinous) woman as we now behold in Christ a perfect man. Then will come the time for a complete antitype of human marriage, only in the antitype the excellences will exceed the type as the light of the sun exceeds that of the moon.

— A.J.

Foreword

We trust that this verse by verse exposition of the little-understood Song of Solomon may fulfil a need in the Brotherhood, and assist the reader to comprehend better the depth of love that has been manifested by the Lord Jesus Christ towards his Ecclesia; and, at the same time, assist him to reveal a greater measure of the same love towards his Lord and his brethren.

Every verse has been commented upon, but we have endeavoured to limit the extent of exposition, in order that the power of Scripture itself might be emphasised. Our comments could be greatly expanded, but to do so, we feel, would be to drown the beauty of the expressions of the Song in a flood of words.

We suggest that the reader first gain an overall understanding of the Song so that he is equipped for the more detailed study of the verses. Then, by reducing our comments, or extending them by his own individual research, provide the basis for Bible marking. He will find, as he begins to unfold and extend the meaning of the many symbols displayed in the Song, that a thousand exhortations will be presented to his mind.

Among the themes that will help him to that end, are the titles given to the Bride, the description provided of the royal Groom, the wonderful definition of love, the various plants and perfumes found in the garden of spices. All these can excite the mind as to what the Groom would delight to see in us. Each of the symbols can be taken much further than we have attempted to do, for we have merely epitomised the Scriptures upon them.

In our comments, we have indicated who the various speakers are, and the reader will find it to advantage to indicate this in the verses of the Bible. Further, in quoting the Scriptures for comment, we have done so as it is set out in its poetical form in the Revised Version. Unfortunately, the Authorised Version has printed the Song as prose, whereas it should be set out in lines as follows (Ch. 2:7):

*I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem,
by the roes, and by the hinds of the field,
That ye stir not up, nor awake my love,
Till he please.*

It is of great assistance, in emphasising the drama of the Song, to set it out in that fashion, and, again, we suggest that it would be profitable for the reader to mark his Bible so that these lines of poetry are indicated. This could be done by marking where each line concludes.

We are confident that the study of this little book will increase the reader's pleasure in it, and illustrate for him more of the beauty and diversity of the Divine record.

— H. P. MANSFIELD,
August, 1969.

Introduction

Although *The Song of Solomon* has been the subject of numerous magazine articles and short study notes, a complete and detailed exposition of it has been lacking in Christadelphia for some time.

The only works available in printed form in the past, as far as we are aware, have been *The Song of Songs — a meditative commentary*, by C. Helen Attwell, and *Song of Solomon*, by R. W. Ask.

Both writers are now dead awaiting the resurrection, and their books are out of print. Their expositions performed a valuable service in drawing attention to a largely neglected portion of Scripture. It was our pleasure, during the lifetime of Brother Ask, to correspond with him upon this and other themes of the Word, and we found his thoughts always helpful, though we never met him personally. His treatise on the *Song of Solomon* assisted us greatly in the better understanding of this delightful little book.

Seldom have we been so moved by the study of a section of Scripture, as we were by our consideration of the Song of Solomon. Where others have expressed themselves as being repelled by some of its expressions, we have found only the most tender pathos. Once it is recognised that the book is allegorical of Christ and his Bride, it will be acknowledged that the Song is a record of the purest spiritual love expressing the intimate feelings of Christ for his Bride, and the intense love and longing of the true Bride for Christ. With the mind attuned to that interpretation of the Song, its study will be found a most stimulating experience, recording a romance intended to last for eternity, and calculated to purify and improve the mind.

In the introduction to his book, R. W. Ask quoted the words of the Hebraist, Dr. Mason Good, who, commenting upon the translators' choice of words, wrote:

“No translator I have met with has rendered the Song of Solomon with all that delicacy of diction to which the original is fairly entitled. The chief error of all results from their having uniformly given verbal renderings of Hebrew terms and idioms which ought to be translated equivalently — a method by which any language in the world, when interpreted into another, may occasionally convey a meaning altogether different from that intended. The observation applied especially to the organs of the human body. Among the Hebrews the liver (Heb. “kabar”), as well as the heart, was supposed to be the seat of love and delight (Psa. 16:9) ‘My heart is glad and my glory rejoiceth.’ Literally, ‘My heart and my liver rejoiceth.’ Yet who, today, would behold such a translation without a smile, or admit the original fairly translated? Among ourselves the spleen is supposed to be the region of disappointment and melancholy. Were a Jew told that Cowper had long labored under a spleen, he would be ignorant of the meaning. The ancient Hebrews used the term ‘navel’ (chorer) in some such sense as we describe the whole or chief part of the waist; but in our language they are never synonymous expressions.

Whenever the latter is interpreted by the former, instead of adopting the literal term "navel", we should imply "the waist", in its figurative meaning. What would the reader understand by chapter 7:2: 'Thy navel is like a round goblet which wanteth no liquor'? None of our commentators, through missing the real translation, can explain it. By changing the term 'navel' for 'waist', to which the Hebrew word equally applies, and recalling to mind the exquisite elegance of the ancient vases, and the supreme blessing with which they regarded fertility, how obvious is the compliment of the royal Bridegroom in which the idea is conveyed:

*"Thy waist is a well turned goblet,
Replete with the luscious fluid."*

"Thus the Hebrew word, though in its strictest sense is the 'navel', is a term of far more refinement than its English Synonym. It designates other ideas, even independent of the waist, for it also implies a coil, a cord, a string, a musical string, and hence a song, a canticle — in which sense it is employed by Solomon himself as the title of his Songs: these we are considering. Then again, the term 'belly' should be rendered 'bosom'; in other places the frame at large. The word 'thigh' is, by a similar figure, occasionally employed for the limb in general."

We can conclude, therefore, that there is nothing indelicate in the expressions of the Song, even when they are taken in their literal significance. However, it is when their symbolic meaning is discerned, that their true beauty is really appreciated.

The Song records the true Bride's ardent feelings of love for Christ, and his words of admiration and delight in her. By study and meditation upon it, we can learn to appropriate these expressions to ourselves as part of the Lamb's Bride.

To be a member of the Bride is the objective of the Gospel call. Simeon declared "how that God did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for His name" (Acts 15:14). The object of that selection and separation, is to establish a relationship between Yahweh and those chosen; and as a bride becomes related to her husband's father by marriage, so the Ecclesia does to Christ's Father by marriage to the Son. Paul wrote: "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2). The wedding between Christ and his espoused will ultimately take place as described in Revelation 19:7-9: "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready."

John called Jesus the Bridegroom (John 3:29), and Jesus spake of himself as such (Matt. 25:1). Where there is a Bridegroom, there must needs be a Bride. The Song introduces us to both, and reveals the mutual love that exists between them.

The study of *The Song of Solomon*, therefore, can help us to understand our relationship to Christ better, and assist us to become a member of his multitudinous Bride. May the reader be guided in understanding to that end, and may he experience as much pleasure in the study of this little book as it has been our lot to enjoy.

Its Setting & Background

There are five poetical books in the Bible, and both the number and setting of them are significant. As regards the number, five represents grace in Bible numerology, and these five poetical books sing the story of Divine grace; as regards the setting, these books are so placed in the Bible as to set forth five progressive stages of true happiness. This sequence is recognised when the fundamental message of each of the books is set down in order, thus:

- Job** — Blessing through suffering;
- Psalms** — Rejoicing in hope;
- Proverbs** — Practical wisdom for life at present;
- Ecclesiastes** — Seeking the highest good;
- Song of Solomon** — Sweet intimacy of communion with Christ.

These five principles are as steps in a ladder leading to the highest good. Paul taught that entrance into the Kingdom is only through much tribulation, and that is the basic thought of Job, providing the foundation for the other principles set forth in the poetical books.

Concerning background, the Song is a blend of type and allegory.

The type is based upon the brief allusions that are made to Solomon's chief bride: the daughter of Pharaoh. In the song, the Groom likened his Bride to a mare that had been "in Pharaoh's chariot" (Song 1:9). This suggests that she had first been seen in Pharaoh's household in Egypt, and had there been selected by the Groom as his Bride.

Solomon brought his Bride out of Egypt into the Promised Land. She first dwelt in the city of David where the ark rested (1 Kings 9:24; 2 Chron. 8:11), but afterwards the king built a special palace for her exclusive use, in which she dwelt in regal splendour. Its "beams were of cedar and rafters of fir" (Song 1:17), and in design it was similar to the royal palace where Solomon sat to judge the people. The record states:

"Solomon made also an house for Pharaoh's daughter, whom he had taken to wife . . . all were of costly stones . . . and the foundation was of costly stones" (1 Kings 7:8-10).

There is a remarkable similarity between this description, and that of the New Jerusalem, likened to the Lamb's bride.

John wrote:

out of heaven . . . and the foundations of the wall of the city were garnished with all manner of precious stones" (Rev. 21:2,19).

The multitudinous Bride of Christ, like Solomon's chief wife, is taken out of spiritual Egypt, and is invited to inhabit the "house" that the Bridegroom is preparing. He declared:

"In my Father's house are many abiding places; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:2).

Unlike Solomon's other wives (1 Kings 11:1 — mg), nothing derogatory is recorded of this Bride out of Egypt. He married her whilst he was still in favor with Yahweh, and evidently she accepted the hope of Israel, for there is no reference to him ever building a shrine to any Egyptian gods. Some have thought that 2 Chronicles 8:11 reflects adversely upon her, but a closer consideration of it reveals that this is not so. The passage states:

"Solomon brought up the daughter of Pharaoh out of the city of David unto the house that he had built for her: for he said, My wife shall not dwell in the house of David king of Israel, because the places are holy, whereunto the ark of Yahweh hath come."

Apparently she was permitted to dwell in the city of David whilst her own house was being built in the western portion of the city of Jerusalem. Afterwards, however, she removed to her own palace adjacent to that of Solomon. Probably, her original place of abode in the city of David was later required for the Temple worship. Hence the words of Solomon above. They are not directed against Pharaoh's daughter specifically, but against any wife of Solomon, and can be rendered: "No wife of mine shall dwell in the house of David" (see Cambridge Bible, Rotherham, etc.).

It was inappropriate for any wife of Solomon to dwell permanently in the house of David for two reasons: (1) — she should be in Solomon's establishment: (2) — the site of David's house was holy (a) because it was the area to where the ark had been taken; and (b) it was required for the Temple worship.

The sojourn of Pharaoh's daughter in the house of David adjacent to where the ark rested, was but a temporary arrangement, until her own house was built. In a figure it was comparable to the Ecclesia awaiting the establishment of the Kingdom in glory.

Another passage of Scripture, having bearing upon the Song of Solomon, is Proverbs 31. It records instruction that King Lemuel received from his mother concerning the choice of a bride. Lemuel, whose name means "Devoted to El", is identified with Solomon, whose second name means "Beloved of Yah" (2 Sam. 12:25). He was recommended to seek for "a virtuous woman", as a bride, whose qualities would measure up to those listed in the closing verses of the chapter.

Earlier in the Book, warnings are issued against the seductive influence of "strange women" who would draw their dupes away from the Truth (Prov. 6:24; 20:16; 23:27; 27:13). The same word is used in 1 Kings 11:1 to describe Solomon's other wives. Evidently he spake

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from personal experience. The Hebrew word used to describe these “strange women” is *nokkee*, signifying “foreign.” The word relates to foreign women who would introduce their foreign ideas into the Truth, as did Solomon’s wives.

Proverbs also refers to another “strange woman” (see Prov. 2:16; 5:3, 20; 7:5; 22:14; 23:33) who would incite to adultery. The context of these chapters reveals that the adultery is religious more than moral. The Hebrew word is *zuwr* and signifies “to turn aside.” It therefore relates to an apostate Israelitish woman “who forsaketh the guide of her youth, and forgetteth the covenant of her God” (Prov. 2:17).

These “strange women” type apostates within the Ecclesia who turn aside from the things of God.

Proverbs urges us to be on guard against both:

- (1) Outside friendships which lure us away from the Truth.
- (2) Apostate brethren within the Ecclesia who would turn us aside from the Truth.

Both must be avoided.

Among the characteristics admired in the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31 are her integrity (vv. 11-12), industry (vv. 13-15), prudence (vv. 16-18), skill (v. 19), charity (v. 20), wisdom (v. 21), clothing (v. 22), repute (v. 23), self-reliance (v. 24), and kindness (v. 26).

These are qualities that should be developed by both male and female members of Christ’s bride.

The Bride of the Song of Solomon has the qualities of that virtuous woman. Her whole character is summed up in the statement: “Favor (Heb. *chen*, grace of manner, or deportment, which can be assumed in order to hide real feelings) is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth Yahweh, she shall be praised” (Prov. 31:30).

Assuming that Proverbs 31 comprises advice originally given to Solomon regarding the selection of a bride, and that Pharaoh’s daughter became his choice, surely we can conclude that Psalm 45 comprises the hymn composed to celebrate the marriage.

It is, of course, a prophetic Psalm pointing forward to the union of Christ and his Bride in the Age to come: but as with so many similar Psalms, it has a historical background, which appears to be the marriage of Solomon.

The superscription describes it as “*A Song of loves.*” The word “loves” is from the Hebrew *yediyd*, Beloved, which is portion of Solomon’s second name as given in 2 Samuel 12:25: Yedidiah.

The Psalm describes the glory and beauty of the King and his Consort, and addressing the latter, exhorts her in the following words:

“Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father’s house; so shall the king greatly desire thy beauty; for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him!”

These words well fit into the idea of the Queen having come out of Egypt. Moreover, she is also described as a “daughter of a king” (Psa. 45:13 — see Moffatt), which, likewise, agrees with the status of Pharaoh’s daughter in the land of her nativity, whilst in the land of her adoption,

she was the wife of a king.

The expressions of this Psalm are remarkably related to those of the Song of Solomon, and suggest that it is virtually an epitome of the larger book.

The characters described therein are also alike, for besides the King and his Bride, there are the onlookers who praise the glory of the King and the beauty of his Consort (see also Song 3:11), there are virgin companions of the Bride who comprise part of the multitudinous Bridal train (cp. Song 1:3), and there are the nations who submit to the authority and military prowess of the king (cp. Song 3:8).

But, of greatest significance is the fact that the Psalm is undeniably prophetic of Christ.

This is established in the statement addressed to the King: "Thy throne, O God (Elohim) is for ever and ever; the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre" (Psa. 45:6), which is said by Paul to be addressed to the Son (Heb. 1:8-9): "Unto the Son He saith . . ."

The King is praised for his regal glory (v. 2), speech (v. 2), valour (v. 3), prosperity of his reign (v. 4), conquests (v. 5), stability of his rule (v. 6), moral attributes (v. 7), splendor (v. 7), universal approbation (v. 8).

The Bride is praised for her inward virtues (v. 13), outward beauty (v. 13), attire and retinue (v. 14), position and status (vv. 9, 15), her fruitfulness in posterity (v. 16).

The powerful exhortation delivered to her (v. 10, quoted above), epitomises that which the King Messiah desires to see in all of us.

Note the gradation:

- "**Hearken**" — attend to the Word;
- "**Consider**" — apply its principles;
- "**Incline**" — render obedience;
- "**Forget**" — separate yourself;

It is obvious, therefore, that the theme of Christ as the Bridegroom, and the Ecclesia as the Bride, is not unique to the Song of Solomon, but is frequently used throughout Scripture. It is reflected in the advice of Bathsheba to Solomon her son (Prov. 31); it is revealed in the type of Solomon's marriage to his Egyptian Bride (1 Kings 3:1); and it is predicted in the Psalm composed for the occasion of the king's marriage (Psalm 45).

Other Scriptures, dealing with the same theme, are Isaiah 54:5-8; Hosea 2:2; Matt. 9:15, etc.

Some have endeavoured to build up a love story around the allusions found in the Song of Solomon. They represent Solomon as competing with a shepherd for the love of the Shulamite, or else as testing the genuineness of her love by disguising himself as one. But such stories lack a sense of reality, and detract from the beauty of the Song. It is true that the Bride is described as a shepherdess, and keeper of a vineyard, and some have questioned how such expressions can fit the daughter of Pharaoh. But, in fact, these are terms that are applied by

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Scripture to those high in authority. The kings of Israel were considered as shepherds guiding the flock, or as keepers of Yahweh's vineyard. Thus, of David, it is written:

"He chose David also His servant, and took him from the sheepfold: from following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance. So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands" (Psalm 78:70-72).

David's skill in shepherding the flock developed into ability for leading the people placed in his care.

The Bride is given the name of "the Shulamite" (Ch. 6:13), and from this it is claimed that she came from Shunem, and not from Egypt. The word Shulamite, however, is the feminine form of Solomon, and shows that the Bride, having separated herself from Egypt, the land of her nativity, was granted the name of Solomon, thus being completely identified with him.

After all, it is normal for a Bride to bear the name of the Groom. Thus every true son and daughter of Yahweh embraces the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, in anticipation of a complete identification with him in the Kingdom to come.

The Theme

The basic theme of the Song of Songs is that of Divine love, culminating in the glorious union of a spiritual marriage.

Reference to it is found throughout Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation.

The key to the true interpretation of the Song of Solomon is provided in Ch. 4:7 and Ch. 7:10.

The first records the voice of the Groom to the Bride:

*"Thou art all fair my love,
There is no spot in thee".*

These words (see margin) are cited by Paul in Ephesians 5:27, and there applied to Christ as the Bridegroom, and the perfected Ecclesia as the Bride. Paul wrote:

"Christ loved the ecclesia, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing (lit. laver) of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious ecclesia, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."

The Song provides the ideal: a bride all fair, without spot. Paul's comment reveals the means: the cleansing influence of Christ through the Word.

Paul's discourse upon marriage in Ephesians is based upon this ideal. He shows that mutual sacrifice provides the key to a successful union. This requires mutual consideration and devotion; a clear understanding of the spheres of activity of both, with proper respect for each other's labors; and the sacrifice of selfish personal desires for the good of the other, modelled on Christ's pattern of love.

Christ's love for the Ecclesia is the ideal set for husbands. His tender concern is for the well-being of his Bride, who, unfortunately, is frequently found out of step with her husband. Nevertheless, his love is so great that he sacrificed himself that she might be helped. Therefore, Paul wrote:

"Husbands love your wives, even as Christ also loved the ecclesia, and gave himself for it . . ."

Christ gave himself for the Ecclesia that he might sanctify it (set it apart unto himself), and cleanse it, thus smoothing away every spot and wrinkle, so that it might ultimately be presented unto himself, holy and without blemish, "a glorious Ecclesia." The word is from the Greek *endoxos*, and signifies one "held in honor." The Ecclesia will be considered such in the Age to come. A similar expression is applied to the "virtuous woman" in Proverbs 31:28-31.

Christ's sacrificial love is designed to produce a flawless condition in his bride, such as is described in the Song of Solomon. Paul's quotation from it in Ephesians 5:27, provides the key to the whole book: "This is

a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Ecclesia" (Eph. 5:30-32). The Groom is Christ, the Bride is the Ecclesia, and the love described is that created by the Truth.

The second reference that provides a key to the interpretation of the Song is that of Ch. 7:10. In previous songs, the Bride has already confessed her total dedication to her Lord (Ch. 2:16; 6:13); and now, she sums it all up by declaring:

"I am my beloved's and his desire is toward me!"

These words of the Bride link the theme of the Book with the covenant made in Eden. In 2 Cor 11:2, Paul clearly shows that the formation of Eve and her marriage to Adam foreshadowed that of the Ecclesia and its union with Christ.

In *Elpis Israel* (pp. 47-55), Brother Thomas has written upon the subject at length and with power. Adam was placed into "a deep sleep" that out of him might be built up his bride, this foreshadowing the sacrificial death of Christ out of which came the Ecclesia. In Eve, Adam saw a counterpart of himself. That is what is really meant by the expression: "an helpmeet for him." The Hebrew literally signifies "one fit for him", "one to match him", literally, "one as his front." Eve was the feminine counterpart of Adam, so that both fitted the other. She reflected and responded to the feelings of her husband, so that combined they formed a glorious unity.

There has been no other marriage like that one in Eden. Not only was the bride built up from her husband, but both acknowledged a common parentage in God. Only the formation of the Ecclesia out of Christ, and their union in a spiritual marriage, can match and exceed it. The Ecclesia is as the front of Christ, his counterpart, reflecting the attributes of his glorious Divine character. In *The Law of Moses* Brother Roberts writes: "Man is for strength, judgment and achievement; woman is for grace, sympathy and ministration. Between them they form a beautiful unit; 'heirs together of the grace of life'."

There was both unity and equality in Eden before sin made its ugly appearance. The man and the woman were as one, rejoicing together before God. It constituted the honeymoon of humanity, which was brought to an end by the seductive suggestion of the serpent, and its terrible fruit in sin. The unity in Eden was broken, and because the woman was first in the transgression, she was brought into subjection to her husband (1 Tim. 2:12-14).

After the serpent had been told that God would provide a Redeemer who would bruise its head and release man from its power, sentence was pronounced upon the woman:

"I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee" (Gen. 3:16).

The word "desire", Hebrew *teshuwqah*, is the connecting link between the covenant to Eve, and the declaration of the Bride in Song 7:10. The word only occurs three times in Scripture, and in each case,

in a most significant manner. Besides the two references indicated above, it occurs in the following declaration to Cain:

“If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin (a sin offering) lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his (Abel’s) desire, and thou shalt rule over him” (Gen. 4:7).

Notice how this last sentence resembles that spoken to Eve: “Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.”

The Hebrew word for “desire” signifies “a stretching out after”, thus “a longing”, from the root *shuwq*, to run after or over, i.e. to overflow as in water.

But what is the “desire”? With regard to Eve, it was not “for” her husband, but “to” him. It was for something she had lost, but hoped to regain through him. In this context, it obviously referred to the restoration of former privileges that she had enjoyed when there was complete “oneness” between the two. Adam had regarded her as “the woman whom Thou (God) gavest to be with me” (Gen. 3:12). They associated as one, on grounds of equality; but the presumption of Eve had destroyed that. Eve’s desire was for a resumption of the previous state.

Instead of *teshuwqah*, desire, some read *teshewbah*, return. Thus the Concordant translation renders: “By your husband is your restoration, and he shall rule over you.” The LXX and the Syriac also render it as “return.” the LXX has the word *apostrophee*, “a turning of oneself”, “an escape of place of refuge from evil”, “a resource against the want of water, and a means of getting it” (see Liddel & Scott, Greek Lexicon).

All these meanings are most significant. Eve was reminded that her restoration, return, place of refuge, help in need, was subject to her husband, and that he must exercise the rule over her.

Eve, however, was typical of the Bride of Christ, and these words spoken to her have an added significance when related to the Bride. The restoration of the Bride is subject to her husband (Christ), and he must bear rule over her, if she would attain unto it.

What is the restoration?

That unity for which Christ prayed the Father when he declared:

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me, through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father art in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us” (John 17:21).

This expresses the complete union of marriage; that oneness that shall only be experienced when the marriage of the Lamb hath come. For the moment, the Bride is espoused as a “chaste virgin” to Christ, and in this relationship, there is partial restoration. Thus Paul wrote: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28).

This use of the word “desire” seems confirmed beyond all doubt by the reference in Genesis 4:7 — “Unto thee shall be his (Abel’s) desire, and thou shalt rule over him.”

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN EXPOSITOR

Granted that the word “desire” signifies “restoration” and has relation to the complete union that redemption would establish, these words have a deep significance. Cain was the firstborn, and if he did as directed, he would exercise its privileges. These included his status of authority, the double portion of the inheritance and the right of priesthood. Let Cain do well, and Abel’s restoration, or redemption would be subject to the intercession of his brother as priest, and he would bear the rule over him.

The use of *teshuwqah* in this passage shows how significant is its meaning. In the Song, the Bride joyfully confesses that the “desire” of her Lord is towards her. “His restoration is towards me”, doubtless signifies, that she is the one selected for restoration or redemption and that she would be restored to the original “oneness” that once existed before sin entered the world. Genesis 3:16 and 4:7, provide the key to the use of the word in the Song, and the interpretation of the Song itself. Thus, in the marriage described therein, there is seen the climax and consummation of the covenant made to Eve.

Whatever historical background the Song may have, the reference in Ch. 4:7 as interpreted in Ephesians 5:27, and Ch. 7:10 as linked with Genesis 3:16 provide the Key to its true interpretation, and show that the real value of its study rests in seeking out the allegorical meaning of the expressions used.

Analysis

Many Hebraists and commentators have divided the book into 12 songs with a single theme: the love of the King-Messiah for his Bride, and the Bride's adoration of her husband. Others have provided different divisions, though none, as far as we know, have suggested the pattern that we have set out in our analysis.

We believe that the 12 divisions as suggested seem the most natural, and we have followed them. But then emerge problems. There seems to be no proper sequence in the songs. For example, Song 4 refers to the sudden appearance of the Bridegroom, whereas Song 7 proclaims his absence. Again, Song 5 predicts his triumphal procession to Jerusalem, whereas Song 10 contains an impassioned plea for him to come quickly.

In the apparent absence of a planned time sequence, most commentators suggest that the songs are merely expressions of love of the Bride for the Groom and vice versa, without following a particular pattern. This however, is foreign to Scripture.

In fact, the songs do provide a pattern when they are divided into two groups of six. Then Song 1, which speaks of the tender love of the Bride for her Lord, is naturally followed by Song 2 in which the Groom expresses his opinion of the Bride. Song 3 which records the excitement of the Bride at indications of his coming, is followed by Song 4 where she seeks him by night. In this way, each Song builds on the other in sequential order, until, at the end of Song 6, there is commemorated the sweet communion of love.

Then Song 7 commences the process all over again! We have the Bride expressing her love of the Groom, and the Groom praising the Bride for her beauty. We have her (Song 10) ardently pleading for him to come quickly, and then, in the closing song rejoicing in the beautiful union of his presence.

Twelve songs, two divisions of six each, setting forth in sequence the experience of Divine love. Why two divisions? Surely because there are two divisions in the great family of Yahweh: first those selected from Israel after the flesh, and then those out of the Gentiles.

According to this suggested sequence, Song 7 relates to the first advent call, when the proclamation was made to Gentiles to separate themselves as a people for the Name of Yahweh (Acts 15:14). That is the pattern that emerges from the Song of Solomon, and which we have followed in this Analysis.

Romance for Eternity

Introduction v.1

PART ONE: The Bride Selected from Israel

Song 1: The Bride's Ardent Love and Becoming Humility — Ch. 1:2-8

Her Beloved is the centre and incentive of her existence v.2
Her inward doubts of her personal worth vv.3-6
Her longing for his personal assurance of love v.7
An exhortation to her to work and wait for his coming v.8

Song 2: Love's Communion and Self-Sacrificing Devotion — Ch. 1:9-2:7

How the Groom views the Bride vv.9-10
How the virgins seek to beautify her v.11
The consolation of true love vv.12-14
Mutual joy in the communion of love v.15-Ch.2:4
Longing for the marriage vv.5-7

Song 3: Signs of the Groom's Coming — Ch. 2:8-17

The Bride's excitement at signs of his coming vv.8-9
The Groom's encouraging message vv.10-13
The desire of the Groom v.14
Preparations for his coming v.15
The response of the Bride vv.16-17

Song 4: The Groom's Sudden Appearance — Ch. 3:1-5

Seeking him by night vv.1-3
His unexpected advent v.4
Exhortation for the virgins v.5

Song 5: The Splendour of the Marriage — Ch. 3:6-4:7

Triumphal procession to Jerusalem vv.6-10
The glory of the King v.11
The beauty of the Bride Ch. 4:1-7

Song 6: Entering the Inheritance — Ch. 4:8-5:1

Viewing the land v.8
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PART TWO: The Bride Selected from Gentiles

Song 7: The First Advent Call and Espousal of The Bride — Ch. 5:2-6:10

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Song 10: The Bride's Deep Longing and Ardent Desire for the Groom's Return — Chapters 7:10-8:4

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Song 11: The Joy and Communion of True Marriage — Ch. 8:5-7

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Song 12: Love's Labor in the Future — Ch. 8:8-12

Responsibilities of family relationships	vv.8-10
Supervising the inheritance	vv.11-12

Epilogue — Ch. 8:13-14

— Groom's Final Prayer	v.13-14
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PART ONE

The Bride Selected from Israel

(Comprising Songs 1-6)

The first six songs depict the emotions and desires of the Bride found within the compass of Old Testament times. Though the Bridegroom had not then come, he was depicted in the types and shadows of the Law, and became the hope and desire of the faithful. So David said: "I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of Yahweh in the land of the living" (Psa. 27:13). He earnestly sought for the realisation of his great love: the Messiah, who would rescue him from all foes and provide him with a secure inheritance.

That same spirit is felt in Psalm 45, entitled "A Song of Loves". Therein, the Psalmist's heart "overflows with the good theme" of matters concerning the king, who is described as "fairer than the children of men". Then, responding to the spiritual attraction of the Bride, the king would "greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him" (v.11).

The faithful Bride who was "preparing her garments" of glory and beauty in the centuries before the manifestation of the Bridegroom in the personage of the Lord Jesus, would nevertheless, anticipate his appearance and her affections are presented in this first section of the book.

Of such were Simeon and Anna, who were "waiting for the consolation of Israel", and "gave thanks... speaking to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem". They gave expression to the desires of the multitudinous Bride found in the ranks of Israel, and who will join with the Gentile element (Songs 7-12) in the final glorious consummation.

There are six songs in this first section, which commence from the development of the Bride's love, the self-sacrificing of her devotion for him, and the fulfilment of her hopes in the marriage that is yet future, when "all that are in the graves shall hear his voice".

Then those of faithful Israel will be gathered with their Lord and Savior, as those of the Gentile times (Songs 7-12) are likewise, and we shall be united, for Christ will be "our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition... having reconciled both unto God in one body by the cross" (Eph. 2:14-16). The glory of that day, and the anticipation of those that await its manifestation, are beautifully captured in this first section of the Romance for Eternity..

Song One

*The Bride's
Ardent Love
and
Becoming Humility*

Chapter 1:1-8

2. *Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth:
For thy love is better than wine.*
3. *Thine ointments have a goodly fragrance;
Thy name is as ointment poured forth;
Therefore do the virgins love thee.*
4. *Draw me; we will run after thee:
The king hath brought me into his chambers:
We will be glad and rejoice in thee,
We will make mention of thy love more than of wine:
rightly do they love thee.*
5. *I am black, but comely,
O ye daughters of Jerusalem,
As the tents of Kedar,
As the curtains of Solomon.*
6. *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.*
7. *Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth,
Where thou feedest thy flock, where thou makest it to
rest at noon:
For why should I be as one that is veiled
Beside the flocks of thy companions?*
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.*

Song One:

THE BRIDE'S ARDENT LOVE AND BECOMING HUMILITY

The Song commences abruptly with the Bride expressing her desire for the presence of her Lord, and the affectionate salute she expects to receive from him. She does not name him. So absorbing is her love, so much directed to one person, that there is no need to do so. Her love for "Him" is well known, so that all who know her, know of whom she speaks.

This is the ideal attitude adopted by all who form part of the Bride. Christ is for them the only one. All other feelings are subordinate to that love which they extend to him. Their ardent longing is for his presence, and to be received by him with such an affectionate greeting as demonstrates that he accepts them as his.

The words of the Bride are not directed to her Lord, for otherwise she would address him in the second person. They are spoken to the attendant virgins with whom she converses. She speaks to them of the great favor paid her that she should be drawn by his love, and she confesses that she feels completely unworthy of it. They reassure her, pointing out qualities that she possesses but does not realise.

Finally, she turns from them, as though she finds no satisfaction in their assurances, and communes in her heart, seeking the comfort of her absent one (v.7). And from him comes a message speaking comforting words to her heart, and giving her advice as to what she should do during the period of their absence one from the other.

In the allegory, the Bride represents the perfected Ecclesia, and the virgins, the individual members thereof. The Bride deprecates her beauty, for she is conscious of imperfections. The attendant virgins, however, viewing the perfected Bride of whom they hope to form a part, see only her beauty and praise her for it.

How true this is of present circumstances. During the present period of awaiting the arrival of Christ, the Ecclesia is conscious of, and often depressed by, her imperfections. But she should realise that through the influence of her absent Lord

(Eph. 5:25-27), and her own efforts to make herself ready (Rev. 19:7), she shall ultimately be presented as a beautiful Bride "without spot or blemish."

CHAPTER 1

Introduction — v. 1.

This short abrupt verse expresses the importance of the book and introduces the amanuensis. For the real author is the Spirit and not Solomon. He is introduced into the song as typical of a "greater than he" (Matt. 12:42).

VERSE 1

"The Song of Songs" — (Heb. 'shir hashirim'). This expression shows that it is the superlative song of which the book is to treat; the one above every other song. The expression can be compared with such as "King of kings", and "Lord of lords." It is recorded that Solomon composed a thousand and five songs (1 Kings 4:32), but the song of this book excelled them all. Why? Because its theme is the greatest that can engage the attention of anyone. It sings of Love — the Divine love that excelleth all. "Now abideth faith, hope and love", wrote Paul, "but the greatest of these is love." And what is love designed to do? Paul again teaches us: to provide a Bride without spot or blemish fit to be joined unto Christ in marriage union (Ephesians 5:27). The word in the Greek is *agape*. It is a love that stems from Yahweh through His Son, and not from mere fleshly emotion.

It is a Divine feeling, for "love is of God" (1 John 4:7). The Greeks used three words for "love": *eros*, *phileo*, and *agape*. The first never appears in the Bible, the second occurs frequently. But the Bible makes use of an expressive word that is seldom found in Greek literature: *agape*; and uses it of a Divine love that is begotten in men by the Word. See Barclay "N.T. words" p.19; Vine p. 692, Comp. Bible Appendix No. 135.

Her Beloved is the Centre and Incentive of her Existence — v. 2.

The all-absorbing love of the Bride is

centred upon her Beloved, whose presence she desires above all else.

VERSE 2

"Let him kiss me" — It is the Bride speaking, but she does not disclose to whom she is referring. There is no need to do so: because for her there is but one, and she is completely identified with him. All she has to mention is "Him", and instantly the Bridegroom is brought to mind. This complete dedication is suggested by Paul who wrote: "I am jealous over you with Godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2). Her love for her espoused Groom is so all-absorbing that her desires and actions are governed by it. Do we ardently desire the presence of Christ? Is our love for him all-absorbing?

"The kisses of his mouth" — In ancient times, a kiss had far greater meaning than it has today. It was then the token of allegiance (1 Sam. 10:1), compassion, forgiveness and restoration (Luke 15:20), friendship (1 Sam. 20:41), affection (Gen. 45:15; Luke 7:45), love (1 Pet. 5:14), adoration (Hos. 13:2). A kiss is the natural sign of sympathy and affection. Thus Absalom won the hearts of the people by kissing those who came to court to present their suits (2 Sam. 15:5), and in a similar act of perfidy, Judas betrayed his Master with a kiss (Luke 22:47-48). Rightly the Proverbs warns: "Faithful are the wounds of a friend; but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful" (Ch. 27:6).

The Bride particularly desires the kisses of the Groom's mouth. These, of course, are the most intimate and affectionate of kisses; but in Scripture, they mean even more. True and right words are as a kiss of the mouth, and the Bride may well expect such of the Groom (Prov. 24:24-26). In Genesis 41:40, where the A. V. has: "According

to thy word shall all my people be ruled", the Hebrew reads: "Thy mouth shall all my people kiss" (see margin). By this, Joseph was taught that they would render homage and obedience to his words, and his authority would be accepted by them. The kisses the Bride desires, therefore, comprise the "right words" which will proclaim the Groom's acceptance of her (Prov. 24:24-26); and in response, she shall kiss his mouth to indicate that she shall render him homage and obedience (Gen. 41:40).

"For thy love is better than wine" — This is generally interpreted as a continuation of the Bride's comment, though Rotherham, in his translation, suggests that it is a chorus sung by others. The change of the personal pronoun from the third person ("him") to the second person ("thy") would surely imply a different speaker or speakers; and the context would suggest that here we have the voice of the attendant virgins.

They respond: "For thy love is better than wine." This is explanatory of the ardent desire of the Bride for the kisses of the Groom's mouth. The word "love" is in the plural in the Hebrew (see margin), for the Bride is more than one person. She is "the Lamb's wife" and therefore constitutes a multitude in one. There are several different words for "love" in the Song. The one before us now is a translation of the Hebrew *dowd*, from whence comes the name David, or Beloved. It literally signifies *to boil up*, hence *to be troubled, disturbed*. The "love" referred to is not an impersonal, dispassionate liking of one for another, but is a deep affection that really moves one's inner being. The words of the virgins, therefore, explain why the Bride so keenly desires the presence of the Groom and the kisses of his mouth. Moreover, they are reassuring, reminding the Bride that whilst she desires the love of the Groom, he, also, desires her love. "It is better than wine", to him.

Pure wine is refreshing, stimulating and strengthening (Ps. 104:15). In Judges 9:13 it is described as that which

"cheereth God and man." How can wine "cheer God"? Because it is used as the symbol of a new life dedicated unto Him. Wine was liberally used in sacrifice to signify life devoted to His will (Num. 15:5, 7, 10). In like manner the Lord identified his blood poured out with the wine he passed to his disciples.

Wine was obtained by treading the fruit underfoot and extracting the juice. This can be likened to the blood of the grape. But it is the bloom of the fruit, ripened by the sun, that causes wine to ferment. Fermentation is a sign of a new life. It is said that it creates a chemical that prevents it from corrupting, thus it speaks of eternal life. Wine, therefore, requires the action of the sun on the fruit (see Mal. 4:1-2), the humiliation of the fruit (the treading it under foot), and the manifestation of new life by means of fermentation. The spiritual import of all this is obvious.

Her Inward Doubts of Her Personal Worth — Vv. 3-6.

Though desiring the presence of her Beloved, the Bride is full of doubts, magnifying her own imperfections. However, she is reassured by her attendant virgins who see only her beauty. This natural reaction aptly describes the Bride in her present condition: called to a wonderful ideal, but at present impressed with her limitations.

VERSE 3

"Because of the savour of thy good ointment" — The verse has been rendered: "Like the fragrance of thine own sweet perfume is thy name: a liquid perfume poured out." The speakers are the virgins, and they are addressing the Bride. They explain why they have been drawn to her, and they particularly praise the beautiful perfume of her ointment, which, in the next line, they connect with the name she bears.

To what does the ointment refer? There was a special ointment made for the purpose of anointing those things and persons that were to be set apart for Divine use (Exod. 30:23-28). It made holy, or separated for Divine

Love; Beloved

In our note to Ch. 1:2, it is said "There are several different words used for "Love" in the Song. These words have their own special significance, and noting them in the text enhances our understanding. The words, their import and their occurrences are noted below:

Dowd — to boil; figuratively to love. It is a masculine word. Translated 'beloved' in 1:14, 16; 2:3, 8, 9, 10, 16, 17; 4:16; 5:1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 16; 6:1, 2, 3; 7:9, 10, 11, 13; 8:5, 14. With the possible exception of Ch. 7:9 it always refers to the groom (see the note there). Translated 'well-beloved' in 1:13. Translated 'love' in 1:2, 4 (1st); 4:10; 7:12.

Aheb — to have affection. "It implies ardent and vehement inclination of the mind; at the same time tenderness; and fulness of affection." A masculine word. Translated 'love' or 'loveth' in 1:3, 4 (2nd), 7; 3:1, 2, 3, 4.

Ahabah — the feminine form of "aheb". Translated 'love' in 2:4, 5, 7; 3:5, 10; 5:8; 7:6; 8:4, 6, 7.

Rahyah — the feminine form of 'reyah' (see 5:1, 16 — 'friend'); an associate; a companion. Translated 'love' in 1:9, 15; 2:2, 10, 13; 4:1, 7; 5:2; 6:4. (this word occurs elsewhere only in Judges 11:37, where Jephthah's daughter refers to her "fellows")

Machmad — delightful; the object of affection or desire. A masculine word. Translated 'lovely' in 5:16.

use, those upon whom it was poured (Psa. 133:2), reminding them that their sanctification came from above, and that they must seek the guidance of the Spirit to effectively perform their duties. The Spirit-Word performs that function upon believers today, who, in consequence are described as "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling" (Heb. 3:1). John wrote: "Ye have an unction (an anointing) from the Holy One, and ye know all things" (1 John 2:20). Later he described the anointing of the Spirit as "the truth" (1 John 5:6).

In addition to being a sanctifying agent, ointment is likened to the joyful effect of good counsel (Prov. 27:9; Heb. 1:9); it was used for healing and soothing (Isa. 1:6), and some of it was costly to purchase (Matt 26:7). The

application of all this to the Spirit-Word is not difficult to trace.

It was the "savour of the good ointment" of the Bride that attracted the virgins. However, this, of course, would only be apparent when the ointments were poured forth, or used. The savour, or perfume, of the Spirit-Word is apparent in the proclamation and performance of the Truth. "Thanks be unto God", wrote Paul, "which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ.." (2 Cor. 2:14-15). He described the loving ministrations of the brethren of Philippi as "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God" (Phil. 4:18).

Good words and good actions constitute the "savour of the good oint-

ments" of the Bride, and where they are manifested, they draw virgins to her.

"Thy name is as ointment poured forth" — What is the name of the Bride? She has taken on the name of Christ, which brings her into the family of God, so that the name of Yahweh is named upon her (see Acts 15:14; John 17:6,11,26; 1 Thess. 1:1; Prov. 18:10). It is incumbent upon all who stand in that relationship to the Name, that they manifest its attributes (Exod. 34:5-7), so that God is revealed in them. Then the fragrance of that Name is apparent, and others are drawn to it. The Name then becomes more than a word, for it is seen in action, so that it is as "ointment poured forth".

This expression inevitably must call to mind the action of two women who poured forth precious ointment to anoint the Lord whom they loved so much. One was a sinner and the other was a saint. The former in her deep emotion washed the feet of the Lord with her tears, and then anointed them with the precious ointment she had brought. For all her sins, there were qualities in her character far exceeding the cold indifference of the Pharisee, and the result of her action was the forgiveness of her many sins and the promise of salvation through her faith (Luke 7:38-50). The second woman anointed both his head (Matt. 26:7) as a token of his kingly status, and also his feet (John 12:3) as expressive of her humility and submissiveness. She also wiped his feet with her hair, which, as the token of her glory (1 Cor. 11:15), she offered in humble service of her Lord. Her action, which was born of her love and understanding for her Lord, was expressive of her character, and as a result, "the house was filled with the odour of the ointment" (John 12:3). Similar action on the part of the Bride will fill the Ecclesia (Yahweh's house — Heb. 3:6) with the perfume of the Name, drawing others to Him.

"Therefore do the virgins love thee" — Whereas the Bride symbolises the Ecclesia as a whole, the virgins represent the individual members thereof,

forming part of the Bridal party (Matt. 25:5-13). As such they comprise members of both sexes, and they are considered "virgins" because they have not been polluted with the world (Rev. 14:4). They are attracted to the Bride because she represents the ideal to which they are called, and hope to attain. The word "love" is from the Hebrew word *ahab*, "to have affection, desire, breathe after, or long for."

VERSE 4

"Draw me" — The first person, singular number of the pronoun "me" connects these words with the Bride (see v.2), so that it is she who now speaks. She records how powerful is the appeal and influence of the Groom. In his love for her, he has drawn her to him and with extreme delight she has reciprocated his affection. The Bride's words find an echo in Jeremiah 31:3, predicted in relation to Israel: "Yahweh hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee." In spite of all the original imperfections of Israel, the prophet showed that the nation will be ultimately drawn to Yahweh and cleansed of its weaknesses. The Lord, likewise, told the Apostles that "no man can come unto me, except the Father draw him" (John 6:44). The Father draws by enlightening the understanding of disciples, which, in turn, inclines the will and influences the mind towards Him. See Matt. 18:3; John 12:32; 15:16. The "drawing" leads to baptism but its influence must remain in order that the character of the one chosen may conform to that in which Christ delights. The Bride recognises that, and in the appeal "Draw me", she expresses her willingness to follow the example of her husband, the Good Shepherd. We can well contrast Yahweh's actions towards Cain with His invitation to the Bride. Cain was "driven" from the Divine Presence (Gen. 4:14) but, in love, the Bride of Christ is drawn to embrace his principles (cp. Hos. 11:4).

"We will run after thee" — The

plural pronoun denotes that the virgins speak. Recognising the ideal in the Bride, they proclaim their eagerness ("we will run") of seeking to attain unto it. "I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart", declared the Psalmist (Psa. 119:32).

"The King hath brought me into his chambers" — The Bride replies to the virgins, explaining her privileged position, and indicating the direction in which they will have to run to find her. She has been taken into the King's chambers for the purpose of purification prior to marriage (Esther 2:3,12). This is the present position of the Bride of Christ. She has been conducted into the heavenlies in Christ (Eph. 1:3; 2:6), and in this place of privilege, she awaits the return of her Lord, that she might be united with him in marriage (Col. 3:1-4). These "heavenlies" comprise the antitypical Holy and Most Holy places of the Tabernacle and Temple. At the moment, the Bride is in the Holy Place, walking in the light of the seven-branched lampstand, eating the shewbread of the hope of Israel, and attending the golden altar of incense or of prayer. She awaits the time when she will penetrate into the Most Holy, to be clothed upon with immortality, and to be associated with her Lord and King. Her present sojourn in the Holy Place, like that of Esther in the royal palace, is for the purpose of purification (Col. 3:4-10; Eph. 5:26-27).

"We will be glad and rejoice in thee" — This is the attitude of the virgins (believers) as they consider the great joy of their association with the Ecclesia and their consequent relationship to Christ. In this they rejoice (Phil. 4:4). What greater joy is there, even now, than in the pure and elevating associations of the Truth; what greater rejoicing can we experience than that which comes from the contemplation of Yahweh's Word as the Divine revelation unfolds before us. If they truly follow the Bride, the virgins will likewise enter into the King's chambers: "With

gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought; they shall enter into the king's palace" (Psa. 45:15). Let us try to capture something of that joy as we associate with those of like precious faith, and revel in the "joy set before" us (Heb. 12:2).

"We will remember thy love more than wine" — In our comment upon v. 2, we state that wine is refreshing, stimulating and strengthening, cheering God and man. But in comparison to the everlasting love of which the virgins speak, it is extremely shortlived. The effects of wine quickly wear off, but not those of true love, concerning which they now comment. Paul comments that of the three lasting virtues: faith, hope and love, the greatest is love (1 Cor. 13:13). It overcomes all problems, sees beyond all difficulties, and introduces the recipient to a romance that leads to eternity.

"The upright love thee" — It is only the upright who can possibly love the Bride, because her virtues are a reproach to all others. She is despised by the world, and even treated with indifference by some "virgins", for the latter are made up of both wise and unwise (Matt. 25:1-13). Later in the Song (Ch. 5:7), the Bride records that she was derided and persecuted by the world; but was sustained in all her trials by the knowledge of the Groom's unceasing love for her.

VERSE 5

"I am black but comely" — Most commentators attribute this statement to the Bride, but Mason Good divides it up as a statement and comment between the Bride and the attendant virgins. "I am black", laments the Bride. "No, you are comely" reply the virgins. This seems the most natural division, and is sustained by the *Amplified Version* which renders: "I am so black. But you are lovely and pleasant (the ladies assured her)."

The Hebrew word translated "black" ('shakow') signifies brown or swarthy. The Bride feels that the heat of the sun lighting upon her has impaired her beauty. In a typical sense,

the opposition and frustration she has experienced (and which the sun's heat represents — Rev. 7:16), has made her more conscious of sin and mortality, so that she feels unworthy of the praise of the virgins.

The virgins, however, seek to reassure her by rejoicing, "You are comely!" that is, pleasant and lovely. They see beyond her natural state to the perfection of beauty that will result when every blemish is removed, and she stands forth completely purified before her Lord.

A person called to become a member of the multitudinous Bride, is very conscious of his or her imperfections, though at the same time, acknowledging the beauty of the perfected Bride. This is what the words express.

"O ye daughters of Jerusalem, as the tents of Kedar" — The Bride sweeps the reassuring words of the Virgins aside with words that illustrate her opinion. She likens herself to the tents of Kedar, which are made of goats' hair, and become blackened by exposure to the sun. Such tents are ugly, not attractive, and she feels too deeply the failings of the flesh to claim the comeliness which the virgins attribute to her. Kedar was a son of Ishmael, so that his descendants were Arabs (Gen. 25:13). His name signifies "dark" and, by implication, "afflicted." In the allegory of Genesis (see Galatians 4:21-31), Ishmael represents Israel after the flesh, and that could be the reason why the Bride likens herself to Kedar. She has been called to be an Israelite after the spirit, but she confesses that she is conscious of the flesh, and therefore is "as the tents of Kedar." The words of Paul come to mind: "For that which I do, I allow not: for what I would that do I not; but what I hate, that I do" (Rom. 7:15).

"As the curtains of Solomon" — Once more the attendant virgins reply with reassuring words. To them, the Bride is not as the ugly black tents of Kedar, but as the beautiful "curtains of Solomon." The *Amplified Version* again beautifully expresses this

exchange: "I am as dark as the tents of the Bedouin tribe Kedar! like the beautiful curtains of Solomon."

What curtains were they? The same word is used to describe the curtains of the Tabernacle, so that the expression could relate to the hangings between the Holy and Most Holy, with its beautiful and significant embroidery of blue, purple, crimson, white, and the figures of the cherubim inwrought; or it could relate to the tapestry curtains in the palace of Solomon which also would have been inwrought with intricate and beautiful patterns. If the former are referred to, the comparison indicates that the beauty of the Bride is a reflection of Christ's glory; if the latter, then her character is as attractive as the elegantly embroidered tapestries in Solomon's palace. The Bride is described as being arrayed in "raiment of needlework" (Psa. 45:14), which are her "garments of salvation" (Isa. 61:10). They will reflect the skilful workmanship of those responsible for their making, which constitute them "workmen that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Tim. 2:15).

VERSE 6

""Look not upon me, because I am black" — Ignoring the comforting words of the attendant virgins, and doubtless, in reverie, addressing the absent Groom, the Bride again stresses her blemishes, and expresses her prayer that they be overlooked. She pleads that she be not despised because long exposure to the sun has discolored her skin.

"Because the sun has looked upon me" — The burning action of the sun's rays is used as a symbol for opposition and persecution (Psa. 121:5-8), and the Bride feels that this has so left its mark upon her as to impair her beauty. Certainly such trials test us, and reveal our weakness. Job used blackness as a symbol of trouble and persecution (Job 30:30). Jeremiah contrasted the pure, white countenances of the Nazarites, with the dark visages of those who had been subjected to evil (Lam. 4:7-8). As

for the Bride, she is the more conscious of her defects in that regard because she knows that the Groom is "white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand" (Song, 5:10). Later in the Song, the Groom reassures her with a message of love (v.8). To him she is "the fairest among women."

"My mother's children were angry with me" — The most tragic circumstances that the Bride experiences are opposition and malice from those of her own household. It is a common happening with regard to those who embrace the things of Christ. They are often despised and opposed by relations from whom they have been forced to separate for the Truth's sake; whilst, unfortunately, enmity is sometimes manifested even by some of the household of faith towards those who oppose error and apathy. This is in accordance with Christ's warning that a man's foes can be those of one's household (Matt. 10:36), so that "brother shall betray brother to death" (Mark. 13:12).

Christ experienced the same treatment, for "neither did his brethren believe in him" (John 7:5). In fact, they bitterly opposed him, and at a time when enthusiasm for his cause was running high as far as the general public were concerned, they attempted an unwarranted interference, and endeavoured to forcibly put him under constraint (Mark 3:21).

He received this opposition from "his mother's children", though not his Father's. Their action fulfilled the prophecy of Psalm. 69:8: "I am become a stranger unto my brethren, and an alien unto my mother's children. For (because) the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up. . ."

The Bride's experience therefore is similar to that of the Groom, so that they both feel sympathy for the sufferings of the other. She can say: "My mother's children were angry with me" (Song 1:6). She has the assurance, however that those very children will one day be forced to acknowledge her true status. The Groom has promised: "Behold, I will make them of the

synagogue of Satan, which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have loved thee" (Rev. 3:9).

It is significant that in the blessing conferred upon Jacob, Isaac declared that his "mother's sons would bow down to him" (Gen. 27:29). Isaac, of course, thought that he was addressing Esau, whom he considered "his son" (v.5) in contrast to Jacob whom Rebekah acknowledged as "her son" (Gen. 27:6). Isaac was thus induced by circumstances to add a clause to the blessing conferred on Jacob that will yet be a common experience of all true Israelites.

"They made me keeper of the vineyards" — The Bride laments the time she has been forced to spend in labor in the world's vineyards, to the exclusion of work in God's vineyard. To her it has been servitude with drudgery, and so anxious is she to devote her time to work in the vineyard of God that she begrudges the time spent elsewhere. The circumstances in which she finds herself for the moment, however, including the demands that the world makes upon her, force her to labour in avenues that are spiritually unprofitable.

"But mine own vineyard have I not kept" — This does not necessarily mean that she has completely neglected the vineyard of God, here identified as her own, but, rather, that the time spent in the other vineyards has been at the expense of her spiritual interests. It is part of the drama of the Song, that in its concluding lines, the Bride is represented as securing her vineyard at last (Song. 8:12).

Her longing for his Personal Assurance of Love — v. 7.

In his absence the Bride feels desolate and lonely, and constantly seeks the guidance and help of the absent Groom.

VERSE 7

"Tell me, O thou whom my soul loveth" — It is obvious that the Bride is

now addressing the Groom. She is seeking information from him that would re-assure her in his absence.

It is always possible to commune in thought or by letter with one who is absent. But in such cases we are desirous of a reply. With regard to the absent Bridegroom we already have such communication in the Word of Truth. Our doubts can be answered by comparing its lifegiving message, and from its pages we hear the sweet voice of the Groom speaking words of warning rebuke or of assurance to us (Psa. 19:5-11; Song 5:16).

Notice the significant progression in the Bride's several appeals to the Groom: "Kiss me (Ch. 1:2) — the salutation of acceptance and friendship; "draw me" (v.4) — the acknowledgement of authority and willingness to follow the Groom's lead; "tell me" (v.7) — the request for knowledge, by which alone she can develop those characteristics which he would approve of, and in which he delights.

The word for "loveth" in the LXX is *agapao*, which expresses the highest, and most unselfish form of love. It is love that is sacrificial in its manifestation, and originates only from God (1 John 4:7). It is brought into existence through the power of the Word, and manifests itself in outstanding attributes (1 Cor. 13).

"Where thou feedest, and where thou makest thy flock to rest at noon"

— The Groom is a shepherd-king, and he leads his flock to the green pastures of the Word (Psa. 23:2; John 10:27). Moreover, as a good shepherd provides rest and shelter for the flock when the sun stands high, he does likewise, by leading them to Yahweh, for His Name is as a tower, in which the righteous can find shelter (Prov. 18:10). Yahweh is as a Shield and a Shade to the sheep of Christ's flock (Psa. 121:5; 84:11), affording protection and help in time of trouble (cp. John 17:11).

Let those who claim to form part of the Bride seek their food and rest in the pastures and shelter of Yahweh's providing. They will then find refuge from

the trials and burdens of life (symbolised by the sun's heat — Rev. 7:16). The Groom, himself, declared: "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. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt. 11:28-30).

"For why should I be as one that turneth aside" — The margin of the A.V., and the text of the Revised Version, render this "as one that is veiled." This would suggest that the Bride is asking why her identity should remain hidden. This, of course, is the case with the Bride at the moment, for who knows her true identity?

Even Paul, with all his insight into the human mind and character, confessed that he knew it not. He declared: "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are His. And, let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity" (2 Tim. 2:19). In other words, the actual constituents of the multitudinous Bride will not be known until they are revealed at the Judgment Seat. They will be those who are found "walking in the light" (1 John 1:3-7)

The Hebrew word translated "turneth aside", is *atah*, "to wrap it up," and hence the "veiled" of the Revised Version. But it can also signify "to wander blindly." If that meaning is accepted, the Bride in this context expresses her desire for guidance that she wander not blindly among the flocks of Christ's companions, awaiting the time of complete rest.

Why should she wander blindly in the heat of the sun? There is no need for her to do so. She should know where shelter and relief can be found. And yet, in spite of this, the Bride often fails to use resources and information available to her, and so wanders blindly.

"By the flocks of thy companions"

— The flocks of the Groom's companions relate to the separated community of saints in every age and in every clime

that constitute portion of the Bride. Many of these came into existence through the work of the Apostles — Christ's companions (John 17:20). But though they are the companions of the Groom, they are no adequate substitute for him. Only the presence of the Beloved will satisfy. But when will he come? He alone can reveal that and bring about the union of love she desires (Rev. 6:10; Psa. 74:10; Dan. 12:6). The anxiously awaited "day and hour" is hidden (Mark 13:32); therefore, the Bride must patiently await the pleasure of the Groom.

An Exhortation to Her to Work and Wait For His Coming — v. 8

The answer to her question should be self-evident, and with quiet reproach she is urged to do what must be done.

VERSE 8

"If thou know not, O thou fairest among women" — The reply of the Groom holds both reproach and praise. This is indicated more forcibly by Rotherham's rendering: "If thou knowest not of thyself. . ." She should realise of herself where the place of shelter and rest is to be found, for it has been revealed unto her, and there is no need for her to wander blindly. At the same time, the Groom acknowledges that the Bride is the "fairest among women", and by so addressing her, he would seek to allay her feelings, as she confesses her lack of beauty. He uses a term that confirms the opinion of the virgins (ch. 1:4), who praise her in identical language (ch. 5:9).

"Go thy way by the footsteps of the flock" — She is advised to follow the Good Shepherd, as he leads the flock. This answer is similar to that given to

Peter, when he enquired of the Lord what work John should do. Christ replied that this was no concern of Peter's, and that he should devote himself to following the Shepherd. "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me!" (John 21:22). The duty of the Bride (of which Peter forms a part) is to keep with the flock which follows the voice of the Good Shepherd. By so doing she will please the Groom, find ample feed, and enjoy restful shelter until he appears to take her unto himself. "Be followers of me," wrote Paul, "even as I also am of Christ."

"Feed thy kids beside the shepherds' tents" — The Bride (the Ecclesia in every age) is instructed to patiently continue in well-doing, feeding her little ones beside the shepherds' tents. As Moses and David were God-appointed shepherds for Israel, so the Apostles were appointed for Jews and for Gentiles. The Lord himself is the chief shepherd (1 Pet. 5:1-4), and his instructions have been passed on to the flock by the under-shepherds. Christ instructed Peter to "feed his lambs (John 21:15), and the true Bride (or Ecclesia) will be always found beside the tents of the shepherds, hearkening to their counsel, and feeding the young under her care. It is her responsibility to minister the "milk" of the Word as well as "meat". The young must not be neglected because elders find the exposition of first principles tiring and prefer to revel in richer pastures. At the same time, there must be progress and development in the understanding and practice of the Word, evident tokens that neither young nor old are famished (see 1 Pet. 2:2; Heb. 5:12-14).

Song Two

Love's Communion and Self-Sacrificing Devotion

Chapters 1:9 - 2:7

9. *I have compared thee, O my love,
To a steed in Pharaoh's chariots.*
10. *Thy cheeks are comely with plaits of hair,
Thy neck with strings of jewels.*
11. *We will make thee plaits of gold
With studs of silver.*
12. *While the king sat at his table,
My spikenard sent forth its fragrance.*
13. *My beloved is unto me as a bundle of myrrh,
That lieth betwixt my breasts.*
14. *My beloved is unto me as a cluster of henna-flowers
In the vineyards of En-gedi.*
15. *Behold, thou art fair, my love;
Behold, thou art fair;
Thine eyes are as doves.*
16. *Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant:
Also our couch is green.*
17. *The beams of our house are cedars,
And our rafters are firs.*

Chapter 2

1. *I am a rose of Sharon,
A lily of the valleys.*
2. *As a lily among thorns,
So is my love among the daughters.*
3. *As the apple tree among the trees of the wood,
So is my beloved among the sons.
I sat down under his shadow with great delight,
And his fruit was sweet to my taste.*
4. *He brought me to the banqueting house,
And his banner over me was love.*
5. *Stay ye me with raisins; comfort me with apples:
For I am sick of love.*
6. *His left hand is under my head,
And his right hand doth embrace me.*
7. *I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem,
By the roes, and by the hinds of the field,
That ye stir not up, nor awaken love,
Until it please.*

Song Two:

LOVE'S COMMUNION AND SELF-SACRIFICING DEVOTION

In this Song, the Bride communes with her absent Groom, receiving from him messages that assure her of his continued affection. He has chosen her out of Egypt, and praises her for her beauty. (vv. 9-10). The attendant virgins admire her, and proclaim their intention of making for her additional ornaments of grace (v. 11). The Bride responds by explaining what the King means to her as she contemplates him in his glory (vv. 12-14). And this calls forth a mutual exchange of loving messages between the Groom and the Bride (v. 15 — Ch. 2:2), which culminate in a further explanation to the virgins of the benefits of association with him (vv. 3-7).

The ardent expressions of this Song stem from mutual love developed out of deep appreciation of the beauty and virtues of the Bride and Groom. Though he is absent from her, she is with him in spirit, and he is the very centre of her life. She freely confesses that she is love-sick, and, therefore, has little time for anything but her absent Groom. Is that our state? How do we view Christ? What does he mean to us? Is he to us a living reality whom we can love? Or is he merely a name in the Bible, an expression we use in Divine worship?

Whether we realise it or not, Christ is a living manifestation of Divine excellence, of goodness and severity (Rom. 11:22). As Judge, he will return to remove all blemishes from the multitudinous Bride; as Bridegroom, he will take to himself "his wife who hath made herself ready" (Rev. 19:7). To that end, let us draw more closely to him, so that we can enjoy sweet communion with him. Receiving thereby messages of assurance and love, we can learn to express ourselves in terms and actions of adoration as we contemplate the excellence of his character.

How the Groom views the Bride

— Vv. 9-10.

Because of her latent virtues, he chose her out of Egypt, and beautified her with ornaments of grace.

VERSE 9

"I have compared thee, O my love"

— The past tense is used, indicating that she was once associated with Egypt, but has been separated unto him. The word translated "love" is *rahyah*, the feminine form of *reyah*, signifying female friend, associate, companion, lover (see v.15 mg.). The root word is *raha*, to tend a flock,

hence a shepherd. The Bride has those shepherd characteristics that are also among the chief virtues of the Groom. Having thus mutual interests, they are mutually attracted to each other. The Bride is more than "his love", for she is his female friend and associate (see John 15:14-15). Let us develop the virtues of Christ that we might please him.

"To a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots" — The Hebrew word is in the feminine gender, and so Rotherham renders it, "to a mare." Mares were used for riding or for chariots in preference to male horses. They were considered to be swifter and to have greater powers of endurance. A well-bred horse excels in beauty and gracefulness in the animal world, and those in Pharaoh's chariots would be outstanding in that regard. A well-trained horse will respond quickly to the slightest pressure upon the bridle (James 3:2-3, 6-8). "If a man offend (or stumble) not in word, the same is a perfect man and able to bridle the whole body." Christ was the perfect man who completely controlled the tongue. By his influence he is able to strengthen his Bride to respond to the guidance of the Spirit (Phil. 4:13; 1 Thess. 3:12-13).

The horses of Egypt were famed at that time as the best in the world, and Pharaoh's horses were the finest in Egypt. Solomon acquired some of these horses to grace his own stable (1 Kings 10:28), and obtained his chief Bride from Pharaoh's establishment (1 Kings 7:8). It is interesting to learn that the names of both horses and of chariots in the Egyptian language were borrowed from the Semitic, so that though Egyptian, they had some Hebrew characteristics about them. It is suggested that they were first imported into the country by the Hyksos, or shepherd-kings (W. J. Deane). Pharaoh's chariots conferred authority upon the one using them (such as Joseph — Gen. 41:41-43); and were also used for war (Exod. 14:7-8). "A mare in Pharaoh's chariots" thus becomes a symbol of authority, and of military prowess. Being perfectly

trained, and under the complete control of the charioteer, such would be very quickly submissive to his touch and guidance.

Though Rotherham renders the word in the singular, as "mare", the Hebrew word is in the plural. The Revised Version margin renders: "to the steeds" or "to my steed," though in Pharaoh's chariots, the King viewed the "company of mares" as his own, and "bought them with a price" (1 Cor. 6:20). There was only room for two horses in one chariot, speaking of Jew and Gentile. Those mares would form a perfect team, completely co-operating with each other, never out of step. So also, should the Ecclesia be a co-operating body of people, all working as one (see 1 Cor. 5:10; Eph. 4:3; Gal. 2:5), for that is their ultimate destiny if they are to form part of the Bride (John 17:21).

VERSE 10

"Thy cheeks are comely with rows of jewels" — The last two words are in italics in the A. V., indicating that they are not found in the original. The Revised Version renders: "Thy cheeks are comely with plaits of hair." The Bride is thus praised for her long, flowing tresses. Paul describes long hair as both a glory to a woman (1 Cor. 11:15), and also as a symbol of her subjection to the man (v. 7). Long hair was considered a shame to a man. However, under the law when a man took upon himself the Nazarite vow which separated him unto Yahweh (Num. 6:5), he was required to wear his hair long. Why should the Nazarite be expected to do this in view of Paul's comment? Because, in the terms of his vow, the Nazarite had separated himself unto Yahweh, thus acknowledging his subjection to Him, as part of His multitudinous Bride (Isa. 54:5). The true Bride is in "subjection to her husband" and this "meek and quiet spirit" is the adornment in which Yahweh takes pleasure (1 Pet. 3:1-5). As a token of that, wives are expected to be in subjection to their husbands.

The instruction and laws of Yahweh are said to be "an ornament of grace

unto thy head, and chains about thy neck" (Prov. 1:8-9). But they are only so when they are obeyed. Thus: "Keep sound wisdom and discretion; so shall they be life unto thy soul, and grace to thy neck" (Prov. 3:21-22). The submission, of which long hair is a token, will result in life; and the chains about the neck, speak of the ornament of grace. Submission to our espoused husband, even Christ, is essential if we would gain life.

"Thy neck with chains of gold" —

The last two words are in italics in the A. V., indicating that there are no equivalent words in the Hebrew. The R. V. renders "chains of jewels." A chain of gold about the neck was the symbol of authority. Thus one was placed around the neck of Joseph (Gen. 41:42), and one about the neck of Daniel (Dan. 5:29). The Bride exercises authority even now, though it is but a token of the authority that she will wield in the Age to come, when she shall rule with Christ (Rev. 5:9-10).

How the Virgins Seek to Beautify Her — v.11

By contemplation of the Bride's beauty, the virgins are induced to emulate her virtues.

VERSE 11

"We will make thee borders of gold"

— The plural pronoun "we" indicates a different speaker: the attendant virgins. They have heard the voice of the Bridegroom, and promise to add to the jewels that decorate the multitudinous Bride. Thus, in their admiration, they would identify themselves with her. The word "borders" (or "rows" in v.10) is from the Hebrew *torim*, signifying round ornaments that hang down, so that the R. V. renders it as "plaits." Being in the plural, they hang down on both sides of the head. Gold, of course, stands for a tried faith (1 Pet. 1:7), which is an ornament of grace that the virgins must display to be incorporated in the perfected Bride; for, "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6).

"With studs of silver" — Silver is the

metal of redemption. The golden jewels that hang down from the head like plaits of hair, are studded with silver, showing that redemption is associated with faith. It was incumbent upon each Israelite to pay into the Divine treasury, a half shekel of silver (Lev. 5:15) as the price of the ransom for his soul (Exod. 30:12-16). Rich and poor, priest and layman, ruler and slave, had all to give the same amount; all were reduced to the same common level. This was "a memorial unto the children of Israel before Yahweh, to make an atonement" (v. 16), and the silver paid was used in the construction of the Tabernacle which housed the glory of Yahweh (Exod. 38:25-28).

The true atonement was not effected with gold or silver, but through the precious blood of the Lord Jesus (1 Pet. 1:18-20), and it is necessary to put oneself in relation to it, if one would gain the benefits it can confer.

In the Song, these jewels of gold and silver adorn the Bride like plaits of hair. From this we can conclude that the virgins' subjection to the requirements of the Groom will find expression in a tried faith that will consummate in complete redemption. In that way, the attendant virgins, being incorporated into the multitudinous Bride, will provide additional ornaments of grace to beautify her.

The Consolation of True Love — Vv. 12-14.

In highly symbolic terms, and with a message that would encourage the virgins in their resolve to make for her jewels of gold and silver, the Bride explains what the Groom really means to her.

VERSE 12

"While the king sitteth at his table"

— Though the King is absent, the Bride is able to contemplate his glory, and thus bring him into her presence. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name" says the king to members of the multitudinous Bride, "there am I in the midst of them", (Matt. 18:20). The Bride, in speaking to the virgins, expresses the great joy

that she receives from sitting at the table of the King. To sit at a table with another implies fellowship. By spiritual communion she is able to enjoy such with the King, even though he is absent. We do so when we gather around the table of the Lord. At such times, our spiritual life reaches a climax, and the ointment of our life in Christ powerfully diffuses its fragrance. The thought is better expressed in the Revised Version, which presents it in the past tense: "While the king sat at his table. . . ." So long as she was in communion with him, the fragrance of her ointment could be smelt.

"My spikenard sendeth forth the smell thereof" — Spikenard is a very costly ointment (Mark 14:3), derived from a fragrant plant which was used in ancient times for healing and perfume. The word in the Hebrew is derived from a root signifying to glisten and shine (Strong), and as such could well speak of a life devoted to Yahweh (cp. John 17:4). Spikenard was used by Mary to anoint the Lord as an expression of her love for him (John 12:3), and is here symbolic of the Bride's love for the Groom, particularly as it is manifested at the Table of the Lord. It demanded personal sacrifice on the part of Mary to purchase the ointment, for spikenard "was the costliest anointing oil of antiquity, and was sold throughout the Roman Empire, where it fetched a price that put it beyond any but the wealthy" (Bullinger). Mary's act of extravagance on behalf of Christ was condemned by the worldly-minded Judas, but highly commended by her Lord who acknowledged her sacrifice with these significant words: "Truly I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her" (Matt. 26:13).

VERSE 13

"A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me" — The R.S.V. renders this as "a bag of myrrh." The word is derived from the Hebrew *mor* signifying "bitter". It is a fragrant sub-

stance, which formed part of the ingredients in the special anointing oil prepared by Moses (Exodus. 30:23). It was also used as a perfume (Prov. 7:17; Ps. 45:8), and for the purification of women (Est. 2:12). Myrrh, signifying "bitter", points to the bitterness of death. It was among the gifts presented to the infant Jesus (Matt. 2:11), and was used for his anointing at the time of his death (John 19:39-40). It was thus associated with his birth and death, on the principle that he came into the world to die (1 Tim. 1:15).

The Bride speaks of her well-beloved as a "bag of myrrh" unto her. It was the custom of women to place such upon the bosom, the warmth of which drew forth the fullest and richest fragrance. It thus lay close to her heart, where the principles of Christ's sacrificial death should dwell with us; for it will be through the cleansing efficacy of his offering that the final beauty of the Bride will be developed and revealed (Eph. 5:27). If we constantly bring Christ's sacrifice to mind, meditating upon what it means to us, the thoughts generated will find their expression in actions that will send forth a pleasant odour: "An odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God" (Phil. 4:18).

The Bride describes her Groom as her wellbeloved. The word is derived from the Hebrew *dowd* to be agitated, to boil up in warmth. The names David and Yedidiah (Solomon's second name — 2 Sam. 12:25) are built up from the same root, and God testified of His Son Jesus, when he emerged from the waters of baptism: "This is my Son the beloved, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt. 3:17 — see *Diaglott.*)

"He shall lie all night betwixt my breasts" — The personal pronoun "he" should be rendered in the neuter gender, "it". The Revised Version renders: "that shall lie . . ." It is to the bag of myrrh that the Bride is referring, and not to her wellbeloved. Christ's manifestation of love should be ever in our heart that we might emulate it in life. Referring to the law and commandment (obedience to which is an

action of love). Solomon declared: "Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life" (Prov. 6:20-22).

The bag of myrrh is represented as lying between the breasts of the Bride "all night", so that the warmth of her body draws forth the greater fragrance in spite of surrounding coldness. Christ represented the period of his absence from the earth as the time of "night" (John 9:4-5). It is during that period, when there is no visible evidence of his presence, that we need to keep his principles close to us, that by our warmth to them they might give forth the greatest fragrance.

VERSE 14

"My beloved is unto me as a cluster of Camphire" — It is of the greatest significance that the Hebrew word for "camphire" is *kopher*, the same word as is used for "atonement." Instead of "camphire", the Revised Version has "henna flowers." These are a creamy-white flower, noted for their fragrance and beauty, and used for producing a golden dye, as a cosmetic for the hair. The margin of the A.V. has cypress instead of "camphire." The cypress is an evergreen, known also as the "manna tree" because it produces a small, white seed like a coriander.

In v.13, the Beloved is described as a bag of myrrh hidden in the bosom, whereas here he is as a bouquet of henna-flowers, displayed for all to see. We must have Christ in our heart, displayed in our characters, and expressed in our speech.

The three kinds of perfume mentioned by the Bride, set forth in order a symbolic representation of life (spikenard — to glisten, shine), death (Myrrh — bitter), and resurrection to eternal life (white flowers and golden dye of camphire — atonement). All this is expressed in the doctrine of the

atonement. Paul declares that Jesus "was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25).

"In the vineyards of En-gedi" — This is a most expressive symbol. The flowers symbolising the atonement are connected with vineyards in En-gedi! En-gedi is a very beautiful oasis set in the Wilderness of Judea, on the barren, western shores of the Dead Sea. Arid soil and naked rocks characterise this desolate region. But not so at En-gedi, where there is a marked change. The traveller suddenly comes upon orchards and vineyards, with shrubs, trees, and ample verdure, fed by the cool, sparkling waters of the oasis, which cascade as water-falls down the steep cliffs. The cliffs on either side of the ravine contain caves, one of which formed a place of refuge for persecuted David. It was in one of these caves that Saul had the skirt of his robe cut off by David, who was hiding in its innermost recesses. David might have slain his enemy, had he not feared to stretch forth his hand against Yahweh's anointed (1 Sam. 23:29; 24:1-6). En-gedi, therefore, is a place of refreshment and refuge. Together with Englaim, it is mentioned in Ezekiel 47:10 as the site where fishers shall catch fish in the Age to come, from the healed waters of the Dead Sea.

Engedi signifies, *Fountain of a Kid* (Strong). A kid of the goats was used as a sin offering for the people of Israel on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:5), so that the name brings to mind the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus. Particular emphasis, however, is placed upon the vineyards of En-gedi, constituting it a place of refreshment as well as of refuge. Immediately the mind turns to John 15:5, and the Lord's parable of the vineyard: "I am the vine and ye are the branches." Thus refuge, refreshment and redemption are conjured up in the mind by the reference to the "vineyards of En-gedi."

Mutual joy in the Communion of Love
— Vv. 15-Ch. 2:4.

The Bride receives words of praise

from her absent Groom, and returns to him a message of love. She deprecates her worth, but the Groom praises her unique beauty. She speaks to the virgins of the benefits she has received from her associations with the Groom.

VERSE 15

“Behold thou art fair, my love; behold thou art fair” — She had described herself as black (v.5), but he does not see her so. To him she is fair, and made so by his own self-sacrificing love to her need (Eph. 5:27). It is true, that even in human relationships, the experience of love will bring forth a latent beauty in a girl or woman; and it is no less true in spiritual association. The love of Christ can develop beauty of character in those who come under its influence.

Again, the groom describes her as “his love”, or female companion (see margin). Her interests are his, and so there is mutual fellowship developed by their common outlook.

“Thou hast doves’ eyes” — The eyes reveal the inward disposition of the mind. The comparison with the dove reveals the Bride to be mild, harmless, chaste and faithful, for the dove is emblematic of these characteristics (Matt. 10:16).

The dove, or pigeon, was the only bird offered in sacrifice (Lev. 1:14). It was the offering of poverty for the sin offering or the burnt offering, and was offered with a lamb at childbirth (Lev. 14:4,22). The dove was a “clean” bird, but was never eaten by the Jews. Used by Jesus to symbolise harmlessness, in its sacrificial use it set forth the principles of innocence or perfection of character dedicated to Yahweh, thus approximating to the characteristics of the lamb. But, as with sheep, the dove can also act foolishly (Hos. 7:11; Isa. 53:6). In the Song the symbol is applied to the multitudinous Bride of Christ (Ch. 1:15; 2:14; 4:1 5:2; 6:9), whilst in Ch. 5:12, the same expression is used with regard to the Beloved. As the Groom gazes into the eyes of the Bride, he sees his own reflected therein, as in a mirror.

VERSE 16

“Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant” — These are the words of the Bride, as she responds to the praise of the Groom. The beauty of one is the beauty of the other, though the context of the Bride’s comments really expresses the idea, “thou only art fair!” The Beloved is fair in appearance and pleasant in manner. He is fair in character and he is pleasant inasmuch as he is ready to express praise and encouragement where such are warranted or needed (see v.15).

“Also our bed is green” — In the Revised Version, “bed” is rendered as “couch”, a resting place (Heb. 4:10; Matt. 11:28). It is not the nuptial bed, or bridal bower, that is intended, but the home itself as a bowery resting-place. In v.7 the Bride sought information as to the situation of the resting place, but here she is in no doubt about it at all. Moreover, she associates herself completely with the Groom, by speaking of “our” bed.

The Hebrew word for “green” is *rahanan*, signifying according to Dr. Strong, “to be green, verdant, soft, fresh, by analogy, new, and figuratively, prosperous.” This new, prosperous, soft and verdant resting place will be revealed at the second coming of the Lord.

VERSE 17

“The beams of our house are cedar” — In every expression of this delightful little book there is a wealth of meaning. Cedar speaks of the glory of Lebanon with its aromatic smell (Hos. 14:6). The cedar is symbolic of incorruption, as it is said that only accident or vandalism will destroy it. It has never been known to have been attacked by the worm, for there is something in the sap that is death to that creature. There is great expressiveness, therefore, in such statements as Isaiah 65:22: “As the days of a tree are the days of my people.” Trees have been found to be the oldest living creation on the earth.

What constitutes the “house” the Bride is describing? It is a symbol for the Ecclesia, “whose house are we, if

we hold fast the confidence of the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." (Heb. 3:6).

The words of the Bride reveal that she "holds fast her confidence." Her ardent desire is to enter into that "rest that remaineth for the people of God."

"And our rafters of fir" — The margin renders "rafters" as "galleries," whilst Rotherham translates it as "fretted ceiling"; "Our fretted ceiling is Cypress trees." Cypress wood is known for its beauty, strength and fragrance. Blended with cedar wood it speaks of incorruptibility, beauty, strength and fragrance — all suitable expressions to describe the "house" of Yahweh's building, over which the Lord Jesus is established as the firstborn Son.

CHAPTER 2

VERSE 1

"I am the rose of Sharon" — "Sharon" signifies "the plain". The Bride, therefore, who is a model of modesty, confesses once again her unworthiness to be the object of the special attention of the Groom. In her own eyes she is not a specially cultivated flower of the garden, but only a wild rose of the plain. Very beautiful, as all things of Yahweh's creation are as they come from His hand, but nevertheless, very common, growing in profusion.

The Revised Version margin describes the flower as the autumn crocus. The word in the Hebrew is *habazzeleth*. It is derived from a root signifying "to form bulbs", so that complete identity of the flower is impossible. If the crocus is referred to, it is most appropriate, for it is a five-leaved flower, thus emphasising the principle of grace.

"And the lily of the valleys" — The word in the Hebrew is *shoshannah*, derived, according to some, from the numeral six (*shesh*). Thus the emphasis is on the flesh, for six is the number of man (Rev. 13:18). Once again, the Bride is describing a very common wild flower, indistinguishable among its fellows, and claims that this is descriptive

of her state. But she is viewing herself as flesh sees her.

VERSE 2

"As the lily among thorns" — This is the Groom's response. Far from being indistinguishable among all the other wild-flowers, she stands out in his view as a lily among thorns. Thorns and briars are used to describe the sins of the flesh in Hebrews 6:8, but such do not become her, for they are all hidden by the cover provided for her by the Groom.

"So is my love among the daughters" — The word for "love" is the same as is used in previous verses. She is his female friend and companion; sharing his thoughts, hopes, plans, ideals and purpose.

VERSE 3

"As the apple tree among the trees of the wood" — In deep appreciation of his words of grace, the Bride responds by describing what the Groom is to her. He is as a fruit tree, bearing luscious fruit, in contrast to the barren trees of the wood. The Hebrew word *tappuah*, here translated "apple", is used of many types of fruit, including citron, apricot, etc., and here seems to denote the orange which grows particularly well in Israel, and produces excellent fruit. The orange is healthful, fragrant, refreshing and fruitful, and in a spiritual sense Christ is all that to the Bride. The Proverbs refer to "apples of gold in pictures of silver," and provide an excellent and significant description of the Orange (Prov. 25:11). In season, the golden orange, and snow-white blossom appear together, and with the dark green protective leaves, speak of results with the promise of more to come. "Words fitly spoken" are like that; for they give immediate benefit and continue to produce fruit. The Hebrew is: "a word spoken upon his wheels" (see margin), because words are vehicles expressing ideas, and Yahweh's words are the chariot conveying His ideas to the mind of those who are responsive to them (cp. Ezek.

1:12). Christ is as the healthful, fruitful Orange tree to the Bride, providing her with refreshment and nutriment through the "words fitly spoken" that his teaching reveals. It is significant that later in the Song, in a section expressive of the future Age, the Groom reminds the Bride of how he raised her up "under the apple tree" (ch. 8:5).

"So is my beloved among the sons" — He is as unique among others, as the Bride is in comparison with the other flowers of the land.

"I sat down under his shadow with great delight" — In his shadow she found shelter from the sun's heat such as she desired, and was refreshed. What is more refreshing on a hot day than a beautiful orange tree, with its cool, dark-green leaves, its ample shade, and its luscious fruit. Let us, in all times of trial or frustration, seek the refreshment and relief that Christ can provide. The blessings associated therewith are more satisfying and lasting than those offered by the world, though this is not always appreciated as it should be. However, in the future when we shall be in a position to review the past, and properly assess the events of our lives, we will be induced to say: "Thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat" (Isa. 25:4).

"And his fruit was sweet to my taste" — In Ch. 5:16, the mouth (speech) of the Groom is said to be "most sweet." This answers to the fruit of the Orange tree, and surely can relate to his teaching. "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psa. 119:103). When rightly viewed those "sweet words" include even words of warning and rebuke (see Psalm 19:8-14), because they are ever designed to instruct, upbuild and help. The Bride has "tasted that the Lord is gracious" (1 Pet. 2:3), and she needs to continue with the diet from the Orange Tree under whose shade she shelters from the burning heat.

The verse before us has expressed five wonderful features of Divine grace. The Bride has declared:

"I sat down" — She has a place of

rest: "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden. . ." (Matt. 11:28).

"Under his shadow" — She has a place of shelter: "Dwelling in the secret place of the most High; abiding under the shadow of the Almighty" (Psa. 91:1).

"With great delight" — She has a place of joy: "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory" (1 Pet. 1:8).

"And his fruit" — She has a place of nourishment: "Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things" (Psa. 103:5).

"Is sweet to my taste" — She has a place of refreshment: "Sweeter also than honey" (Psa. 19:9-10).

VERSE 4

"He brought me to the banqueting house" — the Hebrew is *Beth-hakkerim*, the house of the vineyard or the house of wine. The symbol is used of Israel (Ezekiel 15), but is also appropriated by the Lord Jesus who described himself as the true vine, and the disciples as the branches (John 15:1). Ezekiel shows that the vine is only useful for fruit, and is destroyed if it does not produce grapes in sufficient quantity (v.4). Here is the challenge that faces every believer. He or she has been brought to the house of the vineyard and it is their bounden duty to produce fruit to the glory of the husbandman. And even a fruitbearing branch will be pruned in order that it might produce better fruit (John 15:2) It is the Word that prunes, so Christ declared: "Ye are clean (similar word to "purgeth" or "pruneth") through the word which I have spoken unto you." When that Word is assimilated into the mind, and applied in action, it will purify character, and so the Bride will be brought to perfection (Eph. 5:26).

In Esther 5:4,6,12, the banqueting house is shown as the house of favor. Haman thought it a great honor to be invited there, but found to his dread that for him it was a "savor of death unto death." The Bride has been invited into a position of favor with the Groom, so, figuratively, she is in the banqueting house, as the Israel of God (Gal. 6:16).

“And his banner over me was love” — Rotherham renders the verb in the present tense: “is love” and represents a banner with which marching soldiers would identify themselves. Believers have given themselves to a new allegiance in Christ Jesus; one that has come into existence through the love he manifested at his first advent. It is revealed in their lives, inasmuch as they are called into his service (Acts 15:14). The word for “love” is *ahabah* and signifies “affection”. Identification with that banner ensures access to the Throne of grace in prayer. Hence David wrote: “We will rejoice in Thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners: Yahweh fulfil all thy petitions” (Ps. 20:4-6).

Longing for the Marriage — Vv.5-7.

The love that she has already experienced from the Groom causes the Bride to long for the marriage that will unite them completely and for ever. Meanwhile, so deeply does she feel the absence of her Beloved, that her heart aches for his presence, and she feels depressed and ill.

VERSE 5

“Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples” — She feels sick with longing and needs food to sustain her. But what are the “flagons” that she craves? The Hebrew word is *ashishah*, which Strong defines as something pressed together. The Revised Version margin renders it as “cakes of raisins” i.e., the fruit of her labour in the Lord’s vineyard. Such will “stay” or “sustain” her. The apples, or oranges, that alone can comfort her, are the fruit of the tree under whose shadow she rests. The words of Scripture provide the only true medium of sound comfort.

“For I am sick of love” — The Bride confesses that she is lovesick through longing. The R.V. renders: “I am sick through love”. The word for love is *ahabah*, as in v. 4, and signifies “affection”. It is thus an emotional love engendered by the Word. She feels this affection for her absent Beloved because she knows him (John 17:3);

whereas those who “know him not” (even though they claim to be believers), are not over-anxious for his coming.

This affection for Christ needs to be developed, and it can be by study of the Word, and reflecting upon the beautiful character and compelling personality of its chief hero (Ch. 5:10). Make him a reality, and we will desire him more; see the world about us through the eyes of the Word, and we will desire its end. Christ comes for those “who look for him” (Heb. 9:28), who “love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8). This is a challenge to us today, when the material things of life demand so much of our attention, that our eyes can easily be deflected from the Lord.

The faithful have expressed themselves frequently in terms that show they are sick with longing for the Groom. The Psalmist declared: “My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of Yahweh: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God” (Psa. 84:2). “I had fainted”, wrote David, “unless I had believed to see the goodness of Yahweh in the land of the living” (Psa. 84:2). See also 2 Cor. 4:18; 5:2; Rom. 8:19, etc.

VERSE 6

“His left hand is under my head” — This is a beautiful picture of anticipation. The Bride looks forward to the time when her weary pilgrimage will be at an end, and she shall be united with her Beloved. The R.V. margin turns this into a petition: “Let his left hand be under my head.” The request is significant, for his left hand holds her head in an embrace of endearment. The head is the seat of intelligence, and the wisdom of the Bride is God-given. Even now the head of the Bride can be assisted in that fashion. James exhorts that if any lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all liberally; and it shall be given him (James 1:5). In that way the head is supported by the Groom.

“And his right hand doth embrace me” — The fulfilment of the first request provides comfort for the Bride.

as her head rests trustingly upon the Lord, supported by his hand; the fulfilment of the second request will give her confidence in the security she will experience in the sheltering, loving arms of the Groom.

The "right hand" is the symbol of power (Exod. 15:6; Isa. 63:11-14; Psalm 80:17; 118:15; Psa. 110:1). Content in his love, supported by his left hand, and embraced by his right hand, the Bride will recover from her sickness. Meanwhile, we can rest confidently in the assurance that we can reach forth to the love of Christ even now. Already, we can experience the comfort of his word, and the confidence that comes from resting in him. Paul expresses it in Romans 8:31-39, and he summarises his thought by declaring that nothing is "able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Nothing, that is, except our own folly.

VERSE 7

"I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem" — The bride has been speaking concerning her Beloved; now she directly addresses the attendant virgins.

"By the roes and by the hinds of the field" — The roe is the gazelle. Together with the hind, or female deer, they are noted for beauty and speed. Moreover, they are very sensitive to sound, and very elusive. In v. 9, the Beloved is likened to the roe and hart, and therefore the charge is delivered in his name.

"That ye stir not up, nor awake my love" — The personal pronoun *my* is in italics which shows that there is no

equivalent word in the Hebrew. If it is eliminated, it removes the personal aspect of the charge. The virgins are then instructed not to artificially stimulate love by its emotional, evangelical meetings, and its appeal to feeling in the absence of the Word. Revival meetings provide a typical example of this dangerous kind of religion. The excitation of the mind under the influence of rousing music, and a magnetic personality, is but temporary, and soon the recipient lapses back into a more complete state of indifference to the requirements of God than was his original condition. It is this form of emotional religion which the virgins are warned against.

"Till he please" — The R. V. margin provides the neuter gender: "till it please". Love must be spontaneous and unfettered as the deer upon the hills; thus the terms of the charge laid upon the virgins. It will be drawn out by the beauty of the Bridegroom, and the excellence of his attributes. The Word of God is capable of fostering it; and from it alone will true love come. The warning to the virgins is an important one, and much harm has resulted in Ecclesial life because it has been ignored. Brethren have thought that love can be stimulated by artificial means, and so a shortlived infatuation for Christ has been developed in some, with the sad result that those affected eventually leave the Truth altogether.

As the Bride contemplated the benefits in the Beloved, considered the happiness of true love, and anticipated the joy of the future union, she warned the virgins against artificial stimulation of love.

The blessings of the Truth, as they are experienced now, develop the love of Christ and of God, which then needs no artificial stimulation. Among these blessings (Rev. 1:3) is the prophetic Word, which furnishes those who are waiting on God with great leading signmarks by which they may recognise His hand at work, and be cheered by a knowledge of their whereabouts in the working out of His purpose, His great promised work of goodness.

Song Three

Signs of His Coming

Chapter 2:8-17

8. *The voice of my beloved! behold, he cometh,
Leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the
hills.*
9. *My beloved is like a roe or a young hart:
Behold, he standeth behind our wall,
He looketh in at the windows,
He sheweth himself through the lattice.*
10. *My beloved spake, and said unto me,
Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.*
11. *For, lo, the winter is past,
the rain is over and gone;*
12. *The flowers appear on the earth;
The time of the singing of birds is come,
And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land;*
13. *The fig tree ripeneth her green figs,
And the vines are in blossom,
They give forth their fragrance.
Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.*
14. *O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the
covert of the steep place,
Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice;
For sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is
comely.*
15. *Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the
vineyards;
For our vineyards are in blossom.*
16. *My beloved is mine, and I am his:
He feedeth his flock among the lilies.*
17. *Until the day be cool, and the shadows flee away,
Turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young
hart.
Upon the mountains of Bether.*

Song Three:

SIGNS OF THE GROOM'S COMING

There is a rising tempo in this Song, as the Bride describes her excitement at indications of the coming of her Beloved. In her great joy, she forgets the doubts that she has been expressing earlier, and we hear no more of her being "black", or as being a mere wild flower of the valley. Instead, she proclaims: "My beloved is mine, and I am his!"

She recalls a message of love that she received from him, inviting her to make ready, and to come away.

In beautiful words, borrowed from nature's indications of approaching Spring (vv. 11-14) but now given a spiritual significance, the Bridegroom draws attention to signs that should be expected. These together with the message of the Beloved, emphasise the need for personal preparation for the occasion of his appearing, and with such an exhortation (v.15), followed by a prayer that he come quickly (v. 17) the Song closes.

The Bride's Excitement at Signs of the Groom's Coming — Vv.8-9.

She hears the sound of his approach, and sees indications of his coming.

VERSE 8

"The voice of my beloved! Behold, he cometh" — These words of the Bride can literally be rendered: "Hark! my beloved! Look! He comes!" It is not the voice, but the approach of the Bridegroom that she hears. This rising excitement should be ours today, as we hear the signs that tell of his approach, and see events taking place that proclaim he is coming.

"Leaping upon the mountains, skipping upon the hills" — The expressions of this line are in accordance with the description given of the Beloved in v.9. He is likened to a "roe or a young hart." "Leaping" and "skipping" imply speed, and their use in the context above indicates that he is coming quickly. He is seen upon the mountains and hills, indicating that the signs of his approach are clearly discernible to all who are watching. "Mountains" and

"hills" are used figuratively in the prophetic Scriptures for empires and nations (e.g., Isa. 2:2, 14), and here could well represent the signs that are seen in such today.

VERSE 9

"My beloved is like a roe or a young hart" — These animals are greatly admired for their grace, beauty, gentleness, fleetness, and sure-footedness. They were clean animals, and good for food (Deut. 12:15). In Psalm 42:1 they are used to typify the Godly man whose soul pants after God, as the hart does after the water brooks. In Isaiah 35:6, a spiritually-sound man is likened to an hart in its agility. In 2 Samuel 22:34 these expressions are applied to Christ himself. In Proverbs 5:19, the hind and roe are described as "loving" and "pleasant," terms that in the Song, are attributed to the Beloved. Etymologically, the two words are derived from significant roots. The Hebrew word for roe" comes from a root signifying to "amass", such as a multitude for war;

“hart” is derived from a variation of *El*, signifying “power” or “might” (Strong).

The fleetness of foot which characterises the roe is used in Scripture in describing those who were fleet in pursuing the enemy in war (2 Sam. 2:18; 1 Chron. 12:8), whilst the surefootedness of the hind is used to describe those who will surmount every difficulty, and ascend to high places, to rule over others (Hab. 3:19).

All the allusions to these animals are fitting descriptions of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Beloved. He is known for his grace, beauty, gentleness; he will yet be known for his speed in pursuing the enemy in war, and for his elevation to power over the nations. He is Godly, spiritually-sound, loving and pleasant. He will amass a large company of people whom he will organise for war against the enemy (Psa. 149), and he will manifest the power of Yahweh in subduing his adversaries.

Though all these features characterise the roe or hart, and have their application to Christ, the Bride is more concerned in this Song with their proverbial shyness, fleetness of foot, and elusiveness. The slightest suspicious noise, and they are gone; and with a fleetness of foot that is hard to match.

The natural habitat of these animals is in the mountains of Israel, and, significantly, it is in that vicinity that the main signs of Christ’s coming are seen today.

“Behold, he standeth behind our wall” — The Bride represents herself as being inside a house (a fitting analogy of her present position — Heb. 3:6), when she hears the sound of her Beloved’s approach. It originates from outside, behind the wall, and consequently from the world. It is from there that we “hear” developments and activities that tell of Christ’s coming.

“He looketh forth at the windows” — The R.V. alters this to “looketh in” at the windows. The analogy of Christ as a roe or hart is maintained, and he is represented as shyly manifesting himself from a distance. In Revelation

16:15, Christ declares: “Behold I come as a thief...” In another place (Rev. 3:20), he is represented as “knocking at the door”; here as “looking in at the windows”. Signs of Christ’s coming are common throughout the world today, and as he is coming primarily for the saints (Heb. 9:28), he can be aptly described as “looking in at the windows.”

“Shewing himself through the lattice” — From inside the house, the Bride indistinctly sees the approach of her Beloved. He is revealed “through the lattice.” In ancient times, windows were not covered with glass, but were filled in with open lattice work. The allegory presented in this Song, therefore, is that of the Beloved and the Bride lovingly looking at each other, though for a time separated. She hears signs of his approach, and can dimly perceive his outline through the lattice. With rising excitement, she recalls a message he had left for her, giving her instructions for such an occasion. Those instructions of course have application to us today, as we hearken to the signs of the times, and discern indications of the Lord’s coming.

The Groom’s Encouraging Message — vv. 10-13.

In view of the signs of the coming of the Groom, the Bride recalls a message he had previously left, and which now engages her earnest consideration.

VERSE 10

“My beloved spake, and said unto me” — The Bride in describing her experience, recalls a revelation she received from the Groom.

“Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away” — This is a message of endearment and encouragement. It is similar to the words of Christ, given in the context of a description of the signs of the times: “When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh” (Luke 21:28). In the Song, the Bride is described as “my love.” The epithet signifies, “my female friend” which is the very ex-

pression Jesus used to describe the Apostles. He declared that they were his "friends" if they did "whatsoever I command you", and then went on to describe some of the benefits of friendship. Amongst these is the privilege of being well informed as to the master's plans and intentions. Christ gave these revelations to the Apostles, and they, in turn, have passed them on for the benefit of all believers (see John 15:13-15; Rev. 1:1). Knowing the ultimate purpose of God in Christ, they should make preparation to "come away", or to be taken to the place of judgment (Isa. 26:20; 1 Thess 4:17; 2 Thess 1:7). As we hear and see signs of the approach of the Beloved today, we need to heed his message. He comes as a thief, looking in at the windows, anxious to see if his Bride is ready and waiting to receive him. To that end, he has dictated to her a message which should alert her to urgent requirements (see Rev. 1:3; 22:7, 12). Let us heed that message, recognising that in it, the Beloved has spoken and addresses us: "He that hath an ear, let him hear..."

VERSE 11

"For lo, the winter is past" — It is the time of spring, when "the earth bringeth forth her bud" (Isa. 61:11) or when the resurrection will take place.

"The rain is over and gone" — The time of harvest is almost come. At such a time, the Passover is held, commemorating the redemptive deliverance. The Passover was the first of the main feasts appointed by Yahweh. It is significant, that all these feasts (Lev. 23) took place in the Spring and Summer, and occurred during the time when the harvest was brought in. Thus Passover was celebrated at the time of the beginning of harvest, and Tabernacles at its completion (Lev. 23:10, 39). The harvest, of course, points to the work of redemption that Christ will yet effect in the earth.

VERSE 12

"The flowers appear on the earth" — This is prompted by the warmth of

the sun's rays which causes plants to push their way through the soil, whether they be flowers or noxious weeds. Brother Thomas has some excellent remarks to make upon this theme in *Eureka*, vol. 3, pp. 536-539. Writing concerning the rising of the Sun of righteousness (Mal. 4:2), he declares:

"The wings of the sun are his rays or beams. It is with these potent radiations that he causes things to spring forth from the earth. But, all he causes to spring forth are not good risings. Some are very noxious, poisonous weeds, which are not healed of their evil qualities by the brightness of his shining. Hence, his natural risings are some good and some bad, according to the seeds in embryo. Nor do the best and choicest of his risings spring forth in their perfection. They spring forth with bodies altogether unlike the bodies they will be, when clothed in the brilliance of their flowering glories. When they spring forth, these risings of the sun are only distinguishable from weeds by a well-practised observer. As Paul indicates, they spring forth 'not that body that shall be...but the Deity giveth a body that pleaseth Him, and to every seed his own body'".

The flowers reveal the identity and character of the plant, and so it will be with the saints, whose glory or otherwise, will be manifested at the spring time of Yahweh's purpose.

"The time of the singing of birds is come" — The words "of birds" are in italics, and should be eliminated. It is the time of singing, when all the "new songs" of the Scriptures will be in the mouths of the redeemed (e.g. Psa. 96:1); when they will sing with greatest enthusiasm: "Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9-10; 14:3, etc.). And as the Bridegroom will extend his influence throughout the world, and bring to men everywhere the benefits of his glorious reign, all nations will raise their voices in singing his praises

(Rev. 5:13). It will be the time of singing for all humanity.

“And the voice of the turtle is heard in our land” — Notice the graciousness of the Beloved. It is “our” land to which he makes reference; the land promised to Abraham and his seed for an everlasting possession (Genesis 13:15). The Groom shares it with his Bride; he arranges that both their names should be inscribed upon the titledeeds, so that they have a common inheritance.

At what time is the cooing noise of the turtle dove to be heard? They unfaithfully return to the Land every spring, about the beginning of April (the period of the Passover). Jeremiah declares that turtledoves observe “the time of their coming” (Jer. 8:7), and it will be at the “set time to favour Zion” that the Bridegroom will appear in the glory of his Father (Psa. 102:13,16).

The dove is used in Scripture as a symbol for Israel. The Lord was the ideal Israelite (Isa. 49:3-6), and therefore at his baptism he was anointed with the Holy Spirit “in the form of a dove” (Matt. 3:16). He taught that the great sign of his Messiahship was the sign of Jonah. The experience of that prophet foreshadowed the ministry of the Lord, and his name Jonah, or Yonah, is the Hebrew word for dove.

VERSE 13

“The fig tree putteth forth her green figs” — The fig tree is a common symbol of Israel (Jer. 24:8; 29:17; Joel 1:7). As such it was used by the Lord, who called upon his followers to behold the development of Israel, as a significant sign of the times (Matt. 24:32). In Israel, there are cultivated two varieties of figs: one early and the other late. The fruit of the latter remains on the tree throughout winter, until the spring, when it ripens. Thus, the R.V., instead of reading “putteth forth” has “ripeneth.” The word is derived from the Hebrew *chanetah*, to spice, from a verb meaning “to redden.” The ripening of these green figs, that have hung on the tree all through winter, is an indication of spring.

“And the vines with the tender grape” — The R.V. renders: “The vines are in blossom.” This is another indication of spring. Like the fig tree the vine is frequently used as a symbol of Israel. But, whilst the fig tree signifies national development, the vine speaks of the nation’s spiritual condition (Isa. 5:1-7). Israel will not only develop nationally, but will be changed spiritually.

“Give a good smell” — The R.V. renders: “They give forth their fragrance.” This is a further indication of approaching harvest: this time in spiritual conditions, when the grapes “are fully ripe” (Rev. 14:18).

“Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away” — This second invitation by the Bridegroom (cp. v.10) completes the message that the Bride had earlier received from him. Why is the invitation doubled? Possibly the first one is a call to separate from the world in precept and practice, in preparation for his coming; and the second one indicates the physical withdrawal that shall take place when the saints are brought before the Judgment seat at the Groom’s coming. If so, the message of the Groom contains eight major points:

1. “Come away” — Withdraw from the world.
2. “Winter is past” — The bleakness of trial has ceased.
3. “Rain is over and gone” — The Sun of righteousness is manifested.
4. “Flowers appear” — Resurrection and glorification of saints.
5. “Time of singing” — The period of rejoicing.
6. “The voice of the dove” — The set time to favor Zion.
7. “The figs ripen” — Israel develops nationally.
8. “The vines blossom” — Israel develops spiritually.

The Desire of the Bridegroom — v.14
Whereas vv. 10-13 represent a message that the Bride had already received from her Beloved, which concludes with the second invitation to “come away”, v.14 expresses the voice of the Groom who

now interjects to express his ardent desire to see and hear the Bride.

VERSE 14

“O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs” — The dove is not only a gentle, innocent bird, but one that mourns the absence of her mate (Isa. 59:11). The application to the Bride is both beautiful and obvious. With the rising excitement that the signs of the times call forth, there also is mixed a degree of mourning that he is not here, and that this bitter pilgrimage of trouble and frustration has not yet been brought to its end. The Bride is privileged that she, at least, can look to its end.

Under normal conditions, the dove has no protection, and therefore must seek one. Clearly recognising her need, she provides for it by sheltering in the “clefts of the rock” (see Jer. 48:28; Ezek. 7:16). There is also a Rock for the Bride (Deut. 32:3-4, 15). It is of the greatest significance, that when Moses desired to witness the Glory of Yahweh he was placed in the cleft of a rock, and covered with the hand of the angel, whilst the Glory passed before him, and the Divine Name was proclaimed in its fulness (Exod. 33:22). The cleft rock, from whence poured out the life-giving water, foreshadowed the Lord Jesus (1 Cor. 10:4), and into the shelter of that rock, the Bride as a timid dove must creep. There she will find adequate shelter from the storms of life, and from those who would lay a snare for her. Therefore the Psalmist declared: “Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion (tent) from the strife of tongues” (Ps. 31:20. See also Ps. 32:7; 119:4; and contrast with Isaiah 28:17). Those “hidden ones” will one day manifest Yahweh’s power, for they constitute “the hiding of His power” (Hab. 3:4).

“The secret places of the stairs” is rendered in the R.V. “the covert of the steep place,” which likewise renders Psalm 31:20 as “the covert of Thy presence.” “He that dwelleth in the secret

place of the Most High,” declared the Psalmist, “shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty” (Psa. 91:1).

Thus the dove shelters in the cleft of the rock, separated from the world in the covert of the steep place, and there she is kept from harm.

“Let me see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice” — This expresses the ardent desire of the Groom to join his Bride. It is wonderful to contemplate, that Yahweh and His Son desire the manifestation of Divine Glory upon the earth, as much as any of those who are called to participate therein. Isaiah speaks of Yahweh “waiting” for that time to come when His Son will be exalted, that He may show mercy to the elect (Isa. 30:18). So there is a communion of feeling between those in heaven who desire the same glorious consummation, and those on earth who anxiously await it.

“For sweet is thy voice and thy countenance is comely” — The Beloved says this, but not the world, which does not listen to the voice of the Bride with pleasure, nor discern any beauty in her. A characteristic of the Bride is the sweetness of her speech, and in this she reflects the example and glory of the Groom (ch. 5:16). James (ch. 3) therefore sternly warns those in the Ecclesia who let their tongues run away with them. That exhortation needs to be observed by all who desire to become an element of the Bride (cf. Prov. 27:15).

The comeliness of the Bride’s countenance is hidden from the world because it consists of “the hidden man of the heart ... even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price” (1 Pet. 3:4). Normally brides will endeavour to glamorise themselves by artificial means; but the true Bride of Christ has no need for that. Her character is beautiful, and one in which Christ, and all like him, will find pleasure.

Preparations for his Coming — v.15

In view of the messages of the Groom regarding his coming, the virgins express their desire to make due pre-

paration for it by eliminating those things that could offend him.

VERSE 15

“Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines” — The symbol of foxes is used elsewhere for adverse elements in spiritual and in natural Israel (see Ezek. 13:4; Luke 13:32). The “little foxes” that help to spoil the vines, or one’s spiritual development, are those natural propensities of the flesh that can get out of control. Paul appealed: “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice” (Eph. 4:31). That is also the appeal of the virgins in this place.

“For our vines have tender grapes” — The R.V. “are in blossom”, indicating that the time is ripe. It is in recognition of an urgent need, that the virgins speak as they do.

The Response of the Bride

— vv. 16-17.

With anticipation she awaits the coming marriage, meanwhile recognising the immediate help of the Groom.

VERSE 16

“My beloved is mine and I am his” — This is the triumphant declaration of the Bride as she contemplates the promise of the Groom relating to his coming. Gone are her previous gloomy doubts. She no longer dwells upon the swarthy of her face, or the possibility of her being indistinguishable among the rest of the “flowers of the plain”; the messages she has received have built up her confidence that she is the Groom’s and the Groom belongs to her.

There is an encouraging progression of confidence throughout the song: (1) — The initial declaration that she is black — Ch. 1:5; (2) — the admission that even if she has a beauty, it is only such as countless others possess — Ch. 2:1; (3) — The confidence of mutual love between herself and the Groom — Ch. 2:16; (4) — The knowledge that she is the Groom’s and that his desire is towards her — Ch. 7:10.

This rising confidence and joy can be ours if we develop it by the contemplation of blessings received and those that are yet to come.

“He feedeth among the lilies” — In v. 1, the Bride is likened to a lily, so that the plural term must relate to the individual members thereof. In what sense can it be said today that the Groom feeds among them? In the sense supplied by the Lord Jesus who declared that wherever two or three are gathered together in his name, he is in the midst thereof (Matt. 18:20. See also 1 Cor. 11:26; Heb. 10:25). We have the confidence that wherever we might be, if what we do is truly in his name, he is there to grace the proceedings.

VERSE 17

“Until the day break and the shadows flee away” — This is portion of a fervent prayer of the Bride earnestly beseeching the presence of her Beloved. Instead of “until” read “when” with the R.V. margin, and then the request signifies, “When the new day comes.”

The word “break” is “breathe” in Hebrew, and could relate to the beginning of a Jewish day which commences at the setting of the sun approximately 6 p.m. It is common for the scorching heat of the eastern sun to be followed by a cool, refreshing breeze at eventide; at which time, also, the shadows flee away. This application of the expression finds support in Isaiah 17:14.

On the other hand, the rising of the Sun of righteousness (Malachi 4:2) drives away the shadows of the night, and causes it to break unto “the morning’s clear shining” that David desired (2 Sam. 23:4). When Christ returns, the dark shadows of Gentile night will be driven away, and the clear light of Zion’s glad morning (Isa. 60:1-2) will reveal the purpose of God in full clarity. The true shape of things will be seen. During night time they are obscured and distorted, and so it is with our hopes and fears. We become depressed and frustrated because we

fail to see our own proper perspective, or with full clearness of vision. Let us not become discouraged. The day will dawn at last revealing that He has done for us "exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think" (Eph. 3:20).

"Turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart" — The verb "turn" can also signify "return." The Bride is beseeching her Beloved to turn back, to come, and come quickly, moving with the fleetness of foot that characterises the roe or hart.

"Upon the mountains of Bether" — The word "Bether" means "dissection" according to *Ungers Bible Dictionary*. There are no mountains with the name of Bether in Israel, so that a symbolic meaning is here implied. The term relates to the action of dividing the animal for the "cutting of a covenant" (Gen. 15:10; Jer. 34:18-19). The breaking of bread, comprising the token of Christ's covenant, is based

upon that practice, and the term in the Song brings to mind the Divine Covenant. Jesus said that he would no more eat or drink thereof until he did so anew in the Kingdom. When he returns in order to establish the Kingdom, it will be in fulfilment of the Covenant. It is on the basis of this that the Bride now pleads for the coming of the Groom.

It is on this lovely note that the third Song concludes.

Now consider Love's benefits as expressed in vv. 14-17. There is:

Security — In the cleft of the rock;

Privilege — In feeding with the Groom;

Responsibility — To destroy the harmful foxes;

Assurance — For he is mine and I am his;

Anticipation — He is coming;

Separation — The demands of Bether required of the Bride;

Participation — In sharing his future in fulfilment of the Covenant.

No more beautiful description of the coming of Spring occurs in any poetry than that contained in the verses of this Song, and the spiritual beauty of them is even greater. We live at a time when evidences of its coming are obvious. The long winter of human ignorance and wilfulness is almost past, and the Spring of human history which shall witness the resurrection and the revival of the Kingdom of God draws nigh. "God shall wipe all tears from their eyes; and (for the redeemed) there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain" (Rev. 21:4). It will be the time of singing and rejoicing, when "the earth shall yield her increase, and God, even our God, shall bless us." O that we may be found worthy to partake of its blessings; that we may bring forth much fruit. "Herein" said Jesus, "is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." Thus may we have our fruit unto holiness, and in the end eternal life.

A Jewish Comment On The Song of Songs

The applicability of the Song of Songs to the Passover, the Festival of Deliverance, is two-fold. Passover marks the return of spring, and Solomon's poem sings of the glories of spring's revival in language which directly heightens our consciousness of its sweet sight and sounds, its warm breath, its aromatic odours. "For lo! the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear upon the earth; the time of the singing birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in the land. The fig-tree is putting forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell." The Georgics of Virgil, the Idyls of Theocritus, works of genius as they are, bear no comparison to these exquisite strains of the inspired writer. "Come, my beloved, let us go forth to the fields, let us pass the night in the villages, let us watch whether the vine has ripened into blossoms, whether the pomegranate has bloomed." One can understand the enthusiastic Akiba being moved by such beautiful expressions to exclaim: "There was no such good day known to Israel as that whereon they were given the Song of Songs, for all the Scriptures are holy, but the Song of Songs is holy of holy." Akiba's opinion has been fully vindicated by the allegorical interpretation which Jews and Christians alike have given to this poem. The love of which it discourses — and this is the second point of application to the Passover — is the love of God for Israel as exemplified in their redemption from Egypt. From that time they became His affianced, and the story of their fidelity reflected itself in such phrases as those in which the Song of Songs abounds. "O draw me forth, let me run after thee... Set me as a seal on the heart, as a signet on thine arm, for love is strong as death... Many waters can not quench love, nor can rivers subdue it. If a man were to give his very all for love, would he ever be despised?"

— From the Jewish Chronicle.

Song Four

*The Groom's
Sudden
Appearance*

Chapter 3:1-5

1. *By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth:
I sought him, but I found him not.*
2. *I said, I will rise now, and go about the city.
In the streets and in the broad ways,
I will seek him whom my soul loveth:
I sought him, but I found him not.*
3. *The watchmen that go about the city found me:
To whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?*
4. *It was but a little that I passed from them,
When I found him whom my soul loveth:
I held him, and would not let him go,
Until I had brought him into my mother's house,
And into the chamber of her that conceived me.*
5. *I adjure you, O daughter of Jerusalem,
By the roes, and by the hinds of the field,
That ye stir not up, nor awaken love,
until it please.*

Song Four:

THE GROOM'S SUDDEN APPEARANCE

The joyous excitement and note of confidence found throughout the previous Song here gives way to a feeling of depression. The high hopes of the Bride stimulated by signs she discerned that her Beloved would soon appear are dispelled, as night after night goes by, and he fails to come. How similar this is to present experiences! We are buoyed up with confidence one day, and then cast down the next as frustrations and problems threaten to overwhelm us. At one moment, we are sure that Yahweh is with us in our work, and the next we begin to have doubts in ourselves. The Bride, however, did not allow herself to be overcome by selfpity, nor did she lose faith that her Beloved would come. She gave herself to activity in his service. Arising from her bed, she went forth to seek the Bridegroom, like the virgins in the parable (Matthew 25). And, like them, she was taken by surprise when he made his sudden appearance, even though she was seeking for him. Living at the epoch of Christ's second coming, we can enter fully into the feelings of the Bride as expressed in this Song.

Seeking him by Night

— Vv. 1-3.

The Bride is restless, as night after night she sought for her Beloved but found him not. Instead of giving way to depression, however, she busied herself in activity, seeking him whom her soul loved.

VERSE 1

“By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth” — The word “night” is plural in the Hebrew, and signifies “in the nights”, that is, night after night. It was, for her, a long and tiring vigil. Anyone who has suffered with insomnia will appreciate her feelings, as the dark minutes of the night seem to stretch into hours, and the morning light seems a week away before it appears. How bright, cheering and hopeful is the golden light of the sun after a sleepless night. The relief of the morning, in such condi-

tions, is a constant theme of the Psalmist, who saw it as a symbol of Divine help (Ps. 30:5; 90:5). The anxious longing of the Bride for the coming of the Groom is expressed in the words of the Psalmist: “My soul waiteth for Yahweh more than they that watch for the morning” (Psa. 130:6).

In a symbolic sense, night relates to the time when Jesus is absent from the earth (John 9:4). The “hours” of waiting during that night seem interminable to those who anxiously await his coming, and “love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8). Like the Psalmist they watch for the morning when the Sun of righteousness will arise with healing in his beams (Mal. 4:2).

These are the sentiments of the Bride in the Song before us, as night after night she awaits what the next day will bring. She is lonely. It is “her” bed upon which she reclines, a contrast to “their bed” of Ch. 1:16, “their house”

of Ch. 1:17, and "their land" of Ch. 2:12. On her bed, she sought him in meditation. Again the Psalmist beautifully captures the idea of the Song:

*"Yet Yahweh will command his
lovingkindness in the daytime,
And in the night his song shall be
with me,
And my prayer unto the God (El —
Strength) of my life.*

*While they say daily unto me,
where is thy God?
Why go I mourning because of
the oppression of the enemy?"*
(Psa. 42:8-9; 77:6-11).

Isaiah declared: "Yea, in the way of Thy judgments, O Yahweh, have we waited for Thee; the desire of our soul is to Thy memorial name (RV). With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early..." (Isa. 26:8-9).

"I sought him, but I found him not" — She filled her mind with thoughts of him, recognising that ultimately he must come to redeem his promise to her. But her love was so absorbing that nothing but the actual presence of her Beloved would satisfy her longing. She felt so lonely in his absence. That is our state now, as we try to make a mental reality of Christ, but, through weakness of the flesh, find it so difficult to do. The greater our love of him, the more ardent is our desire for his coming.

VERSE 2

"I will rise now, and go about the city" — Nevertheless, the Bride did not give way to her distress; she determined to profitably fill in the time, and by activity ease her loneliness. She arose to go about the city — as the Bride does today in the great city of the Gentiles (Rev. 16:19).

"In the streets, and in the broad ways" — These were the places of greatest activity, where the business of the city was done, and people gathered for social intercourse.

"I will seek him whom my soul loveth" — There is constant repetition in this short song of one statement: "whom my soul loveth." It occurs no less than four times in four verses

(vv.1-4). Her soul is her life and being, which ached for the presence of her Beloved. She loved him "with all her soul, mind, and strength" (Mk. 12:30), and everything was subordinated to that all-powerful love. In the streets and broadways of the city, therefore, she made her lonely way seeking for him among crowds that jostled her as she proceeded with her quest.

"I sought him but I found him not" — Again she repeats the sad and lonely cry of v.1. She did not find him in the busy ways of men. They were intent upon the business of life, and little heeded the appeal of the lonely woman. How similar to the activities of the Bride today, who wanders in the public places frequented by the world, vainly striving to set Christ before the people, giving herself to activity, trying to assuage the aching void of her heart! Where is Christ among the multitude? He is not to be found. Nor do the people want him. Certainly the Bride would not remain silent as she wandered the streets and the broad ways of the city. Everywhere she went she would enquire: "Have you seen my Beloved?" the answer was one of indifference, or of impatience, from people who did not like to be interrupted in their work. It is the same today, and will be until the Beloved comes. We seek him, we give ourselves to activity in the Truth, but it is difficult to labor, with few results, because of the hardness of men's hearts.

So the Bride found as she wandered seeking her Beloved.

VERSE 3

"The watchmen that go about the city found me" — Her activities did not go altogether unnoticed. She came under the surveillance of the watchmen of the city, whose business it was to protect its interests (Psalm 127:1). They "found" her, which implies that they were seeking her. The unusual appearance of a lonely woman walking through the streets and market-places of the city, enquiring as to the whereabouts of her Beloved, excited their interest, so that she came under their observation. Is it not the same today? Does not Peter exhort us: "Having

your living honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation"? (1 Peter 2:11-12).

"To whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth?" — To them she has but one question to ask, one statement to make: Have you seen him whom my soul loveth? In other words, to use the question of Isaiah: "Watchman, what of the night?" (Isa. 21:11). As we watch the signs of the times, and observe developments among the nations, and the doings of politicians, we are virtually enquiring of the watchmen of the city as to when the Lord will come.

The Unexpected Advent — v. 4

VERSE 4

"It was but a little that I passed from them" — She had sought information from them concerning her Beloved; and then, shortly after doing so, was excited by his sudden, unexpected approach. The depression she had experienced earlier, was now swallowed up in the joy of his presence.

"But I found him whom my soul loveth" — Her search at an end, she found great peace of mind in the presence of her Lord. For "but", read "when" as in the R.V.

"I held him, and would not let him go" — In her excess joy, she lay hold upon her Beloved, and would not let him go. She experienced in his company, the unity for which Christ prayed on her behalf (John 17:21).

"Until I had brought him into my mother's house" — The Bride conducted her Beloved into her mother's house, that she might lavish all her affection upon him in a congenial and sympathetic environment. Hidden from the public gaze, she could give uninhibited expression to her joy in his company.

This foreshadows the communion that shall take place between the Lord and his Bride at his return. The mother's house, is, of course, the Ecclesia, as we have seen earlier (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 3:6).

In a later Song, contained in Part Two, the Bride expresses her desire to

bring the Beloved into her mother's house (Ch. 8:2). This repetition is indicative of the two-fold aspect of the Bride: selected from Israel and from the Gentiles.

"And into the chamber of her that conceived me" — The word *cherer* which is translated "chamber", signifies the innermost part. The same word occurs in Isaiah 26:20. "Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast." The verse speaks of the time when the saints will be withdrawn from the world for judgment, and those found worthy will be granted immortality. Thus clothed upon with Divine nature, they will enter more completely into the feelings of their Lord than ever has been possible previously. In the isolated fastnesses of Sinai, they will be separated from a world that at that stage, will be completely immersed in war and violence. Peace however, will be enjoyed by the great company of the Redeemed. In the presence of Christ they will rejoice in the glorious union that will unite them all as one, and bind them to him as his Bride. What a joyous time that will be when we will be joined forever with those whom we have learned to love in this age, and attain unto the complete unity with the Father and the Son for which the latter prayed just prior to his death (John 17:21).

Exhortation for the Virgins — v. 5

VERSE 5

"I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem" — The virgins, members of the Bridal party, are again charged as before.

"By the roes and by the hinds of the field" — In the name of Christ, for these are symbols used in relation to the Beloved.

"That ye stir not up, nor awake my love" — Again, the personal pronoun "my" is in italics, and this should be eliminated. Do not artificially stimulate love; let it naturally develop by contemplating the virtues and beauty of the Beloved.

"Till he please" — With the R.V. this should be changed to "it". See notes on Ch. 2:7.

"In All Thy Ways Acknowledge Him"

*"In all thy ways acknowledge Him"
To whom thy path is known;
Thy wisdom is to trust His care,
Nor strive to walk alone.
Commit thy way to God. The rest
Leave to His will — He knoweth best.*

*"In all ways," in each rough path
Stretch forth thy feeble hands.
And seek protection from His love,
Who heaven and earth commands.
Thy strength in each emergency
Sufficient "for the day" shall be.*

*"In all thy ways," when clouds arise
And darkness clouds thy way,
He knows the grief — appoints e'en this
Deep sorrow — oh, then, "pray";
Thy burden roll upon the Lord,
And stay thyself upon His Word.*

*"In all thy ways," thy strength brought down,
With lingering sickness pressed;
Too weak to raise thy head, thou may'st
Rest on the Master's breast.
Tho' now the end thou canst not see,
Thou yet shalt say, "Twas good for me."*

*"In all thy ways acknowledge Him,"
Leave every painful doubt
To Him, whose name is "Wonderful,"
His ways past finding out.
In child-like faith His rod receive,
His precious promises believe.*

Song Five

*The Splendour
of the
Marriage*

Chapter 3:6-4:7

6. *Who is this that cometh up out of the wilderness like pillars
of smoke,
Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense,
With all powders of the merchant?*
7. *Behold, it is the litter of Solomon;
Threescore mighty men are about it,
Of the mighty men of Israel.*
8. *They all handle the sword, and are expert in war:
Every man hath his sword upon his thigh,
Because of fear in the night.*
9. *King Solomon made himself a palanquin
Of the wood of Lebanon.*
10. *He made the pillars thereof of silver,
The bottom thereof of gold, the seat of it of purple,
The midst thereof being paved with love,
From the daughters of Jerusalem.*
11. *Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold king Solomon,
With the crown wherewith his mother hath crowned him
in the day of his espousals,
And in the day of the gladness of his heart.*

Chapter 4

1. *Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair;
Thine eyes are as doves behind thy veil:
Thy hair is as a flock of goats,
That lie along the side of mount Gilead.*
2. *Thy teeth are like a flock of ewes that are newly shorn,
Which are come up from the washing;
Whereof every one hath twins,
And none is bereaved among them.*
3. *Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet,
And thy mouth is comely:
Thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate
Behind thy veil.*
4. *Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury,
Whereon there hang a thousand bucklers,
All the shields of the mighty men.*
5. *Thy two breasts are like two fawns that are twins of a roe,
Which feed among the lilies.*
6. *Until the day be cool, and the shadows flee away,
I will get me to the mountain of myrrh,
And to the hill of frankincense.*
7. *Thou art all fair, my love;
And there is no spot in thee.*

Song Five:

THE SPLENDOUR OF THE MARRIAGE

The last Song saw the Bride happily joined to her Beloved, and with sweet intimacy, enjoying his loving presence. The counterpart of this will be seen at Sinai when the Lord returns. All the applicable references (see Deut. 33:1-2; Psalm 68:17; Hab. 3:1-2; Mal. 3:1) suggest or imply that the judgment seat will be set up there, and that after the unrighteous have been banished, time will be occupied in celebrations of joy to the glory of the Father, and thanksgiving to the Son. From Sinai, the saints will move up to Jerusalem in glorious procession. The way will be beset with difficulties, for the Land will be given over to war. But with Almighty power, the Gentile forces will be swept aside, and the King and his Consort will enter Jerusalem.

The Song before us describes this entrance into the city. At this point, a new group of onlookers is introduced into the drama of it. They are the "daughters of Zion", who are quite distinct from the "Daughters of Jerusalem." They are heard excitedly commenting upon the Bridal procession as it approaches. One group asks, "Who is this....?" (v.6.); another group responds with: "Behold his palanquin,".... (v.7.); a third party joins in with the ejaculation: "They all hold swords,".... (v.8.) They recognise the King, and one offers words of explanation concerning his chariot (vv. 9-10). Finally, all the onlookers are invited to behold the King in his glory (v.11).

After the plaudits of the multitude have ceased, the King turns to his Bride and praises her for her beauty (Ch. 4:1-7).

Triumphal Procession to Jerusalem — Vv.6-10.

An excited group of the daughters of Zion is watching the bridal procession as it moves out of the wilderness to the city of Jerusalem. As they do so, they discuss among themselves the circumstances and members of the party.

VERSE 6

"Who is this that cometh out of the wilderness like pillars of smoke" —

This is the exclamation of the daughters of Zion (v. 11) as they view the approach of the Bridal party. But, for the moment, as is usual on such occasions, their attention is dominated by one figure: the Bride. "This" is in the feminine gender, and therefore relates to a female, the Bride (Strong). The circumstances are indicated in Rev. 19:7-9, 19. It will be noticed that the marriage precedes the marriage supper (v.9). This, of course, is usual,

but in ancient times, they were often protracted affairs. The marriage of the Lamb to his Bride will take place at Sinai where they will be united together; the marriage supper to which guests are invited (see Rev. 19:9) will be after this, at Zion. It is common to identify the marriage and the supper as one, and this leads to misunderstanding. The following account of a marriage and supper, taken from various parts of the Word, will help to better appreciate Revelation 19, and this fifth Song. The Bride was dressed in white garments often richly decorated (Psa. 45:13-14), with bridal girdle about her waist (Isa. 49:18), and resplendent with jewels (Isa. 61:10). The Bridegroom set out from his home to that of the Bride, accompanied by friends and musicians (Matt. 25:10). Having received the Bride, he conducted the whole company to his house, whilst singing, dancing and general rejoicing marked the route (Psalm 45:15; Matt. 9:15). It was customary for friends to join the company on the way back (Matt. 25:6). A feast was then provided to which additional friends were invited (Matt. 22:1-10; 25:1-13).

The Scriptures reveal that the Bridegroom will return with his angelic friends to meet the Bride at Sinai, and conduct her to Jerusalem for the feast. Those who join the procession on the way back to partake of the subsequent feast, include Israel and those nations that accept the terms of the invitation expressed in Rev. 14:6-7. The feast is celebrated after Armageddon and before the complete destruction of those nations who remain adamant in the face of Divine mercy (Ezek. 39:17). The latter, including Babylon the Great, will be destroyed (Isa. 60:12).

The period represented in this fifth Song, therefore, is immediately after Armageddon and before the Feast. The Bridal party is seen moving up out of the wilderness, and its striking appearance is the subject of amazed comment by onlookers, and particularly by those who, in the Song, represent Israel after the flesh.

It is not so much the beauty, as the awe-inspiring appearance of the Bride,

that captures attention. She is described as coming up out of the wilderness "like pillars of smoke." The word "pillars" is a translation of the Hebrew *timarah* from *tamar*, "to be erect, a palm." *Timarah*, therefore, denotes a column as spreading at the top and suggests the nuclear mushroom cloud of smoke.

It must not be confused with the "pillar of cloud" which led Israel through the wilderness. In the Hebrew "pillar" in Exodus is an entirely different word from that used in the Song. Further, the likeness in the Song is to smoke and not to cloud, as in the wilderness.

The phrase, "pillar of smoke" occurs in two other places (Judges 20:40; Joel 2:30), and in both instances implies destruction. In the latter occurrence, it is destruction that results from Divine intervention, which is a form of nuclear activity.

The Heb. word translated "smoke" ('asham'), is also used for the smoke of sacrifice associated with Divine protection (Isa. 4:5). In this sense it associates with the smoke of incense associated with Divine communion (Rev. 8:4); the hiding of the Glory of the Day of Atonement (Rev. 15:8) associated with Divine mercy.

Certainly, this suggests an awe-inspiring manifestation, but it exactly conforms to the facts of the case when the Bride shall be manifested to the world in company with her Beloved for the first time. They will move from Sinai into an area of war, and there the unleashing of Divine power (the effect of which is similar to that of nuclear explosion — see Zech. 14:12) will devastate those armies that will have moved against Jerusalem for war.

This would suggest that all the ideas expressed above are to be combined in the symbol before us. Thus:

There is certainly a hiding of identity, and of fulness of Glory yet to be revealed, and it prompts the question: "Who is this...?"

Divine communion is suggested by the erect appearance of the palm-like column (see Psa. 92:12).

The very context (see v.8) suggests war, and implies that the Bride is being

conducted to her abode through territory infested by those who would hurt her if they could.

To summarise: the "pillars of smoke" thus suggest Divine power in belligerent manifestation. This is the first impression seen by the onlookers, as from a distance they view the approaching Bridal party.

"Perfumed with myrrh and frankincense" — It was normal for vessels of perfume to be carried before marriage processions, so that the air would be impregnated with the scent. "Myrrh" represents sacrificial death; "frankincense" represents prayer (Rev. 5:8 mg.). Thus power, sacrifice, and prayer are emphasised in the appearance of the Bride.

"With all powders of the merchant" — The Hebrew word *abaqah*, powders, suggests powdered spices such as were used for perfume and incense (see *Unger's Bible Dictionary*). They were used in the manufacture of the anointing oil (Exod. 30:23-25), which is a symbol of the Spirit, the "unction" or anointing" of 1 John 2:20. The Bride therefore appears as representing Divine power, death to flesh, Divine communion in prayer, and Divine Nature in the Birth of the Spirit (2 Pet. 1:4).

VERSE 7

"Behold his bed, which is Solomon's" — It appears as though another group of the daughters of Zion interjects with the exclamation of this verse. Whilst the Bride is not recognised ("Who is this?"), the Bridegroom is known as Solomon. It is, of course, the "greater than Solomon" who is the hero of the Song (Matt. 12:42), and who soon will be recognised by Israel after the flesh (Zech. 12:10). Those accompanying him in the day of his glory, however, will be unknown to the nation. The surprise of the Jewish people at the appearance of this great company of the redeemed is expressed in Isaiah 49:21: "Who hath begotten me these, seeing I have lost my children, and am desolate, a captive, and removing to and fro? (see Zech. 14:2). Who hath brought up

these? Behold, I was left alone; these, where had they been?"

The "bed" of the King is the subject of special comment. The word is from the Hebrew *mittah*, a palanquin, a portable litter, used for state occasions, on which the occupant is borne aloft by bearers in pomp and magnificence. The onlookers see this palanquin approaching, and view the royal figure of the king upon it. They recognise him as the Prince of Peace, though the peace he comes to establish is only made possible through war and conquest.

"Threescore valiant men are about it" — The symbolism suggests the Most Holy of the Tabernacle, manifesting the Glory of Yahweh, and moving up from the wilderness into the pre-determined resting place. As the Tabernacle was surrounded by sixty pillars (Exod. 27:10-16), so the King in glory is surrounded by sixty heroes of Israel, all of them "pillars in the temple of Yahweh" (Rev. 3:12). These are the elite of the nations, as is suggested by their number. In Bible numerics, twelve is the number of perfect government, and five is the number of grace. The multiplication of one with the other gives the total of sixty, suggesting the perfect government of grace, which, of course, is the principle of the Tabernacle.

"Of the valiant of Israel" — The word in the Hebrew is *gibbor* which is an intensive form of *geber* (a man), and denotes a strong, bold man, and hence a hero in war. These valiant warriors are successful heroes in a spiritual battle, in which they have learned to discipline their own spirits (Prov. 16:32), and bring their minds into subjection to Christ (2 Cor. 10:4-5). The weapons of their warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God, so that they can pull down strongholds of the mind which the flesh would erect against Him. In this way they "please him" who has chosen them to be soldiers (2 Tim. 2:3-4).

VERSE 8

"They all hold swords, being expert in war" — The R.V. renders, they all "handle the sword" which is a Hebraism signifying that they are experi-

enced in its use. The warfare is referred to by Paul in Eph. 6:13-17, where everything is protected but the back, and the only weapon of offence is the sword. The person that turns back in the fight of faith will meet his death.

On the other hand, Christ's soldiers must become practised in the use of the sword, ("the word of God") and its blade must be kept sharp and clean to get the best results. It is a sword of offence, to be used against the lusts of the flesh, as well as error. The epistles of Paul, Peter, John and Jude abound in suggestions as to how to wage the spiritual warfare of faith, and he who desires a place among the sixty valiant warriors will heed the instruction and apply its principles.

"Every man hath his sword upon his thigh" — Though sheathed for the time being, it is there to be instantly drawn when necessity demands. In the past it has been wielded against the lusts of the flesh as manifested individually, but in the day of glory, it will be drawn against the lusts of the flesh manifested politically.

"Because of fear in the night" — For the valiant warriors, the night is over, and so the sword is sheathed. The "rising of Zion's glad morning", however, will usher in the night of Gentile times, and the sword is there to be used against such, as required. It will be through conquest only that the world will be brought into subjection to Christ, and the honor of doing this will be given into the hands of the saints (Isa. 26:9; 32:17; Psa. 149:5-9).

The symbolism of this section of the Song can be epitomised thus:

Pillars of smoke: Divine power for the consumption of flesh.

Myrrh: Sacrificial death.

Frankincense: Prayer.

Powders: Holy Spirit.

Sixty Valiants: Veterans in the battle of life.

Handling Swords: Warfare temporarily over.

Fear in the night: Gentile night from which the world will be emerging.

VERSE 9

"King Solomon made himself a

chariot" — The conversation among the onlookers continues, as some now venture an explanation of the extraordinary procession that has come unexpectedly upon them. They see the Bridegroom, and recognising him, speak of his glory. The word "chariot" is better rendered "palanquin", though it is derived from a different word from that of v.7. Here it is *appiryon*, and signifies a more stately means of transport, relating to a royal carriage. The King is thus seen in the fulness of regal dignity.

"Of the wood of Lebanon" — The word "Lebanon" signifies "white", and speaks of purity. It derives its name from its snow-capped peaks, which are as a "crown of glory" on the head thereof, and in that way is suggestive of the white crown worn by the high priest. The "wood" is the cedar; known for its beauty, fragrance and durability, and used, as we have already noted, as a symbol of incorruptibility (cp. Notes Ch. 1:17).

VERSE 10

"He made the pillars thereof of silver" — The support of its covering were pillars of silver, the metal of redemption. See note on Ch. 1:11.

"The bottom thereof of gold" — Its foundation was of gold, the metal that speaks of a tried faith (1 Pet. 1:7), and without the manifestation of which it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6). "Bottom", is *repheed* in Hebrew, and signifies "a support" or "pedestal." This evidently went all around the sides, and supported the pillars, whilst the centre was a beautiful inlaid mosaic.

"The covering of it of purple" — Purple was the robe of royalty (Judges 8:26; Mk. 15:17; Luke 16:19; John 19:2), and rightly so, for it is the color of God-manifestation which will be characteristic of the aristocracy of the Age to come. Purple is a blend of blue and crimson. Blue was the color the Israelites wore on the fringe of their garments to remind them of the commandments of Yahweh, that they might perform them instead of following their own desires. (Num. 15:38; Deut. 22:12). Crimson is the color of flesh; so that the combination represents

God manifest in the flesh.

Instead of "covering" the R. V. has "seat", from *merkov*, "chariot." The seat, therefore, is the seat of royalty.

"The midst thereof being paved with love" — By "midst" is probably meant the solid floor in the centre of the chariot. It comprised a beautiful "inlaid" (see R. V. mg.) mosaic of love. As Paul shows in 1 Corinthians 13, love is a many-sided virtue, revealing itself in a multiplicity of ways. It is, as we have earlier indicated, a Divine attribute, stemming from Yahweh through His Word, the fulness of which will be manifested in the Age to come. But who provided this glorious mosaic that graces the royal chariot of the King? The next line in the poem reveals this.

"For the daughters of Jerusalem" — These are the virgins that wait upon the Bride, and as we have consistently suggested, they form part of the multitudinous Bride. Instead of "for", the R. V. has "from", indicating that this part of the palanquin is a wedding gift to the King. Our love is the greatest of gifts that we can offer him (Mark 12:29-30).

The Glory of the King — v.11

Israel after the flesh is invited to behold its king, and learn what it has lost in ignoring his claims.

VERSE 11

"Go forth, O ye daughters of Zion, and behold King Solomon" — The daughters of Zion evidently relate to Israel after the flesh, in contrast to the daughters of Jerusalem who, in the Song, represent Israel after the spirit. See Isa. 3:16,17; 4:4. They are invited to "behold" king Solomon. They can behold him as sacrifice (Num. 21:8), saviour (Isa. 45:22), and sovereign (Isa. 33:17). Above all, they can see him as the Prince of Peace, who will terminate the long era of warfare that the disobedient nation has suffered over the centuries. Solomon types the Lord Jesus as Prince of Peace, a peace which the daughters of Jerusalem (Foundation of Peace) have already experienced in measure (John 14:27), but which still awaits the daughters of Zion.

"With the crown wherewith his mother crowned him" — Bathsheba, the mother of Solomon, sought the crown of the kingdom on behalf of her son (1 Kings 1:16-17). Her name means *Daughter of the Oath*, and it is on the basis of the Divine oath, that the crown will be bestowed upon the Lord Jesus, the antitypical Solomon (Luke 1:72-79). In the Song before us, the "mother" of the King is the New Jerusalem, "the mother of all" saints; in a spiritual sense including the Lord Jesus (Gal. 4:28, 30; Heb. 12:22-23).

"In the day of his espousals" — The day of Christ's espousals (and with Christ and his Bride this Song is concerned) was the day that the Ecclesia was established in his name (Acts 2). Paul wrote concerning it: "I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ" (2 Cor. 11:2). It was at that very time, moreover, that the Ecclesia commenced to proclaim that "there is another king, one Jesus" (Acts 17:7). It can be said with every propriety, that the Lord was crowned in the day of his espousals.

"And in the day of the gladness of his heart" — There was a "joy set before the Lord" (Heb. 12:2) to which he attained at the time that the Ecclesia became his espoused Bride. At the same time, he was anointed "with the oil of gladness" above his fellows (Heb. 1:9), and in completing the mighty work which he undertook he "saw of the travail of his soul, and was satisfied" (Isa. 53:11). This was the day of "the gladness of his heart." He was made glad in that he brought to successful consummation the work set before him at his first advent. All that the Lord accomplished at that time, will be brought to the notice of Israel after the flesh, the daughters of Zion, when he shall be apocalypted in glory (Zech. 12:10).

CHAPTER 4

The Beauty of the Bride — Vv. 1-7

The King commends the beauty of the Bride, specifying seven particulars. He

expresses his great pleasure in the affection she lavishes on him.

VERSE 1

“Behold thou art fair, my love; behold thou art fair” — This is the constant praise of the Beloved as he gazes on the beauty of his Bride (see Ch. 1:8,15). Why the repetition? Perhaps because he sees in her both external and internal beauty. There is an external beauty for all to see, because the prophet declares: “Thy people shall be all righteous” the work of Yahweh’s hands that He might be glorified (Isa. 60:21). There is also an internal beauty, for, as is acknowledged in Psalm 45:13, this “daughter of a king is all glorious within.” Mere external beauty is of little worth. The Proverbs record: “As a jewel of gold in a swine’s snout, so is a fair woman which departeth from wisdom” (Prov. 11:22).

Of the virtuous woman (Prov. 31:10) it is remarked: “Favour (deportment or grace of manner) is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth Yahweh, she shall be praised” (Prov. 31:30).

That is the basis of praise now lavished upon the Bride.

““Thou hast doves’ eyes within thy locks” — We have already commented upon the symbol of the dovelike eyes of the Bride (see note Ch. 1:15). Paul revealed the importance of eyes that see clearly. He prayed on behalf of the Ephesians that “the eyes of their understanding being enlightened, they may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” (Eph. 1:18). The Lord also declared that “the light of the body is the eye” (Matt. 6:22), and urged that the eye should be “single” or sound. If the vision is distorted everything is seen out of focus, and is reflected back to the brain in that condition. Thus it is not sufficient that we have light, we must also have an organ adapted to receiving it. As the natural eye, when healthy, brings all things into correct perspective, and regulates the motions of the body accordingly, so the mental eye pro-

vides spiritual vision as a basis for action. The Bride is first commended for her eyes. They are described as being “within the locks” or, according to the R.V., “behind the veil.” The veil shrouded all the face, thus hiding the flesh. This emphasised the brightness of the eyes, the symbol of intelligence, which appeared even more beautiful as a result.

“Thy hair is as a flock of goats” — The long hair of a woman is a symbol of glory (1 Cor. 11:15), and of loving submission to her husband; in this case, to Christ. In Samson long hair was a symbol of strength (Judges 16:17). In the Nazarite, it proclaimed his dedication to the will of Yahweh. If we would be worthy constituents of the Bride, we must continue in submission to the will of Christ, showing strength in the Lord and dedicating ourselves to his service. Then our beauty will be praised when we appear before him.

The hair is likened to a “flock of goats.” Goats’ hair was used as a protection for the Tabernacle (Exod. 26:7), being spun into cloth by women whose heart “stirred them up in wisdom” (Exod. 35:26). The covering on the Bride (and Paul declared that the hair is given as a covering — 1 Cor. 11:15), constitutes her glory, and proclaims that she had given herself unto Yahweh through His son.

“That appear from mount Gilead” — The R.V. renders “appear” as “lie” or recline. The picture is that of rows of goats reclining on an undulating slope, and raising their heads as they are disturbed, for the idea incorporates the principle of movement. These rows of goats, with their long hair, represent the flowing tresses of the Bride. They are reclining upon mount Gilead which signifies the *Heap of Witness* relating to a covenant (Gen. 31:48-49). The hair upon her head, therefore, is a Heap of Witness, proclaiming the Bride’s acceptance of the Divine Covenant, through submission to the Lord Jesus Christ! Gilead was known for its healing balm (Jer. 8:22; 46:11; Mic. 7:14).

VERSE 2

“Thy teeth are like a flock of sheep

that are even shorn” — Shorn sheep appear white and smooth, and match each other. So also do the teeth of the Bride. They are white and even. But why select teeth for special mention? Because the quality is largely governed by the food we eat. When we over-indulge in soft, sweet food, the effect will be revealed in decayed teeth. This teaches an important spiritual lesson. Let us over-indulge in the world’s sweets, and we will feel the effects in our spiritual condition; let us eat soft food all the time (even within the ecclesia), and our spiritual teeth will find it difficult to masticate the harder meat of the Word (Heb 5:12-14). How important it is that we seek out a balanced diet of spiritual food.

The sheep are represented as being “even shorn” indicating that they have been shorn by expert shearers. We sometimes shear each other by finding fault with one another, whilst closing our eyes to own failings. Let the Word do the shearing, and if we heed it this will be done perfectly. As a result our speech will be like sheep “even shorn” (Col. 4:6; Titus 2:8). We will be humbled of all pride, and will develop the mind which was in Christ Jesus (Phil. 2:5)

“Which came up from the washing”

— Usually, before shearing, sheep are washed that the wool may be cleaner. It is the laver of water by the Word (Eph. 5:26) that will cleanse us. Through its influence, our lives can be changed: “Though your sins be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isa. 1:18). We are washed when we go through the water of baptism, but we need daily contact with the laver of the Word to maintain our cleansed state.

“Whereof every one bear twins” —

The R.V. margin renders “Which are all of them in pairs.” The teeth are perfect, and none has fallen out. This comes of good health, the result of a good diet.

“And none is barren among them” —

The Bride not only is in possession of all her teeth, but each one can function properly. She is thus able to thoroughly masticate food to the benefit of her

body as a whole. How important is it to be able to do that! In other words, it is not enough to merely study the Bible; we must act upon it. The Truth must be understood, thought upon and applied, before its power will be felt. Remember, that under the law, the beasts that were considered clean were those which, among other things, ate clean food, and masticated it well. The cow for example, provides the example of an Israelite masticating and re-masticating food. Let us likewise “chew over” the things of God, carefully ruminating upon them, that they might form part of our thoughts so as to be reflected in action (Rom. 2:13-15; 2 Pet. 1:8).

VERSE 3

“Thy lips are like a thread of scarlet”

— These are healthy lips, pulsating with life, their scarlet texture a refreshing contrast to the delicate colouring of her skin. How different from the swollen lips of the leper that had to be covered up at the approach of fellowman. Lips that had to cry “unclean, unclean!” (Lev. 13:45). No so the beautiful lips of the Bride that proclaim the message of salvation and thus become “a thread of scarlet” to all who hear and do. Twice in Scripture a “thread of scarlet” is used as a token of salvation, whilst in the verse before us the lips of the Bride, being similarly described, likewise become a figure of that which brings redemption. In all, then, we read the expression three times in the Word of God:

Firstly, the firstborn of Tamar was identified by a thread of scarlet which the midwife bound upon his hand (Gen. 38:28). Tamar means *upright* or *erect* (the palm tree); Judah means *Praise of Yah*, and their firstborn was called *Zerah, The rising of Light*, all of which is highly significant in the parabolic drama of Gen. 38. as it points forward to the birth of the firstborn as the saviour of humanity.

Secondly, the thread of scarlet was used by Rahab to indicate that she was the one who had aided the spies, wherefore salvation was to be offered to her and her house (Josh. 2:18).

Thirdly, the expression found in the

verse before us, and its significance has been outlined above.

“And thy speech is comely” — It is calculated to draw others by its pleasantness (the meaning of “comely”). See Prov. 16:24; Col 4:6; Tit. 2:8; James 3:8-13. The Bride’s speech is similar to that of the Groom (Psa. 45:2), for she proclaims the message of salvation she received from him.

“Thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate” — The temple is the seat of intelligence, and it is here likened to a piece of pomegranate. A “piece” of pomegranate implies that the inside of the fruit can be seen. The pomegranate is a most significant fruit. Not only is it red on the outside, but when cut open it is found to be packed with seeds, speaking of fruitfulness. The symbolism is remarkable. First there is the fruit packed with seeds, relating to the members of the multitudinous Bride. They comprise the “seed” of Christ (Isa. 53:10), being intellectually begotten “of incorruptible seed, even the Word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Pet. 1:23). Further the pomegranate has a red pulp which is most refreshing to the taste, and which looks like wine when squeezed. This is in contrast to the seeds, which are white! Thus the fruit is a wonderful symbol for the sacrifice of Christ, providing a righteous (white) seed. There were pomegranates of blue, purple and scarlet around the hem of the high priest’s garment (Exod. 28:33-34), proclaiming the same glorious truth with the significant addition of the colours referred to. If the mind of the Bride is constantly centered upon the principles of the sacrifices of Christ her actions will be purified accordingly, and the seed will be white.

“Within thy locks” — Or “within thy veil” (see v. 1).

VERSE 4

“Thy neck is like the tower of David builded for an armoury” — From its situation upon mount Zion, the beauty of its proportions, and the white smoothness of its stones. The tower of

David was an object of general admiration and stateliness (2 Sam. 22:51; Micah 4:8) speaking of good deportment. The Bride is noted for such. She had been delivered from the yoke of bondage which would bend her neck (Acts 15:5,10; John 8:36), and she stands with uplifted eyes awaiting the coming of the Lord (Luke 21:28). Let us learn to lift up our heads to him, so as to have him always in view. It is said that the only time the swine lifts up its head to heaven is when its throat is cut!

Micah calls the tower of David “the tower of the flock” (Micah 4:8) for from it David as the shepherd-king surveyed the flock of his people.

Thus the Bride with head erect surveys her bridal party. Her necklets gleam like swords and shields, indicating that she is able to defend her own: the weapons of war indicating the thousand battles of the past (Heb. 11).

“Whereon there hang a thousand bucklers” — The Bride has lived in the midst of trouble and war; particularly against the flesh. But around her neck, like a glorious string of pearls hang the tokens of a thousand victories. David used to bring into his tower, souvenirs of his conquests, and he saw in them evidence of the goodness of the triumph of faith. In her day of glory the Bride will be able to look back on many a victory won through faith and strength received of Yahweh. But this will only be possible if her neck remains unbent, and her eyes fixed upon the joy set before her which she hopes to share in the company of her Beloved.

“All shields of mighty men” — The R. V. renders: “The shields of the mighty men.” Shields were hung up in ancient times as the trophies of martial glory (Ezek. 27:11). The shields that grace the neck of the Bride as ornaments, are shields of faith belonging to the mighty who have won the warfare of life — mainly in struggling against themselves (Eph. 6:16)

VERSE 5

“Thy two breasts are like two young roes that are twins” — One writer

comments: "This is a beautiful yet delicate figure, describing the lovely equality, perfect shape, and sweet freshness of the maiden's bosom. The meadows covered with lilies suggest beauty and fragrance." The description of the breasts shows that the Bride is fully matured and developed (ct. Ch. 8:8). The mention of the "two" suggest the two covenants that proclaim Divine truths: or the two great families of mankind (Jews and Gentiles) from whence her children are derived. The milk with which they are fed is the nourishing milk of the Word (1 Pet. 2:2). To be able to feed her babies properly, the mother must eat, masticate and digest the proper food herself.

The breasts are likened to roes or fawns because these animals are admired for their loveliness, grace and shyness. In form, in deportment, in mental ability, in submissiveness, in her spiritual health, the Bride reflects the care of the Beloved.

"Which feed among the lilies" — In Ch. 2:16, the Beloved is said to feed among the lilies (see note); now it is revealed that the nutriment which the Bride provides for her young is obtained from the same source: in the company of those of like precious faith. In Ch. 2:16, the Bride said of the Beloved, "He feedeth among the lilies" thus speaking of the fellowship that the saints have with him: and now, here, he returns the compliment by implying that the Bride has encouraged her members not to forsake the assembling of themselves together in feeding upon the Word (Heb. 10:25). Only by so doing will the Bride develop in maturity, in preparation for her future work of nourishing others in the kingdom.

VERSE 6

"Until the day break and the shadows flee away" — The R.V. mg. supplies "when" instead of "until", thus pointing to the future day of glory, the day of the marriage, the most important day in the life of the Bride. See also Ch. 2:17.

"I will get me to the mountain of

myrrh" — Both the ecclesia and Yahweh's righteousness are likened to mountains (Heb. 12:22; Psa. 36:6), and as the latter is revealed only in the former it can be likened to a mountain of righteousness, or of myrrh. Myrrh as we have seen (see Ch. 1:13) signifies bitterness, and is symbolic of sacrificial death, through which righteousness is manifested. The true ecclesia, or the Bride, therefore is appropriately likened to a mountain of myrrh, for the Divine nature she will then possess, will only have been granted her because she has put to death the flesh, and has manifested the righteousness of God. The Beloved declares his intention of visiting that "mountain of myrrh" at his coming.

"And to the hill of frankincense" —

The Bride is not only commended for mortifying the flesh, but also for her reliance upon the strength of Yahweh petitioned in prayer. For frankincense is the symbol of prayer (Psa. 141:2; Rev 5:8; 8:3; Luke 1:10). It was white in colour, and was used as an ingredient of the anointing oil (symbol of the Spirit: Exod. 30:34, cp. Rom. 8:26). It was added to the offerings under the law as a symbol of praise (Lev. 2:1,2,15,16) and afterwards burnt as a sweet smelling savour, a memorial unto Yahweh (Lev. 6:15). Let our praise and our prayers ever ascend unto the Father, and let us draw heavily upon the strength that He has promised us in time of need, and which He will never hesitate to supply. The multitudinous Bride is noted for her sacrifice (myrrh) and her prayer (frankincense): and to that sacrificing and praying community the Beloved will hasten when the Day of Glory is ushered in to drive asunder the shadows of the night.

VERSE 7

"Thou art all fair my love" — Previously the Bride has been described as "fair" (Ch. 1:15,16; 2:10, etc.), but now she is "all fair." The process of her beautification by the cleansing power of the Word has been brought to perfection (see Eph. 5:26-27). Like Esther, she has gone through her period of purification (Est. 2:12),

and is now fit to stand before her royal Groom in full confidence of his approval. See also Psa. 45:13.

“There is no spot in thee” — These words are cited by Paul in Eph. 5:27 to show the purpose of Christ’s offering in regard to the Ecclesia. His use of this verse in that way is an inspired key to the understanding of the Song of Solomon. When every sin has been purged away, and all discordant elements removed, the Bride will stand forth in perfection; for both her character and nature will be Divine (Rom. 5:2; 2 Pet. 1:4).

Before leaving this Song, note again the seven points of the Bride’s eternal

beauty:

Her eyes —Reveal her to be mild, harmless, chaste, intelligent, faithful.

Her hair —Denotes that she is obediently in subjection to her husband.

Her teeth —Indicate that she practises good habits in diet.

Her lips —Proclaim sound words of truth.

Her temples —Reflect a meditative and intelligent mind.

Her neck —Displays good deportment, and reveals that she carefully supervises the care of her own.

Her breasts —Indicate her maturity and show that she is capable of feeding her spiritual progeny.

Song Six

*Entering
the
Inheritance*

Chapter 4:8-5:1

8. *Come with me from Lebanon, my bride,
With me from Lebanon:
Look from the top of Amana,
From the top of Senir and Hermon,
From the lions' dens,
From the mountains of the leopards.*
9. *Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my bride;
Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes,
With one chain of thy neck.*
10. *How fair is thy love, my sister, my bride!
How much better is thy love than wine!
And the smell of thine ointments than all manner of spices!*
11. *Thy lips, O my bride, drop as the honeycomb:
Honey and milk are under thy tongue;
And the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon.*
12. *A garden shut up is my sister, my bride;
A spring shut up, a fountain sealed.*
13. *Thy shoots are an orchard of pomegranates, with precious
fruits;
Henna with spikenard plants.*
14. *Spikenard and saffron,
Calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense;
Myrrh and aloes, with all the chief spices.*
15. *Thou art a fountain of gardens,
A well of living waters,
And flowing streams from Lebanon.*
16. *Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south;
Blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out.
Let my beloved come into his garden,
And eat his precious fruits.*

Chapter 5

1. *I am come into my garden, my sister, my bride:
I have gathered my myrrh with my spice;
I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey;
I have drunk my wine with my milk.
Eat, O friends;
Drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved.*

Song Six:

ENTERING THE INHERITANCE

The marriage having taken place, the Beloved conducts his Bride with joy to a vantage spot where the inheritance of the Land can be seen spread out before her. She looks down upon the scene of many an act of faith, where many members of the multitudinous Bride "worked out their salvation with fear and trembling", allowing the power of God's Word to mould their characters and disposition "both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Phil. 2:12-13). But she is conscious of the fact that the victory she has won, and the inheritance she has gained, have only been possible through the love and care of her Beloved. She looks at him with deep affection, which, in his love, he returns. Again he addresses words of praise to her, describing in detail the attributes of her character in which he delights. The Song closes in a glorious marriage feast in which all are invited to participate.

Viewing the Land — v. 8

The Bride is taken to the mountainous regions of the north from whence a panoramic view of the Land is obtained, and is invited to view it as a token of the world-wide inheritance that will be hers.

VERSE 8

"Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse" — Though Lebanon was included in the borders of the land originally promised the people of Israel, they never obtained it. The enemies of the nation, the lions and leopards of the verse before us, retained possession of it. That will not be the case when the kingdom is re-established, however, for then the borders of the promised land will be extended from the Euphrates to the Nile (Gen. 15:18), and all the world will be brought into subjection to Christ. The Promised Land, however will be his special possession.

Some have suggested that the Bride does not go to Lebanon, but is invited to come away from it. Upon that

suggestion has been built a theory interpreting the Song as recording the attempts of Solomon to woo away a shepherdess, the bride of a shepherd with whom he had become enamoured, who lived in the region of Lebanon.

R.W. Ask, however, states that the idea in the original is "Come look from Lebanon!" The context certainly suggests this. Rotherham renders: "With me from Lebanon shalt thou enter" implying that the Bride must first go to Lebanon in order to enter the land from that direction.

Another rendition has: With me from Lebanon, O Bride, with me from Lebanon thou shalt come, shalt look around, or wander forth from the height, or head of Amana" etc.

We conclude that the Bride is taken to Lebanon that she might view the promised inheritance.

She is invited to do so as the Groom's "spouse" or wife. This is the first time in the Song that this title has been given her, suggesting that the marriage has taken place.

Lebanon is a double range of moun-

tains in Syria, divided by the Bekaa plain. It was included in the division of the land by Joshua, but it never came into the possession of Israel. It therefore typifies the promised inheritance in the hands of strangers. But having been delivered of such, the Bride is invited to view her inheritance from this eminence, and from the lions' dens and mountains of the leopards. Those cruel beasts (symbolic of the Gentiles) will have been driven from their previous haunts, and the land cleared of Gentile domination.

Each of the places visited by the Bride is significant. Lebanon means "white" from the snow that is always on its peaks, and which is as a crown of righteousness on the head thereof. The word is derived from *lebab*, which signifies "the heart."

The mountains of Lebanon provide majestic scenery which testifies to the glory of Yahweh its Creator.

G.A. Smith observes: "The mountain rises from great roots cast out across the land like those of some giant oak" (see Hos. 14:5). The cedars that graced its slopes were elegant trees that provided a fragrance described as "the smell of Lebanon". Unfortunately, very few of them remain today.

"With me from Lebanon" —Lebanon is splendidly situated as a site to view the Promised Land. Its beauty speaks of Yahweh's glory and majesty; it overlooks the Bekaa valley, the scene of one of David's greatest victories, and thus testifies to Yahweh's providence and power. David's faith was tested to the uttermost. He had moved north against Hadadezer to "recover his border at the river Euphrates" (2 Sam. 8:3). His forces comprised infantry only, whereas Hadadezer had an extremely large contingent of formidable iron chariots, as well as additional strong allies. Faced with this powerful army, David learned that the Syrians had likewise moved against him. Their army poured down the pass that gives access to the plain (v.5), so that his retreat was cut off. At the same time, a messenger arrived from Israel to report that the Edomites had invaded the south of Is-

rael (Psa. 60 — inscription). Hopelessly outnumbered, shut in on all sides by either mountains or armed forces, and with his own country invaded, what could David do? A prayer ascended to heaven, and with a courage that matched his faith, David dealt one by one with the enemies that crowded in on him. An outstanding victory followed and David returned in triumph to Jerusalem bearing with him an hundred chariots as tokens of Yahweh's help (v. 4). It was then, we believe, that Psalm 20 was composed and sung:

Now know I that Yahweh saveth his anointed;

He will answer him from his holy heaven

With the saving strength of his right hand.

Some trust in chariots, and some in horses:

But we will make mention of the name of Yahweh our God. (vv. 6-7).

Lebanon occupies a strategic site from which to view the Promised Land. It speaks of Yahweh's glory, majestically displayed in its beauty; of His power and providence as manifested in David's victory that it overshadowed. It will yet speak of Yahweh's integrity, when Lebanon is at last freed from the enemy.

What will David's feelings be when, in the day of future conquest, he will again look down upon the plain where, in difficult times, he had put his faith in Yahweh and found that it was not misplaced!

"Look from the top of Amana" — Amana is the feminine form of *amen*, signifying Amen, Truth, Verity. The word suggests something fixed, a covenant (Strong). It is part of the anti-Lebanon range from whence come the waters of the river Abana (also called Amana: 2 Kings 5:12 mg.).

The white, lofty Lebanon can well symbolise righteousness, whilst the waters of Amana can represent truth springing out of the earth. From these heights, the Beloved and his Bride might well look down upon the land of their inheritance, and reflect how that in their associations one with the other, mercy (through which the Bride is developed)

and truth (personified by the Groom) have met together. Then the beautiful expressions of Psalm 85:10-13 could well have an application:

*Mercy and truth are met together;
Righteousness and peace have kissed
each other.*

*Truth shall spring out of the earth;
And righteousness shall look down
from heaven.*

*Yea, Yahweh shall give that which is
good;*

*And our land shall yield her increase.
Righteousness shall go before him;
And shall set us in the way of his
steps.*

Lebanon is to the north west of the Land of Promise, and Amana to the north east. From each vantage point the Bride will view her inheritance.

“From the top of Shenir and Hermon” — These are two names given to the same mountain (Deut. 3:9). Shenir signifies a *Coat of Mail* (Davis). The name is most applicable to Hermon, for the mountain stands as a sentinel to the north of the land, and symbolically represents the armour of faith (Eph. 6). Hermon signifies *High*, or *Abrupt* (Strong), *Sacred* (English and Hebrew Bible Students’ Concordance), or *Devoted* (Unger). It is 10,000 feet high, and from its peak a glorious panoramic view of the land can be enjoyed. Hermon was the mount of the Transfiguration (Matt. 17). There the three privileged Apostles saw the Lord in glory conversing with Moses and Elijah, representatives of the Law and the Prophets. But gradually the vision of Moses and Elijah waned (Luke 9:33), and the Lord alone was left in glory. So it will come to pass in the Age to come, when the instruction of the Law and the vision of the Prophets shall both find their fulfilment in the glory revealed through the Son.

The Bride will doubtless consider these matters of Divine revelation, as from Hermon she views the scene before her. How exciting it will be for at least three of her members to see in reality that which their sleepy eyes only viewed in a temporary vision.

The names of these mountains are significant. They tell in order the

triumph of redemption:

Lebanon — White, righteousness; through baptism, a triumph over self.

Amana — Truth, the basis of faith; a victory over disbelief.

Shenir — Coat of mail, the warfare of the Truth; the conquest of error.

Hermon — Elevation, the authority of the future; the subjugation of the world.

The believer goes through all processes: from righteousness, to faith; through the battle of life, and on to victory.

“From the lions’ dens” — The lion is used as a symbol of various nations throughout Scripture (Dan. 7:4; Jer. 4:7). It is obvious, however, that if the Bride is going to view the land from the lions’ dens, these dangerous beasts will no longer be there. The land will be cleansed of Gentile influence, and made ready for the Bride.

“From the mountains of the leopards” — The leopard is likewise used as a symbol for Gentile power (Dan. 7:6), but, obviously, the Song implies that such wild beasts have been removed from the land.

The Queen in her glory — Vv. 9-15

In terms of the highest praise, the Groom praises the virtues of his Bride whom he has already acknowledged as all fair, without spot.

VERSE 9

“Thou hast ravished my heart, my sister, my spouse” — The margin renders: “Thou hast taken away my heart” or, as we might say, “You have stolen my heart.” His heart is all hers, as he looks fondly upon her countenance, and considers her beauty.

She is his “sister spouse”, for the personal pronoun, *my*, being in italics, should be eliminated. This means that like Adam and Eve, the Groom and Bride (the second Adam, 1 Cor. 15:45, and Eve, 2 Cor. 11:1) have a common parentage. Spiritually they acknowledge the one Father (Yahweh) and Mother (Abrahamic Covenant), so that the Lord Jesus is both the elder brother and Groom of the multitudinous Bride.

“Thou hast ravished my heart with one of thine eyes” — The R.V. mg. renders: “One look from thine eyes”.

The multitudinous Bride has been taken to various vantage points in order to view the promised inheritance. Each place is significant in itself, or in its past associations. As she views the Land, and considers what Christ has done for her, her heart overflows with love for him. Spontaneously, the great company of the Redeemed, constituting the multitudinous Bride, turn their eyes as one upon their Beloved, whose loving dedication has made their salvation possible, and who is the centre and foundation of the Divine purpose. Though comprising millions of eyes, they turn on him as one, with a look of affection and love: a look that gives him inexpressible pleasure and captures his heart.

“With one chain of thy neck” — The heeding of instruction is likened to a chain about the neck, or an ornament of grace (Prov. 1:9) and obedience (Prov. 25:12). As the Bride turns her look of ardent love on the Groom, this ornament of grace is seen upon her neck, and likewise impresses the Beloved. The love of the Bride has gendered the obedience she has manifested, and this, too, has captured his heart.

The Hebrew word *anak* (chain) has also the idea of “turning” and of “stretching out.” It is a characteristic of the Bride that she turns her face to her Lord, and stretches out her neck that she might better see and hear him. In this she is like faithful Ruth who followed Naomi back to the *House of Bread* (Bethlehem), and not like Orpah, whose name means “the back of the neck”, and who turned her back on her mother-in-law. In the Song, the Bride is represented as turning both neck and eyes on the Beloved in understanding adoration of all that he has done for her.

VERSE 10

“How fair is thy love, my sister, my spouse — Again the personal pronoun “my” can be eliminated, and the Bridegroom addresses his sister-spouse. And note that he commends her love on this occasion, and not

merely her person. Actually, all the attributes that he has praised stem from her love for him, for it is the greatest of virtues (1 Cor. 13:13).

“How much better is thy love than wine” — In Ch. 1:2,4, the virgins address the Bride and in similar terms commend her for her love. At that time she was disposed to disagree with them, and to confess that she was black and unattractive; but now her Beloved endorses their estimate of the worth of her love.

“And the smell of thine ointments than all spices” — See note Ch. 1:3. In Proverbs 27:9, ointment is said to rejoice the heart, “as the sweetness of a man’s friend” is increased by “counsel of the soul” (see mg.).

VERSE 11

“Thy lips, O my spouse, drop as the honeycomb” — This is indicative of the quality of her speech (Prov. 16:24; 24:13-14) which being associated with the Truth is likened to honey and the honeycomb (Psalm 19:10). Honey is a pure food, providing instant energy, and being soothing in its effect. The speech of the Bride is like that: both strengthening and soothing to those who receive it.

“Honey and milk are under thy tongue” — This is said to be the spiritual diet of the Lord according to Isaiah 7:15. See also Psa. 119:103; Jer. 15:16; Prov. 24:13-14; Psa. 19:14. Contrast James 3:9-10.

“And the smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon” — There is a fragrant, distinctive, penetrating aromatic perfume associated with Lebanon where its cedars still grow. The smell is the scent of the cedars, and they symbolise incorruptibility. Lebanon signifies “white” and the garments of the Bride are white (Rev. 19:8). Lebanon comes from a root *lebab*, “the heart,” and from this comes the righteousness of the Bride.

VERSE 12

“A garden inclosed is my sister, my

spouse” — The Hebrew word for inclosed signifies “barred.” The garden is barred, speaking of the state of virginity before marriage.

“A spring shut up, a fountain sealed” — These are terms all expressive of the virginal state of the Bride, though each of them has a special significance, thus:

The Garden — is enclosed, or separated. So the Bride must separate from the world.

The Spring — is shut up, or covered. So the Bride must be covered with Christ.

The Fountain — is sealed, bearing the mark of authority. So the Bride must bear that seal in a character that shows the mark of the Divine hand (2 Cor. 1:22; Rev. 7:24).

Separation, Sanctification, Dedication are the three steps thus indicated.

VERSE 13

“Thy plants are an orchard of pomegranates, with pleasant fruits” —

The pomegranate symbolises the redemptive work of the Lord Jesus. In our comment upon v. 3, we noted that they were on the hem of the high priest’s garment. In addition, the pillars which held up the temple had pomegranates on them (1 Kings 7:18-20), showing that Divine worship rests upon the sacrifice of Christ, without which there would be no approach to Yahweh. The pleasant fruits produced in this orchard are the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22).

“Camphire with spikenard” — Camphire is better translated “henna flowers.” (See note Ch. 1:14). They grow in clusters and yield their odour while in full bloom, therefore signifying the resurrection. With regard to the spikenard which is *with* the camphire, and not additional to it, see the comment on Ch. 1:12.

VERSE 14

“Spikenard and saffron” — Spikenard is mentioned twice because it is mixed with the camphire and saffron. Saffron is a beautiful yellow fragrant flower, speaking of the external glory of the Bride.

“Calamus and cinnamon, with all trees of frankincense” — Calamus is a sweet cane, pleasing to the taste, and in ancient times used with sacrifices (Isa. 43:24; Jer. 6:20). It speaks of the sweet disposition of the Bride. Cinnamon is a common spice, obtained by removing the outer bark of the tree, and peeling off the thin inner bark which provides the spice which gives a pleasant aroma and flavor to food. It portrays the inner sweetness of the Bride which matches her external beauty. Frankincense is obtained by cutting the bark of a tree with a knife. The fluid which penetrates the gash is that which is used as incense. As a type it speaks of sacrifice, which is a feature of both the Groom and the Bride.

“Myrrh and aloes with all the chief spices” — Myrrh comes from a word meaning “bitterness” and it speaks of the struggle against the flesh, which must be put to death ultimately. The Bride, like her Beloved, has succeeded in that. Aloes is styled “a tree of Yahweh’s planting” (Num. 24:6) to describe its glory. Its Latin name signifies the Eaglewood — one of the faces of the Cherubim, a token of immortal strength (Isa. 40:31), and a symbol of the Spirit. In India the tree attains a height of 120 feet and, according to Herodotus, in ancient times, it was considered of extreme value. Its wood yields a high polish and reveals a lovely grain. In addition, it was rich in oil. The perfume came from the inner centre portion of the tree; its very heart. It is represented as perfuming the clothes of the Bride (Psa. 45:8), and was used to embalm the body of the Lord at death (John 19:39).

When we count up the pleasant fruits of this Garden which represents the Bride, we find that there are nine enumerated. Significantly, there are also nine fruits of the Spirit which the virgin-bride of Paul’s epistles is exhorted to develop (Gal. 5:22-23). They can be aligned with the fruits of the Garden in the Song:-

Pomegranate (Heb. *Rimmon* — upright). With its wine-like juice, it symbolises Christ’s offering of *love*: the

first of the fruits of the Spirit (cp. John 3:16).

Camphire (Heb. *Kopher* — cover). The henna flower, pointing to the resurrection, suggesting the position of privilege which a believer has when he rises from the waters of baptism, and finds himself in fellowship with Christ. It answers to *joy* (1 John 1:4).

Spikenard (Heb. *Nard* — glisten). A most "precious" ointment, answering to that which causes us to glow in spite of frustrations and trials, namely, a *peace* that passes understanding (Phil. 4:7).

Saffron (Heb. *Karkom*). A glorious orange flower, revealing the beauty of the outworkings of the hidden heart. Paul's next fruit of the spirit is *longsuffering*, which can well answer to this flower. Longsuffering is shown to be a blend of patience and mercy (1 Pet. 3:20), or of forbearance and love (Eph. 4:2).

Calamus (Heb. *Qaneh* — erect). It is a sweet cane which was used in offerings, and an ingredient of the anointing oil (Exod. 30:23). It has its counterpart in *gentleness* (Psa. 104:34; 2 Cor. 10:1).

Cinnamon (Heb. *Qinnamown* — upright). As this is derived from the inner bark, it relates to the inner life or to *goodness*. The Greek word in Gal. 5:22 (*agathosune*) signifies manifesting good to others, but not necessarily by gentle means; therefore a goodness which is from within, and not necessarily appreciated by those without.

Frankincense (Heb. *Lebonah* — white). In the enumeration of the fruit of the Spirit, *faith* comes next and we can be sure, from Hebrews 11:6, that there can be no righteousness in its absence.

Myrrh (Heb. *Mor* — bitter). It speaks of death to self, and therefore is a counterpart of *meekness* which demands a similar sacrifice (James 1:20-21).

Aloes (Heb. *Analiym* — tents). It is described as a tree of Divine planting (Num. 24:6) so that it can be likened unto the tabernacle (tent) that was set up in the wilderness according to Yahweh's pattern. It answers to *temperance* or self-control which is an out-

working of knowledge (2 Pet. 1:6).

VERSE 15

"A fountain of gardens" — Rotherham renders this "a garden fountain." The Beloved describes his Bride in that way implying that she is capable of feeding others with the water of truth as she previously has been fed (Isa. 32:2).

"A well of living waters" — This is what Christ is to us (John 4:14), what we can now be to the world in preaching the Gospel, and what we will be in the Age to come. The Lord declared: "He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38).

"And streams from Lebanon" — These streams are formed of melted snow, the purest of water from heaven. In Jeremiah 18:13-15 this water is likened to the refreshing doctrines of truth as they come from Yahweh. See also Psa. 104:16; 92:12. As we have imbibed this cool, refreshing water of life from Christ, so we are equipped to channel it on to others (Rev. 22:1-2)

The Communion of Love — v. 16-Ch. 5:1

In the concluding portion of this section, the Bride prays that the vision of glory described in the earlier part may be brought to consummation. She prays for conditions that shall ripen the fruits to perfection, in order that her Beloved might not be disappointed in the Garden. The Song concludes with a statement from him, declaring that he has every confidence in her, for he has already gathered some of the fruit.

VERSE 16

"Awake, O north wind: and come, thou south" — It is the voice of the Bride speaking in prayer. She acknowledges that the winds are at the pleasure of Yahweh's will (Psa. 78:26; 135:7), and prays firstly that the north wind might be sent.

The latter-day invasion from the north (Ezek. 38:15) will figuratively accomplish this. It will play a part in the final consummation that will see the

Land cleared of the enemy and governed by the King and his consort. Therefore, the Bride anxiously awaits its coming.

The Hebrew word for north is *tsaphon*, and signifies "hidden," "dark," "unknown." It is from a root signifying "to hide" (by covering over), and by implication, "to reserve." It is the symbol of God's throne (Isa. 14:13-14), the place from whence the Cherubim emerge (Ezek. 1:4), and the coming judgment of the earth will originate (Isa. 41:25; 14:31).

Dan, with the standard of the eagle, was on the northern side of the Tabernacle, and his name means *Judge*. The north, therefore, was considered the place of Judgment from whence comes promotion.

To pray for the north wind to blow, therefore, is to pray for Yahweh to manifest Himself in judgment such as will drive away the present bleak conditions that exist for the saints.

On the other hand, the south wind is a pleasant, warm wind, very helpful to the growth of vegetation (Job 37:17), and therefore one calculated to ripen the fruits of the garden.

"Blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out" — The Bride realises that the fruits of the garden will not be brought to perfection until the warmth of spring drives away the cold of winter, and the warmth of the sun ripens the fruit. When that occurs, the garden will send forth a delicious odour of blended spices.

"Let my beloved come into his garden" — The garden is owned by both. First it is hers — "my garden," and then it is "his." This is a prayer on the part of the Bride for the Messiah to come!

"And eat his pleasant fruits" — They are "his fruits," because all the essential beauty of the Bride stems from his influence. Without him there would be no fruits of the Spirit, and therefore, when he views the perfected Ecclesia, he, like the husbandman who awaits the fruit of his toil, will be able to rejoice in the work of his hands. In that way he will "eat his pleasant fruits." There will be a mutual joy and

rejoicing between the Beloved and the Bride in the Age to come.

CHAPTER 5

VERSE 1

"I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse" — This is the answer of Christ to the prayers of his Bride.

"I have gathered my myrrh with my spice" — We have found that myrrh consistently relates to sacrifice, including the sacrificial death of the Lord. The Groom thus claims to have gathered to himself his perfected Ecclesia, all the members thereof being associated with myrrh, his sacrificial death, and having developed the fruits of the spirit.

"I have eaten my honeycomb with my honey" — Honeycomb is the sweetest part of honey. See note Ch. 4:11. In expressing himself in this fashion, the Groom is stating that he has experienced the benefit of the honey he has eaten. As far as Christ is concerned, this will be revealed in its fulness in the Age to come. Then, as never before, Yahweh's righteous servant "shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isa. 53:11). The Lord would never have succeeded except that he learned to eat the Honey of the Word in his youth (see Isa. 7:15), for the results of it were seen in the righteous life that he revealed before Yahweh. This example must be followed by the members of the multitudinous Bride, for they, too, need the strengthening, soothing influence of the Word.

"I have drunk my wine with my milk" — Yahweh offers "wine and milk" to those who are prepared to come to Him and buy "without money or price" (Isa. 55:1). The former rejoices the heart; the latter provides nourishment; both relate to the power of the Divine Word, of which Christ partook in common with the saints.

"Eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved" — This is an invitation to the multitudinous members of the Bride to "eat and drink

anew" with their Lord in the Kingdom. They are his friends who obey his commands (John 15:14); they are his beloved who do so faithfully unto the end and are incorporated into the perfected Bride. They are "the meek" who "shall eat and be satisfied" (Psa. 22:26), when the Lord "pays his vows before them that fear him" (v. 25).

Therefore, when partaking of the Bread and Wine, our thoughts should not be limited to the significance of the memorials as they relate to the present or the past, but should also take in the future. We need to recall that he has promised to eat and drink anew in the Kingdom of God. In that day, he will

provide "a feast of fat things" in Jerusalem, and "will swallow up death in victory" (Isa. 25:6-8). His "friends" are invited to eat and drink, as they were at his first advent (John 15:14). They are now given the additional title of "beloved," for the perfected Ecclesia is as a true Bride, invested with his own name!

It is significant that the Groom addressed the Bride as "beloved" in this context, because that is his title. In doing so, he completely identifies her with himself; they are one, as he prayed the Father they might be (John 17:21). She is his sister-spouse, and in consequence, bears his name.

The first section of the book ends with this Song. It commenced with the Bride filled with misgivings: black as the tents of Kedar, wandering blindly, a mere wild rose of the valley or lily of the field; it concludes on a note of triumph: receiving the praise of the Groom, ravishing his heart with her love, revealing the fruits in which he delights, and receiving the fulness of his praise.

This is the drama of Christ, the Ecclesia, the nation of Israel and the world. Out of darkest gloom and sorrow a great joy will come, and a great light will arise. The one who on Calvary's Hill cried: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me," will yet have all the world praise him. The Ecclesia whose foundation members fled from the cross in fear and frustration, will yet rule the nations in company with him whom they doubted. The nation of Israel which through unbelief has experienced sorrows surpassing those of all other nations, will yet attain unto the "first dominion" in the empire of Christ. The world which today blasphemes the Divine Name, and is filled with sin and evil, will yet reflect to the glory of its Creator.

How privileged we are to have been drawn nigh to an understanding of the Divine purpose, that we might see through the darkness that surrounds us to the glorious revelation that shall be ushered in at the coming of the Bridegroom.

PART 2

The Bride Selected from the Gentiles

(Comprising Songs 7-12)

The last Song was one of triumph and of rejoicing. The Groom and his Bride had unitedly viewed the promised inheritance from the northern precincts of the Land. From Lebanon and Hermon they had seen it stretched out before them as the glorious garden of Yahweh (Isa. 51:1-3). Then, in response to the request of the Bride, the Groom visited his own figurative garden, to enjoy its pleasant fruits.

The next Song, however, is of a different mood. The Groom is absent, and the Bride is confused and depressed. The Beloved comes and knocks at her door, but just as she sleepily arises to grant his entrance, he withdraws himself. Later, the Bride wanders about the city, ill-treated by the watchmen and questioned by others concerning her absent Beloved.

Why does a Song of doubt and depression follow the previous one of triumph and rejoicing? If we are looking for chronological order in the arrangement of the Songs this would be confusing, except on the basis suggested in the Introduction, namely, that in Songs 7-12 we have a second arrangement, repeating with variations the experiences recorded in the earlier one. The Bride is taken out of both Israel and the Gentiles, and this twofold aspect of the Bride is clearly represented in the Book before us.

“BEHOLD, I STAND AT THE DOOR AND KNOCK”

These words of Christ, addressed to the ecclesia in Laodicea (Rev. 3:20), could be drawn from the section of the Song of Songs, in which the Beloved describes how he knocked on the door of the drowsy Bride, who, however, failed to open to him until he had withdrawn himself. That is the section that now engages our attention. The Lord's statement, quoted above, is appropriate to it. In *Eureka*, Brother Thomas renders it in the past tense: “I have stood at the Door, and I knock,” and he comments in a manner that suitably expounds the Song itself:

“The door here referred to is evidently the ears collectively of those addressed. This appears from what follows, as ‘If any one hear my voice and open the door, I will enter in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.’ ‘Let Christ dwell in your hearts by faith,’ says Paul. Now for Christ to enter in to dwell there, and consequently to banquet there, his voice, which is the Truth, must first knock at, or sound, upon, the ears of a man. If a man does not hearken to the Truth, he keeps the door which leads to his heart, or understanding and affections, shut; and a faith-appreciated Christ cannot enter. The Greek sentence, I have expressed in translation, as, ‘I have stood at the door, and I knock.’ How long he had been standing there is left to inference; but in now sending this epistle to them through the apostle John, he knocked audibly. Some of them would probably not accept the epistle as genuine, especially as it was so little flattering to their vanity; but would give it the go-by, and attribute it to some pretender to Inspiration, as many do in our day, paying the Apocalypse little or no respect. Others however, among them might discern in it the voice of the Spirit, as we do, and give heed to it. In so doing they would set diligently to work as poor, blind, and naked men, to recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, and not rest content ‘until,’ by close study of the Scriptures, ‘Christ be formed in them’; and when so formed, they would hold that heart-satisfying communion with him expressed in the words, ‘I will sup with him, and he with me’.”

— *Eureka*, vol. 1, p. 414.

Song Seven

*The First
Advent Call
and
Espousal of
the Bride*

Chapter 5:2-6:10

2. *I was asleep, but my heart waked:
It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying,
Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled:
For my head is filled with dew,
My locks with the drops of the night.*
3. *I have put off my coat; how shall I put it on?
I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?*
4. *My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door,
And my heart was moved for him.*
5. *I rose up to open to my beloved;
And my hands dropped with myrrh,
And my fingers with liquid myrrh,
Upon the handles of the bolt.*
6. *I opened to my beloved;
But my beloved had withdrawn himself, and was gone.
My soul had failed me when he spake:
I sought him, but I could not find him;
I called him, but he gave me no answer.*
7. *The watchmen that go about the city found me,
They smote me, they wounded me;
The keepers of the walls took away my mantle from me.*
8. *I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved,
That ye tell him, that I am sick of love.*
9. *What is thy beloved more than another beloved,
O thou fairest among women?
What is thy beloved more than another beloved,
That thou dost so adjure us?*
10. *My beloved is white and ruddy,
The chiefest among ten thousand.*
11. *His head is as the most fine gold,
His locks are bushy, and black as a raven.*
12. *His eyes are like doves beside the water brooks;
Washed with milk, and fitly set.*
13. *His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as banks of sweet herbs:
His lips are as lilies dropping liquid myrrh.*
14. *His hands are as rings of gold set with beryl:
His body is as ivory work overlaid with sapphires.*
15. *His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold:
His aspect is like Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.*
16. *His mouth is most sweet: yea, he is altogether lovely.
This is my beloved, and this is my friend,
O daughters of Jerusalem.*

Chapter 6

1. *Whither is thy beloved gone,
O thou fairest among women?
Whither hath thy beloved turned him,
That we may seek him with thee?*
2. *My beloved is gone down to his garden, to the beds of spices,
To feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies.*
3. *I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine:
He feedeth his flock among the lilies.*
4. *Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah,
Comely as Jerusalem,
Terrible as an army with banners.*
5. *Turn away thine eyes from me,
For they have overcome me.
Thy hair is as a flock of goats,
That lie along the side of Gilead.*
6. *Thy teeth are like a flock of ewes,
Which are come up from the washing;
Whereof every one hath twins,
And none is bereaved among them.*
7. *Thy temples are like a piece of a pomegranate
Behind thy veil.*
8. *There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines,
And virgins without number.*
9. *My dove, my undefiled, is but one;
She is the only one of her mother;
She is the choice one of her that bare her.
The daughters saw her, and called her blessed;
Yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her.*
10. *Who is she that looketh forth as the morning,
Fair as the moon,
Clear as the sun,
Terrible as an army with banners?*

Song Seven:

THE FIRST ADVENT CALL AND ESPOUSAL OF THE BRIDE

Song 7 commences with a description of the Bride's condition, as she was found at the Lord's first advent, when he knocked on the door of the Jewish nation, and the door of the hearts of individuals, only to find them asleep. His visit aroused them from their slumber, but before they were properly aware of his true identity, he had withdrawn himself and was gone.

Next, the Bride is found in the city streets, ill-treated by the watchmen who seek her, so that she barely escapes their hostile hands.

Then she is asked why she considers her Beloved as being superior to others, and she provides a description of him which draws forth a further inquiry as to where he has gone, so that others may likewise seek him. The Bride explains that he has withdrawn himself. Her statement is followed by a message from the Groom, praising her beauty, which is echoed by a chorus of queens, concubines and virgins.

The Song, as allegory, provides in sequence the vicissitudes of the Truth from the first advent of the Lord onward.

1. The sleepy attitude of the Bride at Christ's first coming — she does not recognise his true identity — Vv. 2-3 (Christ's ministry).

2. By the time she does realise who it was that knocked at the door, he has withdrawn himself — Vv. 4-6 (Christ's withdrawal to heaven).

3. The Bride is molested — Vv. 7-8 (Persecution of the Ecclesia).

4. In answer to question, the Bride describes the beauty of the Beloved — Vv. 9-16 (Preaching the Gospel).

5. A further question and answer, where has he gone? — Ch. 6:1-3 (Response to the preaching).

6. A description of the Bride's beauty — Ch. 6:4-9 (Requirements to be developed in those who accept the Truth).

7. A chorus of praise — V. 10 (General acknowledgement of the virtues of the true Ecclesia).

Awakened to Divine Love — Vv. 2-6

The Beloved appears, but the Bride is too sleepy to receive him. She fails, at first, to recognise the caller, and when, at last, she realises that it was her Beloved, and she arises to welcome him, he has withdrawn himself. This part of the Song describes the condition of the Bride as Christ found her at his first advent.

VERSE 2**“I sleep, but my heart waketh” —**

This describes the sleepy expectation of the Bride prior to the first advent of the Lord. There was a belief that the Messiah was about to come, but an entirely wrong idea of the method and mission of his coming. “The people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ or not” (Luke 3:15). The fiery John captured the imagination of the people as to what the Messiah should be like. When Jesus preached the doctrine of non-resistance to violence and the sacrifice of self, the people did not want to hear it. They wanted a leader who would deliver them from the shackles of Rome, and did not realise that what they required was a Saviour who would sever the shackles of sin. “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11). Even the Apostles failed to understand the nature of his ministry (Luke 18:34). So the Bride was spiritually asleep, though her heart throbbed with expectation that the coming of the Beloved was near. In the terms of the Song: she slept but her heart was awake.

“It is the voice of my beloved that knocketh, saying” — There were some who heeded the voice of Christ though they were confused as to the real meaning of his teaching (e.g. Matt. 16:22). “My sheep,” he declared, “hear my voice” (John 10:27). He taught that his Bride would constitute those from both the Israelitish and Gentile folds (v. 16), and that, too, is the teaching of the Song of Songs, indicated by its division into two groups of six Songs each. What did the voice of the Beloved

proclaim? Paul summarised his teaching in the following terms: “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light” (Eph. 5:14).

“Open to me, my sister, my love, my dove, my undefiled” — This certainly summarises the message of Christ. Later, he repeated it to the sleepy Laodiceans, saying: “I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Rev. 3:20). He called upon the people to open their hearts to him, but few responded.

His appeal was not to the nation as a whole, however, but to those individuals within it who would answer to the titles of “my sister, my love” etc. We have already expounded upon these terms of endearment addressed to the Bride, with the exception of “my undefiled.” The word is *tam* in Hebrew and signifies “perfection.” It is to this that the Bride is called (Matt. 5:48). In Hebrews 10:1, the Apostle taught that the ordinances under the Law could not make the worshippers “perfect” (see also Ch. 9:9), for in the absence of Christ’s offering, they could not take away sins (Heb. 9:22; 10:4). In Christ, however, the offerings were completed, and sins were blotted out.

Further, the term “perfection” relates to maturity of conduct. The word is used in that relationship in I Cor. 2:6; 14:20 — *mg.*, and elsewhere. It is to a maturity in understanding and conduct that all believers are called (Gen. 17:1).

“For my head is filled with dew” — It is as though Christ appealed “I am outside, open to me!”

“And my locks with the drops of the night” — In a figurative sense, nighttime is when Christ is absent from the earth (John 9:5). Before he came, “the sun had gone down over the prophets, and the day was dark” as far as Israel was concerned (Mic. 3:6), and after he left the earth, night again descended.

VERSE 3

“I have put off my coat; how shall I

put it on?" — The Bride is pictured as lying in bed, reclining at ease. She has put off her coat to retire, and is reluctant to put it on again. That was the state of Israel at the first advent. Sloth, ease, and languor had largely destroyed the spiritual virility of the nation. The words of Amos 6:1 applied: "Woe to them that are at ease in Zion." Even the disciples of the Lord, those who will actually form part of the perfected Bride, did not understand the true mission of Christ, and thus failed to appreciate what was expected of them. They were reluctant to act as he would have them act, and only after his ministry had come to an end did they really recognise him for what he was. Baptism into Christ was required in order to be properly clothed (Gal. 3:26).

"I have washed my feet; how shall I defile them?" — This again expresses the reluctance of the Bride to rise and give her Beloved entrance into the house. She speaks in sleepy confusion, not at first properly recognising the one knocking at the door. How true is her attitude to that manifested by Israel after the flesh to the teaching of Christ. Like Paul, they considered themselves blameless (Phil. 3:6). In that sense, they had "washed their feet" (John 13:10). They were afraid that the teaching of the despised Nazarene would have a defiling effect upon them. That, indeed, was what the Jewish leaders said. They were reluctant to associate themselves with him, and even after Pentecost, the Apostles were hesitant to break completely with Judaism and the Temple.

VERSE 4

"My beloved put in his hand by the hole of the door" — Doors of eastern homes are usually fastened by a door-bolt, access to which is through a hole in the door. The Beloved tried to open the door by this means, but failed to do so. Apparently, it had not been left so that he could easily obtain admittance. The metaphor suggests the love he revealed for those he came to save, in that he tried to gain access to their hearts, in spite of the resistance that

the people manifested towards his appeal. He found the door of entrance closed to his teaching. This reminds us that Christ is limited in what he can do for an individual, if the latter is not prepared to co-operate.

"And my bowels were moved for him" — The R.V. renders this as "heart." The word in the Hebrew signifies one's "inner being." The noise that her Beloved made in vainly trying to open the door, disturbed the sleeping Bride. In her dreamy state it was borne home to her that it was her Beloved trying to obtain entrance. Immediately there was a quickened interest in her visitor. That was the case with Christ at the first advent. His work was not altogether fruitless. Though he found the door closed to him, in that his mission was not properly understood, he laid the foundation for acceptance of his message after he had ascended into heaven. Thus he delivered unto the Apostles, and to Peter in particular, the "keys of the kingdom," that they might open it up to all who would heed their message (Matt. 16:19).

Meanwhile, the potential members of the Bride were stirred up by the magnificent events that took place at the first advent of the Lord, even though they failed to fully understand his mission: "Art thou a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?" (Luke 24:18), the two on the way to Emmaus asked him.

VERSE 5

"I rose up to open to my beloved" — This answers to the awakening of the Apostles to the Truth and the things concerning the Lord, in preparation to preaching them to the people (Acts 1:1-8).

"And my hands dropped with myrrh" — Myrrh symbolises sacrifice, but how did the Bride get the myrrh upon her hands? By contact with the door. The Beloved had left it there. The fragrance of his myrrh, found upon her, was the evident token that he had been there. "We are," wrote Paul,

"a sweet savour of Christ" (2 Cor. 2:15).

"And my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh" — Literally, with "flowing myrrh." The Beloved had left a very distinct perfume; it could not be mistaken. It permeated the house, and particularly the door which the Bride now rushed to open to provide him access. But he was gone, and until he returned the Bride would shed bitter tears, the fast flowing myrrh (see marg.).

"Upon the handles of the lock" — It was left there by the Beloved when he attempted to open the door. The fragrance of Christ's presence at his first advent, as he attempted to gain entrance to Israel, remains until this day. When we open the door of our hearts to him, the fragrance of myrrh is found upon us.

VERSE 6

"I opened to my beloved" — The actual opening of the door can well foreshadow the dramatic events that took place at Pentecost, when the Truth was first proclaimed in the name of the Lord, and 3,000 people instantly accepted it and were baptised (Acts 2:41-47).

"But my beloved had withdrawn himself and was gone" — The application of this in a typical sense to Christ's ascension into heaven is obvious.

"My soul failed when he spake" — The R.V. renders in the past tense: "my soul had failed." The Bride is referring to the time when he knocked on the door and called upon her to open to him (v. 2). She is now conscience-smitten that she had been so dull of hearing. Her expression is similar to that of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus: "Did not our heart burn within us while he talked..." (Luke 24:32). See the warning of Proverbs 1:20-33 against the loss of opportunity. When Christ speaks to us, as he does in the Word (e.g. Rev. 16:15), let us heed.

"I sought him, but I could not find him" — This is similar to the expression of Ch. 3:1. See note.

"I called him, but he gave me no answer" — There was no audible answer such as she desired. Christ warned the Apostles, just prior to his death, that they would have to fend for themselves (Luke 22:35-37). Until then they were greatly protected from the world's hatred, and could receive personal instruction from him. That all came to an end when he was taken into heaven. Then, without him on earth, they became the mark of the world's hatred, and persecution.

Subjected to Persecution — Love's Anguish — Vv. 7-8.

The Bride ventures out into the city in search of her Beloved, and there finds bitter opposition and hatred.

VERSE 7

"The watchmen that went about the city found me" — As was the case in the previous Song, the lonely Bride occupied her time in activity (see Ch. 3:3). She went out into the city seeking her Beloved, and there came under notice of the authorities in charge.

"They smote me, they wounded me" — She suffered extreme hardship from them, such as had not been experienced before. It is obvious, from the Acts of the Apostles, that the preaching of the Gospel was attended with the greatest difficulty, and most bitter persecution. This became particularly so when that madman Nero ruled, and poured out the full extent of his hatred and venom upon the Christians, by the the most terrible atrocities committed against them.

"The keepers of the walls took away my veil from me" — The R.V. renders "veil" as "mantle". The Hebrew *radiyd* signifies a light upper robe. This was evidently torn from her as she struggled to escape her persecutors. Christ warned the Apostles that the world would hate and persecute them (John 15:18, 20), and that proved to be the case. Like the lonely Bride wandering around the city, they suffered physical violence from those who opposed the preaching of the Truth.

VERSE 8

“I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem, if ye find my beloved” — This suggests that the “daughters of Jerusalem” were likewise seeking for the Beloved. This, of course, is according to fact, for in the allegory they represent the individual members of the multitudinous bride.

“That ye tell him, that I am sick of love” — The Bride is faint with love, or love-sick. This has been the experience of countless members of the Bride who have “earnestly desired the coming of the day of God” (2 Pet. 3:12 — R.V.). The appeal of John: “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20), expresses their sentiments. And Paul declared: “We groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:19-23). In Apostolic times, when opposition was strong, and many believers were destitute, the desire for Christ’s coming was perhaps stronger than it is today. We live in an affluent society, when the abundance of material possessions can dull our need of him. They are “perilous days” (2 Tim. 3:1), when love can cool, and Christ’s second coming can become merely a matter of doctrine and not of feeling. Christ comes with a crown of righteousness for “all them that love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8). Let us generate that love by so elevating the prospect of Christ’s coming that it becomes something more real and personal than a mere doctrine to be taught to others, or only a clause found in a Statement of Faith.

Proclaiming the Beauty of the Beloved in his absence — love’s joy — Vv. 9-16.

The Bride in the city is asked the reason for her strange quest; in what way is her Beloved better than any other?

VERSE 9

“What is thy beloved more than another beloved” — How often has such a question been asked the love-sick Bride! What does Christ mean to you? Why do you sacrifice present advantage to serve him? Is it worth

while to separate from the pleasures of life, to please him? Many whose lives are governed by mercenary motives, want to know what we will get out of it all! The answer is, the love which we crave.

“O thou fairest among women” — The character of the Bride is thus acknowledged, and her very beauty excites interest in her Beloved. If she, who is so lovely, is prepared to wait for him, then he must have unusual qualities.

“What is thy beloved more than another beloved” — The repetition of the question indicates the great interest that is aroused.

“That thou dost so charge us” — The daughters of Jerusalem are interested to learn all they can about the Beloved, as the individual members of the Bride should attempt to do about Christ.

VERSE 10

“My Beloved is white and ruddy” — The Hebrew word translated “white” is from a root, *tsachach*, signifying “bright,” such as the shining of the sun (see John 8:12). In Revelation 19:8 this whiteness (a feature there of the Bride) is given as a symbol of righteousness and immortality.

He is also “ruddy.” His perfect health and abounding vigour (Lam. 4:7), is indicated by his rosy cheeks. It was characteristic of David the beloved, that he was “ruddy and of a fair countenance” (1 Sam. 17:42). The Hebrew word is *Adom*, similar to Adam, and therefore indicative of his connection with the human race. Thus the Beloved is represented in symbol as a Son of God (white) and a Son of Man (ruddy).

“The chiefest among ten thousand” — The figurative number of the redeemed is “ten thousands of saints” (Deut. 33:2). It defines a large but unspecified number (1 Cor. 4:15; 14:19; Psa. 3:6), so that it was said of David in comparison with Saul, that he had slain his “ten thousands” (1 Sam. 29:5). Of the ten thousand saints mentioned in the Song, one is chief, and it is

the Beloved. The margin renders "chief" as "standard bearer," and truly he has set the standard (Isa. 11:10) to which the wise in heart will flock. He is the Commander of the people (Isa. 55:4); the Captain of their salvation (Heb. 2:10); the conqueror of humanity's greatest foes: the grave and death (Rev. 1:18); the victor over all enemies of the Truth (Rev. 5:5).

In Revelation 19:11 he is represented as leading his armies, and in righteousness judging and making war. The captions on his standard are Faithful and True, the Word of God, King of kings and Lord of lords. It is significant that David was likewise described as the chiefest among ten thousand (2 Sam. 18:3), for he typed the Lord in his military conquests.

Interesting also, that the countenance of the multitudinous Son of man is said to be "as the sun shining in his strength" (Rev. 1:16). As the sun destroys darkness, so the Lord, in his military conquests, will dispel the darkness that at present enshrouds the world (Isa. 60:1-2).

VERSE 11

"His head is as the most fine gold" —

It is important to recognise that it is the head that is described, not the hair. The head is of gold, the symbol of a tried faith (1 Pet. 1:7). Faith springs from the intellect, from "hearing the word of God" (Rom. 10:17), whereby is developed "a confident anticipation of things hoped for, a full persuasion of things not seen" (Heb. 11:1). This, of course, Christ had to perfection (Heb. 12:2).

"His locks are bushy, and black as a raven" — The bushy locks are indicative of his separateness and consecration as a Nazarite (Num. 6:5). They are black, without any grey hairs therein, indicating changelessness. Of the Lord it is written: "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever" (Heb. 13:8).

But why the identification with the raven? At first sight it seems incongruous, for the raven was an unclean bird. With its harsh, weird croak and its

black plumage, men have looked upon it as a bird of evil omen. However, we recall that ravens brought food to Elijah in time of drought (1 Kings 17:6), and are specially-mentioned as birds which Yahweh feeds (Job 38:41; Psa. 147:9). The Lord drew a lesson from the ravens. He declared: "Consider the ravens: for they neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much are ye better than the fowls?" (Luke 12:24). Thus he compared his disciples with ravens.

All these features can be incorporated into the description of the Beloved with hair as a raven. He was of our nature, and therefore "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Heb. 4:15). That is a feature which it is ever necessary to bear in mind with regard to the Lord Jesus, otherwise we can divorce him completely from our own state of infirmity. He knows our weaknesses, our limitations; he has a fellow-feeling for us in our trials. Therefore we can approach the Throne of grace with confidence, realising that such an one as he will intercede for us.

He, like the ravens, was fed of God, and in turn fed God's persecuted prophets (Matt. 23:34). He was disliked because of his harsh indictment of the Jewish leaders, and was looked upon as a person of evil omen to the nation as a whole (John 11:49-50).

VERSE 12

"His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters" — See Note, Ch. 1:15. The eyes of the Bride and the Beloved thus reflect the same qualities of gentleness, faithfulness, innocence and so forth. The description here shows his eyes as sparkling and yet mild like those of milk-white doves, contented and happy, sitting by full streams of water.

"Washed with milk and fitly set" — His eyes are clear, and properly set (see margin), so that he is neither farsighted, seeing only things afar off; nor near-sighted, seeing only at short range. They are perfect eyes and properly focussed, so that he is able to take

in all requirements, and to pass correct judgment (see Heb. 4:12-14).

VERSE 13

“His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers” — This evidently is descriptive of the beard, which in Scripture, is a symbol of manhood and maturity. It is described as a “bed of spices” and “sweet flowers,” to indicate the pleasantness of his maturity. Despite his manliness, he was, and is, a man of compassion and love.

“His lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh” — The Hebrew word translated lilies is *shoshannah* which, according to some, is derived from *shesh*, “six” and relates to its six leaves. According to Dr. Strong, it is derived from *suws*, “to be bright and cheerful.” The word is used indiscriminately for several flowers, so that no certainty can be expressed for the particular variety. The “lily among thorns” (Ch. 2:2) is probably the *lilium candidum*, a six-petalled white flower that speaks of righteousness. The “lily of the field” is probably the *anemone coronaria*, a beautiful wild flower which paints the countryside with great splashes of purple scarlet, suggesting God manifestation through sacrifice. In this symbolic picture of the Lord, his lips are described as being beautiful in color and in shape. His speech (for the lips symbolise speech), declares the principles of God manifestation (John 17:26) which require the denial of flesh, and thus his words drop as a sweet fragrant perfume: “The flesh profiteth nothing; the words I speak unto you they are spirit and they are life” (John 6:63).

VERSE 14

“His hands are as gold rings set with the beryl” — Instead of “rings,” the R.V. mg. has “cylinders.” These could describe his fingers. They are “of gold” (a tried faith) set with beryl. The word “beryl” is *tarshish* in Hebrew, signifying “to break or subdue.” In the breastplate on the high priest, the beryl represented Dan (cp. Exod. 28:20 with Num. 2:25), whose name signifies, judge. The hands shall be used in judg-

ment, to subdue the nations. They shall also be used in the work of intercession. The Spirit declared of Israel: “Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands” (Isa. 49:16). Even now the hands of the Lord tell their own story of his labor in the work of redemption (Zech. 12:10).

“His belly is as bright ivory overlaid with sapphires” — Instead of “belly” we could read “body.” His body is firm and white, like ivory, with the blue veins (sapphires) showing through the skin. The word “with” is in italics, and can be removed. The ivory speaks of incorruption; it is as a robe of righteousness. The blue of the sapphires proclaims God manifestation (Num. 15:38; Deut. 22:12).

VERSE 15

“His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold” — Here are represented strength, beauty and stability, resting upon a foundation of faith. The Beloved is firm and dependable.

“His countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars” — The Hebrew word for countenance is *mareh* which means “stature” or “aspect.” The Bride now refers to the entire appearance of her Beloved. As Lebanon exceeds all other mountains in the Land for magnitude and for beauty, so he excels all other men. As Lebanon bears a snow-crown of righteousness, so he does of glory and majesty. Besides this, he is also “excellent as the cedar”. The word “excellent” is *bachar*, “to try, to select.” As the cedars of Lebanon were selected above all other trees, so was the Beloved before all else. The cedar is a tall and stately tree, an evergreen noted for its great age, and therefore a symbol of glory and eternity. Its timber was used in palaces and in temples (2 Sam. 5:11; Ezra 3:7); it is a fragrant tree (Hos. 14:7); and it was used for ceremonial purifications (Lev. 14:4; Num. 19:6); all of which can be applied symbolically to the Lord Jesus.

VERSE 16

“His mouth is most sweet; yea, he is altogether lovely” — Instead of mouth, we should read “taste” or “palate” which the Hebrew word *chek* signifies, and which is suggested in the margin. It is rendered “taste” in Psa. 119:103; Prov. 24:13; Song 2:3. The R.V. mg. supplies the word “speech” instead of mouth. He has a taste or palate for good things: “How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Psa. 119:103). Having partaken of this sweet food, he reflected its results in a way of life (see Psalm 19:9-11). “He gave us an example that we might walk in his steps; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered he threatened not; but committed himself to Him that judgeth righteously” (1 Pet. 2:22-25).

“He is altogether lovely”, declared his enamoured Bride. The word is in the plural in Hebrew, indicating that he has many attributes of loveliness, so that he is desirable in all his ways (John 8:46).

“This is my beloved, and this is my friend” — In Hebrew, “this” is emphatic. He is both Beloved and Friend; as she is both his Beloved and Friend. So there is mutual attraction, mutual love, and mutual confidence.

“O daughters of Jerusalem” — Thus those who form a part of the multitudinous Bride are invited to consider him (Heb. 12:2-3).

CHAPTER 6

**Explaining his absence —
Love’s Labor — Vv. 1-3**

In Ch. 5:9 the Bride was asked why she considered her Beloved as more desirable than any other. She responded by describing his qualities. Now the question is asked, Where has he gone that we might seek him!

VERSE 1

“Whither is thy beloved gone” — In proclaiming the qualities of her

Beloved, the Bride had virtually proclaimed the Gospel message. Now follows the question frequently received in preaching Christ to the people: “Where has he gone?”

“O thou fairest among women” — The beauty of the Bride (true Christian virtues) is recognised by seekers after the Truth, and it frequently draws them to look closer into the things of the Truth. Our characters can witness to Christ.

“Whither is thy beloved turned aside” — This seems to speak of quickened interest; they desire a very specific answer: Where has he gone?

“That we may seek him with thee” — This is the ardent desire of all believers, here symbolised as the “daughters of Jerusalem.” It is they who speak in this verse.

VERSE 2

“My beloved is gone down into his garden, to the beds of spices” — This is the answer of the Bride. Her Beloved has left her to tend his garden, and the beds of spices that it contains. In Ch. 4:12, the Bride is described as such a garden, with its trees and shrubs of spices. In what sense can it be said that he left her presence to look after the garden? In that the Lord ascended into heaven, to “prepare a place” for his disciples (John 14:1-3), and to tend their welfare that they might bring forth fruit to the glory of Yahweh. In Hebrews 6:7-9, his work is represented as cultivating herbs and destroying weeds and thistles. Though in heaven, his work extends to the earth, for he continues “to walk in the midst of the Ecclesias” (Rev. 2:1). Ultimately he will return to pluck the fruit of his garden.

“To feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies” — The word “feed” in its Hebrew form, *raah* can signify to feed himself or others. He is the chief shepherd (1 Pet. 5:4), and is ministering to the needs of his people (1 John 2:1-3; his object being, to gather lilies. As (Ch. 2:2) the Bride is likened to a

lily, the gathering of lilies can relate to the increase of her members.

VERSE 3

"I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine" — This is a re-echo of the triumphant words of Ch. 2:16.

"He feedeth among the lilies" — See Ch. 2:16.

Proclaiming the Bride's Beauty — Love's Delight — Vv. 4-9

The Beloved in a message to the Bride praises her beauty, and predicts that those who would oppose her will one day be forced to applaud her.

VERSE 4

"Thou art beautiful, O my love, as Tirzah" — Tirzah was a beautiful city, built on a high commanding position in the mountain range to the north of Nablus. Its name means *pleasant*, and it was used by the kings of Israel as a royal city before Samaria (1 Kings 15:21).

"Comely as Jerusalem" — Jerusalem signifies *Foundation or Vision of Peace*. It was considered as the perfection of beauty as far as cities were concerned (Psa. 48:2; 50:2; Lam. 2:15), and is used as a symbol for the Bride (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22; Rev. 21:9-10).

"Terrible as an army with banners" — One writer has commented: "The beauty of the Bride is overwhelming, it is subduing and all-conquering, like a warrior-host with flying banners going forth to victory ... It is not until Christ appears that the Bride is seen in her perfection. She hangs her head and complains while he is absent, but when he comes and reveals himself, delighting in his people, their beauty, which is a reflection of his, will shine forth as the sun for ever and ever. The word terrible is from the root *ayom*, 'to be impetuous,' 'to press impetuously upon,' 'to infuse terror,' 'to make start up,' referring to the flash of the eyes, the overpowering brightness of the countenance. So the purity and excellence of the Bride shall delight the Lord, and no earthly power shall be

able to stand before it" (R. A. Redford).

VERSE 5

"Turn away thine eyes from me" — The Lord is the object of the admiring gaze of his multitudinous Bride.

"For they have overcome me" — The RSV renders, "they disturb me." The concentrated gaze of the multitudinous Bride in love and admiration is calculated to do this. See also Ch. 4:9.

"Thy hair is as a flock of goats" — See Ch. 4:1.

"That appear from Gilead" — See Ch. 4:1.

VERSE 6

"Thy teeth are as a flock of sheep" — See Ch. 4:2

"Which go up from the washing" — See Ch. 4:2

"Whereof every one beareth twins" — See Ch. 4:2

"And there is not one barren among them" — See Ch. 4:2

VERSE 7

"As a piece of a pomegranate are thy temples" — The RSV renders: "like halves of a pomegranate", referring to the lovely, rosy complexion of the Bride, an indication of glorious Divine health.

"Within thy locks" — See Ch. 4:1.

VERSE 8

"There are threescore queens, and fourscore concubines" — This seems to express a Hebraism indicating the superabundance of queens and concubines, much the same as Amos speaks of three and four transgressions (Amos 1:3). These queens and concubines represent the sects of Christendom (Rev. 17:5; 18:7). They lay claim to Christ, but are not really his.

"And virgins without number" — According to the parable of Matthew 25, there will be those who have

embraced the Truth, but who will be rejected in that day, as being among the "five foolish virgins."

VERSE 9

"My dove, my undefiled is but one"
— She is absolutely unique; there is not one like her.

"She is the only one of her mother"
— If we eliminate the word "only" which is in italics, we hear the Beloved saying that she is "the one of her mother" — the unique one. The mother, is the Abrahamic covenant of Gal. 4:26; and she is the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31, of whom it is said: "Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all."

"She is the choice one of her that

bare her" — The Hebrew word *bar*, rendered "choice," signifies "be-loved," and is derived from a root meaning "clear," "bright." The Millennial morning without clouds, as well as the political sun and moon that will shine in that day, are also so described (2 Sam. 23:3-4; Isa. 30:26). The morning, the sun and the moon, and the Bride are all associated together, and will all shine forth with a common glory; they will all radiate light.

"The daughters saw her and blessed her" — Rotherham renders the latter portion of this line: "and pronounced her happy." They doubtless did so in envy, for they are the virgins of v. 8, who will fail to be incorporated into the multitudinous Bride. They are they whom the Lord referred to when he

The Ten Attributes of the Beloved

Ten is used in Bible numerics in the sense of completeness.

Skin — white and ruddy. Suggesting perfect health and vigor. The result of proper food (John 4:32), and the healthgiving properties of the Sun (Yahweh — Psa. 84:11).

Head — gold. He glorified the Father through faith (John 17:4), and is, in status, the head of the Ecclesia (Col. 1:18; 2:10).

Hair — bushy, black as a raven. Suggesting separateness (Num. 6:5), changelessness (Heb. 13:8), the ability to feel for the weaknesses of others (Heb. 4:15).

Eyes — as doves by the water. Mild, clear, bright, penetrating, sound. See Matt. 6:22; ct. Prov. 23:29.

Cheeks — as a bed of spices. Express healthful vigor and maturity, even though smitten by the world (Isa. 50:6; Mic. 5:1).

Lips — like lilies. Speaking of righteousness, and God manifestation through sacrifice.

Hands — as gold set with beryl. Faithful and strong in intercession and judgment (Isa. 49:16; Rom. 8:33).

Body — as ivory and sapphires. Incorruptibility clothing a character reflecting Divine Glory.

Aspect — as Lebanon and its cedars. Majestic, with a crown of righteousness, decked for eternity.

Palate — most sweet. A lover of truth (Psa. 119:103).

Summary:

Personality — Altogether lovely. Every excellent quality.

said to the Ecclesia at Philadelphia: "I will make them (of the synagogue of satan — rejected virgins) come and worship before thy (the Bride's) feet, and to know that I have loved thee" (Rev. 3:9). The words of the hymn will then be realised in their solemn truth:

*O then what fearfulness shall seize,
Those virgins who have lived at ease,
Nor thought the Bridegroom near!*

Let the solemn exhortation of this Song move us to prepare ourselves for his coming, by maintaining for him our first love.

"Yea, the queens and the concubines, and they praised her" — Those who are the bitterest religious opponents of the Truth today will be forced to acknowledge the Truth in that day, and confess that they inherited lies, vanity and things wherein there is no profit (Jer. 16:19). They will then praise those whom today they reject in scorn.

General Summary of the Bride's attributes — v. 10.

This verse seems to be a general chorus of praise anticipating that which the rejected virgins, together with the queens and concubines, will proclaim in the future as they will be forced to applaud the beauty of the Bride.

VERSE 10

"Who is this that looketh forth as the morning" — The morning is the Millennial dawn, which David desired to see (2 Sam. 23:3-4). Speaking in prophecy of his glorious Son, he declared: "He shall be as the light of the morning, when the sun riseth, even a morning without clouds, as the tender grass springing out of the earth by clear shining after rain." See also Mal. 4:2. The RSV renders the words of the Song: Who is this as "lovely as the dawn." It is significant that the Gentile onlookers (queens, concubines, etc.) ask the same question as their Israelitish counterpart in Ch. 3:6: "Who is this that cometh out of the wil-

derness?" Both Jew and Gentile will stand amazed at the beauty and the glory of the Bride in the future, and will recognise that they failed to make use of their opportunities to form part of her.

"Fair as the moon" — The pure white light of the moon, shining out of the dark vault of heaven, is the symbol of the true ecclesia in the midst of the darkness of the world. The moon preaches, teaches and prophesies. It preaches, for it has no light of its own, and must reflect that of the hidden sun if it would be seen; as the Ecclesia must reflect the light of the hidden sun of righteousness. It teaches, because the very fact that it is shining testifies that there is a sun, though men cannot see it; as the Ecclesia should proclaim the truths concerning the Christ in heaven. It prophesies, for it proclaims that there will be a tomorrow, inasmuch as it would have no light but for the light of the coming day being reflected on its surface. The moon, therefore, is as a "faithful witness in heaven" established there "for ever" (Psa. 89:37).

"Clear as the sun" — The glory of the Bride in the Age to come will be as dazzling as sunlight, driving away the gloom of night with all its dark shadows. Isaiah declares that "in the day of the great slaughter, when the towers fall, the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold" (Isa. 30:25-26). He was speaking figuratively of the shining forth of the full glory of the Ecclesia and its Lord in the political heavens that shall be established. "The righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of the Father," declared the Lord (Matt. 13:43), for they shall shine forth in Divine Glory.

"And terrible as an army with banners" — Thus there is a militant aspect about the Bride which is frightening to the powers of darkness. See note on v.4.

Song Eight

Anticipating His Coming

Chapter 6:11-13

11. *I went down into the garden of nuts,
To see the green plants of the valley,
To see whether the vine budded,
And the pomegranates were in flower.*
12. *Or ever I was aware, my soul set me
Among the chariots of my princely people.*
13. *Return, return, O Shulammitte;
Return, return, that we may look upon thee.
Why will ye look upon the Shulamite,
As upon the dance of Mahanaim?*

Song Eight:

ANTICIPATING HIS COMING

This is a very brief Song, following in thought the one we have just considered. The Bride has hearkened to the words of praise that she has received from her absent Groom, and as she meditates upon them she feels a great desire for his personal company. When will he come? In a reverie she considers the circumstances of her life, reviewing the signs of the times, and what they portend. She falls into a trance, and it seems to her as though the time of her pilgrimage is over, and she is riding in the princely company of the redeemed together with her Beloved. But then, suddenly, she is brought out of her dream by the voice of her attendant virgins who, shaking her, call upon her to awake. The Song closes with the virgins proclaiming what they would desire to see in the Shulamite, or Shulamith.

Love's Reverie — Vv. 11-12

The Bride, in fancy, visits the gardens of nuts, and imagines that the Groom has returned, and she is riding with him in triumph and happiness.

VERSE 11

"I went down into the garden of nuts

— The nuts to which reference is made are probably almonds, the only nuts used in the symbology of the Tabernacle (Exod. 25:33). The almond tree is called "the waking tree" in Hebrew, because it is the first to show blossom in the spring, thus pointing to the resurrection. It also symbolises Divine selection, because it was through Aaron's almond rod flourishing, producing blossom and almonds, that Yahweh indicated His choice of Aaron, and Israel was forced to acknowledge his authority as high priest (Num. 17:8). Jeremiah was shown the rod of an almond tree, and Yahweh declared: "I will hasten My word to perform it" (Jer. 1:12). The almond, therefore, symbolised Divine selection, was a token of the imminence of fulfilment, and as the waking

tree represented the resurrection.

The nut itself can teach important lessons. The outward shell is black, hard and coarse; but the meat inside is white, sweet, and highly nourishing, with an abundance of oil (spirit). This surely teaches that Divine selection is not based on the external appearance, but on that which is hidden beneath. However, the almond provided a further warning and exhortation, for there are bitter almonds as well as sweet. Thus not all who rise from the grave will be accepted.

"To see the fruits of the valley" — The RSV renders fruits as "blossom." She went to view the signs of the times. See Luke 21:29.

"And to see whether the vine flourished" — The RSV has "budded." She considered the development of Israel.

"And the pomegranates budded" — The RSV has "bloom." To view the progress of the pomegranates would be to consider the things of the Truth, the spiritual development of the Ecclesia, and the signs relating thereto (cp.

2 Tim. 3:1-5). If the pomegranates did not bud, it would signify that Christ's sacrificial labors had not brought forth fruit.

VERSE 12

"Or ever I was aware, my soul made me" — The RSV renders: "Before I was aware, my fancy set me..." Meditating upon the signs of the times and all that they convey, her thoughts took her into the future, and she experienced, as it were in a trance, the glory set before her. At that moment, she was like Paul: "We look not at the things which are seen, but the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18).

"Like the chariots of Amminadib" — The Hebrew word for chariots is in the feminine gender, and is the same word used to describe the chariot of the Cherubim in 1 Chron. 28:18; and in such places as Isaiah 66:15 and Zechariah 6:2-3. These chariots, therefore, were those that bore the Divine Glory. Ammi-nadib signifies "my princely people," so that the Bride fancied herself in the Chariots of Glory occupied by her princely people, riding forth in triumph. Although the RSV renders: "My fancy set me in a chariot beside my prince," "Ammi" signifies "my people." In any case, she visualised the coming Millennial Glory. But as her mind took in the vision with the greatest pleasure and joy, she was rudely disturbed in her reverie by the virgins shaking her out of her trance and bringing her back to reality.

The Virgins' Appeal — v. 13

They desire the Bride to arouse herself, to lift herself out of her dreamy reverie, that they might see her in her full beauty. They desire, above all things, to witness her glory.

VERSE 13

"Return, return, O Shulamite" — Shulamite is the feminine form of Solomon, and signifies "peace." His name has been conferred on the Ecclesia. The attendant virgins are represented

as shaking her out of her trance, rousing her from her dream, and calling on her to return to reality.

"Return, return, that we may look upon thee" — The virgins call upon the Bride to return from her reverie, to awake to reality and manifest herself in activity among them in all her beauty. It reminds us that we must be both meditative and active in the Truth, giving practical expression to the things we believe. In Christ the most menial tasks of everyday life can be elevated into acts of service to the glory of his name (Eph. 5:22,25; 6:1,5,6 etc.). The housewife or laborer can serve Christ as much as the speaker on the platform, provided the actions of all are prompted by a strong belief in the things promised by Yahweh.

"What will ye see in the Shulamite?" — As she comes out of her reverie, the Bride enquires of her virgins, as to what they would desire to see in her, what would give them the greatest pleasure.

"As it were the company of two armies" — The R.V. renders this: "As it were the dance of Mahanaim." The name of Mahanaim was given by Jacob to the place where he saw the company of angels, and gained encouragement from the sight in the face of his fear of Esau (Gen. 32:1-2). The name means *The Two Armies or Companies*. In Jacob's case, it comprised the heavenly host in conjunction with his own company. In the Son, however, it is the fusion of two companies, Jew and Gentile, into one multitudinous Being, the Bride of Christ. The Dance of Mahanaim comprises the marriage dance, the dance of triumph by these two companies of virgins who are as one. Such dances were common in ancient times (1 Sam. 18:6; Psa. 30:11). The virgins desired to see the Bride as the centre of such a dance accompanied by the two companies from the great families of humanity who comprise her members.

The Song ends on that note, with Bride and Virgins earnestly seeking the time of marriage when they will be united with the Beloved.

Song Nine

*The Glowing
Beauty of
the Bride*

Chapter 7: 1-9

1. *How beautiful are thy feet in sandals, O prince's daughter!
The joints of thy thighs are like jewels,
The work of the hands of a cunning workman.*
2. *Thy navel is like a round goblet,
Wherein no mingled wine is wanting:
Thy belly is like an heap of wheat
Set about with lilies.*
3. *Thy two breasts are like two fawns
That are twins of a roe.*
4. *Thy neck is like the tower of ivory;
Thine eyes are the pools in Heshbon, by the gate of
Bath-rabbim;
Thy nose is like the tower of Lebanon
Which looketh toward Damascus.*
5. *Thine head upon thee is like Carmel,
And the hair of thine head like purple;
The king is held captive in the tresses thereof.*
6. *How fair and how pleasant art thou,
O love, for delights!*
7. *This thy stature is like to a palm tree,
And thy breasts to clusters of grapes.*
8. *I said, I will climb up into the palm tree,
I will take hold of the branches thereof:
Let thy breasts be as clusters of the vine,
And the smell of thy breath like apples;*
9. *And thy mouth like the best wine,
That goeth down smoothly for my beloved,
Gliding through the lips of those that are asleep.*

Song Nine:

THE GLOWING BEAUTY OF THE BRIDE

In the previous Song, the virgins requested of the Bride that she dance the “dance of Mahanaim,” and the present Song expresses the praise of the virgins and the king in consequence of the Bride’s beautiful performance. When Jacob saw the angelic host, that caused him to name the place “Mahanaim,” he received a token of Divine protection that guaranteed him immunity from any attack from Esau, the profane man of flesh. The dance of the Bride is prompted by joy that she is likewise under such protection. Miriam and the women of Israel danced joyfully when they were baptised into Moses, and delivered from the wrath of Pharaoh (Exod. 15). In doing so, they praised the Divine Name and Goodness “in the dance,” singing “praises unto Him with the timbrel and harp” (Psa. 149:3). The virgins’ description of the Bride’s dance is perfectly chaste, and is designed to bring before the eye the lithe and beautiful movements of the dancer: the skill of her sandalled feet; the active, graceful bending of her body; the beauty of her form and deportment; the elegant synchronising of feet, arms, body and head, in harmonious movement. The Bride is pictured as “rejoicing in the Lord” (Phil. 4:4), and the virgins praise her for her elegance and skill (vv. 1-5). But, unknown to the Bride, her dance (which is stimulated by her love for the Beloved, and anticipation of approaching marriage) has been observed by the King, who sends a similar message of praise, this time for her beauty.

The Bride’s Deportment Praised by the Virgins — Vv. 1-5

It is obvious, from the reference to “the king” in v.5, that the first part of this Song comes from the lips of the attendant virgins.

VERSE 1

“How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O prince’s daughter” — It is significant that the virgins first praise the feet of the dancing Bride and the head last. They do so because they are observing a dance, and they realise that

the beauty with which it is performed, and the skilful balancing of body and synchronising of limbs, are dependent upon the correct placing of the feet. Of course the head directs the feet, but it is possible to have head-knowledge of a matter without giving practical application to it. The Bride is not like that. There is perfect synchronisation between head and feet, so that one works at the dictates of the other. One would almost imagine that the words of Isaiah were drawn from the Song, particularly as they are used by Paul: “How beauti-

ful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things" (Rom. 10:15). Here are beautiful feet working in conformity with a head governed by Yahweh. David declared: "The steps of a good man are ordered by Yahweh (Psa. 37:23). Again, "Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Psa. 119:105). Paul constantly exhorted concerning the walk in the faith (Rom. 6:4; Gal. 5:16; Eph. 4:1 etc.).

The feet are shod with shoes, or sandals. To be barefooted implies shame (Isa. 20:4), mourning (2 Sam. 15:30), and unreadiness to travel (Exod. 12:11). But the Bride has been delivered from shame, she rejoices before Yahweh, and she is ready to go with her Beloved as soon as he appears. She is praised, therefore, because she has beautiful feet, and they are beautifully shod (1 Thess. 2:12). Being "shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Eph. 6:15), she is deserving of her name, Shulamith, or *Peaceable*.

It is a Divine principle, however, that righteousness must precede peace (Heb. 7:2; James 3:17). The work of Christ will involve "rebuking strong nations," before his manifestation as "the prince of Peace," and in this he will have the assistance of his glorified Ecclesia. It needs to be equipped for "treading down the wicked" (Mal. 4:3), as well as taking forth the "everlasting gospel" (Rev. 14:6); and for both activities the feet need to be shod. The analogy of the first is taken from that of oxen beating out corn, with hooves shod with metal. Thus: "I will make thy hoofs brass; and thou shalt beat in pieces many people" (Mic. 4:13). That of the second, is that of messengers, with feet shod to travel into distant parts. Thus: "Feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Eph. 6:17).

She is described as a "prince's daughter," so she is of royal descent. This description of Shulamith is contrary to many interpretations of the Song of Solomon, in which she is portrayed as a lowly maiden, betrothed to a shepherd, whom the king vainly tries to woo from her northern home, by offers of wealth and splendour in his fabulous court at

Jerusalem.

Contrary to this, in our Introduction, and our comment on Ch. 1:9, we have suggested that there was some historical basis in the Song, answering to the experience of Pharaoh's daughter, who left Egypt to marry Solomon. We have suggested that this serves as a type of the Bride of Christ who likewise must leave spiritual Egypt to marry the anti-typical Solomon. Solomon's Egyptian bride was taken to Jerusalem, and a palace was built for her to dwell in, answering to the New Jerusalem of the Apocalypse. The fact that Shulamith is described as a daughter of a prince is in keeping with the circumstances, for Pharaoh's daughter likewise had that honor. Moreover, her experience was similar to that of the Bride in the Song, inasmuch as the other queens, concubines and rejected virgins are shown as being subservient to her, and made to sing her praises (Song 6:9-10).

So much for the type, what of the anti-type? In a spiritual sense, the Christ's Bride or Ecclesia can claim to be of royal descent, for she has been brought into being by the Father through the Son. In fact, believers are not only accounted as the brethren of the Lord Jesus, but also his children. Isaiah predicted that though cut off before marriage, "he shall see his seed" (Isa. 53:10); and Paul quoted the words of Isaiah 8:18 as applying to the Ecclesia: "Behold, I and the children which God hath given me" (Heb. 2:13). In that sense, the Bride is the daughter of a prince, and this is the very term by which she is described in the Messianic Psalm which is prophetic of the marriage of the King and his consort (Psalm 45:13).

Therefore, when a person embraces Christ, he or she becomes part of the espoused bride, and as such "the prince's daughter". The destiny of such is to "reign on the earth" (Rev. 5:9-10). This title of the Bride, therefore, describes the exalted position to which they have been called. These are the "princely people" of Ch. 6:12.

"The joints of thy thighs are like jewels" — This statement describes

the attractive appearance of the Bride's limbs, the beautiful symmetry of her body, which is a credit to her Maker. The word "jewels" is *chelyah* in Hebrew, and signifies a polished trinket. It thus suggests the smooth, well-rounded appearance of the thighs, and figuratively points to the words of Paul: "Loins girt about with truth" (Eph. 6:14). When that is the case, there will be no limping on the part of the Bride (Heb. 12:13). The lesson is emphasised by Paul in Colossians 2:19: "All the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered (by the Head), and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God." Again: "The whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love" (Eph. 4:16).

It is love that makes the joints function, and enables the body to co-operate. Without it, the Body of Christ becomes "stiff-legged" and awkward. Where love is manifested, difficulties are smoothed away, and the whole Body learns to co-operate: "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). As well-formed limbs contribute to gracefulness and ease of movement, so it is with the Body of Christ when the Head is governing every part.

That is what the Song is expressing as the virgins praise the graceful movements of the dancing Bride, and recognise how with each part of the body synchronises the actions that the brain orders. The joints (from a Hebrew root signifying "to turn about") through exercise have become pliable, and have been trained to perform the movements required in expert dancing.

What a contrast the Bride presents to Israel after the flesh, which has been "out of step" with Yahweh spiritually. Jacob, at the beginning, after he had wrestled with the angel all night, found that the encounter left him limping upon his thigh (Gen. 32:24-32). Israel

after the flesh has continued to wrestle with God during the long night of Gentile supremacy, and the nation likewise "halts upon its thigh." Yahweh, however, has proclaimed His intention of curing it of the affliction (see Micah 4:7; Zeph. 3:19). Wrestling with the angel of God caused Jacob to limp; but co-operation with Yahweh has made the thighs of the Bride beautiful, and fit to perform the work expected.

"The work of the hands of a cunning workman" — The word "cunning" is *aman* in Hebrew and signifies an expert workman. It is from a root that expresses the idea of faith, trust and truth. The Psalmist declared of Yahweh: "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psa. 139:14). The human body, in its marvellous working, testifies to the superb wisdom of its Maker. The same wisdom that built up Eve out of Adam also is forming the Bride out of Christ. Paul declares that the Ecclesia, is "buildd together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2:22). The Spirit-Word, moving powerfully in an individual, or an Ecclesia, will manifest itself in works to the glory of the Father.

The beauty of the Bride is a display of Divine workmanship through the Son. Paul declares that at present, we "have this treasure (the light of the knowledge of the glory of God) in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us" (2 Cor. 4:7). "We are his workmanship," he declares elsewhere (Eph. 2:10), "created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (see also Isa. 60:21).

But like the joints of the dancing, supple Bride, we must be pliable to His influence, and allow His Word to move us. Then, ultimately, we will form part of the Bride, and will contribute to the Bride's joyful dance.

VERSE 2

"Thy navel is like a round goblet" — Some consider such expressions as indelicate; in fact, many have turned from the Song because of such comments. However, there is nothing in the Song that can be classed as indeli-

cate when the spiritual meaning is discerned. Moreover, it must be borne in mind that it is the Virgins who are praising the Bride, and not the King (cp. v. 5).

We can, if we desire, substitute the word "navel" by the word "waist." In our Introduction, we quote the words of Dr. Matthew Good to that end. He states that the true idiom of the language requires the word "waist," though the strict etymological meaning of the Hebrew word is "navel." He comments: "The ancient Hebrews used the term 'navel' in some such sense as we describe the whole or chief part of the waist."

He suggests that when the exquisite elegance with which the ancients manufactured their vases, and the supreme blessing with which they regarded fertility are considered, the obvious compliment paid to the Bride will be appreciated, as well as the delicate language in which it is conveyed. The R. V. renders "navel" as "body."

However, accepting the strict meaning of the Hebrew word as signifying "navel," we find that the expression is referred to four times in Scripture: Job 40:16; Song 7:2; Ezekiel 16:4; Prov. 3:5-8.

The references in Ezekiel and in Proverbs are particularly appropriate to illustrate the significance of the term as used in the Song. Ezekiel shows how that Israel in Egypt had forgotten the Covenant of God and had incorporated the ways of the heathen. Spiritually, its mother was a Hittite, a nation given over to destruction (Deut. 7:1-3). What was worse, however, was that Israel had continued in the practices of its spiritual mother. In the language of the prophet, the people were told: "In the day thou wast born, thy navel was not cut..." In other words, there was not a severance from its Hittite mother; it continued to feed from the life stream of paganism, a source destined for destruction.

This is not pleasant language! But it graphically portrays the true state of Israel in Egypt before Yahweh, in mercy and compassion, saved the unattractive foundling child by severing it

from its mother, and so nourishing and caring for it, that it grew up to be an attractive young woman.

That is Ezekiel's theme: how different from the appearance of the Bride in the Song, "Her navel is like a round goblet." It had been carefully cut and sutured, leaving a round goblet-like cavity, testifying to the care lavished upon her at her spiritual birth, and in her upbringing.

The navel is the centre of life for the embryo. Through the umbilical cord the unborn babe is fed, thus affecting its future strength or its weakness. Reference to the navel implies careful pre-natal feeding and care, of which the present beauty of the Bride is the outcome. The expression, in the Song, emphasises the solemn duty of Ecclesias not to neglect the pre-natal care of those who are to be brought to birth through baptism. Good feeding at that stage will contribute to the healthy state of the child.

Whilst that relates to the individual members of the Bride, who have been brought to a spiritual birth, what of the Bride herself? In her case, the navel is an external sign of separation from the natural parent, and the commencement of independent life. Spiritually, the application is clear. The Bride revealed clearly that she had been severed from fleshly connections, and had developed a spiritual beauty and maturity that appealed to her Beloved.

"Which wanteth not liquor" — The margin renders "liquor" as "mixture," and the R. V. as "mixed wine." The reference in Proverbs 3:5-8 can help here: "Trust in Yahweh with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear Yahweh, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones."

Notice the "mixed wine" of positive and negative virtues which "brings health to the navel." There are five of them, and five is the number of grace. The application of these five principles will discipline the flesh, and bring it

into conformity with Yahweh's requirements. They are:

Positive: Trust in Yahweh with all thine heart;

Negative: Lean not unto thine own understanding.

Positive: In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths.

Negative: Be not wise in thine own eyes;

Positive: Fear Yahweh, and depart from evil.

In what sense can it be said that these will bring health to "the navel"? In the sense suggest by Dr. Matthew Good above, namely, that it is an expression denoting the whole body, much the same as "froward mouth" stands for boastful persons in Prov. 8:13, or "slow bellies" relate to depraved gluttons in Titus 1:12. As the navel is the life-line from the mother to the unborn babe, and carries all the sustenance necessary for a healthy embryo, so it is used idiomatically for the whole body in such places, being regarded as the centre of vital strength.

In ecclesial life, particular emphasis should be given to dispensing the "mixed wine" indicated above by clearly setting before members the positive and negative requirements of the Truth.

"Thy belly is like a heap of wheat" — The R.V. renders this as "waist." others have "body." The expression draws comparison with the "man of the one" of Daniel 10, who is representative of the multitudinous Christ in the Age to Come, and who expresses the masculine attributes of the perfect ecclesia. The body of this one is described as being "as the beryl." In the Hebrew, this word signifies "to break or subdue," and this is indicative of the work of the saints with regard to the nations. On the other hand, the Bride's body is like a heap of wheat, identifying her with the bread of life which she shall dispense to the nations in the Age to come. If she is to do that, however, she must herself feed upon the golden grain of faithful exposition now. She will then be nourished and built up, and competent to feed others.

The golden grain suggests the food of faith, and by its very color and quantity speaks of the healthful beauty and well-built proportions of the Bride. A heap of wheat is smooth and rounded, and thus provides an apt allusion to her feminine beauty.

The germ of the wheat is considered an aid to conception, and a corrective to barrenness in women. The symbol, therefore, also suggests the fertility of the Bride in bringing forth children.

"Set about with lilies" — In ancient times, on festive occasions, heaped wheat was decorated with flowers to bring out the better color of the grain, and, by the waving of the flowers in the breeze, to keep birds away. Throughout the Song, the lily is used as a symbol of those who are walking in the way of the Truth. The symbol, therefore, suggest that the Bride will bring to birth further children in the coming Age.

VERSE 3

"Thy two breasts are like two young roes" — See note, Ch. 4:5.

"That are twins" — See note, Ch. 4:5.

VERSE 4

"Thy neck is as a tower of ivory" — See note Ch. 4:4. Gleaming white, polished ivory, symbolises unbending strength, and incorruptible righteousness. The Bride is pictured in stately glory, with head erect, looking for the coming of her Lord (Luke 21:28). This is how she is seen through the eyes of the virgins. She describes herself as black (Ch. 1:5); as bending over the vines in unprofitable vineyards, with the sun beating down upon the back of her neck, causing it to become discolored and swarthy. She was very self-conscious of this state, even though the virgins had then reassured her that she was "comely, as the curtains of Solomon." Now they again praise her. She is not black, but gleaming white, with head set upon a stately neck, looking for her Lord.

"Thine eyes like the fishpools in

Heshbon, by the gate of Bath-rabbim"

— The eyes are the symbol of intelligence, providing an index to the mind. Bright eyes speak of an alert mind; thoughtful eyes of a meditative one; red eyes of excessive self-indulgence (Prov. 23:29). The Bride's eyes are thoughtful and contemplative. They are "like the fishpools in Heshbon," suggesting deep, quiet, calm waters reflecting the glory of heaven. Heshbon was noted for an excellent spring which made it an extremely desirable location; it may have been the waters of the spring that fed the fishpools to which reference is made. Heshbon signifies reason, intelligence, or "who hasteth to understand." It was once in possession of the enemies of Israel, for Sihon was called the "king of Heshbon." Taken by Moses in conquest (Num. 21:23-26), it became a Levitical city (Josh. 21:39), and is therefore most appropriately used in connection with the Bride. She has been taken in conquest by a greater than Moses, and constituted a royal priesthood (Rev. 5:9-10). Bath-rabbim signifies *Daughter of many, or a multitude*. Eyes, water, Heshbon, gate, Bath-rabbim indicate the steps whereby the multitude is developed. The "eyes" contemplate and perceive; the water, through baptism, reflects the glory of heaven; Heshbon suggests increasing in knowledge (Col. 1:9); and Bath-rabbim shows the result: a portion with the multitude.

"Thy nose is as the tower of Lebanon" — The tower of Lebanon was evidently a projection of admirable proportions, elegance and prominence, particularly in view of the mountain on which it was situated. As such it was a fit comparison with the well-shaped nose of the Bride. Leviticus 21:18 lists a flat nose as a defect that would disqualify a priest from serving; perfection of the body being typical of perfection of the mind.

But why should the flat nose disqualify a man for priestly services? In the Song we have the clue. The Bride's nose was likened to the tower of Lebanon, part of the fortification which

kept an eye on hostile Damascus. Her nose can discern danger. She discerns that there is need to keep awake and alert against danger from within or without (2 Tim. 3:1; Matt. 25:13; 1 Thess. 5:6). She can smell the difference between genuine sacrifice and pseudo-sacrifice. Paul teaches that Christ has given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God "for a sweetsmelling savour" (Eph. 5:2). The Bride has a nose that is constantly smelling the odour of that burnt-offering, which gives her both re-assurance, an incentive, and a sound example.

"Which looketh toward Damascus"

— Damascus is said to signify a *Sack of Blood* — Damascus is a Gentile city, that has ever been a stronghold of the enemies of Israel, and therefore, has shed the blood of saints. Its name, *sack of blood*, is indicative of the character of the enemies of spiritual Israel. Among those whose blood has been shed by such is that of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Bride is conscious of this, and also of her past state as a Gentile. Her nose, therefore, is turned towards Damascus, not only because of the danger that could come from that direction, but also to recall that she herself was once among the Gentile enemies of the Lord though she has been delivered from such by his shed blood. She well recalls the exhortation of Ephesians 2:11-13: "Remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh ... now ... are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

VERSE 5

"Thine head upon thee is like Carmel" — Carmel means "fruitful," and this mountain range abounds with trees and rich vegetation, products of rich soil watered by the rains of heaven. The Bride is likened to Carmel as she is to be found "fruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:8). The expected increase develops from a mind that is given to Yahweh's Word (Isa. 55:8-11). Moreover, as the headland of Carmel stands majestically looking out to sea, so the Bride is displayed with head proudly erect, look-

ing for her Lord. Isaiah likens “the glory of Lebanon and the excellency of Carmel” to “the glory of Yahweh, and the excellency of our Elohim,” or the saints (Isa. 35:1-2), so that it is appropriate that these expressions should be applied to the Bride.

“And the hair of thine head like purple” — Purple is a combination of blue and crimson, speaking of God manifest in the flesh (see Num. 15:38; Isa. 1:18). It is, as we have seen, the color of royalty, for those who reveal God in their lives, testify that they are spiritually of royal descent (Rev. 5:9-10). The word for hair in this verse is *dallah*, and is different from that used elsewhere. It signifies something dangling, thus, either long hair or curls. Whatever it is, it indicates hair that has been cared for, and it is attractive to the king. Long hair, of course, speaks not only of subjection, but of glory and strength (1 Cor. 11:15; Judges 16:17).

Such will be manifested by the true Bride.

“The king is held in the galleries” — The king is held spellbound (see margin) by the beauty of the Bride’s tresses (R.V.). Rotherham renders: “The king is held captive by the ringlets.” If the Bride is careful about her hair (by manifesting strength in subjecting her will to that of the Lord), the King-Messiah will undoubtedly be held captive by her tresses. She will fulfil all his desire, and he will take her unto himself.

The Bride’s Beauty Praised by the Groom — Vv. 6-9

The Bride receives a message of encouragement and warning from the absent king. Beautiful as she is in the opinion of the virgins, she still awaits the final perfection and elevation which the king will grant her (see Eph. 5:27).

VERSE 6

“How fair and how pleasant art thou” — She is fair in appearance and pleasant in manner; so her character graces her beauty.

“O love, for delights” — The Heb-

rew word for “delights” is from a root signifying “to be soft, pliable, feminine, delightful.” The king observes in her the qualities he desires. And what are those qualities? In the *Law of Moses* Brother Roberts sums them up by saying: “Man is for strength, judgment and achievement; woman is for grace, sympathy and ministration. Between them they form a beautiful unit: ‘heirs together of the grace of life’.” These qualities are seen to perfection in the King and his Consort, so that she delights in him; and he in her.

VERSE 7

“This thy stature is like to a palm tree” — The Palm is tall and upright; constantly green and flourishing (Psa. 92:12). Thus, as the Palm stands erect above other trees, so does the Bride above all others. The palm takes forty years to reach maturity (in Bible numerics, forty is the number of probation), and by that time it might be 100 feet in height, tall and graceful. It will continue to bear crops for 150 years, after which a slow decline will set in. There are male, or pollen-bearing trees, as distinct from the female or fruiting trees. See *Plants Of The Bible*. The Palm is noted for:

Uprightness — Being tall and straight.
Usefulness — Every portion being used. The fruit is nourishing and medicinal; the stone of the date is used as feed for camels; the leaves provide the material for thatching roofs, or weaving into mats; the fibres are manufactured into ropes and rigging; the juice supplies both sugar and liquor; and what remains furnishes fuel.

Beauty — Being elegant and admirable for decorative purposes.

Strength — Conquering the desert in spite of its choking sand, burning heat, limitation of water, and fierce tempests.

Stability — Having a deep tap root that penetrates far into the soil, anchors the trees, and searches deep for the water of life.

Fruitfulness — Providing the staff of

life to the people of the desert.

Guidance — Being a sure indication of the presence of water.

Permanence — Bearing fruit longer than most trees. The palm is noted for its longevity.

Victory — Representing to Israel the symbol of victory, peace and rejoicing (Lev. 23:40; John 12:13; Rev. 7:9).

God-glorifying — Having special mention in connection with Divine worship in the future, and being likened to the righteous (Psa. 92:12).

“And thy breasts to clusters of grapes” — The words “of grapes” are in italics, and should be eliminated. The R.V. renders: “And thy breasts like its clusters.” The reference is to the clusters of dates, the fruit of the palm, which are among the most nourishing of foods.

VERSE 8

“I said, I will go up to the palm tree”

— The R.V. renders: “I will climb up into the palm tree.” The king announces his intention of visiting the palm to prune its branches, so that it might be improved in beauty. As the branches of the palm are at the top of the tree, it means that he must laboriously climb to where he can catch hold of them. The king is anxious that the Bride should look her best for her approaching marriage (Eph. 5:27), and therefore is prepared to do all within his power to assist her, even though it demands great effort on his part.

“I will take hold of the boughs thereof” — To dress or prune them. Christ has warned that even though we might bring forth fruit, the Divine husbandman will purge or prune us that better fruit might be obtained (John 15:2). Then he added a comment which often is not properly grasped because of the A.V. rendering. He declared: “Ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you” (v. 3). In the Greek, however, the word “clean” is from the same root as “purgeth” or prunes. If we take heed of the Word spoken by Christ, our actions will be pruned. Figuratively, he will have taken hold of our branches and tended

them, that the fruit which we might already be producing to the glory of the Father, might be improved. It will be improved if we heed and apply that Word.

“Now also thy breasts shall be as clusters of the vine” — “Now” signifies as a result of this care and attention. But why are the breasts now likened to clusters of the vine? Because of the wine that is produced therefrom, which “rejoiceth the heart of God and man,” and reveals a new life. See note on Ch. 1:2. As the result of the careful tending of the King, the food that the Bride can offer her progeny will be greatly improved. She will have richer milk for their sustenance, a milk that will draw them to the basic facts of Christ’s offering (1 Pet. 2:2), and which, therefore, will be as wine to them. Only by submitting to the careful tending of the Divine husbandman will we find ourselves in the position that we can give this rich milk unto the babes that are in our care.

“And the smell of thy nose like apples” — The R.V. renders: “The smell of thy breath like apples.” The Hebrew word is “nose,” but it is a word that can be used for breath, and this rendition has been retained in the RSV. In chapter 2:3, the Bride likened her Beloved to an apple (orange) tree; in Ch. 2:5, she expressed her desire to be comforted with the fruit; and now the Groom testifies that she has partaken of it (i.e. of Christ for he is the apple or orange tree). The Beloved says to the Bride: “Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day” (John 6:54). To eat of him in that fashion is to absorb into our very being the principles for which he stands, so that they find expression in our lives. When that happens, our breath is, as it were, affected by the pleasant aroma of the orange fruit; people become conscious of Christ’s influence in us, as they “took knowledge” of the Apostles “that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

VERSE 9

“And the roof of thy mouth like the best wine” — Instead of “the roof of thy mouth,” the R. V. mg. has “palate.” The Bride has developed a taste for good things, likened by the Beloved unto “the best wine.” He rejoices that she is sufficiently discerning to “refuse the evil and choose the good” (Isa. 7:15), so that her tastes are in conformity with his (see Note Ch. 5:16). An example of this is found in the action of Mary and Martha. Both wanted to please the Master: the former by sitting at his feet and hearing his words; the latter by busying herself preparing an elegant meal for him. What gave him the greatest joy? The palate of Mary. It stimulated and rejoiced his heart like the best wine. “Mary has chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her,” he told the indignant Martha. We please Christ by making a similar choice. If he sees that we have developed a taste for the things that he delights in, he will look upon us with the greatest pleasure, both now and in the Age to come.

“For my beloved that goeth down sweetly” — The R. V. renders this a little more clearly: “That goeth down smoothly for my beloved.” The Groom calls the Bride his Beloved, thus addressing her in the same way as she does him. Both find pleasure in the same things. It is like the best wine to him to see that she has a kindred love of the things in which he rejoices. This, of course, lends itself to true fellowship. We rejoice together when we view matters with a single eye, and when our tastes are the same. Thus the Groom finds pleasure in the Bride because her palate is such that she “hungers and thirsts after righteousness” (Matt. 5:6). Such wine “goeth down smoothly,” and rejoiceth his heart.

An alternative to this is provided by Rotherham, on the basis that nowhere else in the “Songs” is the term “beloved” used of the Bride. The Hebrew

dowd is essentially a Masculine term, and is reserved for the Groom, except in 5:1 where he refers to his “friends” as his “beloved”. So Rotherham credits v. 6 to v. 9 as spoken by the Groom to “and thy mouth like good wine” — then shows the Bride as interjecting “flowing to my beloved smoothly.”

On this understanding, her words, spoken faithfully, are to him as “best wine”, gladdening his heart, and calculated to waken the “sleepers” to imitate her demeanor and her activity.

“Causing the lips of those that are asleep to speak” — There are those who “sleep” spiritually (1 Cor. 11:30). Thus Paul exhorted: “Awake thou that sleepest ... and Christ shall give thee light” (Eph. 5:14). He endeavoured to awaken the sleepy members of the Bride to their need to testify to the things of Christ. He continued: “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” The precept and example of such can awaken sleepy members to their responsibilities, so that they are roused from their slumber, and speak the words of Christ.

We must never deprecate the power of a good example; its influence can be wider than we imagine. Certainly words of exhortation are enforced by an application of them in action. Paul could write: “Thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience,” and so forth. His example aroused Timothy and others to emulate it, so that they, in turn could teach others. To the Thessalonians, he wrote: “You became followers of us, and of the Lord” (1 Thess. 1:6). Again: “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ”, (1 Cor. 11:1). He had developed a taste for the things of Christ, and would have others do likewise. The Groom, recognising these qualities in the Bride, highly praised her for them. They were as the “best wine” to him.

Every commentator that we have consulted, both from within and without the Ecclesia, both among the wise and the unwise, has interpreted the above Song as relating to a time when the marriage has taken place, or the Groom has returned to his Bride. A careful consideration of it, however, convinces us that it relates to a period of waiting, giving opportunity to perfect the Bride by the “pruning” action of the Word (V. 8), and to awaken those who “sleep.” The Bridegroom’s message to us today is: “Behold I come as a thief, blessed is he that watcheth (i.e. keeps awake) and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame” (Rev. 16:15). That message is dictated to this generation of Christadelphians, and can apply to no other to the same extent. It is a personal message from the Bridegroom to the Bride, affording her the opportunity of arousing the sleepy; in application of Paul’s exhortation: “Let us not sleep as others, let us watch (keep awake) and be sober” (1 Thess. 5:6-8). The Apocalypse records personal messages from Christ to every generation of believers, from the messages to the Ecclesias of the first century (Chps. 2,3), to the words of encouragement delivered to those who endured the persecution of Rome in the Dark Ages (Ch. 13:9-10), and the rousing words of exhortation (Ch. 16:15) to the present generation who see the signs of the times that speak of the gathering crisis. Significantly, the Apocalypse then moves on to speak of the “marriage of the Lamb” with those who, having heard his warning message, “have made themselves ready” (Rev. 19:7).

Song Ten

The Bride's Deep Longing and Ardent Desire for the Groom's Return

Chapter 7:10-8:4

10. *I am my beloved's
And his desire is toward me.*
11. *Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field;
Let us lodge in the villages.*
12. *Let us get up early to the vineyards;
Let us see whether the vine hath budded, and its
blossom be open,
And the pomegranates be in flower:
There will I give thee my love.*
13. *The mandrakes give forth fragrance,
And at our doors are all manner of precious fruits,
new and old,
Which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved.*

Chapter 8

1. *Oh that thou wert as my brother,
That sucked the breasts of my mother!
When I should find thee without, I would kiss thee;
Yea, and none would despise me.*
2. *I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's
house,
Who would instruct me;
I would cause thee to drink of spiced wine,
Of the juice of my pomegranate.*
3. *His left hand should be under my head,
And his right hand should embrace me.*
4. *I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem
That ye stir not up, nor awaken love,
Until it please.*

Song Ten:

THE BRIDE'S DEEP LONGING AND ARDENT DESIRE FOR THE GROOM'S RETURN

There is a note of expectancy and joy in this Song as the Bride contemplates the consummation of her hopes in the imminent return of the Bridegroom. She has confidence in his love (v. 10), and therefore prays for his coming. She anticipates with pleasure the mutual labor they will engage upon at that time (Vv. 11-12), and reminds him that the time is ripe for his return (v. 13). Her love for him is pure. It is like a sister's love for a dearly beloved brother (Ch. 8:1-2): fraternal, affectionate, deep-seated, intimate. She desires his embraces (v. 3), but again warns that such love as she desires must not be artificially stimulated (v. 4).

This Song, therefore, follows the preceding Songs in correct sequence, telling the story of mutual love, and of romance for eternity.

She pleads for him to come quickly — Vv. 10-13

The message she received from the Groom has deepened her feelings and desire for him. She longs for the consummation of her hope to be joined in perfect union with him whose principles she has faithfully taught and upheld, during his absence. She yearns for the time when she will be united with him as one and thereafter rejoice in mutual work that is as yet set before them.

VERSE 10

“I am my beloved’s” — This is a reiteration of the words spoken in Ch. 6:3. After listening to the Groom’s glowing message of admiration, the Bride has full assurance of faith, knowing that she is his, and his forever. The confident words she uses find echo in Paul’s statement in Romans 8:31-39, and are applicable to saints of all ages, for nothing can separate us “from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our

Lord,” except it be ourselves. Both God and Christ desire our salvation, and are working for it, wrote the Apostle, and only our failure to utilize that love will cause us to lose it.

“And his desire is toward me” — He has selected her above all others, to be his Bride. As we have indicated in our Introduction, this statement, like that of Ch. 4:7, provides a key to the interpretation of the book. The Bride has already confessed her total dedication to her Lord (Ch. 2:16; 6:3), and now she uses language that links the marriage with the Covenant made to Eve. The word “desire,” *teshuwqah*, occurs only in Gen. 3:16; 4:7, and here. In those places, it is rendered “return” by the Septuagint, and “restoration” by the Concordant translation. The Hebrew word is derived from the root *shuwq*, “to run after or over, i.e. to overflow as in water.” But what is the “desire”? Notice that in neither Genesis 3:16 nor here is it a desire

“for” the other, but “to” or “toward” the other party. The same word is used in Genesis 4:7, and obviously relates to the exercise of the status of first-born by Cain on the behalf of his brother. In that regard, some read *teshuwbah*, return instead of *teshuwqah*, and so the Concordant translates Genesis 3:16: “By your husband is your restoration and he shall rule over you.” The Syriac translation has “return.” The Septuagint renders it by the Greek word *apostrophee*, “a turning oneself, an escape or a place of refuge from evil, a resource against the want of water, a means of getting it.”

An equality originally existed between Eve and her husband, as Adam recognised when he said to God: “The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, gave me of the tree” (Gen. 3:12). But in consequence of her sin, Eve was made subject and dependent upon her husband, who, in his declaration, assumed no responsibility for her action. Eve’s inferior position has been the status of women ever since.

However, Paul taught that in Christ there is a restoration of oneness. We experience that initially at baptism, for no matter of which sex we might be, we are then made personally responsible to Christ (Gal. 3:28). But the “oneness” there indicated, is but a token of the complete restoration in the future, when Christ’s prayer will be fulfilled, that he and the Father might be one with the Bride (John 17:21), and when, taking her to himself, he will acknowledge that they are “one flesh” (Eph. 5:31). Meanwhile, the second Eve remains in subjection to her husband (1 Tim. 2:11-12; Eph. 5:22; Col. 3:18).

When the Bride exclaims: “His desire is toward me,” she means that the promised restoration is directed to her, that she has been chosen to enjoy this privilege. It is significant, that immediately upon making this statement, she launches into a description of labor to be performed in mutual co-operation: “let us go forth,” “let us lodge,” “let us get up early,” “let us see.” When her Lord returns she shall be united to him, and will experience that glorious unity promised, including

a restoration of that state of fellowship and equality that existed before sin entered into the world.

When that complete unity has come, the words of 1 John 3:2 will have been fulfilled: “We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him (we shall share his likeness); for we shall see him as he is.” In this statement, the word “appear” does not signify the act of coming, but visible manifestation. The word in the Greek is *phaneroo*, and it signifies to be publicly revealed, or made manifest.

That Christ’s desire is towards his Bride was shown when he was about to dispense the bread and the wine. He declared: “With desire I have desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer” (Luke 22:15). He did so because he realised that the restoration of his people to the glorious unity which he desired (John 17:21) was only possible through this means. When it is brought about, the words of Isaiah 53 will be realised: “He shall see the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied.”

In declaring “I am my Beloved’s,” Shulamith is acknowledging that she is the Father’s gift to the Son, as Eve was to Adam; a gift that the Son has warmly received in love. In her statement, “His desire is towards me,” she acknowledges all that he has done on her behalf that she, who is conscious of sin, might attain the restoration of the glorious unity that existed before sin entered the world.

A similar restoration was described by Hosea, when he predicted the coming “marriage” of Yahweh with Israel after the flesh. “And it shall be at that day, saith Yahweh, that thou shalt call me Ishi; and shalt call me no more Baali” (Hos. 2:16). Ishi is a term of love, Baali a term of subjection and fear. Both terms are applied to husbands; but the former one signifies “my man,” as against “my lord.” Under the terms of the new covenant (Ezek. 36:25-29), Yahweh will be looked upon by Israel in the former light, whereas under the old Covenant, he was looked upon as “lord.” The use of the term Ishi implies her elevation to a high status,

the status of oneness now enjoyed by saints in Christ Jesus.

VERSE 11

“Come my beloved, let us go forth into the field” — This is a prayer pleading for Christ to return, such as has been echoed by saints throughout the ages (Hab. 1:2; Rev. 6:10). Shulamith is anxious to co-operate with her Beloved in his Millennial duties, recognising that “his reward is with him, and his work before him” (Isa. 40:10). “The field,” explained the Lord in one of his parables, “is the world” (Matt. 13:38). There the harvest of the future will be reaped (Rev. 14:14-16).

VERSE 12

“Let us get up early to the vineyards” — She implies that this work is supremely important, so as to justify an early rising. The Scriptures speak of two main vineyards: Israel and the nations (Isa. 5; Rev. 14:18). As vineyards must be given adequate attention to bring forth the best fruits, so the Bride, in conjunction with her royal-Groom, will carefully supervise the spiritual development of both Israel and the nations; and that, early in the Millennium.

“Let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear” — We have previously suggested that the vine is indicative of Israel’s spiritual development, whereas the fig symbolises its political advancement. There will be careful supervision in the future to bring about proper growth in the vine and its fruit, and in this the Bride will play an important part. The Apostles claimed that they were “laborers together with God” (1 Cor. 3:9) in preaching the Truth, and in the Age to come they will go forth on a similar mission (Rev. 10:11; 14:6). The expressions of this verse — vine flourishing, pomegranates budding, etc. — speak of the springtime of the year: a season most appropriate to the return of Christ, with its individual and political resurrections.

“And the pomegranates bud forth” — See note Ch. 4:13. The pome-

granate symbolises the fruit of Christ’s sacrifice. The full fruit of this will be seen at his second coming when the Bride will reap the full benefit of her association with him. However, the efficacy of his offering will not cease with his coming, nor be limited to those who today embrace the Truth; it will bud and bring forth fruit among the nations in the Age to come, as the earth’s populations will be invited to worship in the House of Prayer to be set up for all peoples (Isa. 56:6-7).

“There will I give thee my loves” — The word is in the plural (see note Ch. 1:2) because the Bride is made up of many individuals. In the place of mutual labor (working in the vineyards, etc.) they will confirm their mutual love. This combination of labor and love is similar to the expression relating to the marriage of the Lamb recorded in Revelation 19, which introduces love in the midst of war and conquest.

VERSE 13

“The mandrakes give a smell” — The Hebrew word for “mandrakes” is *dudayim*, from a root *dod* rendered “beloved.” Dr. Young renders it as “love apples.” They were supposed to act as a stimulant of love (see Gen. 30:14). There are two varieties, one which ripens in the early spring, and the other in autumn, at the wheat harvest. As they ripen, the fruit gives off a peculiar smell, to which reference is made by the Bride. The context of the verse implies that the variety here referred to (unlike that of Gen. 30:14) was the early fruit. Thus the Bride reminds her Beloved that the time for marriage has come when he should return, and she pleads with him to do so.

“And at our gates are all manner of pleasant fruits, new and old” — Again the plural personal pronoun “our” is used identifying the Bride and Groom as one. But now she is referring to “our house” (Ch. 1:17), at the gates of which are many pleasant things to be offered. It is significantly illustrative of this comment, that “gates” are also re-

ferred to in the Book of Revelation in connection with the Lamb's Bride, the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:2). Through these gates the nations will bring tokens of their "glory and honor" (Rev. 21:25-27). Moreover, Revelation 22:2 associates many "pleasant fruits" with the same holy city. In the Song, the Bride reminds the Groom of that which she has prepared for his delights in order to induce him to return more quickly.

The idea of "fruits new and old" is incongruous, and as the word "fruits" is in italics, it can be replaced by "things new and old." This is an expression which the Lord Jesus seems to have borrowed to describe those precious things which the Scribe "instructed unto the kingdom of heaven" brings forth out of his treasure (Matt. 13:52). But whereas the Scribe expounds upon these matters, the Bride appeals to her Lord to return that they might mutually enjoy them.

"Which I have laid up for thee, O my beloved" — Some of the "pleasant things" stored up for him comprise the fruits of the Spirit which will be revealed in all their variety: the joy of mutual labor, the pleasure of mutual association, and the warmth of mutual affection that both Bride and Groom will enjoy.

CHAPTER 8

The Purity of the Bride's Love

— vv. 1-2

It is not lust but selfless love that dominates the affections of the Bride for her Beloved. She desires his presence that she might enjoy complete fellowship with him.

VERSE 1

"O that thou wert as my brother" — It is important to carefully note that the Bride is saying: "O that thou wert *as* my brother," and not "O that thou wert my brother." Seeing that she has already complained of the treatment that she received from her "mother's children" (Ch. 1:6) why does she desire this? Perhaps, in her humility, she finds it difficult to approach the august

presence of the King, and feels overawed at the honor paid her that she should be selected by him for marriage. If he were as her brother, this mental barrier would be broken down. Then, again if he were "as her brother," she would not be separated from him; she could go out and bring him in. Moreover, she could lavish her love upon him without experiencing any reproach; she could kiss him in the street, and it would appear perfectly decorous. So she naturally desires that her Beloved were of more humble station in life, that the great disparity between them might be levelled, and that she could, with greater ease and familiarity, approach him in her love.

Already the King has described her as his "sister spouse" (Ch. 4:9), and thereby identified himself as her brother in a spiritual sense, and now the Bride responds saying: "if only you were as my brother (here where I could take hold of you, and of a status in life comparable to my own), I would go out and find you, but now I have to wait for you to come, and though I love you dearly, I feel over-awed at your majesty and glory."

It is often claimed that Shulamith is expressing her desire that her relationship with her Beloved should be on a similar basis as that existing between brother and sister in the terms expressed by Proverbs 17:17: "A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity." But the same book declares: "There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother" (Prov. 18:24). That friend is Christ.

"That sucked the breasts of my mother" — This would reduce the king to a common level with herself, and make it more easy for her to approach him with her love, without her incurring the reproach of being considered too forward or bold.

This is a perfectly natural feeling on the part of the Bride, and one which we constantly feel. Do we not feel something of an inferiority complex, and desire that he should be more on our level of status?

In the spiritual sense, the King has been nourished by a common "mother"

with the Bride, inasmuch as "Jerusalem which is above, is the mother of us all" (Gal. 4:26). But as the Bride contemplates the glory of the King, she loses sight of that fact, and momentarily forgets that he has been calling her his sister. Later the Groom gently corrects her lack of thought, by instructing her that he, as her elder brother, had raised her at the place where her mother had given birth to her (v. 5).

Further, the Bride is represented as expressing a thought that is perfectly natural. We forget, or find it difficult to comprehend in a concrete way (and not just theoretically) that the Lord Jesus was once like us, and like us had to grow up in the things of God. True, he was the "son of man whom Yahweh made strong for Himself" (Psa. 80:17), but at the same time, he possessed the "feeling of our infirmities," and as a son, "learned obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb. 4:15; 5:8).

"When I would find thee without, I would kiss thee" — If the King were her brother, he would be close at hand, and she could go outside and kiss him in a perfectly natural way that would not be misunderstood.

"Yea, I should not be despised" — Affection between brother and sister is natural and expected, and is the subject of approbation rather than criticism. The Bride desires to be able to go out and lavish her love upon the Groom without any inhibition, but to do so in the presence of people who did not understand would call forth adverse comment. It does so in our experience now. When we mix with the world "without" and testify to our love of Christ in proclaiming the Gospel, or maintaining his principles, we are despised. The world laughs at us. It cannot understand the sacrifice of love manifested towards what it believes to be an abstraction, although it does not despise affection shown towards natural things. Thus Shulamith would that the world would see her love for her Beloved in the way that they would view natural affection between a brother and a sister.

VERSE 2

"I would lead thee, and bring thee into my mother's house" — She would be able to do this because of their common relationship, and because, as her brother, she would be on easier terms of familiarity with him. She would find it difficult to do this with the great King, and yet she is anxious to bring him into close relationship with her family. Symbolically, the mother's house is the Ecclesia (Heb. 3:6), and the Bride desires above all else that she should enjoy the unhindered company of her Lord. This is only possible in association together, separated from the world.

"Who would instruct me" — The Hebrew leaves in doubt as to whether this should be "he" or "she." The R. V. mg. renders: "That thou mightest instruct me." See also Companion Bible. There will be much instruction in the day that the Lord meets his perfected Ecclesia! As a result, we will be able to view our lives from the standpoint of God, and see how the Divine mercy has been ever with us, and particularly during those times when we have endured trial, and imagined that Yahweh had departed from us. We will learn of the great love of the Lord for his own, and of his condescending mercy and grace. We will appreciate how kind, beneficent and loving is Yahweh; and we will be drawn towards the Father and the Son in confidence and with an affection that it is not possible for us to feel at the present.

"I would cause thee to drink spiced wine" — This is rated by some as the most refreshing of drinks. Both spice and wine have been associated with the Bride in the expression of the Song, and their spiritual lessons have been considered. Now she promises to provide him with a refreshing drink of spiced wine, which will be the fruit of wisdom that she has received from him. In Proverbs 9:2, wisdom is likened to "mingled wine," and the Bride will be able to display the fruits of wisdom in the character she will reveal to her Beloved.

“Of the juice of my pomegranate” — See note Ch. 4:3. The pomegranate is symbolic of the sacrificial death of the Lord; and in the presence of the great company of the redeemed, Christ will “drink of its juice.” He will see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of Yahweh shall prosper in his hand” (Isa. 53:10).

Her Ardent Longing For His Presence
— vv. 3-4

The Bride expresses her ardent desire for the presence of her Beloved that the vision she has received of the future might become a reality.

VERSE 3

“His left hand should be under my head” — This should be rendered in the future tense: “O that his left hand were under my head” (see Ch. 2:6). The R.V. mg. renders: “Let his left hand,” etc.

“And his right hand should embrace me” — Thus head is supported and heart is embraced: as both mind and emotions are stirred by the presence of Christ.

VERSE 4

“I charge you, O daughters of Jerusalem” — This charge shows that the Groom has not yet come.

“That ye stir not up, nor awake my love” — Eliminate the personal pronoun as in Ch. 2:7.

“Until he please” — The R.V. renders this in the neuter gender: “Until it please.” See note Ch. 2:7. Divine love results from a quiet and dedicated contemplation of him who is to be loved, and only where such is engaged upon, love will spring forth, abounding in such qualities as are outlined in 1 Cor. 13, and continuing for eternity (1 Cor. 13:13).

We have found this song to be a combination of anticipation and doubt. The Bride is certain of the love of her Lord, joyful in the expectation of mutual labor when they are united in marriage, but then filled with awe at the honor paid her, and self-conscious and uneasy as to whether she is qualified to grace such a position of eminence as is offered her.

Song Eleven

*The Joy and
Communion of
The Marriage*

Chapter 8:5-7

5. *Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness,
Leaning upon her beloved?
Under the apple tree I awakened thee:
There thy mother was in travail with thee,
There was she in travail that brought thee forth.*
6. *Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon
thine arm:
For love is strong as death;
Jealousy is cruel as the grave:
The flashes thereof are flashes of fire,
A very flame of the Lord.*
7. *Many waters cannot quench love,
Neither can the floods drown it:
If a man would give all the substance of his house for
love,
He would utterly be contemned.*

Song Eleven:

THE JOY AND COMMUNION OF THE MARRIAGE

The expressions of this Song, are similar to those of the fifth Song (Ch. 3:6-4:7). In both, the Bride and Groom are seen coming out of the wilderness to the admiring gaze of onlookers. In both Songs, the onlookers are found enquiring as to the identity of the Bride. This repetition, of course, follows the pattern that we have suggested in setting out the whole book as representing the experiences of the two-fold Bride of Christ. In this short Song, the royal Groom discourses with his Bride, reminiscing upon the experiences of their courtship. Long before she was conscious of him, he knew of her, and had supervised her development. For the first time she has come to know "the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge," and to perceive it in its "breadth, and length, and depth, and height" (Eph. 3:18-19). In excess of wonderment at this knowledge she speaks of it to the King, and concludes with a wonderful definition of Divine love.

Reminiscing On The Courtship

— v. 5

As Shulamith and her Beloved approach Jerusalem from the wilderness, the Groom draws attention to her upbringing, and explains how that love was first awakened in his heart for her.

VERSE 5

"Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness" — See Note Ch. 3:6

"Leaning upon her beloved" — In the presence of her Beloved she is at peace, with all doubts and fears swept away. She leans upon him, for he is hers. No more is she sleepy as at his first approach; no doubts remain with her as to whether she can grace the position to which she is called. She experiences contentment of mind, and the glorious unity for which she had longed but which she could not fully comprehend until now (John 17:21). Leaning upon him, she looks to him for guidance,

strength and wisdom, having at last learnt the lesson of life in Christ.

"I raised thee up under the apple tree" — In Ch. 2:3, the Bride likened her Beloved to an apple (orange) tree, in the shadow of which she rested with great delight. Now, as they move out of the wilderness towards Jerusalem, they speak together of how their great love for each other developed. He declares: "I raised thee up under the apple (orange) tree." The word "raised," however signifies "awakened" in Hebrew, and is so rendered in the R. V. He awakened her to love. He loved her first, before she loved him. How true this is of Christ and his Ecclesial-Bride. John declares: "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Paul adds: "God commendeth His love towards us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us ... when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son (Rom.

5:8-10). Jesus told his disciples: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (John 15:16). All these expressions teach that God drew us by His love revealed through the Son.

Reminiscing on the past, the Bride comes to realise that Divine love was gradually kindled in her heart by the contemplation of qualities she saw and admired in her Beloved. Rightly she had warned the daughters of Jerusalem that they must not artificially stimulate love (Ch. 2:7; 3:5; 8:4), but must allow it to gradually unfold and kindle into flame by influences that would cause it to burn steadily without warning. The very contemplation of the Beloved's virtues would do that. His qualities of character, manifested not for glorification of self but in self-sacrificing acts of love for others, gendered in her a desire to be his companion. As she recognised him to be a source of strength, wisdom and kindness, all selflessly extended to her by him, so she was provoked to spend herself on his behalf. As he showed in word and deed his zeal and love for his heavenly Father, so she likewise acknowledged her dependence upon Yahweh, and this forged more closely their love of each other. She was desirous to be close to him, and he, likewise, was drawn to her. Qualities which had been latent in her before she met him were awakened and lovingly fostered by him, and brought to maturity. How could she but love him, seeing that she found manifested in him all that she admired and needed? Let us "consider him that endured" on our behalf, that Divine love might be awakened and burn warmly to the glory of Yahweh, and to the benefit of each other.

"There thy mother brought thee forth" — The R.V. renders: "Thy mother was in travail with thee." As the creation of Eve brought discomfort to Adam, so the development of the Bride of Christ was attendant with the greatest travail. The establishment of Israel as a nation out of Egypt, and the formation of the Ecclesias in the first century, were connected with the greatest trial and anguish. It is significant that the Lord Jesus used this very

illustration to describe the manner in which the Ecclesias should be brought into existence. He told the disciples: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world" (John 16:20-21). He then described how that their sorrow would be turned into joy. His remarks related primarily to his own death and resurrection of course, but it was through that travail that the Ecclesia came into existence. And, similarly, the Ecclesia itself travailed in pain to bring forth its children. This has been true of the members of the multitudinous Christ in every age. It is through much tribulation that we will enter into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22); "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12). This is some of the travail by which members of the multitudinous Bride are brought to the birth.

"There she brought thee forth that bare thee" — To follow the R.V. mg.: "There was she in travail and brought thee forth." The newly born had been begotten by the Spirit Word (1 Pet. 1:23). After the birth (John 3:3,5), it was the duty of the mother (Ecclesia) to nourish the new-born babe with the milk of the Word (1 Pet. 2:2), supplementing it with stronger food as it developed (Heb. 5:14 — 6:1), supervising its upbringing so that it might grow to maturity (1 Cor. 14:20).

Believers are brought to birth under the shadow of the apple (orange) tree, and there the Beloved awakens them to the fulness of his love.

The Inflexibility of Love — Vv. 6-7

Happy in the enjoyment of her love, the Bride gives a definition of its inflexibility, its consuming power. True love can never be quenched; it is indestructible, and beyond all price.

VERSE 6

“Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm” — The seal is the signet-ring, *chotham*, from a root “to impress.” Such were sometimes inscribed with the name of a loved one, and carried by a chain on the breast, near the heart (Gen. 38:18), or they were worn on the hand (see Jer. 22:24). There is no record in Scripture, apart from this reference in the Song, to such signets being worn on the arm. Heart and arm are symbolic of mind and strength. For the Beloved to set the Bride as a seal on his heart and arm, is to give his mind and strength to her. For this she pleads, though it imposes a responsibility upon her. She must prove worthy of such an honor. This is indicated by the words that Yahweh sent to king Jeconiah through Jeremiah. The prophet proclaimed: “As I live, saith Yahweh, though Coniah, the son of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, were the signet upon My right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence” (Jer. 22:24).

The names of the tribes of Israel (the potential Bride of Christ) were inscribed upon the gems of the breastplate of the high priest “like the engraving of a signet.” Thus he wore them “upon his heart” when he went in unto the holy place, “for a memorial before Yahweh” (Exod. 28:21,30). The pleading of the Bride is that she might for a similar purpose be engraven upon the heart and arm of her Beloved, who is now high priest over the Israel of God (Gal. 6:16).

“For love is strong as death” — The “love” in question is not that sentimental affection that passes current in the world for love, but the strong, Divine, self-sacrificing, *agape* love of which Paul speaks in 1 Cor. 13. It is a love that stems only from God, as John teaches: “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of (*ek* out from) God; and every one that loveth is begotten of God, and knoweth God” (1 John 4:7). Such a love is begotten of God and springs from the intellect, revealing itself in self-sacrificing devotion of the object of it. It is not mere emotion, though it

expresses itself in feeling; it is not all intellect, though in the absence of knowledge it will not be manifested. It is a love that is created in understanding, and manifests itself in action. It is often misunderstood, so that Paul could write: “I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved” (2 Cor. 12:15).

“Love,” declared the Bride, “is strong as death.” In its own sphere, death seems strong and omnipotent. But it cannot conquer love. In fact, love has conquered death. For “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Because of love, the Son can proclaim: “I have the keys of the grave and of death” (Rev. 1:18).

Can death conquer love? By no means, answers Paul. He declared: “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay in all these things, we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:35-39). Death is inevitable in the absence of the Lord, and will lay its hand upon all for a season. Love as the Bride expresses it is more than a match for that great Enemy. It will beget actions that shall triumph over death in the glory of immortality.

“Jealousy is cruel as the grave” — Jealous and zealous are translations of the same Hebrew word. It defines a Divine characteristic, for Yahweh describes Himself as a “jealous God” (Exodus 20:5). One of His names is “jealous” (Exodus 34:14). He will not tolerate a divided loyalty; He claims us completely, and calls upon us to worship Him with all our mind, strength and body. Because He is jealous, He will not allow anybody to touch His land, people or nation with impunity, but will move for their defence and

vindication. As jealousy is a Divine characteristic, it will be manifested by those who reveal God in their lives. It is written of the Lord Jesus that "the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" (Psa. 69:9) and this is the same word as is rendered jealous elsewhere. The Lord was jealous for the honor of his Father when he overturned the tables of the moneychangers, and drove out the animals that were offered for sale in the courts of the Temple. There is such a thing as a "godly jealousy," and Paul was moved by it when he witnessed the attempts of some to undermine his labors to present the Ecclesia as a chaste virgin to Christ (see 2 Cor. 11:2). On the other hand, there is a "zeal of God" which is "not according to knowledge" (Rom. 10:2). A "Godly jealousy" is that which is in accordance with the Word of God.

"Jealousy is cruel," declared the Bride. The word signifies "firm," "inflexible," "unyielding," and "a godly jealousy is all that. Look how fiercely Paul attacked those who would destroy the virginal state of the Ecclesia. "I would they were even cut off which trouble you," he wrote in indignation to the brethren in Galatia (Gal. 5:12). The term, in the Greek, is very expressive, and shows Paul's desire that such a class of trouble-makers should be rendered impotent to produce any increase in the false doctrines they were proclaiming. Jealousy is inflexible; it will continue on its path come what may, for it desires to serve the Beloved to the exclusion of all else. It is as inflexible or unyielding as the grave, which claims its own, and is never satisfied. The Hebrew word rendered "grave" is *sheol* and is derived from a root *shael* signifying "never satisfied". Like the grave, the love of Christ is never satisfied, but demands our whole being, and is jealous of anything that would hinder it in its set course.

"The coals thereof are coals of fire" — Love is likened to fire in its burning zeal, its impetuous energy, and its uncontrollable power. Love is more consuming and more powerful than hate; urging one on to actions that

otherwise he would not take. The R. V. renders: "the flashes thereof are flashes of fire." The Hebrew word *resheph* figuratively signifies an "arrow" or "fever." Love is like an arrow that strikes, like a fever that burns. The root word is *saraph* from whence is derived the word seraphim of Isaiah 6:2. It means "to burn or consume," as a Divine love does when it takes hold of a person, as it did Paul, for example.

"Which hath a most vehement flame" — The R. V. renders: "A very flame of Yah." This is the only place in the book where the Divine Name is used. Love is the flame of Yah which sets on fire a person's zeal for His work and service, and causes him to offer his life as a burnt offering on the altar of Christ. There was a flame of Yah that was sent from heaven to consume the offerings upon the altar in the days of Moses (Lev. 9:24). That fire was to be kept burning (Lev. 6:12-13), and it alone was to be used for consuming the offerings. It speaks of the influence of the Spirit-Word which causes a believer to become on fire for the things of God. Thus Paul exhorted that we "quench not the spirit" (1 Thess. 5:19). That Word will create a Divine love which will be as the consuming fire of Yah upon the altar, and will cause a person to offer his life as a whole burnt-offering unto Yahweh.

VERSE 7

"Many waters cannot quench love" — Was Paul quoting from the Song when he wrote the words quoted from above? (1 Thess. 5:19). It could be so. In any case, where love is strong, and burns with a Divine fire, it will not be quenched by water. Water cannot quench lightning, and Divine fire is like that flaming arrow from heaven. The waters speak of the floods of opposition, antagonism, trouble and trial that threaten sometimes to drown one in sorrow. Such experiences can give occasion to a feeling of resentment, so that in a fit of petulance under the strain of deep depression, one might feel like turning from the Truth. But

then the love of Yahweh will come to one's aid, urging one to follow the example of the Psalmist who foreshadowed the Lord Jesus, and cried unto Yahweh: "Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul ... I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me" (Psa. 69:1-2,15). When love is as a flame of Yah no amount of trouble will quench it.

"Neither can the floods drown it" — Love can neither be quenched nor drowned. Why? Because true love is faithful, in that it believes in what Yahweh has promised; it is hopeful, in that it looks to the consummation of His purpose; it is supreme, because it is the greatest of virtues (1 Cor. 13:13). How important it is that we develop this Divine love in our lives, for nothing can conquer it or even successfully stand against it. With it, we will prove to be victorious in all the circumstances of life, and will at last be joined to him who is the personification of Divine Love, even the Lord Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom.

"If a man would give all the substance of his house for love" — The Bride is not speaking of worldly, sentimental love, but the Divine love of God, that flame of Yah. This love can be purchased, but not by money (Isa. 55:1-2). A person must give his heart and time to God to receive it. The three Greek words for love are:

1. *Agape*: This is the love of God. It is a word seldom found outside the Bible, but is used in the N.T. in various forms over 200 times.

2. *Phileo*: A love as between friends. This word is found both in and outside the Bible. It is found in the word: Philadelphia — brotherly love. God also reveals this love, and we should likewise manifest it; but it falls short of *agape*.

3. *Eros*: This is a sensual love. The word is not found in the Bible but is used in secular literature. It is of the flesh, an animal-like love.

The love of God is in marked contrast with the "love" of the natural man which is often for sale. The price may be a beautiful countenance, a rich monetary reward, or a social status. But the love of God is not for sale. All one's substance will not purchase it.

"It would utterly be contemned" — Should money be offered to purchase that love it would be treated with contempt. "Thy money perish with thee," Peter told the wretched Simon, "because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money" (Acts 8:20). The tempter tried to bribe Christ with "all the kingdoms of the world" (Matt. 4:10), but failed because the Lord's love for his Father was "a flame of Yah." To his disciples he declared: "Continue ye in my love" (John 15:9). Earlier the Bride has told the virgins that love must not be artificially stimulated, cannot be forced, must come of its own accord, must be drawn out and developed by the two parties being mutually attracted by the qualities of each. Try and purchase that love by a monetary reward, and the bidder will be despised. True love is priceless.

Wonderful indeed, is the future of the redeemed. Imagination gives way in trying to picture it. The saints are to be made equal to the angels — glorious and incorruptible (Luke 20:36). They will be the close associates of the Lord upon his throne (Rev. 3:12). That we, the poorest and the most insignificant of humans, should be related to such an exaltation seems incredible. But any misgivings should vanish in the face of the thrice repeated assurance of the Spirit: "These are the true sayings of God" (Rev. 19:9; 21:5; 22:6). What a reward! Solomon's glory was great, but that to be revealed in the accepted will be greater. The attributes of the Great Eternal are to be vested in the greater than Solomon (Rev. 1:13-18), and of his glory we — if approved at the Judgment — will share!

The Coming Day of Christ

Hail, promised day of rest
From weary fretting toil;
Hail, kingdom of the blest,
With all the earth for spoil.

Hail, promised day of light,
And blessed reign of peace;
Black darkness takes its flight,
And wars and tumults cease.

Hail, promised day of life
When Christ shall Israel bless;
When men shall cease from strife,
And saints all things possess.

Hail, promised day of God,
When praise shall spring to birth;
When righteous Jesse's rod,
Shall rule o'er all the earth.

Hail, promised age of Yah,
When men shall live to love,
When life shall be a joy,
And earth like heav'n above.

Hail, promised day of right;
When all mankind shall see
Messiah's glory bright,
And happy ever be.

Hail, kingdom of the Son,
Most blessed, perfect, pure;
God's reign on earth begun,
Of every ill the cure.

Hail, day of sin undone,
Hail, day of Satan run;
Hail, day of victory won,
Hail, day of Christ begun.

Song Twelve

Love's Labour in the Future

Chapter 8:8-14

8. *We have a little sister,
And she hath no breasts:
What shall we do for our sister
In the day when she shall be spoken for?*
9. *If she be a wall,
We will build upon her a turret of silver:
And if she be a door;
We will inclose her with boards of cedar.*
10. *I am a wall, and my breasts like the towers thereof:
Then was I in his eyes as one that found peace.*
11. *Solomon had a vineyard at Baal-hamon;
He let out the vineyard unto keepers;
Every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand
pieces of silver.*
12. *My vineyard, which is mine, is before me:
Thou, O Solomon, shalt have the thousand,
And those that keep the fruit there of two hundred.*

Song Twelve:

LOVE'S LABOR IN THE FUTURE

Out of the experience of her own problems and strivings, and victories over self, the Bride is able to set an example for others. She has thus been equipped through tribulation to show a fellow-feeling for others who suffer, and encourage them in a walk that will gain for them a rich reward. Yahweh allows us to suffer and to go through trials that we may gain the necessary experience. A priest is selected by God "who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on the erring: for that he is compassed with infirmity" (Heb. 5:2). Thus Christ is able to help us today because he can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmity" (Heb. 4:15). The Millennium will reveal the benefit of many difficult and trying experiences we have gone through in this life, and we will then appreciate how they have equipped us to help those over whom we will be established as king-priests at that time (Rev. 5:9-10). So, in this final Song, we have a description of Love's Labor in the future. The Bride speaks on behalf of her sister; she busies herself in the work that is before her; she rejoices in the continued love of the Groom.

Priestly Ministrations in Love

— vv. 8-10.

The Bride intercedes on behalf of her "little sister," as might a priest for his flock, and sets her an example of what she must do to please the Beloved.

VERSE 8

"We have a little sister" — Who is the sister? First, it should be noted that she is related; she is a sister. Next, she is not only her sister, but his as well, for she uses the plural, personal pronoun, "we." Third, being a sister, she is a daughter of the mother: the Covenant of God. Finally, the sister is "little," she is undeveloped. As the whole setting of this section of the Song is in the Millennium, it is necessary to look to the future, to discern who is referred to here. During the Millennium, the equivalent of the Bride will be developed from among the sons of men, to be granted immortality and union with

Christ at the end of his thousand years' reign. That community is the "little sister" of this verse, answering to the four points enumerated above.

"And she hath no breasts" — She is immature, undeveloped.

"What shall we do for our sister" — The multitudinous Bride is a company of royal-priests (Rev. 5:9-10) who will intercede for those who desire to serve Yahweh during the Millennium. In the great Temple prophecy they are described as standing before Yahweh and offering the offerings that are presented by the worshippers (Ezek. 44:15-16). Thus they will intercede for those mortals who will desire to come and "worship" before Yahweh (Zech. 14:16; Jer. 3:17-18). In this part of the Song, the Bride asks her royal Groom what shall be done to develop the "little sister" community that will be brought into being at the commencement of the Millennium.

“In the day when she shall be spoken for” — This is the day when she shall attract the attention of a suitor. What shall be done for her in that day will be a matter of concern to both the Bride and the Groom, but because she feels for her sister she initiates the request.

VERSE 9

“If she be a wall” — This is the voice of the royal Groom answering his Bride. By “a wall” is meant a state of virginity as is suggested in Ch. 4:12. If she has resisted all attempts to win her from Christ, she will be granted great honor.

“We will build upon her a palace of silver” — The R.V. renders “palace” as “a turret” or mg. “battlement.” Silver is the metal of redemption (Exod. 30:12-13. See Ch. 3:10). A turret or battlements of silver would grace such a wall and give it added beauty. So, like the Bride, if the little sister remains faithful, she will be beautified by the mutual labors of both Bride and Groom (Eph. 5:27).

“And if she be a door” — The wall is for defence; the door is for admission. One speaks of strength; the other for beauty. One holds at bay any immoral advances; the other permits entrance of that which is legitimate and of benefit. Christ likened himself to a door (John 10:1) because he opened the way to the sheep. The “little sister” must be as a door, opening the way to receive his teaching (see Isa. 30:19-21).

“We will enclose her with boards of cedar” — To enclose her with boards of cedar is to strengthen her with immortality; for, as we have seen, the cedar is noted for incorruption.

VERSE 10

“I am a wall and my breasts like towers” — The Bride is speaking in reverie now, as she meditates upon the words of the royal Groom. She provides the example that the little sister must emulate: the example that immortal saints will provide for the mortal population in the Age to come. She is a wall, in that she came to her

Groom as a virgin. Her breasts were as towers, suggesting that they were firm and fully developed, implying her ability to feed her offspring, whilst also denoting her maturity.

“Then was I in his eyes as one that found favour” — The word “favour” is translated from the Hebrew *shalom* or peace. We can secure peace now (John 14:27); it is a peace of mind that passeth understanding. The most bitter invective and opposition cannot disturb that peace (Luke 6:22-23), for secure in the fact that our labors are “unto the Lord and not unto men,” we can rest in Him, and cast upon Him all our care. But the present peace is but the prelude for complete peace at Christ’s coming. The Hebrew word for peace is from a root signifying “to be at one,” and suggesting that perfect unity that will come when the Bride and the Groom are united in marriage, and made “one” with the Father (John 17:21). Let us seek His peace now, and we are sure to attain unto that perfect unity in the Age to come. He will acknowledge that we “are virgins” (Rev. 14:4) or have been walled about; and that we have busied ourselves in feeding the flock (1 Pet. 5:2). This attitude and labor will be commended, and will result in us finding favour or peace at his hands.

Supervising The Inheritance

— vv. 11-12

At the beginning of the Book of Songs the Bride expressed the desire to work exclusively in her own vineyard (Ch. 1:6); now at its close she is shown to have attained unto that ambition (Ch. 8:12).

VERSE 11

“Solomon had a vineyard at Baalhamon” — Solomon, the Prince of Peace, types the Lord Jesus, who likewise is associated with a vineyard. The name of Solomon’s vineyard means *The Lord or Owner of a Multitude*. The same word, “hamon,” or “multitude,” is found in the statement made to Abraham, that he would become “a father of many nations” (Gen. 17:4-5).

It is also found in the name of Hamon-gog (or Gog's multitude) of Ezekiel 39:15. Ezekiel predicts that a great mausoleum will be built to commemorate the overthrow of Gog's multitude, and "the name of the city shall be Hamonah", or the multitude (v. 16). This is a city of the dead, in contrast to the vineyard of Baal-hamon, which will comprise the community of the living over which Jesus Christ is Lord; the multitude promised to Abraham.

"He let out the vineyard unto keepers" — The Bride is in reverie meditating upon the experience of the past. Christ's vineyard has been given into the hands of keepers who are expected to care for it so that it brings forth fruit. He described this labor in the parable of the vineyard (Matt. 20:1-16), giving himself the title of "the Lord of the vineyard" (v. 8). The keepers are those who assume or are granted positions of authority in his Ecclesias, then and now.

"Every one for the fruit thereof was to bring a thousand pieces of silver" — From Isaiah 7:23 it appears that this was the normal hire for a vineyard comprising one thousand vines; or, for every vine, a piece of silver. Silver, we have already seen, is the metal of redemption; therefore, the return that the Lord of the vineyards expects to receive is fruit unto redemption.

VERSE 12

"My vineyard which is mine, is before me" — The Song opened with the Bride lamenting the time she had

been forced to spend in other vineyards to the neglect of her own (Ch. 1:6); now her ambition is fulfilled in that she can labor in her own vineyard without hindrance. There will be activity and labor in the Kingdom of God, but it will be pleasurable and rewarding work in which the Bride will be able to rejoice.

"Thou, O Solomon, must have a thousand" — She now has come out of her reverie, and addresses her royal Groom directly. The Bride of Christ is co-heir with him (Rom. 8:17), and therefore the vineyard is hers as well as his; but she acknowledges her debt to her Beloved, and willingly passes the entire income therefrom to him.

Instead of "must have" the R. V. renders: "shalt have." There is no compulsion and no demand on the Groom's part; on the contrary, it is she who insists that he have all.

"And those that keep the fruit thereof two hundred" — These are keepers of the vineyard of v. 11, and they constitute members of the Bride; those who have labored as leaders in the Ecclesia of Christ. Though the Bride passes all her inheritance to the Groom, she does not forget the faithful workers: and they receive a double tithe of what is given to the King. This is the double portion the firstborn should receive (Deut. 21:15-17; Zech. 9:12). Workers in the vineyard will be suitably rewarded (1 Cor. 9:7), and though mention is only made of the "keepers" of the vineyard in the Song, all who are faithful will be adequately compensated (see Matthew 10:41).

Epilogue

13. *Thou that dwellest in the gardens,
The companions hearken for the voice:
Cause me to hear it.*
14. *Make haste, my beloved,
And be thou like to a roe or to a young hart
Upon the mountains of spices.*

EPILOGUE (Ch. 8:13-14)**Final Appeal and Prayer — vv. 13-14**

These two verses form an epilogue. In anticipation of the marriage, one final exchange remains: an appeal by the Groom to his Bride that he might enjoy the sweet intimacy of personal communion; and a prayer by the Bride for his return, in order that the glorious vision may become a reality.

VERSE 13**“Thou that dwellest in the gardens”**

— It is the voice of the Bridegroom speaking to his Bride as in Ch. 2:14; only this time she is described as dwelling in the gardens. She is not in the wilderness of Babylon the Great (Rev. 17:3), but in the garden of Yahweh, where she appears “as the branch of His planting” (Isa. 60:21).

“The companions hearken to thy voice” — The companions hear the voice of the Bride, diligently consider her words, and observe her conduct, particularly in relation to the Bridegroom. Reference is made to them in Psa. 45:14: “She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework; the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.” Though “companions,” in the verse before us is in the masculine gender in the Hebrew, it can still apply to the redeemed of both sexes, for all are classed as virgins (Rev. 14:4).

“Cause me to hear it” — The Bride is encouraged to speak that others may be moved by her speech and action. Christ would have us to be vocal in our prayers and our praises, and in the preaching of the Word of Truth both within the Body and without. The appeal of the Lord Jesus, in the closing words of the Apocalypse, is remarkably similar to this exhortation. He has testified of these things in the Ecclesiast, he declares (Rev. 22:16), and it is for “the Bride” to say, Come. “And let him that heareth say, Come” (v. 17). If we would please Christ we must be warm in our enthusiasm for the Truth, so that “out of the abundance of our heart our lips will speak” (Matt. 12:34). The words of Mal. 3:16 are to the point: “Then they that feared Yahweh spake often one to another; and Yahweh

hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared Yahweh, and that thought upon His name.” That is the type of conversation that rejoices the heart of Christ to hear (cp. Matt. 18:20).

VERSE 14

“Make haste, my beloved” — The Bride responds to the appeal of the Groom. Rotherham renders her request as “Come quickly!” a prayer that is answered by the Lord Jesus at the conclusion of the Apocalypse, and again re-echoed by John: “He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly, Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev. 22:20).

“Be thou like to a roe or to a young hart” — As these fleet animals move swiftly over the craggy mountains, ignoring the difficulties and dangers attendant thereto, so come quickly! Speedily complete the work that you must do, and which separates you from me, and return, O Beloved! Return to deliver this sad world from its heavy burden of sin, its oppressive load of trouble, its vice, immorality, corruption, violence. Return to fill the earth with Divine Glory, so that Yahweh’s Kingdom come, and His will be done in earth as it is in heaven. Come to deliver your Bride from the shackles of mortality that depress her in this vale of tears, that you might cause her to lift her face to yours in joy, and that you might enfold her with your arms, that she might repose in your everlasting embraces. Come quickly, Lord Jesus!

“Upon the mountains of spices” — The Mountains of Bether or separation (Ch. 2:17), are now become the Mountains of Besamin, or Balsam. Such spices were used in the preparation of the anointing oil (Exod. 25:6; 30:23) which was a symbol of the Spirit. Spices, therefore, may well signify elevation to Divine Spirit-Nature. In Ch. 2:17 the Bride appeals to her Beloved to return in fulfilment of his Covenant to her; now she does so on the basis of his promise. Those two mountains comprise the Alpha and Omega of the Divine purpose which begins with sacrifice (Bether) and ends in glory (Besamin).

SUMMARY OF THE SONG

What The Groom is Likened Unto:

A Shepherd	1:7
A Bag of Myrrh	1:13
A Fruit-bearing Orange Tree	2:3
The Personification of Love	2:4
A Roe and an Hart	2:9
As Feeding among Lilies	2:16
The Possession of the Bride	2:16
Warrior and Peacemaker	2:7
A Crowned King	3:11
The Espoused Groom	3:11
The Bride's Guiding Influence	8:5
The Bride's One Love	1:7

Attitude Adopted By The Groom:

Requests the Bride to Open the "Door" to him	5:2
Withdraws before it is opened	5:6
Observing the Bride from a Distance	2:9
Constantly tending the Saints	6:3
Returning Surefootedly across the Mountains	2:8
Embracing the Bride	2:6
Crowned on the Day of his Espousal	3:11
Conducting the Bride from out of the Wilderness	8:5
Entering Jerusalem in Power and Glory	3:7
Applauded as Chief Among Ten Thousand	5:10
Glistening as the Sun	5:10

The Groom Is Praised For:

Provision of Shade and Sustenance	2:3
Faithfulness, Strength and Immortality	5:11
Kindness	5:12
Sacrificial Love	5:13
Majestic Stature	5:15
Edifying Speech	5:16

Requests Made to The Groom:

Kiss Me	1:2
Draw Me	1:4
Tell Me	1:7
Come to Me	7:10
Make Haste	8:14
Set Me as a Seal Upon Thy Heart	8:6

Signs of the Groom's Coming:

A Noise from the Mountains and Hills (Nations)	2:8
The Approaching Spring	2:11
The Ripening Fruit and Trees	2:13

How the Bride Views Herself:

Black as the Tents of Kedar	1:5
A Wild Flower	2:1
Belonging to the Beloved	6:3
The Subject of His Desire	7:10
A Wall	8:10

What The Bride Is Likened To:

The Curtains of Solomon	1:5
A Mare out of Pharaoh's Chariots	1:9
A Lily Among Thorns	2:2
A Dove in the Clefts of the Rocks	2:14

Perfumed Pillars of Smoke	3:6
A Garden Enclosed	4:12
Fragrant Fruits	4:13
A Fountain of Living Waters	4:15
The Choice, Unique Daughter	6:9
The Fairness of the Moon and the Clearness of the Sun	6:10
A Prince's Daughter	7:1
An Upright Palm Tree	7:7

What The Bride Is Praised For:

A Love better than Wine	1:2
Fragrant Qualities of Character	1:3
A Fragrant Name	1:3
Fair Countenance	1:15
A Sweet Voice	2:14
Comely Cheeks	1:10
Neck Bright with Jewels	1:10
Dove-like Eyes	1:15
Beautiful proportions	4:1-7; 7:1-9
Seeking the help of the Groom	2:5

Experiences Of The Bride:

Loved by the Upright	1:4
Hated by Her Mother's Children	1:6
Persecuted by the Watchmen	5:7
Seeking the Groom	3:1
Anxious for the Groom's Return	2:2
Enquiring Concerning the Signs	3:4
In the Groom's Banqueting House	2:4
Sitting at the King's Table	1:12
Embracing the Groom at His Return	3:4
Coming Out of the Wilderness	3:6
Belligerent in Aspect	3:8
Laboring with her Beloved	7:11

Words Of Endearment For The Bride:

The Groom's Love	1:9, 15; 2:2, 10, 13; 4:1, 7; 5:2; 6:4; 7:6.
The Groom's "Fair One"	2:10
The Groom's Sister-Spouse	4:8-12; 5:1
The Groom's Undefiled	5:2; 6:9
The "Fairest Among Women"	1:8; 5:9

Requests To the Bride:

Follow the Footsteps of the Flock	1:8
Feed the Young	1:8
To Remain with the Shepherds	1:8
To Separate Herself to the Groom	2:10

What The Bride Shares With The Groom:

A Refreshing Resting Place	1:16
A House of Cedar and Fir	1:17
A Land	2:12
Treasures New and Old	7:13

Experiences Of The Virgins:

They Follow the Bride	1:4
They Rejoice with the Bride	1:4
They Desire that Sin be Removed	2:15
They Seek the Groom	6:1

Request To The Virgins:

To Remind the Groom that the Bride is Love-Sick	5:8
Not to Artificially Stimulate Love	2:7; 3:5; 8:4

Final Thoughts

The Song of Songs reveals that Christ's union with the Ecclesia is one forged by the tenderest love. It teaches that there is a place for love in religion; but that the love relating thereto is a Divine quality and not merely a human emotion. There is little of Divine love in the world today. Instead, fear, violence, lust and wickedness abound, producing their brood of superstition, ignorance, and blasphemy of the most degrading kind.

Divine love is a revelation from Yahweh, and not found among men apart from His influence on them. It is expounded in His Word, and manifested by His son. Love is a small word, yet packed within it is the most profound truth which cannot be fathomed by the highest human intellect; nor measured by the most comprehensive vision. We cannot yet see all the ramifications of that love. Yet, like the word "God" itself, it has become so common by use that we think we know it; though we find it difficult to satisfactorily define it. This is the case with many small words such as God, and grace, and mercy, and peace. They are the little words of the language, yet they express tremendous truths.

There are three small words which express all the revelation of Yahweh. They are the words: God, Man and Love. The last binds and binds the first two, and reveals why the First created the second. It is all summed up in the greatest of all commandments: "Thou (man) shalt love Yahweh thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind."

What does love accomplish? It draws us close to God and to Christ; it destroys fear; it relieves sighing; it provides hope; it gives boldness, courage, confidence; it develops trust; it conquers sin. Without it, we would be of all men most miserable; with it, we can conquer the world and all that is in it.

There is a tremendous need to try and live within the compass of Divine love. The words of love, found in the mouth of the Bride, and received by her from her Beloved, are expressions that we must make our own. We can do so by creating a mental image of the Lord, and allowing his personality to draw us. We must try to feel and speak the words of love uttered by the Bride; and apply the exhortations and seek the praise of the Beloved. Let us set ourselves the task of understanding better the revelation of Divine love, rejoicing in the comfort that it can give; and let us rest on Him "that is able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen" (Jude 24,25).

May the words of love, expressed throughout this superlative Song by the royal-Groom to his Bride, so move us, that we are caused to respond with greater feeling to the love that he has manifested towards us, and reflect it in a way that will help to clear away every spot and blemish, and enable us to stand approved before him at the day of his apocalypse in glory. May its study assist each one of us to find a place in the multitudinous Bride who will be united as one with her Husband, Brother and Friend in the day of his glory.

“Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen!” (Rev. 22:20-21).