

MIDNIGHT HARMONIES by Octavius Winslow

[Songs in the Night](#)

[Jesus Veiling his Dealings](#)

[Solitude Sweetened](#)

[A Look from Christ](#)

[Honey in the Wilderness](#)

[The Godly Widow Confiding in the Widow's God](#)

[Looking unto Jesus](#)

[Leaning on the Beloved](#)

[The Weaned Child](#)

[God, Comforting as a Mother](#)

[Jesus Only](#)

[The Incense of Prayer](#)

[The Day Breaking](#)

MIDNIGHT HARMONIES by Octavius Winslow

"Songs in the Night"

“God my Maker, who gives songs in the night.” Job 35:10.

It will be acknowledged by all, competent to form an opinion in the matter, that a holy man is from the very necessity of the case a happy man. It is as impossible to separate happiness from holiness, as it is to separate light from the sun. The introduction of sin opened the door to all wretchedness; the restoration of divine purity closes the door by restoring the Divine image; and the nearer we approximate to the image of God, the more deeply we participate in the happiness of God. Sin is nothing more than a disturbance of the harmony once subsisting between the divine and the human will. Restore that harmony—let the will of God be done on earth as it is done in heaven—and earth will again, as it once did, reflect back the purity of heaven, just as the tranquil lake mirrors from its bosom the image and the splendor of the sun.

A saint of God is, then, a happy man. He is often most so when others deem him most miserable. When they, gazing with pity upon his adversities, and his burdens, and silently marking the conflict of thought and feeling passing within—compared with which external trial is but as the bubble floating upon the surface—deem him a fit object of their commiseration and sympathy, even then, there is a hidden spring of joy, an under current of peace lying in the depths of the soul, which renders him, chastened and afflicted though he is, a happy and an enviable man.

Worldling! refrain your tears, spare your pity. “Blessed are those who mourn now, for they are, and they shall be, comforted.” “Thus says the Lord God: behold, my servants shall eat, but you shall be hungry: behold, my servants shall drink, but you shall be thirsty: behold, my servants shall rejoice, but you shall be ashamed: behold, my servants shall sing for joy of heart, but you shall cry for sorrow of heart, and shall wail for vexation of spirit.” Weep not for him, but, O you Christless souls! weep for yourselves!

How fully do the words placed at the head of this chapter sustain this train of thought. Midnight harmony! Who can inspire it? Songs in the night! Who can create them? God can, and God does. The “God of all consolation,” the “God who comforts those who are cast down,” the “God of hope,” who causes the “bright morning star” to rise upon the dreary landscape, the “God of peace, who himself gives peace, always, and by all means;” even he, our Maker and our Redeemer, gives songs in the night.

All music is of God’s inspiration. The lark’s cheerful carol—the nightingale’s plaintive note—an infant’s praise, and the music of the

spheres— all are the voice of God. There is no instrument whose broken and untuned strings he cannot make discourse sweet strains—even a heart collapsed with grief. And there is no season in the Christian history which he cannot render vocal with a melody to which a seraph might breathlessly listen, from which he might derive new rapture, but which he would imitate in vain.

Music, at all times sweet, is the sweetest amid the sublimity of night. When in the solemn stillness that reigns—not a breath rustling the leaves, and echo herself slumbers,—when in the darkness that enshrouds, the thoughts that agitate, the gloomy phantoms that flit before the fancy, like shadows dancing upon the wall, there breaks upon the wakeful ear the soft notes of skillfully touched instruments, blending with the melting tones of well-tuned voices, it is as though angels had come down to serenade and soothe the sad and jaded sons of earth. But there are songs richer, and there is music sweeter still than theirs,—the songs which God gives, and the music which Jesus inspires in the long dark night of the Christian’s pilgrimage. To this harmony let us now hearken. Three reflections are suggested by the words—The night season,—the songs in the night,—and the author of these night-songs. “God, my Maker, who gives songs in the night.”

The season referred to by the inspired penman is figurative of the sorrow, gloom, and despondency into which all God’s people are, more or less, brought,—the season of night. Designed though this little work is for the period of Christian solitude and sorrow, it is not improbable that it may find its way into the sick and gloomy chamber of a mind yet more sick and dark. It may not, then, be inappropriate to remark what an expressive image is the season of night of an unconverted state— a state of spiritual darkness and of death. Night is the season of gloom, of slumber, of visions. Such is the moral condition of the soul, unenlightened, unawakened, unsanctified by the Holy Spirit. The apostle touches upon this state, in the contrast which he finely draws between the believer and the unbeliever. “But you, brethren, are not in darkness, that the day should overtake you as a thief. You are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness, therefore, let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober; for they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.”

What a solemn picture this, of an ungodly world, of our unconverted relatives; perhaps, my reader, of yourself. “Children of the night”—asleep—in darkness. Is not the night-season especially the season of dreams? Such is the spiritual night of the soul. Thus graphically is it described by the evangelical prophet Isaiah,—“As when a hungry man dreams, and, behold, he eats; but he awakens, and his soul is empty; or as when a thirsty man dreams, and, behold, he drinks; but he awakens, and, behold, he is faint, and his soul has appetite.” Such is your state. You are

asleep; the chains of spiritual slumber bind your moral senses; your plans, your pursuits, your pleasures, your realizations, all are but as the visions that sport around the pillar of night.

You imagine you are happy, you fancy liberty in your fetters, substance in your shadows, reality in your visions. But, by and by, you awake to the conviction—O how keen—that all is but a dream! The spirit is restless, the mind is unfed, the heart is sick, the soul is unsatisfied; all, all is one dark and desolate blank. Yes, God will write, yes, God has written, the sentence of death upon the worldling's enjoyment; and will teach him that all happiness is unreal, and all pleasure is unsubstantial that flows not from himself, and of which he is not the "exceeding joy."

Rouse yourself, then, from your sleep; the bridegroom is coming! the midnight cry of the approaching judge is about to break upon the slumber and darkness of your soul. It is high time to awake out of sleep. What if these words should startle you amid your worldliness and folly, your sin and rebellion, your day-dreams of earthly good,—“You fool, this night your soul shall be required of you!” What if you should awake up in hell! Horror of horrors! Listen to the warning of the Savior, “What shall it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul.” Then, “awake you that sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ shall give you life.”

Awful, if the present night of your unsanctified sorrow should be the harbinger, the prelude, the forecasting shadows of a future and an endless night of woe! But this season of night is signally descriptive of some periods in the history and experience of a child of God, and to them we especially restrict it. It reminds us of the period of soul darkness which often times overtakes the Christian pilgrim. “My servant that walks in darkness and has no light,” says God. Observe, he is still God's servant. He is the “child of the light,” though walking in darkness. Gloom spreads its mantle around him—a darkness that may be felt. Shadows thicken upon his path. God's way with him is in the great deep: “You are a God that hide yourself,” is his mournful prayer. The Holy Spirit is, perhaps, grieved—no visits from Jesus make glad his heart—he is brought in some small degree into the blessed Savior's experience: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”

But, sorrowful pilgrim, there is a bright light in this, your cloud—turn your eye towards it—the darkness through which you are walking is not judicial. It is not the darkness of an unconverted, alienated state. O no! you are still a “child of the day,” though it may be temporary night with your spirit. It is the withdrawment but for “a little moment,”—not the utter and eternal extinction,—of the Sun of Righteousness from your soul. You are still a child, and God is still a Father. “In a little wrath I hid my face from you for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on you, says the Lord your Redeemer.” “Is Ephraim my dear son? is he a pleasant child? for since I spoke against him I do earnestly remember him still.”

And what are seasons of affliction but as the night-time of the Christian? The night of adversity is often dark, long, and tempestuous. The Lord frequently throws the pall of gloom over the sunniest prospect, touching his beloved child where that touch is the keenest felt. He knows the heart's idol: he is best acquainted with the fowler's snare—the temptation and the peril lying in our path. He knows better far than we the chain that rivets us to some endangering object; he comes and draws the curtain of night's sorrow around our way. He sends messenger after messenger. Deep calls unto deep: He touches us in our family—in our property—in our reputation—in our bodies. And O, what a night of woe now spreads its drapery of gloom around us!

Then it is—amid the deepening shadows—we seem to take a more dismal view of every object. All things loom in the mist. Our position, our circumstances, our losses, our prospects, all present a more gloomy and discouraging aspect, and assume a more exaggerated and magnified form, viewed in the somber hues now gathering and darkening around them. It is a “day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains.”

Such, too, is the season of mournful bereavement. What a night is that when the shadow of death falls upon our once bright and joyous tabernacle; when the destroyer enters and lays low some beloved object, around which the heart's affections, perhaps, too closely entwined. It is as though the noonday sun had suddenly become quenched in midnight gloom. “Lover and friend have you put far from me, and my acquaintance into darkness,” is the heart's sad breathing. It was such a night to the heart of Jesus when he left the house of Bethany to go to the grave of Lazarus. Ah! who has not passed through the gloom and the pangs of this season? Who has not seen—the shadows approaching which forewarned of the coming woe? To take our position in the room of suffering, and to watch through the wearisome day and the lonesome night, the slow advance of the fell-destroyer,—to see the light retiring from our ‘pleasant picture,’ and its features of expression and its lines of beauty growing dimmer and fainter, until the shadow of death completely veiled it from our view—what a night of heartache is this! But hush!

“All are not taken! there are left behind
Living beloved, tender looks to bring,
And make the daylight still a blessed thing,
And tender voices, to make soft the wind.
But if it were not so—if I could find
Not love in all the world to answer me,
Nor any pathway but rang hollowly,
Where ‘dust to dust’ the love from life disjoined—
And if with parched lips—as in a dearth

Of water-springs the very deserts claim,—
I uttered to these sepulchers unmoving
The bitter cry, ‘Where are you, O my loving?’
I know a voice would sound, ‘Daughter, I AM,
Can I suffice for heaven, and not for earth?’”

But dark, and often rayless for a time, as are these various night-seasons of our pilgrimage, they have their harmonies. It is not completely night, as it is not completely day with us here. If the day has its dark periods, the night has its bright ones. If the one has its sounds of woe, the other has its notes of melody. There are—provided by him who “divides the light from the darkness”—softenings, alleviations, and soothings, which can even turn night into day, and bring the softest tones from the harshest discord. How humbling is the reflection, that in the depth of the deepest sorrow, the darkness of the darkest shade, we should lose sight of this precious truth.

The strong consolations which our God has laid up for those who love him, are so divine, so rich, so varied, that to overlook the provision in the time of our sorrow, seems an act of ingratitude darker even than the sorrow we deplore. O! it is in the heart of God to comfort you, his suffering child. Once convinced of this, and the bitterest ingredient in your cup has become sweet.

Let me assist you to the conviction of this truth by directing your attention, perhaps in an hour of dark woe, to some of those songs which the Lord enables his people to sing in the night-watches of their journey. This was pre-eminently David’s experience. Few of the Lord’s saints knew more of the night-travel of faith than this wonderful man of God. Happy shall we be if we study closely his instructive life. After alluding to the “Waves and the billows which had gone over him,” he seems to be suddenly checked in his complainings by the recollection of the night-song: “Yet the Lord will command his loving-kindness in the day-time, and in the night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life,” (Psalm xlii. 8.)

Here was midnight harmony! Amid the “noise of the water-spouts,” and the swellings of “billows”—the midnight of his soul—lo! music rises! A song is sung, such as is not heard in heaven—for there is no night there—it is of kindness, it is of love, yes, it is of loving-kindness, manifested and experienced in the hour,—when sinking amid deep and dark waters the soul cries out for fear, “Lord, save, I perish!” O what loving-kindness must that be, suffering believer, which inspires a song so sweet, amid a season so dark as this!

“Awake my soul, in joyful lays,
And sing your dear Redeemer’s praise;
He justly claims a song from me,
His loving-kindness, O how free!
When trouble, like a gloomy cloud,
Has gathered thick and thundered loud;

He near my soul has always stood,
His loving-kindness, O how good!"

The Psalmist, too, on another occasion of night-travel fed his drooping faith with the remembrance of songs he had previously sung: "I call to remembrance my song in the night," (Psalm lxxvii. 6.) It is no small wisdom, tried Christian, to recall to memory the music of the past. Think not that, like sounds of earth-born melody, that music has died away never to awake again. Ah, no! those strains which once floated from your spirit-touched lips yet live! The music of a holy heart never dies; it lingers still amid the secret chambers of the soul. Hushed it may be for awhile, by other and discordant sounds, but the Holy Spirit, the Christian's Divine Remembrancer, will summon back those tones again, to soothe and tranquilize and cheer, perhaps in a darker hour and in richer strains, some succeeding night of heart-grief.

"I remember you upon my bed, and meditate on you in the night-watches." "Restore unto me the joys of your salvation." Yet again: "At midnight I will arise to give thanks unto you because of your righteous judgments," (Ps. cxix. 62.) At midnight—the most lonely, rayless, desolate hour. 'When other hearts of sympathy are hushed to rest; when all the world seems dead to me, wrapped in deep unconsciousness of my silent vigils, in the midnight of my soul's deep grief I will arise from my pillow, moist with tears, and from my couch, worn with my tossings, and will give thanks unto you because of your righteous judgments.'

O what midnight harmony, beloved, is this! The blessed spirits of another world are hearkening: God bows down his ear and listens. Ah! my reader, there is not a single midnight of your history—never so dark as that midnight may be—for which God has not provided you a song, and in which there may not be such music as human hand ever awoke, and as human lip never breathed—the music that God only can create.

But what are some of the materials—the chords and notes—of these songs in the night? We begin with the key-note. Jesus himself is our song! If we cannot sing of Jesus and of his love in the night of our pilgrimage, of what, of whom, then, can sing? As all music has its ground-work—its elementary principles—so has the music of the believing soul. Jesus is the foundation. He who knows nothing experimentally of Jesus, has never learned to sing the Lord's song. But the believer, when he contemplates Jesus in his personal dignity, glory, and beauty—when he regards him as God's equal—when he views him as the Father's gift—as the great depository of all the fulness of God, can sing in the dark night of his conscious sinfulness, of a foundation upon which he may securely build for eternity.

And when, too, he studies the work of Jesus, what material for a song is gathered here! when he contemplates Christ as "made of God unto him wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;" when he views the

atoning blood and righteousness which presents him moment by moment before God, washed from every stain, and justified from every sin, even now, in the night-season of his soul's deep depravity, he can sing the first notes of the song they chant in higher strains above: "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and has made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion, forever and ever. Amen."

O! yes, Jesus is the key-note— Jesus is the ground-work of our midnight harmony. Is it a season of heart-ploughing, of breaking up of the fallow ground, of deeper discovery of the concealed plague? Still to turn the eye of faith on Jesus, and contemplate the efficacy of his blood to remove all sin, and the power of his grace to subdue all iniquity, O what music in the sad heart does that sight of him create! "My soul does magnify the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior."

Is it a night of sorrowful affliction? What a friend, what a brother, what a helper is Jesus! Never, no never, does he leave his suffering one to travel that night unvisited, unsoothed by his presence. He is with you now, and of his faithfulness that never falters, of his love that never changes, of his tenderness that never lessens, of his patience that never wearies, of his grace that never decays, of his watchfulness that never slumbers, you may sing in the storm-night of your grief.

Fix your eye, dim with weeping though it be, upon this touching picture of your sympathizing Lord thus presented to your view: "The ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night, Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spoke unto them, saying, "Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid." Do you think there were no songs on that dark tempestuous night? Did no music rise from that storm-tossed vessel, and swell above the moaning of the sea? Ah, yes, beloved! Jesus was there! And Jesus gave the key-note: "It is I; be not afraid!" And then rose the music of faith and love from the lips of his transported apostle: "Lord, if it be you, bid me come unto you on the water."

Trembling believer! Jesus had been all that night in earnest, wrestling prayer for those loved disciples; and when their peril and fear were at their height, he hastened to their rescue and their comfort, treading the limpid wave with all the majesty and the firmness of a God. Jesus loves to visit us in our night-watches. Jesus is praying for us when in the storm! The incarnate God delights to be near his helpless and timid saints! And he is near—yes, near to you—the strength of your fainting heart, the support of your sinking soul; and you "shall have a song as in the night, when a holy solemnity is kept; and gladness of heart, as when one goes with a flute to come into the mountain of the Lord, to the mighty one of Israel."

Is it the night of bereavement? Ah, heavy as that night is, there is a song even for it, smitten, weeping soul. Jesus was bereaved. Can you not sing of this? “Jesus wept.” Is there no melody in these words? O yes! As one, who himself knew and felt the blank which death creates in human friendship: as one, whose tears once fell upon the cold clay, while no hand was outstretched to wipe them, he sympathizes with your present sorrow, and is prepared to make it all his own. Wide as is the chasm, deep as is the void, mournful as is the blank which death has created, Christ can fill it; and filling it with his love, with his presence, with himself, how sweet will be your song in the night of your sorrow,—“He has done all things well.” O there is not a single hour of the long night of our woe, but if we turn and rest in Jesus, we shall find material for a hymn of praise, such as seraphs cannot sing.

Nor must we pass by David’s sweet song in the dark night of his domestic calamity and grief: “Although my house be not so with God; yet he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure for this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although he makes it not to grow,” (2 Sam. xxiii. 6.) The everlasting covenant which God has made with Jesus, and through Jesus with all his beloved people, individually, is a strong ground of consolation amid the tremblings of human hope, the fluctuations of creature things, and the instability of all that earth calls good. The Word of God meets the peculiar sorrow of domestic calamity with especial tenderness. David was tried in his children— how deep that trial was, few of us may know. But the covenant was enough for it; it was a covenant ordered in all things, and sure: and this was his song in the night. And of this same covenant, O sorrowful child of the covenant, you too may sing: The God of the covenant is your God, your Father, your unchangeable Friend.

What though domestic calamity enshrouds your spirit as with midnight gloom—the covenant in which your name is written, and your sorrow appointed, and your consolation provided, and your steps ordered, sheds its mild luster upon your way, and bids you sing in the night-time of your grief—

“Since you, the everlasting God,
My Father are become;
Jesus, my guardian and my friend,
And heaven my final home:
I welcome all your sovereign will;
For all that will is love:
And when I know not what you do,
I wait the light above.
Your covenant in the darkest gloom
Shall heavenly rays impart,
Which, my eyelids close in death,
Shall warm my chilling heart.”

And who gives these songs in the night? “God our Maker.” Who but God could give them? No saint on earth, no angel in heaven, has power to tune our hearts to a single note of praise in the hour of their grief. No, nor could any creature above or below breathe a word of comfort, of hope, or of succor, when heart and flesh were failing. Who but the incarnate God has power enough, or love enough, or sympathy enough to come and embosom himself in our very circumstances—to enter into the very heart of our sorrow—to go down into the deepest depth of our woe, and strike a chord there that, responding to his touch, shall send forth a more than angel’s music?

It is God who gives these songs. He is acquainted with your sorrows: he regards your night of weeping: he knows the way that you take. He may be lost to your view, but you cannot be lost to his! The darkness of your night-grief may veil him from your eye, but the “darkness and the light are both alike to him.” Then repair to him for your song. Ask him so to sanctify your sorrow by his grace, and so to comfort it by his Spirit, and so to glorify himself in your patient endurance of it, and so to make you to know the wherefore of your trial, and your trial so to answer the mission on which it was sent, as will enable you to raise this note of praise: “You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness; to the end that my glory may sing praise to you, and not be silent.”

In giving you a throne of grace, God has given you a song, methinks one of the sweetest ever sung in the house of our pilgrimage. To feel that we have a God who hears and answers prayer,— who has done so in countless instances, and is prepared still to give us at all times an audience—O! the unutterable blessedness of this truth. Sing aloud then, you sorrowful saints, for great and precious is your privilege of communion with God. In the night of your every grief and trial and difficulty, forget not that, in your lowest frame, you may sing this song, “Having boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, I will draw near, and pour out my heart to God.”

Chant, then, his high praises as you pass along, that there is a place where you may disclose every need, repose every sorrow, deposit every burden, breathe every sigh, and lose yourself in communion with God— that place is the blood-sprinkled mercy-seat, of which God says, “There will I meet with you, and I will commune with you.”

Ah! but perhaps you exclaim, “Would that I could sing! I can weep, and moan, and even trust, but I cannot rejoice.” Yes, but there is One who can give even you, beloved, a song in the night. Place your harp in his hands, all broken and unstrung as it is, and he will repair and retune it; and then, breathing upon it his Spirit, and touching it with his own gentle hand, that heart that was so sad and joyless shall yet sing the high praises of its God!

How much of God's greatness and glory in nature is concealed until the night reveals it! The sun is withdrawn, twilight disappears, and darkness robes the earth. Then appears the brilliant firmament, studded and glowing with myriads of constellations. O the indescribable wonder, the surpassing glory, of that scene! But it was the darkness that brought it all to view.

Thus it is in the Christian's life. How much of God would be unseen, how much of his glory concealed, how little would we know of Jesus, but for the night-season of mental darkness and of heart sorrow. The sun that shone so cheerily has set; the gray twilight that looked so pensively has disappeared; and just as the night of woe set in, filling you with trembling, with anxiety, and with fear, lo! a scene of overpowering grandeur suddenly bursts upon the astonished eye of your faith. The glory of God as your Father, has appeared—the character of Jesus as a loving tender brother, has unfolded—the Spirit as a Comforter, has whispered—your interest in the great redemption has been revealed—and a new earth redolent with a thousand sweets, and a new heaven resplendent with countless suns, has floated before your view! It was the darkness of your night of sorrow that made visible all this wonder and all this glory: and but for that sorrow how little would you have known of it. "I will sing of mercy and of judgment: unto you, O Lord, will I sing."

Suffering, sorrowful believer! pluck your harp from your willow, and with the hand of faith and love sweep it to the high praises of your God. Praise him for himself—praise him for Jesus—praise him for conversion—praise him for joys—praise him for sorrows—praise him for chastenings—praise him for the hope of glory—O praise him for all! Thus singing the Lord's song in a strange land, you will be learning to sing it in divine sounds, such as are—

"Sung before the sapphire-colored throne
To him that sits, thereon—
With saintly shout, and solemn jubilee,
Where the bright seraphims, in burning row,
Their loud uplifted angel-trumpets blow,
And the cherubic host in thousand quires
Touch their immortal harps of golden wires,
With those just spirits that wear victorious palms,
Hymns devout, and holy psalms
Singing everlastingly;
That we on earth undiscording voice
May rightly answer with melodious noise;
As once did, until disproportioned sin
Jarred against nature's chime, and with harsh din
Broke the fair music that all creatures made
To their great Lord, whose love their motion swayed

In perfect harmony, while they stood
In first obedience, and their state of good.
O may we soon again renew that song,
And keep in tune with heaven, until God before long
To his celestial concert us unite,
To live with him, and sing in endless morn of light.”

MIDNIGHT HARMONIES by Octavius Winslow

"Jesus Veiling his Dealings"

Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. John 13:7

Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." John 13:7

Jesus replied, "You don't understand now why I am doing it; someday you will." John 13:7

Our Lord, when he spoke these words, had just risen from the lowliest act of his most lowly life. Around that act there was thrown a veil of mystery which partially concealed its significance and its end from the view of his wondering disciple. There was much in this simple but expressive incident of the Savior's life which filled Peter's mind with perplexing thought. His first feeling was that of resistance, to be succeeded by one of astonishment, still deeper. He had marked each step in the strange proceeding— the loosened sandal, the bathing of the feet, the replacing of the robe; but the deep significance of the whole was to his view wrapped in impenetrable mystery. And how did the Savior meet his perplexity? Not by denying its mysteriousness, but by a promise of clearer light anon. "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." And this explanation and assurance satisfied the mind of the amazed disciple. Simon Peter exclaimed, "Then wash my hands and head as well, Lord, not just my feet!" John 13:9

Each individual believer has a personal interest in this subject, especially those to whom these pages are inscribed—the Father's chastened ones. These words imply a concealment of much of the Lord's procedure with his people. In the preceding chapter we contemplated, under the similitude of the night-season, the present pilgrimage of the saints; a night, however, not entirely rayless, nor songless; not without some harbingers of the joyous morning, nor some key-notes of the entrancing melody with which that morning of joy will be ushered in. It is our wisdom to know that no pure, unmixed sorrow, ever befalls the Christian sufferer. Our Lord Jesus flung the curse and the sin to such an infinite distance from the church, that could his faith but discern it, the believer would see nothing but love painting the darkest cloud that ever threw its shadow upon his spirit. Akin to the preceding subject is the one upon which we now propose briefly to address the suffering reader. It speaks of a veiling of Christ's dealings, with the

promise of an unveiling in a day far sunnier and happier than this. "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."

With regard to our heavenly Father, there can be nothing mysterious, nothing inscrutable to him. A profound and awful mystery himself, yet to his infinite mind there can be no darkness, no mystery at all. His whole plan— if plan it may be called— is before him. Our phraseology, when speaking of the divine procedure, would sometimes imply the opposite of this. We talk of God's fore-knowledge, of his foresight, of his acquaintance with events yet unborn; but there is in truth no such thing. There are no tenses with God— no past— nor present— nor to come.

The idea of God's Eternity, if perfectly grasped, would annihilate in our minds all such humanizing of the Divine Being. He is one ETERNAL NOW. All events to the remotest period of time, were as vivid and as present to the divine mind from eternity, as when at the moment they assumed a real existence and a palpable form.

But all the mystery is with us, poor finite creatures of a day. And why, even to us, is any portion of the divine conduct thus a mystery? Not because it is in itself so, but mainly and simply because we cannot see the whole as God sees it. Could it pass before our eye, as from eternity it has before his, a perfect and a complete whole, we should then cease to wonder, to cavil and repine. The infinite wisdom, purity, and goodness, that originated and gave a character, a form, and a coloring, to all that God does, would appear as luminous to our view as to his, and ceaseless adoration and praise would be the grateful tribute of our loving hearts.

Throw back a glance upon the past, and see how little you have ever understood of all the way God has led you. What a mystery— perhaps, now better explained— has enveloped his whole proceedings! When Joseph, for example, was torn from the homestead of his father, sold, and borne a slave into Egypt, not a syllable of that eventful page of his history could he spell. All was to his mind as strange and unreadable as the hieroglyphics of the race, whose symbolical literature and religion now for the first time met his eye. And yet God's way with this his servant was perfect. And could Joseph have seen at the moment that he descended into the pit, where he was cast by his envious brethren, all the future of his history as vividly and as palpably as he beheld it in after years, while there would have been the conviction that all was well, we doubt not that faith would have lost much of its vigor, and God much of his glory. And so with good old Jacob. The famine— the parting with Benjamin— the menacing conduct of Pharaoh's prime minister, wrung the mournful expression from his lips, "All these things are against me." All was veiled in deep and mournful mystery. Thus was it with Job, to whom God spoke from the whirlwind that swept every vestige of affluence and domestic comfort from his dwelling. And thus, too, with Naomi, when she exclaimed, "Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty has

dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord has brought me home again empty.” How easy were it to multiply these examples of veiled and yet all-wise dispensation.

And is this the way of the Lord with you, my reader? Are you bewildered at the mazes through which you are threading your steps; at the involved circumstances of your present history; the incidents which seem so netted and interlaced one with the other as to present to your view an inextricable labyrinth? Deem yourself not alone in this. No mystery has lighted upon your path but what is common to the one family of God: “This honor have all his saints.” The Shepherd is leading you, as all the flock are led, with a skillful hand and in a right way. It is yours to stand if he bids you, or to follow if he leads. “He gives no account of any of his matters,” assuming that his children have such confidence in his wisdom, and love, and uprightness, as, in all the wonder-working of his dealings with them, to ‘be still and know that he is God.’ That it is to the honor of God to conceal, should in our view justify all his painful and humiliating procedure with us. “It is the glory of God to conceal a thing,” as it will be for his endless glory by and bye fully to reveal it all. But there is one thing, Christian sufferer, which he cannot conceal. He cannot conceal the love that forms the spring and foundation of all his conduct with his saints. Do what he will, conceal as he may; be his chariot the thick clouds, and his way in the deep sea; still his love betrays itself, disguised though it may be in dark and impenetrable providence. There are undertones, gentle and tender, in the roughest accents of our Joseph’s voice. And he who has an ear ever hearkening to the Lord, and delicately attuned to the gentlest whisper, shall often exclaim- “Speak, Lord, how and when and where you may- it is the voice of my beloved!” But we have arrived at an interesting and cheering truth- **THE FULL UNVEILING OF ALL THE LORD’S DEALINGS IN A HOLIER AND A BRIGHTER WORLD.** “You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand.” That there is a present partial understanding of God’s will and ways concerning us, we readily concede. We may, now and then, see a needs be for his conduct. The veil is just sufficiently lifted to reveal a portion of the ‘end of the Lord.’ He will make us acquainted with the evil which he corrects, with the backsliding which he chastens, with the temptation which he checks, and with the dangerous path around which he throws his hedge; so that we cannot escape. We see it, and we bless the hand outstretched to save.

He will also cause us to be fruitful. We have mourned our leanness, have confessed our barrenness, and lamented the distance of our walk, and the little glory we bring to his dear name- and lo! the dresser of the vineyard has appeared to prune his sickly branch, “that it may bring forth more fruit.” “By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin.” The deeper teaching, too- the result of the divine

chastenings- has revealed to some extent the 'end of the Lord' in his mysterious conduct. O there is no school like God's school; for "who teaches like him?" And God's highest school is the school of trial. All his true scholars have graduated from this school. "Who are these who are clothed in white? Where do they come from? These are the ones coming out of the great tribulation. They washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb and made them white." Rev. 7:13-14. "Blessed is the man, O Lord, whom you chasten and teach out of your law." Ask each spiritually, deeply-taught Christian where he attained his knowledge- and he will point you to God's great university- the school of trial.

But there is a time coming, a blessed time of "good things to come," when the darkness will all have passed away, the mystery of God will be finished, and the present conduct of our Savior will be fully cleared up. "What I do, you know not now; but you shall know hereafter." O that "hereafter," what a solemn word to the ungodly! Is there, then, a hereafter? Jesus says there is; and I believe it, because he says it. That hereafter will be terrible to the man that dies in his sins. It will be a hereafter, whose history will be "written in mourning, lamentation and woe." It had been better for you, reader, living and dying, impenitent and unbelieving, had you never been born, or, had there been no hereafter. But there is a hereafter of woe to the sinner, as of bliss to the saint. "These shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal." (Matt. 25:46.)

The position which the Christian shall occupy hereafter, will be most favorable to a full and clear comprehension of all the mysteries of the way. The "clouds and darkness"- emblems in our history of obscurity and distress- which now envelop God's throne, and enshroud his government of the saints, will have passed away; the mist and fog will have vanished, and breathing a purer atmosphere, and canopied by a brighter sky, the glorified saint will see every object, circumstance, incident and step, with an eye unobscured by a vapor, and unmoistened by a tear. "Now we know in part, then shall we know even as we are known." And what shall we know? All the mysteries of Providence. Things which had made us greatly grieve, will now be seen to have been causes of the greatest joy. Clouds of threatening, which appeared to us charged with the agent of destruction, will then unveil, and reveal the love which they embosomed and concealed. All the mysteries of faith too will be known. "Now we see through a glass, darkly; (in a riddle) but then face to face; now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known."

The great "mystery of Godliness" will develop and unfold its wonders. His everlasting love to his church- his choice of a people for himself- his sovereign grace in calling them, all, all, will shine forth with unclouded luster to the eternal praise of his great and holy name. O what a perfect, harmonious, and glorious whole will all his doings in providence and grace

appear, from first to last, to the undimmed eye, the ravished gaze of his white-robed, palm-bearing church.

Many and holy are the lessons we may gather from this subject. The first is- the lesson of deep humility. There are three steps in the Christian's life. The first is- humility; the second is- humility; the third is- humility. "You shall remember all the way which the Lord your God led you these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you, and to prove you, to know what was in your heart." In veiling his dealings, Jesus would "hide pride" from us. How loftily and self-sufficiently would we walk did we see all our present and future history plain before us.

We would ascribe to our own wisdom and skill, prudence and forethought, the honor which belongs to Christ alone. Let us, then, lie low before the Lord, and humble ourselves under his mysterious hand. "The meek will he guide in judgment, and the meek will he teach his way. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies." Thus writing the sentence of death upon our wisdom, our sagacity, and our strength, Jesus- the lowly one- seeks to keep us from the loftiness of our intellect, and from the pride of our heart prostrating us low in the dust at his feet. Holy posture! blessed place! There, Lord, would I lie; my trickling tears of penitence and love, falling upon those dear feet that have never misled, but have always gone before, leading me by a right way, the best way, to a city of rest.

"To cure you of your pride- that deepest-seated ill,
God humbled his own self- will you your pride keep still?"

We should learn from this subject to live by faith amid the enshrouding dealings of our God. Therefore are those dealings often so dark. Could we ever see all the road, faith would have no play; this precious, this Christ-honoring, this God- glorifying grace would lie dormant in the soul. But, in "leading the blind by a way that they know not," he teaches them to confide in the knowledge, truth, and goodness of their Divine escort- and that confidence is the calm unquestioning repose of faith.

"My spirit on your care,
Blest Savior, I recline;
You will not leave me to despair,
For you are love divine.
"In you I place my trust,
On you I calmly rest;
I know you good, I know you just,
And count your choice the best.
"Whatever events betide,
Your will they all perform;

Safe in your breast my head I hide,
Nor fear the coming storm.
“Let good or ill befall,
It must be good for me;
Secure of having you in all,
Of having all in thee.” [Rev. H.F. Lyte]

Oh, sweet, consoling words of Jesus!- “What I do.” Not what men do- not what angels do- not what you do- but, “what I do.” Is the loved one wrenched from your heart?- “I have done it,” says Jesus. Is the desire of your eyes smitten down with a stroke?- “I have done it,” says Jesus. Is it the loss of property, of health, of position, of friends, that overwhelms you with grief?- “I have done it,” says Jesus. “What I do you know not now; but you shall know hereafter.” How many a mother has this promise soothed, while with an anguish such as a mother only knows, she has gazed upon the withered flower on her breast! How many a father, standing by the couch of death, grasping the cold clammy hand of the pride of his heart, has felt the power of these words, more sweet and more soothing than an angel’s music- “What I do you know not now; but you shall know hereafter.” Wait, then, suffering child, the coming glory- yielding yourself to the guidance of your Savior, and submitting yourself wholly to your Father’s will.

“O Lord! how happy would we be,
If we could cast our care on thee,
If we from self could rest;
And feel at heart that One above,
In perfect wisdom, perfect love,
Is working for the best.
“How far from this our daily life!
Ever disturbed by anxious strife,
By sudden wild alarms;
O could we but relinquish all
Our earthly props, and simply fall
On your Almighty arms!
“Could we but kneel, and cast our load,
E’en while we pray, upon our God;
Then rise with lightened cheer,
Sure that the Father who is near
To still the famished raven’s cry
Will hear, in that we fear.
“We cannot trust him as we should,
So chafes fallen nature’s restless mood
To cast its peace away;
Yet birds and flowerets round us preach,

All, all the present evil teach

Sufficient for the day.

“Lord, make these faithless hearts of ours,

Such lessons learn from birds and flowers,

Make them from self to cease;

Leave all things to a Father’s will,

And taste, before him lying still,

E’en in affliction, peace.”

Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand." John 13:7

MIDNIGHT HARMONIES by Octavius Winslow

"Solitude Sweetened"

“I am not alone, because the Father is with me” John 16:32.

It was not one of the least mournful features in the Savior’s humiliation that the path he trod was in a measure solitary, and that the sorrow he endured was in its character a lonely one. He had created and had peopled the world—he had given to man a social constitution, had inspired the pulsation of love, and had imparted to his creatures a secret and strong affinity of mind to mind; and yet he was in the world as one to whom it afforded no home, and proffered no friendship. And was this no felt-trial to the Son of God? Did it enter nothing into the curse which he came to endure? Did it add no gall-bitter to his cup, no keenness to the sadness of his heart, no deepening to the shade upon his brow? Did the absence of a perfectly congenial mind, assimilating spirit, fond, confiding, sympathizing heart, on whose pillow he could lay to rest the corroding cares and mental disquietudes which agitated his own, create no aching void in the Redeemer’s bosom? Surely it must. Our Lord was human— though divine—and as man he must have felt, at times, an intensity of yearning for human companionship proportioned to his capacity to enjoy, and his power to enrich it. The human sympathies and affections that belonged to him, pure and elevated as they were, could only awaken a responsive chord in a human breast. And for this he must have sighed. He was formed for the enjoyment of life, was endowed with a sensibility to the objects around him. He had affections—and he delighted to indulge them: he had a heart—and he longed to bestow it.

There were times, too, when he seemed to contract an attachment to inanimate objects: the tree beneath whose shade he had occasionally sat, the fields over whose verdure he had roamed, the sequestered spots where he had often strayed, the sea whose shores he had frequently trod, the mountain-slopes where he had been wont to stand, associated as they were with communion with God and converse with his disciples, had become sacred and endeared haunts to the holy and sensitive heart of Jesus.

It might indeed be said that the Savior loved and coveted solitude, occasionally stealing away to some favorite place for meditation and prayer. But there were other and more frequent occasions, especially in the deep, lonely sorrow of Gethsemane, when he seemed to feel the need and to ask the soothing of human sympathy. With what melting tones must these words have fallen on the ears of his little band of followers: “Tarry here, and watch with me.”

Yes, our Lord's was a solitary life. He mingled indeed with man— he labored for man— he associated with man— he loved man— but he “trod the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with him.” And yet he was not all alone. Creatures, one by one, had indeed deserted his side, and left him homeless, friendless, solitary— but there was One, the consciousness of whose ever-clinging, ever-brightening, ever-cheering presence infinitely more than supplied the lack. “Behold, the hour comes, yes, is now come, that you shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone: and yet I am not alone, because the Father is with me.”

But from the history of Jesus let us turn to a parallel page in the history of his saints. The disciples of Christ, like their Lord and Master, often feel themselves alone. The season of sickness— the hour of bereavement— the period of trial, is often the occasion of increased depression from the painful consciousness of the solitude and loneliness in which it is borne. The heavenly way we travel is more or less a lonely way. We have, at most, but few companions. It is a “little flock,” and only here and there we meet a traveler, who, like ourselves, is journeying towards the Zion of God. As the way is narrow, trying and humiliating to flesh, but few, under the drawings of the Spirit, find it.

If, indeed, true religion consisted in mere profession, then there were many for Christ. If the marks of discipleship were merely an orthodox creed— excited feeling— denominational zeal— flaming partisanship, then there are many that “find the way.” But if the true travelers are men of broken heart— poor in spirit— who mourn for sin— who know the music of the Shepherd's voice— who follow the Lamb— who delight in the throne of grace— and who love the place of the cross, then there are but ‘few’ with whom the true saints journey to heaven in fellowship and communion.

But the path is even narrower than this— the circle is smaller still. How few real companions do we meet even among the saints of God! Loving them as we do, and yearning for a wider fellowship, yet how few there are with whom we can walk side by side! Doctrine divides us from some. If we speak of God's eternal love, and free choice, and discriminating mercy, we offend. “When our Lord preached the doctrine of sovereign grace, we read that “from that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him.” O it is a solemn and affecting thought, that even the very doctrines of Christ's gospel build a wall of partition between his true disciples.

Church government and ordinances sunder others. The blemishes and imperfections still clinging to the saints, such indeed as separated Paul and Barnabas, often interrupt the full harmony of Christian communion.

The difference of spirituality, too, which we find in the Lord's people, tends to abate much of that communion which ought to distinguish the one family of God. We meet, perhaps, with but few who have been taught

precisely in our school, who see truth as we see it, and who observe ordinances as we observe them, or who can understand the intricacies of Christian experience through which, with toil and difficulty, we are threading our way. Few keep the same pace in the Christian race with us. Some linger behind, while others outrun us. There is one always so lost in a sense of his unworthiness as never to enter into our joy; and there is another towering, as on the eagle's wing, and soaring into a region whose very purity awes, and whose effulgence dazzles us. Thus are we learning the solitariness of the way, even in the very church and family of God within which we are embosomed.

But not from these causes alone springs the sense of loneliness which the saints often feel. There is the separation of loving hearts, and of kindred minds, and of intimate relationships, by the providential ordering and dealings of God. The changes of this changing world—the alteration of circumstances—the removals to new and distant positions—the wastings of disease and the ravages of death, often sicken the heart with a sense of friendlessness and loneliness which finds its best expression in the words of the Psalmist: “I watch, and am as a sparrow alone on the house-top.” But if God “places the solitary in families,” as he occasionally does, he more frequently sets the godly apart from others; and this has often been found to be one of his wisest and holiest appointments. “Come away and rest awhile;” “I will allure her into the wilderness,” are divine expressions which would seem to indicate this instructive truth.

Shall we enter the chamber of sickness? Ah! what solitude reigns here. The gentle movement, the subdued voice, the soft tread, the smouldering embers, the shaded light, all signify that the scenes and the society and the excitement of the world without, intrude not upon the stillness of that world within. Weeks and months and years roll on, and still God keeps his child a “prisoner of hope.” But since he has done it, it must be well done, for “his way is perfect.”

To be arrested in the midst of activity, enterprise, and usefulness,— to be snatched from the pinnacle of honorable distinction, from the scene of pleasant labor, from the soothing society of friends, from the bosom of the domestic circle, within all of which we were so warmly nestled, and to find ourselves the sickly occupant of a lone and gloomy chamber, from which books and friends and family are excluded, is to some a trial of faith and patience demanding grace of no ordinary degree. The pastor torn from his flock, feels it,— the minister banished from his pulpit, feels it,— the Christian laborer laid aside from his loved employ, feels it,— the mother separated from her little ones, feels it; all feel it to be a school of which, though the teaching is most blessed, yet the discipline is most severe.

Shall we enter the house of mourning? Here is solitude indeed— the heart-aching solitude such as death only can create. What an awful stillness reigns

here! The dread silence of all sounds has entered; even the living seem to hold their breath while the king of terrors passes by. The blinded windows—the light foot-fall—the wrapped thoughtfulness—the suppressed conversation—the air of desolateness resting on each countenance—and speaking from each eye, betokens how sad and deep and lonely is the grief with which each heart is breaking. Ah, yes! what a solitude does death often create in the life of the Christian.

The old companion, and the confiding friend removed—the “strong staff broken, and the beautiful rod,”— what a blank does the universe appear? But should we murmur at the solitary way along which our God is conducting us? Is it not his way, and therefore the best way? In love he gave us friends—in love he has removed them. In goodness he blessed us with health—in goodness he has taken it away. In faithfulness he vouchsafed to us affluence—in faithfulness he has recalled it.

And yet this is the way along which he is conducting us to glory. And shall we rebel? Heaven is the home of the saints; “here we have no continuing city.” And shall we repine that we are in the right road to heaven? What, if in weariness and sorrow, you were journeying to the metropolis, where your heart’s fondest treasure was embosomed; and you were to come to a way on whose finger-post was inscribed,— “The road to London,” or, “The road to Paris,” would you, because that road was lone and dreary and irksome, indulge in repining feelings, or waste your moments and your energies in useless regrets? Would you divert into another and an opposite, because a more pleasant and inviting path?

No! The image of your home with its sweet attractions— reposing like a fairy island in the sunny distance— would give wings to your feet, and carpet every step of that rough way with a soft mantle of green. Christ, your heart’s treasure, is there! And will you murmur that the way that leads you to it and to him is sometimes enshrouded with dark and mournful solitude? O the distinguished privilege of treading the path that Jesus walked in!

But the solitude of the Christian has its sweetness. The Savior tasted it when he said, “I am not alone, because the Father is with me;” and all the lonely way that he traveled he leaned upon God. Formed for human friendship, and even knowing something of its enjoyment— for there reposed upon his breast the disciple whom he loved— he yet drew the love that sweetened his solitude from a higher than a human source. His disciples were scattered, and he was left to plod his weary way alone: but his Father with him— O this was enough!

The companionship of God is the highest, purest, sweetest mercy a saint of God can have on earth. Yes, it is the highest, purest, sweetest bliss the saints of God can have in heaven. What is the enjoyment of heaven? Not merely exemption from trial, and freedom from sorrow, and rest from toil, and release from conflict: O no! it is the presence—the full, unclouded presence

of our Father there. To be with Christ— to behold his glory— to gaze upon his face— to hear his voice— to feel the throbbings of his bosom— to bask in the effulgence of God’s presence— O this is heaven, the heaven of heaven!

The twilight of this glory we have here on earth. “I am not alone,” can each sorrowful and banished soul exclaim, “because the Father is with me.” Yes, beloved, your own Father. “You shall call me, my Father.” In Jesus he is your Father— your reconciled, pacified Father— all whose thoughts that he thinks of you, are peace; and all whose ways that he takes with you, are love. The presence, the voice, the smile of a parent, how precious and soothing! especially when that presence is realized, and that voice is heard, and that smile is seen in the dark desolate hour of adversity.

God is our heavenly parent. His presence, his care, his smiles are ever with his children. And if there be a solitary child of the one family that shares the richer in the blessing of the Father’s presence than another, it is the sick, the suffering, the lone, the chastened child. Yes, your Father is with you always. He is with you to cheer your loneliness— to sweeten your solitude— to sanctify your sorrow— to strengthen your weakness— to shield your person— to pardon your sins, and to heal all your diseases.

Hearken in your deep solitude to his own touching words: “Fear you not; for I am with you: be not dismayed; for I am your God: I will strengthen you; yes, I will help you; yes, I will uphold you with the right hand of my righteousness.” Enough, my Father! if thus you are with me, I am not, I cannot be alone— and if such the bliss with which you do sweeten, and such the glory with which you do irradiate the solitude of your hidden ones, Lord, let me ever be a hidden one— shut out from all others, shut in alone with you!

“You are near,— yes, Lord, I feel it,
You are near wherever I move;
And though sense would sincerely conceal it,
Faith often whispers it in love.

“You are near,— O what a blessing
To the souls your love has blest!
Souls, your daily care confessing,
Daily by their God confessed.

“Why should I despond or tremble
When Jehovah stoops to cheer?
But O far rather, why dissemble
When Omniscience is near!

“Am I weak? your arm will lead me
Safe through every danger, Lord:
Am I hungry? you will feed me

With the manna of your Word.
“Am I thirsting? you will guide me
Where refreshing waters flow;
Faint or feeble, you will provide me
Grace for every need I know.
“Am I fearful? you will take me
Underneath your wings, my God!
Am I faithless? you will make me
Bow beneath your chastening rod.
“Am I drooping? you are near me,
Near to hear me on my way:
Am I pleading? You will hear me,
Hear and answer when I pray.
“Then, O my soul, since God does love you,
Faint not, droop not, do not fear;
For though his heaven is high above you,
He himself is ever near!
“Near to watch your wayward spirit,
Sometimes cold and careless grown;
But likewise near with grace and merit,
All your Savior’s, His, His own.” [J.S. Monsell]

There are many thoughts calculated to sweeten the season of Christian solitude which we need but simply suggest to the reflective mind. You cannot be in reality alone when you remember that Christ and you are one—that by his Spirit he dwells in the heart, and that therefore he is always near to participate in each circumstance in which you may be placed. Your very solitude he shares: with your sense of loneliness he sympathizes. You cannot be friendless— since Christ is your friend. You cannot be relationless— since Christ is your brother. You cannot be unprotected— since Christ is your shield.

Do you need an arm to lean upon?— his is outstretched. Do you need a heart to repose in?— his invites you to its affection and its confidence. Do you need a companion to converse with?— he welcomes you to his fellowship. O sweet solitude, sweetened by such a Savior as this!— always present to comfort, to counsel, and to protect in times of trial, perplexity, and danger.

There is so much soothing in the reflection that it is a Father’s presence that sweetens the solitude of his child, that I know not how to express it. “MY FATHER IS WITH ME!” O what words are these! Who can harm you now? What can befall you? When and where can you be alone, if your heavenly Father is with you? He is with you on the ocean, he is with you on the land. He is with you in your exile, he is with you at home. Friends may forsake,

and kindred may die, and circumstances may change— but “my Father is with me!” may still be your solace and your boast.

And O to realize the presence of that Father— to walk with God in the absorbing consciousness of his loving eye never removed, of his solemn presence never withdrawn, of his encircling arm never untwined— welcome the solitude, welcome the loneliness, welcome the sorrow, cheered and sweetened and sanctified by such a realization as this! “I am not alone, because my Father is with me.”

Let the season of temporary solitude be a time of earnest prayer— of deep searching of heart— of much honest, close, filial transaction with yourself and with God. He may have allured you into the wilderness, he may thus have set you apart from all others for this very end. You have been communing much with books, and with men, he would now have you commune with your own heart and with himself!

And this, too, may be the school in which he is about to train you for greater responsibility, for more extended usefulness, and for higher honors in his church. Moses was withdrawn from Pharaoh’s court and banished to the solitude of the wilderness forty years, in order to train him to be the great legislator and leader of God’s people. Who can tell what numerous blessings are about to be realized by you, and through you, by the church of God, from the present season of silence and repose through which you are passing?

O to feel a perfect satisfaction, yes, an ecstatic delight, with all that our heavenly Father does! Submission is sweet, resignation is sweeter, but joyous satisfaction with the whole of God’s conduct is sweeter still. “My Father, not my will but yours be done.” Be this, then, your solace— this your boast— this your midnight harmony— “I AM NOT ALONE, BECAUSE MY FATHER IS WITH ME.”

“How heavily the path of life
Is trod by him who walks alone,
Who hears not, on his dreary way,
Affection’s sweet and cheering tone;
Alone, although his heart should bound
With love to all things great and fair,
They love not him,— there is not one
His sorrow or his joy to share.
“Alone,— though in the busy town,
Where hundreds hurry to and fro—
If there is none who for his sake
A selfish pleasure would forego;
And O how lonely among those
Who have not skill to read his heart,
When first he learns how summer friends

At sight of wintry storms depart.
“My Savior! and did you too feel
How sad it is to be alone,
Deserted in the adverse hour
By those who must your love have known?
The gloomy path, though distant, still
Was ever present to your view;
O how could you foreseeing it,
For us that painful course pursue?
“Forsaken of your nearest friends,
Surrounded by malicious foes—
No kindly voice encouraged you,
When the loud shout of scorn uprose.
Yet there was calm within your soul,
No stoic pride that calmness kept,
Nor Godhead unapproached by woe—
Like man you had both loved and wept.
“You were not then alone, for God
Sustained you by his mighty power;
His arm most felt, his care most seen,
When needed most in saddest hour.
None else could comfort, none else knew
How dreadful was the curse of sin;
He who controlled the storm without,
Could gently whisper peace within.
“Who is alone if God be near?
Who shall repine at loss of friends,
While he has One of boundless power,
Whose constant kindness never ends
Whose presence felt, enhances joy,
Whose love can stop each flowing tear,
And cause upon the darkest cloud
The bow of mercy to appear.”

MIDNIGHT HARMONIES by Octavius Winslow

"A Look from Christ"

“The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter”—Luke 22:61.

And who can fully interpret that look? Painters have often attempted to portray it, but the pencil has fallen despairingly from their hands. The Savior was now standing face to face with Caiaphas—infinite purity confronting sin, infinite truth confounding error. It was to him a solemn and a critical moment. Pleading for his life, all his thoughts, and sympathies, and moments might be supposed to concentrate wholly upon himself. But no! he heard a voice behind him, the tones of which were familiar, though startling, to his ear. It was a voice to which he had often listened, as the ear listens to sweet sounds; but dear and familiar as it was, it uttered words of appalling import. It was the voice of a loved disciple, a sworn friend, who, but a few hours before, had vowed, with all the solemnity and emphasis of an oath, attachment and fidelity unto death. And what was its affirmation? “I know not the man!” His attention diverted from the trial, and his eye, withdrawn from his accusers, the “Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.”

All thought and emotion seemed now to gather around one object--the Christ-denying disciple. His own personal case, now fraught with the deepest interest and peril; the tremendous responsibility which he at that moment sustained; standing on the eve of accomplishing the eternal purpose of his Father in the redemption of his church; the woe through which he was about to pass lowering and darkening around him; yet all seemed for the moment to tremble in the balance, before the case of a now fallen apostle. “And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter.” Peter met the glance. Not a word was uttered, not a syllable was breathed, not a finger was lifted by the Savior; it was but a look, and yet it was such a look as pierced the heart of the sinning apostle. “Peter went out and wept bitterly.”

Let us attempt its interpretation. The eye of Jesus is still upon us; it has often reproved us in our waywardness and folly; it has often cheered us in our loneliness and sorrow; and it may often chide and gladden us again. What is its language? It was a look of injured love. Christ loved Peter; he loved him with an everlasting love. When he allured him from his lowly calling, summoned him to be a disciple, and ordained him to be an apostle, and “a fisher of men,” he loved him. Yes; and he loved him, too, at that moment. He was about to die—to die for Peter. He knew how false and treacherous he would prove; how, at a most critical period of his life, and amid circumstances the most painful, he would deny that he knew him, confirming the disownment with an oath and a curse; yet he loved Peter, loved him with an affection that never faltered or cooled--no, not even at the

moment when the denial and the imprecation rose, fiend-like, from his lips.

What, then, was the language of that look which Christ now bent upon Peter? It was a look of Injured love! It seemed to say, "I am about to die for you, Peter, and can you now deny me? What have I done, or what have I said, worthy of such requital?" And what, my reader, are all our backslidings, and falls, and unkind returns, but so many unjust injuries done to the deep, deathless love of Jesus? How do we forget, at the moment of excited feeling, that every step we take in departure from God, each temptation to which we yield assent, and each sin we voluntarily commit, is in the face of love inconceivably great, and unutterably tender. Injured love! how reproving its glance! "I have died for you," Jesus says; "for you I poured out my heart's blood; and can you, in view of love like mine, thus grieve, and wound, and deny me?"

It was a look of painful remembrance. "And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord." His Lord's solemn prediction of his sin he seemed quite to have forgotten. But when that look met his eye, it summoned back to memory the faded recollections of the faithful and tender admonitions that had forewarned him of his fall. There is a tendency in our fallen minds to forget our sinful departures from God. David's threefold backsliding seemed to have been lost in deep oblivion, until the Lord sent his prophet to recall it to his memory. Christ will bring our forgotten departures to view, not to upbraid or to condemn, but to humble us, and to bring us afresh to the blood of sprinkling. The heart-searching look from Christ turns over each leaf in the book of memory; and sins and follies, inconsistencies and departures, there inscribed, but long forgotten, are read and re-read, to the deep sin-loathing and self-abasement of our souls. Ah! let a look of forgiving love penetrate your soul, illumining memory's dark cell, and how many things, and circumstances, and steps in your past life will you recollect to your deepest humiliation before God.

And O! how much do we need thus to be reminded of our admonitions, our warnings, and our falls, that we may in all our future spirit and conduct "walk humbly with God." The season of solitude and sorrow, suffering reader, is peculiarly favorable for this. It is a time of recollection. The past is recalled, the life is reviewed, principles, motives, and actions are examined, scrutinized, and weighed, and "the result, if the process is fairly and honestly" gone into, will be, "Lord! I do remember this day my sin and folly; pardon it, for your name's sake, and do you remember it no more forever!"

It was a look of gentle reproof. It seemed to convey that reproof in language like this— "I am now bearing your sin and curse; I am about to drink the cup of woe for you; to take you, a poor, lost, condemned sinner, into my very bleeding heart; and do you deny that you did ever know me? Can you inflict another and a deeper wound? Can you add another and a

keener pang to those now falling, like a storm, upon me from my enemies, deriding, and scorning, and rejecting me?" O, what a reproof was that look! It was indeed tender; but its very tenderness made it all the more keen. Blessed Jesus! we love you for all the reproofs of your eye--reproofs most deserved, most searching. We have met your look in secret; in solitude and in sorrow it has spoken to us, revealing our sin and your displeasure, and we bless you for the look.

It was a look of full forgiveness. Who can doubt but that, at this moment, Jesus, by his blessed Spirit, did secretly write upon the heart of his backsliding disciple the free pardon of his sin. And such is ever the look of Christ to us. Be it a look expressive of wounded love; be it a look of mournful remembrance; or be it a look of searching reproof; it yet is always a look of most free and full forgiveness. "I have pardoned," is its language. And this is the meaning of Christ's look now penetrating the dark cloud of your heart's grief, suffering believer. It may revive the recollection of past offences; it may search, and rebuke, and alarm; yet beware of interpreting it all of displeasure; it is a look of loving forgiveness. The sharpest reproof the look of Christ ever conveyed to a believer, spoke of pardoned sin. It must be so, since the covenant of peace provides, and the atonement of Jesus secures, the entire canceling of all his sin.

Meet the eye of Jesus, then, with confidence and love. There may be self-reproach in your conscience; there is no harsh reproach in his look. The uplifted glance of your eye may be sin-repenting, the downward beaming of his is sin-forgiving. O! press to your heart the consolation and joy of this truth--the glance of Jesus falling upon his accepted child ever speaks of pardoned sin. Chastened, sorrowful, and secluded, you may be, yet your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake. O! I know not a truth more calculated to light up the gloom of a lone chamber, to lift up the drooping spirit of a heart-sick child of God, than the announcement that God, for Christ's sake, has pardoned all his transgressions and his sins, and stands to him in the relation of a reconciled Father.

Suffering child of God! with this divine declaration would I come to you in your sorrow and seclusion—"O Israel! you shall not be forgotten of me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, your transgressions, and, as a cloud, your sins. Return unto me; for I have redeemed you." O! that the Spirit, the Comforter, may sweeten your solitude and cheer your gloom, and give you this song to sing in the night season of your grief: "Bless the Lord, O my soul! and forget not all his benefits; who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from destruction, and crowns you with loving-kindness and tender mercies." Forget not that the look of Christ is ever, to his saints, a look of pardoning love.

The posture of Jesus when he looked upon his sinning disciple was most expressive. "The Lord turned." Here was the first step of recovery taken on

the part of Christ. And what has all the restoring conduct of our Lord been towards us, but just this turning to us, when we had turned from him? We have wandered, he has gone after us; we have departed, he has pursued us; we have stumbled, he has upheld us; we have fallen, he has raised us up again; we have turned from him, he has turned to us. O! the wonderful love, and patience patience of Christ! And what is still his language, speaking to us in that look? "Return unto me, for I have redeemed you." And what should be the response of our hearts? "Behold, "we come unto you, for you are the Lord our God." Then, "let us search and try our ways, and turn again unto the Lord."

Yes, my reader, again. What! after all my backslidings and recoveries, my departures and returns, may I turn again to the Lord? Yes! with confidence we say it, "turn again unto the Lord." That look of love beaming from the eye of Jesus, invites you, woos you to return again, yes, this once more, to the shelter of his pierced side, to the home of his wounded heart.

And O! how acute the sorrow awakened by a look from Christ. "Peter went out and wept bitterly." How melting is the look of wounded love! A Father's eye, beaming with tenderness upon a rebellious, wandering child, inviting, welcoming his return--what adamant heart can resist it?

Peter's sorrow, too, was solitary. He went out from the high priest's hall, and sought some lone place to weep. Ah! the deepest, bitterest, truest grief for sin, is felt and expressed beneath God's eye alone. When the wakeful pillow of midnight is moistened, when the heart unveils in secret to the eye of Jesus, when the chamber of privacy witnesses to the confidential confessions, and moanings, and pleadings of a wandering heart, there is then felt and expressed a sorrow for sin, so genuine, so delicate, and so touching, as cannot but draw down upon the soul a look from Christ the most tender in its expression, and the most forgiving in its language.

And what, my reader, shall be the one practical lesson we draw from this subject? Even this— Let us always endeavor to realize the loving eye of Jesus resting upon us. In public and in private, in our temporal and spiritual callings, in prosperity and in adversity, in all places and on all occasions, and under all circumstances, O! let us live as beneath its focal power. When our Lord gave this look to Peter, his eyes were dim with grief; but now that he is in heaven, they are "as a flame of fire." To his saints not a burning, withering, consuming flame, but a flame of inextinguishable love! Deem not yourself, then, secluded believer, a banished and an exiled one, lost to all sight. Other eyes may be withdrawn and closed, distance intercepting their view, or death darkening their vision; but the eye of Jesus, your Lord, rests upon you always, in ineffable delight, and with unslumbering affection. "I will guide you with my eye," is the gracious promise of your God. Be ever and intently gazing on that Eye, "looking unto Jesus." He is the Fountain of Light; and in the light radiating from his eye you shall, in the gloomiest hour

of your life, see light upon your onward way. “By his light I walked through darkness.”

“We all, with open face, beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.”

MIDNIGHT HARMONIES by Octavius Winslow

"Honey in the Wilderness"

“And when the people had come into the wood, behold the honey dropped . . . Wherefore he put forth the end of the rod that was in his hand, and dipped it in an honey-comb, and put his hand to his month; and his eyes were enlightened.”

-1 Samuel 14:26, 27.

And when the people were come into the wood, behold, the honey dropped; but no man put his hand to his mouth: for the people feared the oath. But Jonathan heard not when his father charged the people with the oath: wherefore he put forth the end of the rod that was in his hand, and dipped it in an honeycomb, and put his hand to his mouth; and his eyes were enlightened. 1 Samuel 14:26-27

When they went into the woods, they saw the honey oozing out, yet no one put his hand to his mouth, because they feared the oath. But Jonathan had not heard that his father had bound the people with the oath, so he reached out the end of the staff that was in his hand and dipped it into the honeycomb. He raised his hand to his mouth, and his eyes brightened. 1 Samuel 14:26-27

They didn't even touch the honey because they all feared the oath they had taken. But Jonathan had not heard his father's command, and he dipped a stick into a piece of honeycomb and ate the honey. After he had eaten it, he felt much better. 1 Samuel 14:26-27

The Word of God is rich with the most beautiful and instructive similitude. We are aware there is a limit to its use, and that if that limit be overstepped, we may leave the field of a sober reality, for the uncertain and unsafe path of imagination. Yet, on the other hand, since God has “used similitudes by the ministry of the prophets,” it were folly, no, it were sin to disregard them altogether as useless aids in illustrating and elucidating divine truth. The army of the Lord was now faint and weary in the conflict. Saul had rashly enjoined that no individual should taste of food until the battle had been fought. Ignorant of the royal command, Jonathan, on coming to a certain woods, and beholding honey dropping upon the ground, in a moment of exhaustion, put forth the end of his rod, dipped it in the honey-comb and partook of it; “and his eyes were enlightened.” Now each particular here is suggestive of some spiritual truth.

Firstly: the Lord's people are often weary and faint in their spiritual conflicts. It is no ideal picture of the Christian life when the Word of God represents it in the character of a warfare- it is a solemn and serious truth. To the tactics of this warfare we do not now refer; our remarks bear particularly upon that peculiar state which the conflict produces- weariness and exhaustion. It may be instructive to trace this condition to some of its causes. Among these may be stated, the nature and the number of HIS SPIRITUAL FOES. It may be at the risk of damping the ardor of a young recruit, that we give prominence to this idea, nevertheless, ignorance of our enemies, their strength and variety, has often led to disastrous consequences. The very field upon which the battle is fought is one of sore temptation. What is the world to the believer, but one of his greatest snares? Is there in it anything that sympathizes with the Christian character? Anything in its pursuits, its pleasures, its policy, which advances in his soul the divine life? Can he in his weakness extract from it strength? Can he in his trials derive from it comfort? Can he in his difficulties ask from it aid? Quite the reverse. Yes, the very battlefield is one of severe temptation to the Christian warrior. We can only compare his position to an armed force going out to war, and startled at every turn by some wild beast rushing from its lair, or periled by some pitfall lying concealed at every step. This is no over-wrought picture of the world through which the saints are passing. Things that are lawful, are snares. Things, too, that wear the most innocent and innocuous form, often conceal the greatest danger. Yet how little are we broad awake to this. Why does the apostle so frequently and so earnestly warn the Church of God against the world? Because he knew it to be one of his most subtle and most dangerous foes. I believe the day is coming- hasten, Lord, its arrival! when God will so pour out his Spirit upon his church, that it will be considered then as glaring an inconsistency for a Christian man to become a partner in business with a worldly man, as it is now to form an alliance still closer and more sacred with one who is not a follower of the Lord Jesus. "Don't you know that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." "Wherefore come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord."

And what shall we say of his great, unseen, but not less dangerous enemy- the devil? Satan has a more accurate knowledge of us than we have of ourselves. He studies us as we study a book. Without ascribing to him divine attributes, there is a kind of ubiquity belonging to him which renders him a most formidable, because an ever-present foe. Nor do we think that it is in things decidedly evil that Satan proves most successful with the child of God. It is oftener in things which wear the appearance and the semblance of good. It is Satan robed as "an angel of light" not Satan appearing as a fiend of darkness, that we have most to dread. Hence we have reason to beware of the many specious, but false religions of the day.

And when with the world and the devil, he numbers among his spiritual foes, the corruptions of his fallen nature, the subtlety and deep depravity of his own heart; is it marvellous that the believer should often be dispirited in the spiritual conflict? "Cast down, but not destroyed."

The DEFEATS too which he is constantly sustaining- the cutting off of supplies upon which he depended- the seeming withdrawment of the Captain of his salvation, as if indifferent to the conflict- the rusting of his armor- the defection in the camp of some, the desertion from the ranks of others, and the falls upon the battlefield of yet more, often deeply discourage the Christian soldier. His heart sickens, his spirits droop, his courage fails, and he lays down upon his shield, as if to die.

But there is HONEY IN THE DESERT for the Christian soldier, "faint yet pursuing." There is appropriate refreshment for the weariness and exhaustion of the conflict. The Israelites had been sore pressed by the Philistines. They had fought hard all that day. The rash injunction of their royal leader, had greatly aggravated their suffering. They were forbidden to partake of any nourishment until the evening. Exhausted and faint, weary and discouraged, they light upon a spot in the forest where honey fell, luxuriant and inviting, upon the ground. It met the case of the king's son. He partook of it, and his drooping spirit revived within him.

The Lord of hosts, the Captain of our salvation, has a kind and considerate regard for his weary and discouraged soldiers. They are fighting in his cause- they are battling for his truth- they have come to his help against the mighty, and in the hour when their strength fails, and their spirits droop, and their hearts faint, he will guide them to the spot in the desert, where the honey- the nourishment of his providing- is found, and of which they may eat abundantly.

The similitude of honey is one of frequent occurrence in the Bible. When God would describe the richness of Palestine, he speaks of it as a "land flowing with milk and honey." This, too, would appear to have been a provision especially made by him for the nourishment of his church in the wilderness. Moses says that the Lord made his people to "suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock." It is quite clear, then, that we may regard this species of food as the symbol of great spiritual blessings.

The SOURCES from where the Christian's nourishment is derived are various. We should be grateful to God that he has not limited us to one secondary source of spiritual nourishment. It was proper, it was wise and gracious in God that there should be but one Plant of Renown, but one Rose of Sharon, but one Lily of the Valley, but one Living Vine; in other words, that there should be but one Savior and Redeemer, but one Head and Reservoir of the church. But there are offshoots from this divine plant; there are streams issuing from this sacred fountain-head, from each of which the believer in his weariness and sorrowing may, by faith, extract the

nourishment that strengthens and revives him. I would repeat it- be grateful to God for this. Suppose his people were shut up to but one means of grace- that means being the Gospel ministry; and suppose he were to assign your lot where no such channel were accessible- how would it fare with your soul? But it is not so. Let his Providence guide you to the farthest spot on the earth- the desert, the forest, the prairie- where no ministry of reconciliation proclaims the unsearchable riches of Christ, yet, even there, he can guide you to the spot where falls the honey, abundant as his own affluence, and free as his own grace can make it.

Such, believer, may be your present condition. The seclusion of a sick chamber, the solitude of the house of mourning, the deprivation in other ways of the wonted means of grace, may be to you like an exile from the land of milk and honey; but the Lord has his heart upon you still, and "he does devise means, that his banished are not expelled from him." There is honey for you in the wood.

What is the Word of God but this honey? David's experience shall testify. "How sweet are your words unto my taste! Yes, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" And from where does this honey fall, but from the heart of God? What is the word of God? It is the unfolding of the heart of God. His mind conveys the word, but his heart dictates the word. Take the promises: how "exceeding great and precious" they are. Have you not often found them sweet to your taste as the honey and the honey-comb? When some portion of the word suited to your present need has been brought home to your heart by the sealing power of the Holy Spirit, how have all other sweets become bitter to your taste compared with this. Your Heavenly Father saw your grief, your divine Captain beheld your conflict and your exhaustion, and bade his Spirit go and drop that sweet promise into your sad heart, and you found the entrance of God's word gave light and comfort to your sad and gloomy spirit.

The love of God in Christ! O it is sweeter than honey! The love that gave Christ- that chose us in Christ- that has blessed us in Christ- that gives us standing in Christ; surely it passes all knowledge. To see it traveling over all the opposition of our unbelieving minds, and the corruption of our depraved hearts, and meeting us at some peculiar stage of our journey, in some painful crisis of our history, in some bitter lonely trial through which we are passing; how does this exalt our views of its greatness, and bring us into the experience of its sweetness.

Such, too, is the love of the Spirit. His love as tasted in his calling- in his comforting- in his sanctifying- in his witnessing, and in all his effectual and unwearied teaching. "God is love"- and on this truth- sweet in our present experience- we shall be living through eternity: "If so be we have tasted that the Lord is gracious."

But let us not overlook the honey-comb- the depository of this spiritual

nourishment. "It pleased the Father that in Jesus should all fulness dwell." If the grace that flows from Jesus is sweet, Jesus himself is sweeter still. Let us not, then, be satisfied with the fulness of Christ; but let us live on the person of Christ: "He that eats of my flesh, and drinks of my blood, dwells in me, and I in him." I fear we have too little contact with Christ himself. We do not sufficiently make him our personal friend- walking with him, talking with him, confiding in him as we would with the dearest personal friend of our hearts. And yet this is our high and precious privilege. "This is my Friend," should be the language of every believer, as he points to, and leans upon, Christ.

The PLACE where this honey- the symbol of such spiritual blessing- was found, was the "wood." Beloved, the covenant of grace, the fulness that is in Christ, is not for heaven, but for earth. It is not for the church triumphant, but for the church militant- the church in her warfare. Here it is the battle is fought, and the conflict is passing, and the enemy assails, and the wound is inflicted, and the heart faints, and the spirit is discouraged, and the soul is weary. This honey of God's providing is for the season of sorrow and seclusion, for the need and weariness, the entanglement and loneliness of the forest.

Then, refuse it not, O child of sorrow! Stretch forth your rod of faith, and gather of it abundantly. "Eat, O friends," is your Lord's invitation. Drink deeply of your Father's love- draw largely from Christ's fulness- confide implicitly in God's word- invoke believingly the Spirit's help. All is for you. God is the God of the tried- Jesus is the Savior of the tried- the Spirit is the Comforter of the tried- the Bible, with all its consolations and its hopes, is the Book of the tried. Eat of this honey, and your spirit shall be revived. Your eyes will be opened to see new depths of love in God, new chambers of repose in Christ, new promises of sweetness in the Word, and new unfoldings of wisdom, truth, and goodness in the present conduct of him whose dealings may be veiled in painful mystery, but who will never forget to lead his valiant yet exhausted soldier to the honey in the wood.

Nor let us overlook the mingling of the bitter and the sweet in the Lord's dealings with us here. Like the Apocalyptic book eaten by John, which was in his "mouth sweet as honey: and as soon as he had eaten, was bitter;" so are often blended the varied dispensations of our God. It is a most wise and gracious arrangement. All bitter would have dispirited; all sweet would have glutted. The one would have created despondency, and the other, loathing. Thus, our sorrows and our joys, our trials and our succorings, our defeats and our victories, are strangely, wisely, and kindly blended in this the "time of our sojourning."

Be skillful and diligent to extract this honey from every, the bitterest flower. O that God may make us wise to do this. The sweetest apprehensions of Christ have often been in the bitterest dispensations of God's providence.

The stone that was rolled upon the tomb of Christ was heavy: but Christ was beneath it. There may be a stone of difficulty in the way of our mercies, but faith rolling it away, that very difficulty will be found to have brought us to a living Christ full of sweet grace and truth. And let us remember, too, that it is along the path of filial and unreserved obedience that this honey is most thickly strewed. "O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!" What would have been their reward? "He would have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should have satisfied them."

Beware of being so surfeited with the world, with earthly care and carnal enjoyment as to loathe this honey. "The full soul loathed the honey-comb." Israel loathed the manna. Learn one reason why God has placed you just where you are- even to create in your soul a zest and a taste for this honey. He will embitter the world's sweets, when they embitter his. But Jesus can make the world's bitter, sweet, and the creature's sweet, sweeter. Receive all as from Christ, and enjoy all as in Christ, and then shall Christ be to you all and in all.

Soon we shall be in glory, soon we shall escape from the world, and enter the paradise of God. There the boughs are laden, and drop with honey that never wastes, and that never gluts. The weary pilgrim and the veteran warrior shall repose by the side of the rock from where flowed this precious food all through the desert, partaking of its fulness, lasting as eternity. You who have tasted the honey in the wilderness, shall assuredly partake of it in your Father's house.

"Spent with the toil of wasting war,
His hosts, with him, compelled to fast,
The longing chief of Israel saw
Where nature furnished wild meal.
"The aged terebinth had shed
Its pure and luscious treasure round;
And the rich feast lay duly spread,
Free as the winds along the ground.
"For there, upon the tangled grass,
Dropt the sweet burden of that hive;
Yet, until the dial's shade should pass,
No Hebrew might partake and live.
"The monarch's son, the empire's heir,
The leader in the conflict's van,
The victor- say, what was he there?
A weary, worn and famished man!
"He took and ate- no more oppressed,
From eyes, enlightened, flashed his joy!

O fainting soul! be you as blest
With drops of grace, that never cloy.
“And praise Him who leads sons of care,
Pursued by sin and sore distress-
From famine and from flight, to where
There’s honey in the wilderness.”
-William B. Tappan

The Godly Widow Confiding in the Widow's God

"Let your widows trust in me." —Jeremiah 49:11.

It is well! All that he does, who speaks these touching words, is well. It is well with you, for he who gave in love, in love has taken away the mercy that he gave. The companion of your youth, the friend of your bosom, the treasure of your heart, the staff of your riper and the solace of your declining years, is removed, but since God has done it—it is, it must be well.

Look now above the circumstances of your deep and dark sorrow, the second causes of your bereavement, the probable consequences of your loss— **God has done it**; and that very God who has smitten, who has bereaved, and who has removed your all of earthly good, now invites you to *trust in him*. 'Chance' has not brought you into this state; 'accident' has not bereft you of your treasure; **God** has made you a widow, that you may confide in the widow's God.

With your peculiar case the word of God in a pre-eminent degree sympathizes. It would seem, indeed, as if a widow's sorrow and a widow's desolateness took the precedence of all other bereavements in the Bible. It is touched with a hand so gentle, it is referred to with a tenderness so exquisite, it is quoted with a solemnity so profound, it would seem as if God had taken the widow's sorrow, if I may so express myself, into his heart of hearts. "You shall not afflict any widow,"—"He does execute the judgment of the widow,"—"The sheaf in the field shall be for the widow,"—"He relieves the widow,"—"He will establish the border of the widow,"—"A judge of the widow is God,"—"Plead for the widow,"—"If you oppress not the widow,"—"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the widows in their affliction,"—"Let your widows trust in me."

What a cluster of divine and precious consolations for the widow is here! How do their extraordinary appropriateness to her case, their extreme delicacy in dealing with her position, their especial regard for her circumstances; above all, their perfect sympathy with her lonely sorrow, betray the heart from where they flow!

And **who** is the object of the widow's trust? "In me," says God. None less than himself can meet your case. He well considers that *there is an acuteness in your sorrow, a depth in your loss, a loneliness and a*

helplessness in your position, which no one can meet but himself. The first, the best, the fondest, the most protective of creatures has been torn from your heart, is smitten down at your side; what other creature could now be a substitute? A universe of beings could not fill the void. God in Christ only can.

O! wonderful thought, that the Divine Being should come and embosom himself in the bereft and bleeding heart of a human sufferer—that bereft and bleeding heart of *yours!* He is especially the God of the widow. And when he asks your confidence, and invites your trust, and bids *you lift your weeping eye from the crumbled idol at your feet, and fix it upon himself,* he offers you an *infinite* substitute for a *finite* loss; thus, as he ever does, giving you infinitely more than he took; bestowing a richer and a greater blessing than he removed. He recalled your husband, but he bestows himself!

And O, the magnitude of this trust! It is to have *infinite power* to protect you, *infinite wisdom* to guide you, *infinite love* to comfort you, *infinite faithfulness* at all times to stand by you, and *boundless resources* to supply your every need. It is to have the God who made heaven and earth, the God to whom the spirits of all creatures are subject, the God who gave his dear Son to die for you, the God of the everlasting covenant to be your shield, your counselor, your provider, your God forever and ever, and your guide even unto death.

And **what** are you invited thus to entrust to God? First, your own self. It is one of the greatest, as it is one of the most solemn peculiarities of the Gospel, that it deals with us as individuals. It never, in all the commands it enjoins, and in all the blessings it promises, loses sight of our individuality. This, then, is a personal confiding. You are to trust *yourself* into God's hands; God seems now to stand to you in a new relation. He has always been your *Father* and your *Friend*. To these he now adds the relation of *Husband*.

Your present circumstances seem to invest you with a new claim, not upon his love—for he has always loved you, as he loves you now—but upon his especial, his peculiar, his tender care; the affectionate solicitude of the husband blending with the tender love of the father. You are to flee to him in your helplessness, to resort to him in your loneliness, to confide to him your needs, and to weep your sorrows upon his bosom.

Secondly, your children. "Leave your fatherless children; I will preserve them alive." A state of half-orphanage is one of peculiar interest to God. A fatherless child is an object of his especial regard and care. "You are the

helper of the fatherless,"—"A father of the fatherless is God,"—"Enter not into the field of the fatherless; for their Redeemer is mighty, he will plead their cause with you." Encouraged by this invitation and this promise, *take, then, your fatherless ones, and lay them on the heart of God!* He has removed their earthly father, that he may adopt them as his own. His promise that he will "preserve them alive," you are warranted to interpret in its best and widest sense.

It must be regarded as including, not temporal life only, but also *spiritual life*. God never offers us an *inferior* blessing, when it is in his power to confer, and our circumstances demand, a *greater*. He will preserve your fatherless ones alive temporarily, providing all things necessary for their present existence; but, infinitely more than this, he will, in answer to the prayer of faith, preserve their souls unto eternal life. Thus it is a promise of the life that now is, and also of that which is to come.

Thirdly, your concerns are to be entrusted to God. These, doubtless, press at this moment with peculiar weight upon your mind. They are new and strange. They were once cared for by one in whose judgment you had implicit confidence, whose mind thought for you, whose heart beat for you, whose hands toiled for you, who in all things sought to anticipate every wish, to reciprocate every feeling; 'who lessened his cares by your sympathy, and multiplied his pleasures by your participation;' whose esteem, and affection, and confidence, shed a warm and mellow light over the path of life. These interests, once confided to his judgment and control, must now be entrusted to a wiser and more powerful friend-- to him who is truly and emphatically the widow's God. Transferred to his government, he will make them all his own. Your *care* will be his cares; your *concerns* will be his concern; your *children* will be his children; your *need* the occasion of his supply; and your *fears, perils, and dejection*, the period of his soothing, protection, and love.

And just at this period of your life, when every object and every scene appears to your view trembling with uncertainty and enshrouded with gloom, God—the widow's God—speaks in language well calculated to awaken in your soul a song in the night-- "LET YOUR WIDOWS TRUST IN ME." O! have faith, then, in this word of the living God, and all will be well with you. It will be well with your person, it will be well with your children, it will be well with your estate. The God who cared for the widow of Zarephath, the Savior who had compassion on the bereaved widow of Nain, is *your* God and Savior; and the same regard for your interests, and the same sympathy for your sorrow, will lighten your cares and cheer the desolateness of your widowhood.

Only trust in God. Beware of murmuring at his dealings, of doubting his kindness, of distrusting his word, and of so nursing your grief as to refuse the consolation your God and Savior offers you. The sweetest joy may yet spring from your bitter, lonely sorrow; and the richest music may yet awake from your unstrung and silent harp. If a *human* power and sympathy could "make the widow's heart to sing for joy," O! what joy cannot *God's* power and love create in that desolate, bleeding, widowed heart of your. Place it, then, all stricken and lonely as it is, in God's hands; and, breathing over it his loving Spirit, *he will turn its tears, its sighs, its moanings, into the sweetest midnight harmony!*

"Long have I viewed, long have I thought,
And held with trembling hand this bitter draught;
'Twas now first to my lips applied;
Nature shrank in, and all my courage died.
But now resolved and firm I'll be,
Since, Lord, it is mingled and reached out by Thee.

"Since its your sentence I should part
With the most precious treasure of my heart,
I freely that and more resign;
My heart itself, as its delight is Thine.
My little all I give to you;
You gave a greater gift, your Son, to me.

"He left true bliss and joys above,
Himself he emptied of all good but love;
For me he freely did forsake
More good than he from me can take,
A mortal life for a divine
He took, and did at last even that resign.

"Take all, great God! I will not grieve;
But still will wish that I had still to give.
I hear your voice; you bid me quit
My paradise; I bless, and do submit;
I will not murmur at your word,
Nor beg your angel to sheathe up his sword."

LOOKING UNTO JESUS

"Looking unto Jesus" – Hebrews 12:2.

It was no little kindness in our God that as one saving object, and one alone, was to engage the attention and fix the eye of the soul, through time and through eternity, that object should be of surpassing excellence and of peerless beauty. That he should be, not the sweetest seraph nor the loveliest angel in heaven, but his own Son, the "brightness of his glory, the express image of his person." God delights in the beautiful; all true beauty emanates from him. What a beautiful picture was this world as it rose from beneath his pencil! What a magnificent piece of sculpture was man, as he came forth from his hands! And despite of the withering blight which has fallen upon all that was once so perfect, how much beauty still lingers around the works and creatures of God! "He has made all things beautiful."

To recur to the thought just advanced, how worthy of himself that, in providing a Savior for fallen man, bidding him fix the eye of faith supremely and exclusively upon him, that Savior should unite in himself all divine and all human beauty; that he should be the "chief among ten thousand, the altogether lovely One." Adore the name, O! praise the love of our God, for this. To this peerless object, to this glorious Savior, then, we are now invited to look. And in "looking unto Jesus," let it be remembered that it is not exclusive of the Father, nor of the Holy Spirit. In looking unto Jesus for salvation, we include each Divine Person of the glorious Trinity. We cannot look unto Jesus without seeing the Father, for Christ is the revelation of the Father. "He that has seen me," says Christ, "has seen the Father." Nor can we contemplate Jesus exclusive of the Holy Spirit, because *it is the Spirit alone who imparts the spiritual eye that sees Jesus*. Thus, in the believing and saving view a poor sinner has of Jesus, he beholds, in the object of his sight, a revelation of each separate Person of the ever blessed Trinity, engaged in devising and accomplishing his eternal salvation.

Oh what a display of infinite love and wisdom is here, that in our salvation one object should arrest the eye, and that that object should embody an equal revelation of the Father, who gave Jesus, and of the Holy Spirit of truth, who leads to Jesus, and that that object should be the loveliest being in the universe! Looking unto Jesus! most refreshing and sweet are these words! What an embodiment of truth! How simple, yet how grand! How brief, yet how expressive! They involve the following points: "Looking unto Jesus," *from* everything; "Looking unto Jesus," *in* everything; "Looking unto Jesus," *for* everything.

First, "Looking unto Jesus," **FROM** everything. The eye cannot properly contemplate two different objects with equal simplicity and distinctness at the same moment. It is equally contrary to the philosophy of mind, that it can give its supreme study to more than one subject at a time. This will hold good in matters of faith. The object of faith is one, the trust of faith is one, the giver of faith is one, "looking unto *Jesus*." Now a true spiritual beholding of the Lord Jesus in the great matter of our eternal salvation, requires that we look away from every other object that would divide our attention, to him alone.

We must look *from* **ourselves**. This is, perhaps, the most common and insidious object that comes between the eye of the soul and Jesus. When God was ejected from the heart of man, self vaulted into the vacant throne, and has ever since maintained a supremacy. It assumed two forms, from both of which we are to look in looking savingly to Jesus. We must look from **righteous self**; from all works of righteousness which we can perform, from our almsgivings, from our charities, from our religious observances, our fastings, and prayers, and sacraments; from all the works of the law by which we are seeking to be justified; from all our efforts to make ourselves better, and thus to do something to commend ourselves to the Divine notice, and to propitiate the Divine regard; *from* all this we must look, if we rightly look unto Jesus to be saved by his righteousness, and by his alone. The noble language of the apostle must find an echo in our hearts: "I once thought all these things were so very important, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the priceless gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I may have Christ and become one with him. I no longer count on my own goodness or my ability to obey God's law, but I trust Christ to save me. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith."

We must equally, too, look unto Jesus from **unrighteous self**. Our sins and transgressions and iniquities, red as crimson, countless as the sands, and towering as the Alps, are not for one moment to intercept or obscure our looking unto Jesus for salvation. Jesus is a *Savior*, as his precious name signifies. As such, he came to save us from our sins, be those sins ever so great for magnitude, or infinite for number. It is impossible that we can look unto Jesus, and feel the joy of his salvation flowing into our hearts, while at the same time we are looking at the number and the turpitude of our sins. We must not look at the sin and at the Savior at the same time; but beholding by faith him who "bore our sins in his own body on the tree," who was "made a sin-offering for us," who was "wounded for our transgressions, and

was bruised for our iniquities," who shed his precious blood that the guiltiest may be cleansed, and the vilest saved, and between whom and the penitent sinner, though he were another Manasseh, another Saul of Tarsus, another dying malefactor, no transgression and no crime can interpose an effectual barrier, we shall see the exceeding greatness and sinfulness of sin in a clearer, and more searching and solemn light, than we possibly could viewing it apart from the cross.

Look unto Jesus, then, *from* your sins; their magnitude and their number interpose no difficulty, and from no real discouragement to your immediate approach to Christ. No argument based upon your unworthiness can avail to exclude you from an interest in his great salvation. He came into the world to save sinners, even the chief. All that he did, and all that he said, and all that he suffered, was for *sinners*. It is his work, it is his joy, it is his glory to save sinners. For this he exchanged heaven for earth, relinquished the bosom of his Father for the embrace of the cross. He was never known to reject a poor sinner that came to him; he has never refused to take within his sheltering side, to hide within his bleeding bosom, the penitent that sought its protection, fleeing from the condemnation of the law to the asylum of the cross. "Whoever comes unto me I will in no wise cast out." With such a declaration as this, flowing from the lips of Jesus, who can refuse to look from the greatness of his own sin and guilt to the greatness of his love, the greatness of his grace, the greatness of his salvation, "who came into the world to save sinners?"

In "looking unto Jesus," we must also look *from* churches, as from ourselves. God has placed salvation for a lost sinner in no church upon earth. He has ordained that salvation should exist only in the Lord Jesus. To substitute, then, the church of God for the Christ of God, faith in the church for faith in the Savior of the church, surely were a crime of the deepest guilt, entailing consequences the most dire. The church of God is herself a fallen, sinful, and impotent body. She is pardoned, justified, and accepted alone in her one divine and great Head; and "there is no other name given among men whereby they may be saved," but the name of Jesus. He, then, who is looking to any church, or to church privileges, for salvation, whatever the name by which that church is called, whatever the power it claims, or the authority it assumes, shall as assuredly perish in his vain refuge as Joab perished when he fled from the vengeance of the king, into the "tabernacle of the Lord, and caught hold of the horns of the altar," but fell beneath its sacred shadow, weltering in his blood. Escape, then, from every other refuge, and flee to Jesus, the true Sanctuary and the true Altar, where safety and salvation alone are found.

Second, "Looking unto Jesus," **IN** everything. In the deep study of the holiness of the law, and the strictness of Divine justice, what a suitable and glorious object for the alarmed and trembling spirit to look upon is he who came to honor that law and to satisfy that justice. Are you agitated by thoughts of the Divine holiness, and your own impurity? Do you tremble as you contemplate God's determination to punish sin, by no means clearing the guilty? Look unto Jesus, and let your trembling subside into the calmness with which his whisper stills the tempest. He has become "the end of the law for righteousness," to all that believe. His atonement, while it vindicates the majesty of the Father's government, spreads its mighty shield around the Father's child; and thus protected, neither the thunder of the law nor the flaming sword of justice can reach him. Oh the blessedness of looking, by faith, to Jesus, from the wrath and the condemnation justly due to our transgressions; to see all that wrath and condemnation borne by him who wept and bled in the garden, who languished and died upon the tree; to see Jesus, with the keys of all authority and power suspended from his girdle, closing up our hell, and opening wide our heaven! In the season of solitude and sorrow, Christian reader, when thoughts of God's holiness mingle with views of your sinfulness, and fears of Divine wrath blend with the consciousness of your just deserts, darkening that solitude and embittering that sorrow, O! turn and fix your believing eye upon the Divine, the suffering, the atoning Savior, and peace, composure, and joy will lull your trembling spirit to rest.

You are not sick, nor in solitude, nor in sorrow, because there is wrath in God, for all that wrath was borne by your Redeeming Surety. You are so – oh that you could believe it – because God is love. *Divine goodness sent the sickness, mingled the cup of sorrow, and marked out your lonely path.* It must be, since Jesus so bore away the curse and the sin, that God now brims the cup he emptied with the love that passes knowledge. "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, neither be you weary of his correction: for whom *the Lord loves* he corrects, even as a father the son *in whom he delights.*" Your heavenly Father loves you, and delights in you; *therefore* he chastens and corrects you. "*Despise*" it not, then, on the one hand; and do not be "*weary*" of it on the other.

In every position of life, our privilege is to be "looking unto Jesus." God can place us in no circumstances, be they humble or exalted, in which we may not repair to Christ for the wisdom and the strength, the grace and the consolation, those circumstances demand. It is our mercy to know that God adapts himself to every position of his saints. He knows that in times of *prosperity*, the feet of his saints are apt to slide; and that in times of *adversity*, they are often pierced and wounded. Thus, in the smooth path, as

in the rough, Jesus is to be the one object to which the eye is raised, and upon which it rests. If he exalts you, as he may do, to any post of distinction and responsibility, look unto Jesus, and study the self-annihilation and lowliness of his whole life; and seek the grace to sustain you in the position for which your own powers are most inadequate. If he lays you low, as in his dealings with his people he often does, from the depth of your humiliation let your eye look unto Jesus, who reached a depth in his abasement infinitely beneath your own; and who can descend to your circumstances, and impart the grace that will enable you so to adapt yourself to them as to glorify him in them. Thus you will know both how to abound, and how to suffer need.

In each season of affliction, to whom can we more appropriately look than to Jesus? He was pre-eminently the man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. If you would tell your grief to one who knew grief as none never knew it; if you would weep upon the bosom of one who wept as none ever wept; if you would disclose your sorrow to one who sorrowed as none ever sorrowed; if you would bare your wound to one who was wounded as none ever was wounded; then in your affliction turn from all creature sympathy and support, and *look to Jesus*; to a kinder nature, to a tenderer bosom, to a deeper love, to a more powerful arm, to a more sympathizing friend, you could not take your trial, your affliction, and your sorrow. He is prepared to embosom himself in your deepest grief, and to make your circumstances all his own. So completely and personally is he one with you, that nothing can affect you that does not instantly touch him.

Your temptations from Satan, your persecutions from man, the woundings of saints, and the smitings of the watchmen, all fall upon him. "The reproaches of those who reproached you fall on me." Tender to him are you as the apple of his eye. Your happiness, your reputation, your usefulness, your labors, your necessities, your discouragements, your despondencies, all pass beneath his unslumbering notice, and are the objects of his tenderest love and incessant care. If Jesus, then, is willing to come and make, as it were, his home in the very heart of your sorrow, surely you will not hesitate in repairing with your sorrow to his heart of love.

And when heart and flesh are fast failing, and the trembling feet descend into the dark valley of the shadow of death, to whom shall we then look, but *unto Jesus*? The world is now receding and all creatures are fading upon the sight; one object alone remains, arrests, and fixes the believer's eye, it is Jesus, the Savior; it is Immanuel, the incarnate and now present God; it is the Captain of our salvation, the conqueror of death, and the spoiler of the grave; it is our Friend, our Brother, our Joseph, our Joshua, loving, and faithful, and present to the last. Jesus is there to confront death again, and

vanquish him with his own weapons. Jesus is there to remind his departing one, that the grave can wear no gloom and can boast of no victory, since he himself passed through its portal, rose and revived and lives for evermore.

Sick one! in your languishing, look to Jesus! Departing one! in your death struggles, look to Jesus. Are you guilty? Jesus is righteous. Are you a sinner? Jesus is a Savior. Are you fearful, and do you tremble? The Shepherd of the flock is with you, and no one shall pluck his sheep out of his hands. How fully, how suitably does the gospel now meet your case! In your bodily weakness and mental confusion, two truths are, perhaps, all that you can now dwell upon, – your sinfulness and Christ's redemption, your emptiness and Christ's sufficiency. Enough! you need no more; God requires no more. In your felt weakness, in your conscious unworthiness, midst the swelling of the cold waters, raise your eye and fix it upon Jesus, and all will be well. Do you hear not the words of your Savior calling you from the bright world of glory to which he bids you come, – "Arise, my love, my fair one! and come away." Let your trusting, joyful heart respond,

Jesus! my breath is failing; lead me on
Softly and gently, as my strength can bear;
Draw me to you in closer union,
And for eternal life your child prepare.
Let your love shine upon my soul, and chase
This mistiness and darkness quite away,
Until faith discerns her holy resting-place
Distinctly, in the perfect light of day.
Roll me in snowy clothing; store my heart
With precious jewels from your treasury.
This world is not my rest; let me depart,
And let my ransomed soul return to thee.
Well may I trust you, who yourself have given
To gain for me the peace and bliss of heaven.

Third, "Looking unto Jesus," *for* everything. A few words must express all that we would say upon this view of our subject. God has but one Treasurer, and the church but one Treasury, the Lord Jesus. He has deposited all fullness exclusively in Christ, that we might, in all need, repair only to Christ. "Looking unto Jesus," for our standing before God; "Looking unto Jesus," for the grace that upholds and preserves us unto eternal life; "Looking unto Jesus," for the supply of the Spirit that sanctifies the heart, and fits us for the heavenly glory; "Looking unto Jesus," for each day's need, for each moment's support; "Looking unto Jesus," for the eye that sees him, the faith that beholds the invisible; in a word, "Looking unto Jesus," *for*

EVERYTHING. Thus has God simplified our life of faith in his dear Son. *Severing us from all other sources, alluring us away from all other dependencies, and weaning us from all self-confidence, he would shut us up to Christ alone, that Christ might be all and in all.* "They shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn." "Look unto me, all you ends of the earth, and be you saved, for I am God, and there is none else."

"For the weakness of faith's eye" remember that Christ has suitably provided. His care of, and his tenderness towards, those whose grace is limited, whose experience is feeble, whose knowledge is defective, whose faith is small, are exquisite. He has promised to "anoint the eye with eye-salve that it may see," and that it may see more clearly. Repair to him, then, with your case, and seek the fresh application of this Divine ointment. Be cautious of limiting the reality of your sight to the nearness or distinctness of the object. The most distant and dim view of Jesus by faith, is as real and saving as if that view were with the strength of an eagle's eye.

A well-known example in Jewish history affords an pertinent illustration: the wounded Israelite was simply commanded to *look* to the brazen serpent. Nothing was said of the clearness of his vision or the distinctness of his view; no exception was made to the dimness of his sight. His eye might possibly be blurred, the phantoms of a diseased imagination might float before it, intercepting his view; no, more, it might already be glazing and fixing in death? Yet, even under these circumstances, and at that moment, if he but obeyed the Divine command, and looked towards, simply *towards*, the elevated serpent, distant and beclouded as it was, he was immediately and effectually healed. Thus is it with the operation of faith. Let your eye, in obedience to the gospel's command, be but simply raised and fastened upon Jesus, far removed as may be the glorious object, and dim as may be the blessed vision, yet thus "looking unto Jesus," you shall be fully and eternally saved. And soon – oh how soon! – we shall see him unveiled, unclouded in glory. Until then, let us run the race set before us; looking unto Jesus as the goal which we shall soon reach, and as the prize which we shall forever possess.

Wherefore droops your trembling soul?
 Wherefore saddened is your brow?
 Clouds around your path may roll,
 But your God is present now;
 Raise your eyes, the cross is there,
 Steadfast still, though tempest frown;
 Lift your head and breathe your prayer,
 Claim your Savior for your own:

Make through him your strong appeal,
'Looking unto Jesus,' kneel.

He, the Author of the faith
Which your spirit shall renew,
In his sacred hour of death
Finished your salvation too;
Learn your Savior's power to see,
He the 'life, the truth, the way,'
Interceded e'en for thee
Before your heart had learned to pray.
Lift your heart, and lift your hand,
'Looking unto Jesus,' stand.

When the water-floods of grief,
Round your helpless head shall rise,
When there seems no relief,
Look towards the eternal skies.
There behold how radiantly
Beams the star of faith divine;

Yesterday it shone for you,
And today it still shall shine.
Ask no aid the world can give,
'Looking unto Jesus,' live.

When you feel by many a token
That the flesh shall soon decay,
And the golden bowl be broken,
And the silver cord give way;
There beyond the darksome veil,
Trust that he your eyes shall bless;
As the light of life shall fail,
Keep the Sun of Righteousness
Ever brightening in your eye,
And 'looking unto Jesus,' die!

MIDNIGHT HARMONIES by Octavius Winslow

"Leaning on the Beloved"

“Who is this that comes up from the wilderness,
leaning upon her beloved?” Song of Solomon 8:3.

The path of the believer is an ascent, from a dark path and desolate world under the dominion of sin and Satan, to a bright and glorious world, where God and holiness supremely and eternally reign. The first step, which he takes in this heavenly journey, is out of the wilderness of a wrecked and ruined nature, into the glories of a nature new and divine. Until this is done, there cannot possibly be any right direction or real progress of the soul towards heaven. Years may be exhausted in the rigid performance of religious duties— sacraments, fasts, charities, pilgrimages— but they count with God for nothing; they but fetter and impede, rather than free and propel the spirit in its holy and heavenly course. All these self-endeavors must cease; all these human doings must be abandoned.

Conversion, the conversion of which Jesus spoke to Nicodemus, is the severance of the sinner from himself, his divorcement from his wedded attachment to a broken law of Works, a legal righteousness, and his simple escape to the refuge set before him in the Gospel. There is no turning of the face to the Savior, until there is a turning of the back upon self! No man is in Christ, savingly and sensibly, until he is out of himself, legally and meritoriously. No man will enfold himself with the righteousness which is of God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, until, seeing the utter worthlessness of his own righteousness, he renounces it at once and forever. This single step taken, it becomes the first of a series, each one constituting a daily coming up out of self, conducting the believer nearer and nearer to perfect and endless glory.

That the Christian's path should wind its way along an ascent, sometimes steep and perilous, always difficult and toilsome, should awaken no surprise and create no murmur. There is ever this great encouragement, this light upon his way, that it is a heaven-pointing, a heaven-conducting, a heaven-terminating path; and before long the weary pilgrim will reach its sunlit summit; not to lie down and die there, as Moses did upon the top of Pisgah, but to commence a life of perfect purity and of eternal bliss!

Turn your eye, dear reader, and rest it for a moment upon the beautiful picture, which Solomon presents, to your view in his inspired song. To what is the world compared? a wilderness. What object is seen in this wilderness? the church of God. What is she doing? she is coming up from the wilderness. What company is she in? the company of her Beloved. By what is she

strengthened and upheld in her journey? she is leaning upon her Beloved. And what does the sacred painter describe as the effect of this spectacle? it excites the admiration and astonishment of all who behold it, and they exclaim:— “Who is this that comes up from the wilderness leaning upon the Beloved?” To one feature of this graphic description of the Church of God, let us turn our attention, namely, the posture of the believer in his ascent from the wilderness— leaning upon Jesus.

The object of the believer’s trust is Jesus, his Beloved. He is spoken of by the apostle as “the Beloved,” as though he would say, “There is but one beloved of God, of angels, of saints— it is Jesus.” He is the beloved One of the Father. “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; my elect one, in whom my soul delights.” “The only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father.” “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” If Jesus is thus so dear to the Father, what then must be the turpitude of the sin of rejecting him!— a sin, let it be remembered, of which even Satan cannot be guilty. Yes; Jesus is the beloved of God; and therefore, coming to God through him, it is impossible that a believing soul can be rejected.

But he is also the church’s beloved, the beloved of each member of that church. Thus can each one exclaim, “This is my beloved, and this is my friend. He is ten thousand times more glorious to my view and precious to my soul, because he is mine. His person is beloved, uniting all the glories of the Godhead with all the perfections of the manhood. His work is beloved, saving his people from the entire guilt, and condemnation, and dominion of their sins. His commandments are beloved, because they are the dictates of his love to us, and the tests of our love to him.”

O, yes! you have but one beloved of your heart, dear believer. He is “white and ruddy, the chief among ten thousand;” he is all the universe to you! Heaven would be no heaven without him; and with his presence here, earth seems often like the opening portal of heaven. He loved you, he labored for you, he died for you, he rose for you, he lives and intercedes for you in glory; and all that is lovely in him, and all that is grateful in you, constrain you to exclaim— “I am my beloved’s, and my beloved is mine.”

Such is the company in which the believer is journeying through, and coming up from, the wilderness. Was ever a poor pilgrim more honored? Was ever a lonely traveler in better company? How can you be solitary or sorrowful, be in peril or suffer need, while you are journeying homewards in company with, and leaning upon, Jesus?

But for what are you to lean upon your Beloved? You are to lean upon Jesus for your entire salvation. He is “made of God unto you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption;” and for each one of these inestimable blessings, you are to depend daily upon Christ. Where can you lean for pardon but upon the atoning blood of Jesus? Where can you lean for acceptance, but upon the justifying righteousness of Jesus? And where can

you lean for sanctification, but upon the sin-subduing grace of Jesus?

This leaning upon the Beloved, then, is a daily coming up out of ourselves in the great matter of our salvation, and resting in the finished work of Christ, no more, in Christ himself. We are to lean upon Jesus for a constant sense of pardon; to be coming perpetually to the blood of sprinkling, thus preserving the conscience clean and tender, and maintaining a filial, loving, and close walk with God.

You are to lean upon the fulness of your Beloved. He is full to a sufficiency for all the needs of his people. There cannot possibly occur a circumstance in your history, there cannot arise a necessity in your case, in which you may not repair to the infinite fulness which the Father has laid up in Christ for his church in the wilderness. Why, then, do you seek in your poverty, what can only be found in Christ's riches? why look to your emptiness, when you may repair to his fulness? "My grace is sufficient for you," is the cheering declaration with which Jesus meets every turn in your path, every crook in your lot, every need in your journey. Distrust, then, your own wisdom, look from your own self, and lean your entire weight upon the infinite fulness that is in Christ!

The posture is expressive of conscious weakness, and deep self-distrust. Who is more feeble than a child of God? Taught the lesson of his weakness in the region of his own heart, and still learning it in his stumblings and falls, and mistakes many and painful, in his self-inflicted wounds and dislocations, he is at length brought to feel that all his strength is out of himself, in another. He has the "sentence of death in himself, that he should not trust in himself." "I am weak, yes, weakness itself," is his language, "I am as a bruised reed, shaken in the wind; I stumble at a feather; I tremble at an echo; I frighten at my own shadow; the smallest difficulty impedes me; the least temptation overcomes me. How shall I ever fight my way through this mighty host, and reach in safety the world of bliss?"

By leaning daily, hourly, moment by moment, upon your Beloved for strength! Christ is the power of God, and he is the power of the children of God. Who can strengthen the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees but Jesus? "In those who have no might, he increases strength." When they are weak in themselves, then are they strong in him. His declaration is— "My strength is made perfect in weakness." It is illustrated, it shines forth, and is exhibited in its perfection and glory in upholding, keeping, and succoring the weak of his flock. Lean, then, upon Jesus for strength. He has strength for all your weakness; he can strengthen your faith, and strengthen your hope, and strengthen your courage, and strengthen your patience, and strengthen your heart, for every burden, and for every trial, and for every temptation.

Lean upon him; he loves to feel the pressure of your arm; he loves you to link your feebleness to his almightiness, to avail yourself of his grace. Thus

leaning off yourself upon Christ, “as your day so shall your strength be.” In all your tremblings and sinkings, you will feel the encircling of his power. “The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms.”

And where would you lean in sorrow but upon the bosom of your Beloved? If you lean upon his arm for support, it is equally your privilege to lean upon his heart for sympathy. Christ is as much your consolation, as he is your strength. His heart is a human heart, a sinless heart, a tender heart, a heart once the home of sorrow, once stricken with grief, once an aching, bleeding, mournful heart.

Thus disciplined and trained, Jesus knows how to pity and to succor those who are sorrowful and solitary. He loves to chase grief from the spirit, to bind up the broken heart, to staunch the bleeding wound, and to dry the weeping eye, to “comfort all that mourn.” It is his delight to visit you in the dark night-season of your sorrow, and to come to you walking upon the tempestuous billows of your grief, breathing music and diffusing calmness over your scene of sadness and gloom. When other bosoms are closed to your sorrow, or are removed beyond your reach, or their deep throbbings of love are stilled in death,— when the fiery darts of Satan fly thick around you, and the world frowns, and the saints are cold, and your path is sad and desolate, and all stand aloof from your sore,— then lean upon the love, lean upon the grace, lean upon the faithfulness, lean upon the tender sympathy of Jesus.

That bosom will always unveil to welcome you. It will ever be an asylum to receive you, and a home to shelter you. Never will its love cool, nor its tenderness lessen, nor its sympathy be exhausted, nor its pulse of affection cease to beat! You may have grieved it a thousand times over, you may have pierced it through and through, again and again,— yet, returning to its deathless love, penitent and lowly, sorrowful and humble, you may lay within it your weeping, aching, languid head, depositing every burden, reposing every sorrow and breathing every sigh upon the heart of Jesus. Lord! to whom shall I go? yes, to whom would I go, but unto you!

This posture of faith is equally expressive of the advancement of the soul. The church was seen leaning, but not stationary. She was strengthened and upheld of her Lord, but she was going forward. She was leaning and walking, walking and leaning. The power she was deriving from Christ stimulated her greater progress. She gathered strength from her close dealing with her Lord, only to employ that strength in urging her upward, heavenward, homeward way. It was not the posture of indolence, in which individual responsibility was lost sight of in conscious weakness, and weakness was made an excuse for slothfulness and drowsiness of spirit. We lean truly upon Jesus that we may advance in all holiness, that the grace of the Spirit may be quickened and stimulated, that we may cultivate more heavenly mindedness, and be constantly coming up from the world,

following him outside the camp, bearing his reproach.

O! what encouragement have we here to cultivate heavenly mindedness, since for the task, so difficult, yet so pleasing, we may lean upon the all-sufficiency of our Lord's grace. Let our movement, then, be an advance; let our path be upward; let us gather around us the trailing garment, casting away whatever impedes rather than accelerates our progress; and leaning upon our Beloved, hasten from all below, until we find ourselves actually reposing in the bosom upon which, in faith and love, in weakness and sorrow, we had rested amid the trials and perils of the ascent.

What more appropriate, what more soothing truth could we bring before you, suffering Christian, than this? You are sick,— lean upon Jesus. His sick ones are peculiarly dear to his heart. You are dear to him. In all your pains and languishings, faintings and lassitude, Jesus is with you; for he created that frame, he remembers that it is but dust, and he bids you lean upon him, and leave your sickness and its issue entirely in his hands.

You are oppressed,— lean upon Jesus. He will undertake your cause, and committing it thus into his hands, he will bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your judgment as the noonday.

You are lonely,— lean upon Jesus. Sweet will be the communion, and close the fellowship which you may thus hold with him, your heart burning within you while he talks with you by the way.

Is the ascent steep and difficult? lean upon your Beloved. Is the path straight and narrow? lean upon your Beloved. Do intricacies, and perplexities, and trials weave a webbing around your feet? lean upon your Beloved. Has death smitten down the strong arm, and chilled the tender heart, upon which you were wont to recline? lean upon your Beloved. O! lean upon Jesus in every difficulty, in every need, in every sorrow, in every temptation. Nothing is too insignificant, nothing too lowly to take to Christ.

It is enough that you need Christ to warrant you in coming to Christ. No excuse need you make for repairing to him; no apology will he require for the frequency of your approach. He loves to have you quite near to him, to hear your voice, and to feel the confidence of your faith, and the pressure of your love! Ever remember that there is a place in the heart of Christ sacred to you, and which no one can fill but yourself, and from which none may dare exclude you.

And when you are dying, O! lay your languishing head upon the bosom of your Beloved, and fear not the foe and dread not the passage, for His rod and staff they will comfort you. On that bosom, the beloved disciple leaned at supper; on that bosom the martyr Stephen laid his bleeding brow in death; and on that bosom, you, too, beloved, may repose, living or dying, soothed, succored, and sheltered by your Savior and your Lord!

“Jesus can make a dying bed

Feel soft as downy pillows are,

While on his breast I lean my head,
And breathe my soul out sweetly there.”

Thus leaning ever on Jesus, how sweet will be your song in the night of your pilgrimage. “Blessed be the Lord, because he has heard the voice of my supplications. The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped! therefore my heart greatly rejoiced, and with my song will I praise him.”

“Holy Savior, friend unseen,
Since on your arm you bid me lean,
Help me throughout life’s varying scene,
By faith to cling to you!

“Blest with this fellowship divine,
Take what you will, I’ll never repine;
E’en as the branches to the vine,
My soul would cling to you.

“Far from her home, fatigued, oppressed,
My soul has found her place of rest;
An exile still, yet not unblest
While she can cling to you.

“Without a murmur, I dismiss
My former dreams of earthly bliss;
My joy, my consolation, this—
Each hour to cling to you.

“What though the world deceitful prove,
And earthly friends and joys remove;
With patient, uncomplaining love,
Still would, I cling to you.

“Often when I seem to alone tread
Some barren waste with thorns overgrown,
Your voice of love, in tenderest tone,
Whispers, “Still cling to me.”

“Though faith and hope awhile be tried,
I ask not, need not, anything beside;
How safe, how calm, how satisfied,
The soul that clings to you.

“They fear not Satan, or the grave,
They feel you near, and strong to save,
Nor fear to cross even Jordan’s wave,
Because they cling to you.

“Blest is my lot, whatever befall;
What can disturb me, what appall,
While as my rock, my strength, my all,

Jesus! I cling to you!”

MIDNIGHT HARMONIES by Octavius Winslow

"The Weaned Child"

“Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child”—Psalm 131:2.

There are few lessons taught in God’s school more difficult to learn, and yet, when really learned, more blessed and holy, than the lesson of weanedness. The heart resembles the vine, which as it grows, grasps and unites its feeble tendrils to every support within its reach. Or, it is like the ivy, which climbs and wraps itself around some beautiful but decayed and crumbling ruin. As our social affections develop and expand, they naturally seek a resting-place. Traveling, as it were, beyond themselves, breathing love and yearning for friendship, they go forth seeking some kindred spirit, some “second self,” upon which they may repose, and around which they may entwine. To detach from this inordinate, idolatrous clinging to the animate and the inanimate creatures and objects of sense, is one grand end of God’s disciplinary dealings with us in the present life. The discovery which we make, in the process of his dealings, of the insufficiency and insecurity of the things upon which we set our affections, is often acutely painful. Like that vine, we find that we grasped a support at the root of which the cankerworm was secretly feeding,—and presently it fell! Or, like that ivy, we discover that we have been spreading our affections around an object which, even while we clung to and adored it, was crumbling and falling into dust,—and presently it became a ruin! And what is the grand lesson which, by this process, God would teach us? The lesson of weanedness from all and everything of an earthly and a created nature. Thus was David instructed, and this was

the result: “Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child.” It may be profitable, tried and suffering reader, briefly to contemplate this holy state, and then the way by which the Lord frequently brings his people into its experience.

Every true believer, whatever may be the degree of his grace, is an adopted child of God. It is not the amount of his faith, nor the closeness of his resemblance to the family, that constitutes his relationship; it is the act of adoption by which his heavenly Father has made him his own. If he can only lisp his Father’s name, or bears but a single feature of likeness to the Divine image, he is as much and as really a child of God as those in whose souls the lineaments are deeply and broadly drawn, and who, with an unfaltering faith, can cry, “Abba, Father!” Doubtless there were many of feeble faith, of limited experience and of defective knowledge—mere babes in Christ—in the church to which the apostle inscribed his letter; and yet, addressing them all, he says, “Behold, what manner of love that we should be called the sons of God.” But it is the character of the weaned child we are now to contemplate. All believers are children, but are all believers weaned children? From what is the child of God thus weaned?

The first object from which our heavenly Father weans his child, is—himself. Of all idols, this he finds the hardest to abandon. When man in paradise aspired to be as God, God was dethroned from his soul, and the creature became as a deity to itself. From that moment, the idolatry of self has been the great and universal crime of our race, and will continue to be until Christ comes to restore all things. In the soul of the regenerate, divine grace has done much to dethrone this idol, and to reinstate God.

The work, however, is but partially accomplished. The dishonored and rejected rival is loath to relinquish his throne, and yield to the supreme control and sway of another. There is much yet to be achieved before this still indwelling and unconquered foe lays down his weapons in entire subjection to the will and the authority of that Savior whose throne and rights he has usurped. Thus, much still lingers in the heart which the Spirit has renewed and inhabits, of self-esteem, self-confidence, self-seeking, and self-love. From all this, our Father seeks to wean us. From our own wisdom, which is but folly; from our own strength, which is but weakness; from our own wills, which are often as an uncurbed steed; from our own ways, which are crooked; from our own hearts, which are deceitful; from our own judgments, which are dark; from our own ends, which are narrow and selfish, he would wean and detach us, that our souls may get more and more back to their original center of repose—God himself. In view of this mournful exhibition of fallen and corrupt self, how necessary the discipline of our heavenly Father that extorts from us the Psalmist's language: "Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother." Self did seem to be our mother—the fruitful parent of so much in our plans and aims and spirit that was dishonoring to our God. From this he would gently and tenderly, but effectually, wean us, that we may learn to rely upon his wisdom, to repose in his strength, to consult his honor, and to seek his glory and smile supremely and alone. And O how effectually is this blessed state attained when God, by setting us aside in the season of solitude and sorrow, teaches us that he can do without us. We, perhaps, thought that our rank, or our talents, or our influence, or our very presence were essential to the advancement of his cause, and that some parts of it could not proceed without us! The Lord knew otherwise.

And so he laid his hand upon us, and withdrew us from the scene of our labors, and duties, and engagements, and ambition, that he might hide pride from our hearts—the pride of self-importance. And O, is it no mighty attainment in the Christian life to be thus weaned from ourselves? Beloved, it forms the root of all other blessings. The moment we learn to cease from ourselves—from our own wisdom, and power, and importance—the Lord appears and takes us up. Then his wisdom is displayed, and his power is put forth, and his glory is developed, and his great name gets to itself all the praise. It was not until God had placed Moses in the cleft of the rock that his glory passed by. Moses must be hid, that God might be all.

Our heavenly Father would also wean us from this poor, perishing world. In a preceding chapter we touched upon the great snare which the world presented to the child of God. It is true Christ has taken him out of, and separated him from, the world; assailed by all its evils, and exposed to all its corrupting influences. The intercessory prayer of our Lord seems to imply this: “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil.” And O what an evil does the Christian find this world to be! In consequence of the earthward tendency of his affections, and the deep carnality with which the mind is imbued, things which God designed as blessings to soothe and soften and cheer, become, by their absorbing and idolatrous influence, powerful snares. Rank is a snare, wealth is a snare, talent is a snare, friendship is a snare. Rank may foster pride and ambition; wealth may increase the thirst for worldly show; talent may inspire a love of human applause; and friendship may wean the heart from Christ, and betray us into a base and unholy

compromise of Christian profession. Now from this endangering world our heavenly Father would shield, by withdrawing us. It is not our rest, and he agitates it; it is not our portion, and he embitters it; it is not our friend, and he sometimes arms it with a sword. It changes, it disappoints, it wounds; and then, thankful to expand our wings, we take another and a bolder flight above it. Ah! beloved, how truly may the Lord be now sickening your heart to the world, to which that heart has too long and too closely clung. It has been your peculiar snare; your Father saw it, and wisely and graciously laid his loving, gentle hand upon you, and led you away from it, that from a bed of sickness, or from a chamber of grief, or from some position of painful vicissitude, you might see its sinfulness, learn its hollowness, and return as a wanderer to your Father's bosom, exclaiming with David, "My soul is even as a weaned child."

This weanedness, of which we speak, often involves the surrender of some endeared object of creature affection. The human heart is naturally idolatrous. Its affections, as we have previously remarked, once supremely centered in God. But now, disjoined from him, they go in quest of other objects of attachment, and we love and worship the creature rather than the Creator. The circle which our affections traverse may not indeed be a large one; there are perchance but few to whom we fully surrender our heart; no, so circumscribed may the circle be, that one object alone shall attract, absorb, and concentrate in itself our entire and undivided love—that one object to us as a universe of beings, and all others comparatively indifferent and insipid. Who cannot see that in a case like this, the danger is imminent of transforming the heart—Christ's own sanctuary—into an idol's temple, where the creature is loved and revered and served lucre than he who gave it? But from all idolatry

our God will cleanse us, and from all our idols Christ will wean us. The Lord is jealous, with a holy jealousy, of our love. Poor as our affection is, he asks its supreme surrender. That he requires our love at the expense of all creature attachment, the Bible nowhere intimates. He created our affections, and he it is who provides for their proper and pleasant indulgence. There is not a single precept or command in the Scriptures that forbids their exercise, or that discourages their intensity. Husbands are exhorted to “love their wives, even as Christ loved his church.” Parents are to cherish a like affection towards their children, and children are bound to render back a filial love not less intense to their parents. And we are to “love our neighbors as ourselves.” Nor does the word of God furnish examples of Christian friendship less interested and devoted. One of the choicest and tenderest blessings with which God can enrich us, next to himself, is such a friend as Paul had in Epaphroditus, a “brother and companion in labor, and fellow-soldier;” and such an affectionate friendship as John, the loving disciple, cherished for his well beloved Gaius, whom he loved in the truth, and to whom, in the season of his sickness, he thus touchingly poured out his heart’s affectionate sympathy: “Beloved I wish above all things that you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers.” Count such a friend, and such friendship among God’s sweetest and holiest bestowments. The blessings of which it may be to you the sanctifying channel, are immense. The tender sympathy—the jealous watchfulness—the confidential repose—the faithful admonition—above all, the intercessory prayer, connected with Christian friendship, may be placed in the inventory of our most inestimable and precious blessings. It is not therefore the use, but the abuse, of our affections—not their legitimate exercise, but their idolatrous tendency—over which we have

need to exercise the greatest vigilance. It is not our love to the creature against which God contends, but it is in not allowing our love to himself to subordinate all other love. We may love the creature, but we may not love the creature more than the Creator. When the Giver is lost sight of and forgotten in the gift, then comes the painful process of weaning! When the heart burns its incense before some human shrine, and the cloud as it ascends veils from the eye the beauty and the excellence of Jesus,—then comes the painful process of weaning! When the absorbing claims and the engrossing attentions of some loved one are placed in competition and are allowed to clash with the claims of God, and the attentions due from us personally to his cause and truth,—then comes the painful process of weaning! When creature devotion deadens our heart to the Lord, lessens our interest in his cause, congeals our zeal and love and liberality, detaches us from the public means of grace, withdraws from the closet, and from the Bible, and from the communion of the saints, thus superinducing leanness of soul, and robbing God of his glory,—then comes the painful process of weaning! Christ will be the first in our affections—God will be supreme in our service—and his kingdom and righteousness must take precedence of all other things. In this light, beloved, read the present mournful page in your history. The noble oak that stood so firm and stately at your side, is smitten,—the tender and beautiful vine that wound itself around you, is fallen,—the lowly and delicate flower that lay upon your bosom, is withered—the olive branches that clustered around your table, are removed—and the “strong staff is broken and the beautiful rod;” not because your God did not love you, but because he desired your heart. He saw that heart ensnared and enslaved by a too fond and idolatrous affection,—he saw his beauty eclipsed and himself rivaled by a faint

and imperfect copy of his own image, and he breathed upon it, and it withered away! “The day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon all . . . pleasant pictures.” When an eminent artist, who had concentrated all the powers of his genius upon a painting of our Lord celebrating the last supper, observed that the holy vessels arranged in the foreground were admired to the exclusion of the chief object of the picture, he seized his brush and dashed them from the canvass, and left the image of Jesus standing in its own solitary and unrivaled beauty. Thus deals our God oftentimes with us. O solemn words! “The day of the Lord of hosts shall be upon all . . . Pleasant Pictures,”—all pictures that veil and eclipse the beauties of him who is the “brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of his person,” God will obliterate.

Filial submission to God’s will, is, perhaps, one of the most essential features in this holy state of weanedness of which we speak. “Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother.” There are some beautiful examples of this in God’s word. “And Aaron held his peace.” Since God was “sanctified and glorified,” terrible as was the judgment, the holy priest mourned not at the way, nor complained of its severity, patient and resigned to the will of God. He “behaved and quieted himself as a child that is weaned of his mother.” Thus, too, was it with Eli, when passing under the heavy hand of God: “It is the Lord; let him do what seems him good.” He bowed in deep submission to the will of his God. Job could exclaim, as the last sad tidings brimmed his cup of woe, “The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” And David was “dumb and opened not his mouth, because God did it.” But how do all these instances of filial and holy submission to the Divine will—beautiful and touching as they

are—fade before the illustrious example of our adorable and blessed Lord: “O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, your will be done.” Ah! how did Jesus, in the deepest depth of his unutterable sorrow, “behave and quiet himself as a child that is weaned of his mother? his soul was even as a weaned child.” Such, beloved, be the posture of your soul at this moment. “Be still.” Rest in your Father’s hands, calm and tranquil, quiet and submissive, weaned from all but himself. O the blessedness of so reposing!

“Sweet to lie passive in his
hands,
And know no will but his.”

“God’s love!” It is written upon your dark cloud—it breathes from the lips of your bleeding wound—it is reflected in every fragment of your ruined treasure—it is pencilled upon every leaf of your blighted flower—“God is Love.” Adversity may have impoverished you—bereavement may have saddened you—calamity may have crushed you—sickness may have laid you low—but, “God is Love.” Gently falls the rod in its heaviest stroke—tenderly pierces the sword in its deepest thrust—smilingly bends the cloud in its darkest hues—for, “God is Love.” Does the infant, weaned from its wonted and pleasant fount, cease from its restlessness and sorrow reposing calmly and meekly upon its mother’s arms?—so let your soul calmly, submissively rest in God. How sweet the music which then will breathe from your lips in the midnight of grief: “Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child.”

And who can bring you into this holy position? The Holy Spirit alone can. It is his office to lead you to Jesus—to reveal to you Jesus—to exhibit to your eye the cross of Jesus—to pour into your

heart the grace and love and sympathy of Jesus—to bend your will and bow your heart to the government of Jesus, and thus make you as a weaned child. The work infinitely transcends a power merely human. It is the office and the prerogative of the Divine Spirit—the “Spirit of holiness”—who only can sever between flesh and spirit, to bring you into the condition of one whose will in all things is completely merged in God’s. And what is his grand instrument of effecting this? The cross of Christ! Ah! this is it. The Cross of Christ! Not the cross as it appeared to the imagination of the Mohammedan Chief, leading the imperial army to battle and to conquest; not the cross pictured—the cross engraved—the cross carved—the cross embroidered—the cross embossed upon the prayer-book, pendant from the maiden’s neck, glittering on the cathedral’s spire, and springing from its altar: not the cross as blended with a religion of Gothic architecture, and painted windows, and flaming candles, and waving incense, and gorgeous pictures, and melting music, and fluttering surplices: O no! but the cross—the naked, rugged cross—which Calvary reared, which Paul preached, and of which he wrote, “God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which* the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” Faith, picturing to its view this cross, the Holy Spirit engraving it on the heart in spiritual regeneration, the whole soul receiving him whom it lifts up, as its “wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption,” gently and effectually transforms the spirit, that was chafened and restless, into the “meekness and gentleness of Christ.” O what calmness steals over his ruffled soul! O what peace flows into his troubled heart! O what sunshine bathes in its bright beams, his dark spirit, who from the scenes of his conflict and his sorrow, flees beneath the shadow and the shelter of the cross. The storm ceases—the

deluge of his grief subsides—the Spirit,
dove-like, brings the message of hope and
love—the soul, tempest-tossed, rests on the
green mount, and one unbounded spring clothes
and encircles the landscape with its verdure and
its beauty. Child, chastened by the Father’s
love, look to the cross of your crucified Savior.
And as you fix upon it your believing, ardent,
adoring gaze, exclaim—

“Wearily for me you
sought,
On the cross my soul you
bought;
Lose not all for which you
wrought.”

What is your sorrow compared with Christ’s?
What is your grief gauged by the Lord’s? Your
Master has passed before you, flinging the
curse and the sin from your path, paving it with
promises, carpeting it with love, and fencing it
around with the hedge of his divine perfections.
Press onward, then, resisting your foe resolutely,
bearing your cross patiently, drinking your cup
submissively, and learning, while sitting at the
Savior’s feet, or leaning upon his bosom, to be
like him, “meek and lowly in heart.” Then,
indeed, shall “I have behaved and quieted
myself as a child that is weaned of his mother:
my soul is even as a weaned child.”

“Quiet, Lord, my froward heart,
Make me teachable and mild,
Upright, simple, free from care;
Make me as a weaned child.
From distrust and envy free,
Pleased with all that pleases You.
“What You shall today provide,
Let me as a child receive;
What tomorrow may betide,
Calmly to Your wisdom leave.
'It is enough that You will care,

Why should I the burden heart.
“As a little child relies
On a care beyond its own;
Knows he’s neither strong nor wise—
Fears to stir a step alone—
Let me thus with You abide,
As my Father, Guard, and Guide.
“Thus preserved from Satan’s wiles,
Safe from dangers, free from fears,
May I live upon your smiles
Until the promised hour appears;
When the sons of God shall prove
All their Father’s boundless love.”

MIDNIGHT HARMONIES by Octavius Winslow

"God, Comforting as a Mother"

“As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you” Isaiah 66:13.

It would appear from the Bible, that all the relations and affections of our humanity were really impressions of the Divine. All doubt, indeed, as to the correctness of this idea would seem to be removed by the inspired history of man's creation. We read: “God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him.” The human soul, cast as it were in this Divine mold, comes forth imprinted and enstamped with the likeness of God. There is the transfer of the Divine to the human. The creature starts into being, a reflection of its Creator. Marred by sin though this image is, yet not utterly effaced are the lines and traces of the sacred original. The temple is in ruin, but it is still a temple, and beauty lingers round it, and God reenters it. The splendor of the creature is spoiled, but it is still God's offspring, and he disowns not his child. Man is fallen, but God, looking down upon the spoiled and scattered parts of the ruined structure—like the strewn fragments of a broken mirror—beholds in each the dim and multiplied but real resemblance of himself.

Trace each feature of this resemblance. Is it the parental relation? God is a Father. Is it the filial? Christ is a Son. Is it the conjugal? Our Maker is the Husband of his church, and the church is the Lamb's wife. And is not Christ described as a Friend and a Brother, and his church called by him his sister? Thus, then, would it appear that the different relations in which we stand each to the other, and the affections which these relations foster, have their counterpart in God—copies and impressions of a Divine original.

But there is yet another relation still more tender and holy, which would seem to be equally a reflection of the Divine character; we allude to the maternal. God represents himself as clothed with the attributes of a mother! “As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you.” In all the similitudes which we have employed in the preceding pages, illustrative of the Christian's consolation and support, is there any one that transcends, or that equals, this? Would it not seem that in adopting this impressive figure, in appropriating to himself this endearing relation, with which he would express the great depth of his love and the exquisite character of his comforts, God had surpassed himself? Has he before reached a point of tenderness like this? Could he have exceeded it? “As one whom his Mother comforts, so will I comfort you.” Let us not obscure the beauty, or weaken the force of these words, by an extended exposition. A few thoughts will suffice.

God's family is a sorrowing family. "I have chosen you," he says, "in the furnace of affliction." "I will leave in the midst of you a poor and an afflicted people." The history of the church finds its fittest emblem in the burning yet unconsumed bush which Moses saw. Man is "born to sorrow;" but the believer is "appointed thereunto."

It would seem to be a condition inseparable from his high calling. If he is a "chosen vessel," it is, as we have just seen, in the "furnace of affliction." If he is an adopted child, "chastening" is the distinguishing mark. If he is journeying to the heavenly kingdom, his path lies through "much tribulation." If he is a follower of Jesus, it is to "go unto him outside the camp, bearing his reproach." But, if his sufferings abound, much more so do his consolations. To be comforted by God, and to be comforted as a mother comforts her child, may well reconcile us to any sorrow with which it may please our heavenly Father to invest us!

God comforts his sorrowful ones with the characteristic love of a mother. That love is proverbial. No line can fathom it, no eloquence can depict it, no poetry can paint it. Attempt, if you will, to impart brilliance to the diamond, or perfume to the rose, but attempt not to describe a mother's love. Who created the relation, and who inspired its affection? That God who comforts his people with a love like hers. And what is a mother's affection—fathomless and indescribable as it is—but as a drop from the infinite ocean of God's love!

Did ever a mother love her offspring as God loves his? Never! Did she ever peril her life for her child? She may. But God sacrificed his life for us. See the tenderness with which that mother alleviates the suffering, soothes the sorrow of her mourning one. So does God comfort his mourners. O there is a tenderness and a delicacy of feeling in God's comforts which distances all expression. There is no harsh reproof—no unkind upbraiding—no unveiling of the circumstances of our calamity to the curious and unfeeling eye—no heartless exposure of our case to an ungodly and censorious world; but with all the tender, delicate, and refined feeling of a mother, God, even our Father, comforts the sorrowful ones of his people.

He comforts in all the varied and solitary griefs of their hearts. Ah! there may be secrets which we cannot confide even to a mother's love, sorrows which we cannot lay even upon a mother's heart, grief which cannot be reached even by a mother's tenderness; but God meets our case! To him, in prayer, we may uncover our entire hearts; to his confidence we may entrust our profoundest secrets; upon his love repose our most delicate sorrows; to his ear confess our deepest departures; before his eye spread out our greatest sins. "As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you."

God comforts the penitential sorrows of his backsliding children with a mother's changeless love. With our hearts 'bent upon backsliding,' how many, how aggravated, and how mournful are our departures from God! But

does he disown and disinherit us for this? No! he still calls and receives us, and welcomes our return as children. “Turn, O backsliding children, says the Lord.” “Return, you backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings.” “As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you.”

Inextinguishable, undecaying, and deathless is a mother’s love. “It may be autumn, yes, winter, with the woman; but with the mother, as a mother, it is always spring.” When has the door of her heart or her dwelling been closed and fastened against her wayward one? He may have abandoned the roof that sheltered his early years, and, tearing himself from the influences and the attractions of home, have become a wanderer upon life’s troubled sea; he may have made shipwreck of character, of fortune, and of happiness, and become an outcast of society, with the stamp of infamy and outlaw branded upon his brow,—yet, should he in his far-wanderings come to himself, and his soul be humbled within him, and his heart burst with penitential grief, and, thinking of his sin, his baseness and ingratitude, resolve to arise and go to his mother, and sue for forgiveness at her feet, do you think that that mother could close her heart against her repentant child? Impossible! She would be the first, and, perhaps, the only one, who would extend to him a welcome, and volunteer him a shelter.

In the depth of her quenchless love, she would hail his return with gladness, forgetting all the bitterness of the past in the sweet joy of the present; and while other eyes might look coldly, and other hearts might be suspicious, and other doors might be closed and barred, the bosom which nursed him in infancy, and the home which protected his earlier years, would expand to receive back the poor, downcast, penitent wanderer. And see how she comforts! With what words of love she greets him! with what accents of tenderness she soothes him! with what gentleness she chases the tear from his eye, and smooths his rugged brow, and hastens to pour into his trembling heart the assurance of her free and full forgiveness.

This is the figure to which God likens his love to his people. “As a man whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you.” Acute is the penitential grief of that child which has strayed from its heavenly Father. Deep and bitter the sorrow when he comes to himself, resolves, and exclaims, “I will arise and go to my Father.” Many the tremblings and doubts as to his reception. “Will he receive back such a wanderer as I have been? Will he take me once more to his love, speak kindly to me again, restore to me the joys of his salvation, give me the blessed assurance of his forgiveness, and once more admit me with his children to his table?” He will, indeed, weeping penitent!

Yet again, O listen yet again to his words, “As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you.” Is not this declaration well calculated to create the sweetest midnight harmony in the gloomy season of your contrition and grief? Surely it is. In the valley of your humiliation there is

open to you a “door of hope,” and you may enter and “sing there as in the day of your youth, and as in the day when you came up out of the land of Egypt,” and in the first love of your espousals, gave your heart to Christ.

God will comfort your present sorrow by the tokens of his forgiving love. He invites, he calls, he beseeches you to return to him. He is on the watch for you, he advances to meet you, he stretches out his hand to welcome you, he waits to be gracious, he yearns to clasp his penitential, weeping Ephraim to his heart. “When he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.”

Will a mother’s love live on, warm and changeless, amid all the long years of her child’s rebellion, forgetfulness and ingratitude? Will she, when he returns, and gently knocks at her door, and trembling lifts the latch, and falls, weeping and confessing, upon the bosom he had pierced with so many keen sorrows, press him to a heart that never ceased to throb with an affection which no baseness could lessen, and which no dishonor could quench? And will God our Father, who inspired that mother’s love, who gave to it all its tenderness and intensity, and who made it not to change, turn his back upon a poor, returning child, who in penitence and confession sought restoring, pardoning mercy at his feet? Impossible! utterly impossible!

The love of God to his people is a changeless, quenchless, undying love! No backslidings can lessen it, no ingratitude can impair it, no forgetfulness can extinguish it. A mother may forget, yes, has often forgotten, her child; but God, never! “Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yes, she may forget, yet will I not forget you.” How touching, how impressive the figure! It is a woman,—that woman is a mother,—that mother is a nursing mother,—and still she may forget and abandon her little one: “yet will I not forget you,” says your God and Father.

Touching, heart-melting, heart-winning truth! “Lord! we come unto you in Jesus’ name! We have sinned, we have gone astray like lost sheep, we have followed the devices of our own hearts, we have wandered after other lovers, we have wounded our peace, and have grieved your Spirit: but, behold, we come unto you, we fall down at your feet, we dare not so much as look unto you, we blush to lift up our faces,—receive us graciously, pardon us freely, so will we loathe ourselves, hate the sin you do pardon, and love and adore and serve the God that forgives and remembers it no more forever! As one whom his mother comforts, so do you comfort us!”

Who can supply a mother’s place? There is one, and only one, who can, and who promises that he will; it is the God who removed that mother. “As one whom his mother comforts, so will I comfort you.” “Acquaint now yourself with him, and be at peace.” The fond, affectionate, confiding mother sleeps in the dust. The most beautiful light of your home is extinguished. The sweetest voice that echoed through your dwelling is silent.

The kindest and brightest eye that beamed upon you is closed in death. The author of your being, the guide of your youth, the confidant of your bosom, the joy of your heart is no more. Now let God enter and take her place.

All that that mother was—a refuge in every sorrow, an arbiter in every difficulty, a counselor in every perplexity, a soother in every grief, the center that seemed to unite and endear all the other sweet relations and associations of the domestic circle—God made her. She was but a dim reflection, an imperfect picture, a faint image of himself. All the loveliness, and all the grace, and all the wisdom, and all the sweet affection which she possessed and exemplified, was but an emanation of God.!

Make him your mother now. Take your secrets to his confidence, take your embarrassment to his wisdom, take your sorrows to his sympathy, take your temptations to his power, take your needs to his supply. O! acquaint yourself with him as invested with the holy character, and clothed with the endearing attributes of a mother.

He will guide you, shield you, soothe you, provide for you, and comfort you, as that mother, upon whose picture—as it smiles mutely upon you from the wall—you gaze with swimming eyes, never could. In vain you breathe before it your complaints, exclaiming, “as one that mourns for his mother” once so touchingly did,—

O that those lips had language! Life has passed
With me but roughly since I heard you last.
These lips are your,—your own sweet smile I see,
The same that often in childhood solaced me;
Voice only fails, else how distinct they say,—
‘Grieve not, my child, chase all your fears away!’

Go and breathe your sorrows into God’s heart, and he will comfort you, oh! with more than a mother’s love! Blessed sorrow, if in the time of your bereavement, your grief, and your solitude, you are led to Jesus, making him your Savior, your Friend, your Counselor, and your Shield. Blessed loss, if it be compensated by a knowledge of God, if you find in him a Father now, to whom you will transfer your ardent affections, upon whom you will repose your bleeding heart and in whom you will trust, as you have been wont to trust in that mother— ‘Who has reached the shore, Where tempests never beat, nor billows roar’.

How sweet is the thought that Jesus once felt the throbbings of a mother’s bosom. And with what filial affection did he commit that mother to the care of the beloved disciple in the darkest hour of his woe. Acquainted with your loss, sympathizing with your sorrow, compassionating your loneliness, in all respects capable of entering into the circumstances of your case, he invites you to repair to him for comfort, the tender sanctifying comfort, which not even a mother could pour into your heart.

He can guide your youth, he can solace the cares of your riper years, he can

strengthen and soothe the weakness and sorrow of declining age. But let your heart be true with him. Let faith be simple, childlike, unwavering. Cling to him as the infant clings to its mother. Look up to him as a child looks up to its parent. Love him, obey him, confide in him, serve him, live for him; and in all the unknown, untrod, unveiled future of your history, a voice shall gently whisper in your ear—

As one whom his mother comforts,
so will I comfort you.

Act but the infant's part,
Give up to love your willing heart;
No fondest parent's melting breast
Yearns, like your God's, to make blest:
Taught its dear mother soon to know,
The tenderest babe its love can show;
Bid your base servile fear retire,
This task no labor will require.
The sovereign Father, good and kind,
Wants to behold his child resigned;
Wants but your yielded heart—no more—

With his large gifts of grace to store:
He to your soul no anguish brings,
From your own stubborn will it springs.
But crucify that cruel foe,
Nor pain, nor care, your heart shall know.
Shake from your soul, overwhelmed, oppressed,
The encumbering load that galls your rest,
That wastes your strength in vain;
With courage break the enthralling chain.
Let prayer exert its conquering power,
Cry in the tempted, trembling hour—
My God, my Father, save your son!
It is heard, and all your fears are gone.
—Martin Luther

JESUS ONLY

"And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, except **Jesus only**" – Matthew 17:8.

There were occasions in our Lord's wondrous history when the drapery of his humiliation could but imperfectly conceal the indwelling splendor of His Godhead. Profound as that humiliation was – and to fathom its depth, we must scale the infinite height from when he stooped – it could not intercept all the rays of the Shekinah which slumbered within. Here and there a beam would dart forth from beneath the enshrouding cloud, often overwhelming with its effulgence those upon whom its brightness fell. Such was one of those occasions, a single incident in which has suggested the subject of the present chapter. Our Lord was now transfigured – the unveiling of his glory overpowered the three disciples who were with him in the Mount, who, when the bright cloud overshadowed them, and they heard a voice out of the cloud which said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; listen to him," "fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and do not be afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, except *Jesus only*." Blessed company in which now they found themselves alone! *Moses*, the type of the Law, and *Elijah*, the representative of the prophets, had passed away, and no one was left "except Jesus only." All their fears had subsided, for Jesus had calmed them. All their happiness was complete, for Jesus was with them. And is not this still the motto of every true believer, in the matter of his salvation, in the spiritual circumstances of his history, in the yearnings of his heart, in the hour of death, and amid the solemn scenes of the final judgment – "JESUS ONLY?" Let us reflect awhile upon each of these particulars.

In the believer's salvation, it is "Jesus only." The salvation of man is an embodiment of God himself. We will not merely say that it reveals his love, or that it reflects his wisdom, or that it displays his power, or that it unveils his holiness – it does all this – but much more. Salvation is not merely a demonstration of the Divine perfections; it is a demonstration of the Divine Being. The essence – the heart – the mind – the attributes – the character – the government of God, are all embarked, embodied, and exhibited in the salvation of man. It is a work so surpassingly stupendous, glorious, and divine, we can account for its vast and unique character, and its transcendent results, upon no other principle than its essential demonstration of Deity – "GOD manifest in the flesh." To mix, then, anything extraneous with this great and finished work, to add to it anything of human device, would seem a crime of deepest dye – a sin, the pardon of which might well extend

beyond the provision of its mercy. God has, at every point, with a jealous regard for his own glory, exhibited and protected this great truth. Over the cross beneath which as a sinner I stand – inscribed upon the portal of the refuge into which as a sinner I flee – above the fountain within which as a sinner I bathe – upon every object on which as a sinner I believingly gaze, God has written one sentence – solemn, pregnant, and emphatic – "JESUS ONLY." Let us briefly confirm and illustrate it.

Jesus only could stoop to our low estate. He only could stand between justice and the criminal – the day's-man between God and us. He only had divinity enough, and merit enough, and holiness enough, and strength enough, and love enough, to undertake and perfect our redemption. None other could embark in the mighty enterprise of saving lost man but he. To no other hand but his did the Father from eternity commit his church – his peculiar treasure. To Jesus only could be entrusted the recovery and the keeping of this cabinet of precious jewels – jewels lost, and scattered, and hidden in the fall, yet predestinated to a rescue and a glory great and endless as God's own being. Jesus only could bear our sin and sustain our curse, endure our penalty, cancel our debit, and reconcile us unto God. In his bosom only could the elements of our hell find a flame of love sufficient to extinguish them, and by his merits only could the glories of our heaven stand before our eye palpable and revealed. Jesus must wholly save, or the sinner must forever perish. Listen to the language of Peter, uttered when "filled with the Holy Spirit," and addressed with burning zeal to the Christ-rejecting, self-righteous Sanhedrin; "The stone that you builders rejected has now become the cornerstone. There is salvation in no one else! There is no other name in all of heaven for people to call on to save them." Thus, in the great and momentous matter of our salvation, Jesus must be all. He will admit no co-adjutor, as he will allow no rival. The breach between God and man he will heal alone.

The wine-press of Divine wrath he will tread alone. The battle with the power of darkness he will fight alone. The bitter cup of Gethsemane he will drink alone. The rugged cross to Calvary he will bear alone. The last conflict with the power of hell he will sustain alone. The passage through the grave he will tread alone. Man's sins and sorrow, the sinner's curse and woe, he will endure singly and alone; "of the people there shall be none with him." What majesty gathers around the work and conquest of Jesus, thus accomplished and achieved single-handed and alone! What an impressive view does the fact present of the inconceivable mightiness of the work, and of the unparalleled almightiness of him who wrought it! Salvation was a word distancing all created power. It could only be secured by a power essentially and absolutely Divine. Jesus undertook the work alone, and alone

he accomplished it.

What is the deduction, rigidly logical, and scripturally true? JESUS IS DIVINE. Here is the key to the mystery of the whole. Deity in alliance with humanity – the Deity supplying the merit; and the humanity the vehicle of atonement – singly and unaided wrenched the prey from the destroyer, broke the chain of the captive, and brought salvation and glory within the reach of the vilest of Adam's race. And because the Son of God wrought the stupendous achievement *alone*, alone "he shall bear the glory." Not a note shall swell to the praise, not a monument shall rise to the honor, not a beam shall irradiate the brow of another, from the work of our redemption. To Jesus only shall the anthem be sung, to Jesus only shall the honor be ascribed, to Jesus only shall the glory redound, Jesus only shall wear the crown. Hark! How they chant his high praises in the heavenly temple: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." Oh yes, in heaven it is "Jesus only."

It follows, then, from all this, that salvation is a *finished* work. Precious is this truth to the believer's heart. And yet, how much is it practically overlooked! The judgment unequivocally admits it, but the doubts and tremblings which enslave and agitate the heart, and which, like ripples upon the surface, impart and unevenness to the peaceful serenity of the Christian's life, too evidently betray the feeble hold which his faith has upon this truth. But the doctrine remains substantially and unchangeably the same. The obedience, with which he answered the claims of justice, formed the two cognate parts of that mighty and illustrious work, of which, when he bowed his head in death, he exclaimed, "IT IS FINISHED."

Believer in Jesus! Remember all your confidence, all your hope, all your comfort flows from the *finished* work of your Savior. "Jesus only." See that you unwittingly add nothing to the perfection of this work. You may be betrayed into this sin and this folly by looking within yourself rather than to the person of Jesus; by attaching an importance too great to repentance and faith, and your own doings and strivings, rather than ceasing from your own works altogether, and resting for your peace and joy and hope, simply, entirely, and exclusively in the work of Jesus. Remember, that whatever we unintentionally add to the finished work of Christ, mars the perfection and obscures the beauty of that work. "If you lift up your tool upon it, you have polluted it." Nothing have we to do but, in our moral pollution and nakedness, to plunge beneath the fountain, and wrap ourselves within the robe of that Savior's blood and righteousness who, when he expired on the tree, so completed our redemption, as to leave us nothing to do but to *believe*

and be *saved*.

"It is finished!" O words, pregnant of the deepest meaning! O words, rich of the richest consolation! Salvation is finished! "Jesus only!" Look from fluctuating frames, and fitful feelings, and changing clouds, to "Jesus only." Look from sins and guilt, from emptiness and poverty, to "Jesus only." The veil of the temple was rent in twain, and you may pass into its holiest, and lay upon the altar the sacrifice of a broken and a contrite heart, which shall be accepted through him who "gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savor."

"It is finished!" Let devils hear it, and tremble! Let sinners hear it, and believe! Let saints hear it, and rejoice! All is finished. "Then, Lord, I flee to you, just as I am! I have stayed away from you too long, and 'am nothing bettered but rather grown worse.' Too exclusively have I looked at my unworthiness, too absorbed have I been with my penury, too bitterly have I mourned having nothing to pay. Upon your own finished work I now cast myself. "Save, Lord and I shall be saved!" *Before this stupendous truth, let all creature merit sink, let all human glory pale, let all man's boasting vanish, and Jesus be all in all.* Perish forms and ceremonies – perish rites and rituals – perish creeds and churches – perish, utterly and forever perish, whatever would be a substitute for the finished work of Jesus, whatever would be attempt to add to the finished work of Jesus, whatever would tend to neutralize the finished work of Jesus, whatever would obscure with a cloud, or dim with a vapor, the beauty, the luster, and the glory of the finished work of Jesus! It was "Jesus only" in the councils of eternity – it was "Jesus only" in the everlasting covenant of grace – it was "Jesus only" in the manger of Bethlehem – it was "Jesus only" in the garden of Gethsemane – it was "Jesus only" upon the cross of Calvary – it was "Jesus only" in the tomb of Joseph – it was "Jesus only" who, "when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty of high." And it shall be "Jesus only" – the joy of our hearts, the object of our glory the theme of our song, the Beloved of our adoration, our service, and our praise, through the endless ages of eternity. O, stand fast, in life and in death, by the FINISHED work of Jesus.

"Tis finished!" see the Victor rise,
Shake off the grave, and claim the skies;
You heavens, your doors wide open fling;
You angel choirs, receive your King.

"Tis finished!" – but what mortal dare
In the triumph hope to share?

Savior, to your cross I flee;
Say, "Tis finished!" *and for me.*

Then will I sing, "The Cross! The Cross!"
And count all other gain but loss:
I'll sing the cross, and to your tree
Cling evermore, blest Calvary.

In the spiritual exercises of the believer's soul, still it is "Jesus only." In the corrodings of guilt upon the conscience, in the cloud which veils the reconciled countenance of God from the soul, where are we to look, but to "Jesus only?" In the mournful consciousness of our unfaithfulness to God, our aggravated backslidings, repeated departures, the allowed foils and defeats by which our enemies exult, and the saints hang their heads in sorrow, to whom are to turn, but to "Jesus only?" In the cares, anxieties, and perplexities which troop around our path, in the consequent castings down of our soul, and the disquietude of our spirit within us, to whom shall we turn but to "Jesus only?" In those deep and mysterious exercises of soul-travail, which not always the saints of God can fully understand – when we see a hand they cannot see, and when we hear a voice they cannot hear; when we seem to tread a lone path, or traverse a sea where no fellow-voyager ever heaves in sight; the days of soul-exercise wearisome, and its nights long and dark – oh! to whom shall we then turn, save to "Jesus only?" Who can enter into all this, and understand all this, and sympathize with all this, but Jesus? To him alone, then, let us repair, with every sin, and with every burden, and with every temptation, and with every sorrow, and with every mental and spiritual exercise, thankful to be shut up exclusively to "Jesus only."

And whom does the heart in its best moments, and holiest affections, and intensest yearnings, supremely desire? Still the answer is, "Jesus only." Having by his Spirit enthroned himself there, having won the affections by the power of his love and the attractions of his beauty, the breathing of the soul now is, "Whom have I in heaven but you, and who is there on earth beside you?" Blessed is that soul, the utterances of whose heart are the sincere and fervent expression of a love of which Christ is the one and supreme object. Oh to love him more! Worthy, most worthy is he, of our first and best affection. Angels love him ardently and supremely; how much more should we, who owe to him a deeper debt of love than they; for whom he has done infinitely more than for angels! Would that this might be our motto, our principle, our life, – "To me to live *is Christ.*" Let the love of Christ, then, constrain us to love him in return with an affection which shall evince, by the singleness of its object and the unreserved surrender of its obedience, that he who reigns the Sovereign Lord of our affections is –

"Jesus only."

And when the time draws near that we must depart out of this world, and go unto the Father, one object will fix the eye from which all others are then receding, it is – "Jesus only." Ah! to die, *actually* to die, must be a crisis of our being quite different from reading of death in a book, or from hearing of it in the pulpit, or from talking of it by the way-side. The world fading in the view – life congealing at its fount – the brain swimming – the eye fixing – and yet conscious that in a few hours, or moments, the soul will take the tremendous leap, and bound away to a world unknown; rushing through suns and systems and scenes all new and strange and wondrous – Oh it is a solemn, an appalling thing to die!

But to the believer in Jesus, how pleasant and how glorious! "Absent from the body," he is "present with the Lord." Jesus is with him then. The blood of Jesus is there, cleansing him from all his guilt; the arms of Jesus are there, supporting him in all his weakness; the Spirit of Jesus is there, comforting him in all his fears: and now is he learning, for the last time on earth, that as for all the sins, all the perils, all the trials, and all the sorrows of life, so *now* as that life is ebbing fast away, and death is chilling, and the grave is opening, and eternity is nearing, "Jesus only" is all-sufficient for his soul.

And when the trumpet of the archangel sounds – waxing louder and louder – and the dead in Christ arise, and ascend to meet their Savior and their Judge, as he comes, in majesty and great glory, to receive his Bride to himself, – then, oh *then*, will every heart, and every thought, and every eye, of that ransomed church, be fixed and fastened and centered upon one glorious object – "JESUS ONLY." Believer! look to him – lean upon him – cleave to him – labor for him – suffer for him – and, if need be, die for him. Thus loving and trusting, living and dying for – JESUS ONLY.

Why should I fear the darkest hour,
Or tremble at the tempest's power?
Jesus vouchsafes to be my tower.
Though hot the fight, why quit the field,

Why must I either flee or yield,
Since Jesus is my mighty shield?
When creature comforts fade and die,
Worldlings may weep, but why should I?

Jesus still lives and still is night.

Though all the flocks and herds were dead,
My soul a famine need not dread,
For Jesus is my living bread.

I know not what may soon betide,
Nor how my needs may be supplied;
But Jesus knows, and will provide.
Though sin would fill me with distress,

The throne of grace I dare address,
For Jesus is my righteousness.
Though faint my prayers and cold my love,
My steadfast hope shall not remove,

While Jesus intercedes above.
Against me earth and hell combine,
But on my side is power Divine;
Jesus is all, and he is mine.

THE INCENSE OF PRAYER

"Let my prayer be set before you as incense" – Psalm 141:2.

God has a temple outside of heaven. Not all the worship, nor all the worshipers, are confined to that blissful world where he immediately dwells. He has another sanctuary upon earth – other worshipers and other services, where, with whom, and with which, the beams of his presence are as strictly promised and as truly shine as in the general assembly of the church gathered around him in glory. It is not the magnificent structure made with hands, with its splendid ritual and its ponderous ceremonial, flattering to the pride and captivating to the sense of man, but a temple and a temple-service far more beautiful in God's eye is that of which we speak. "Thus says the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that you build unto me? and where is the place of my rest? For all these things has my hand made, and all these things have been, says the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembles at my word." "Thus says the high and lofty One that inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy, I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite one." This is God's temple upon earth, this his worshiper, and this his worship. The material structure is nothing, the magnificent service is nothing, the formal worshiper is nothing, "but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembles at my word." Oh most solemn truth! Oh most precious words! "Lord! engrave them upon my heart by your blessed Spirit. Be my body your temple, my heart your sanctuary, your presence my life, my life your service."

The believer in Jesus is a royal priest, ordained to offer up spiritual sacrifices to God. He is called and consecrated, clothed and anointed, to a high and holy service. His calling is divine, his consecration is holy, his clothing is costly, his anointing is fragrant. Before the standing and the glory and the service of one of the royal priesthood, all the pomp and gorgeousness of Aaron's priesthood fade into nothing. Called according to God's purpose, consecrated and set apart by sovereign grace, invested with the righteousness of Christ, anointed with the Holy Spirit, and offering up the spiritual sacrifice of a "broken and a contrite heart," – is it surprising that God should look with an eye of ineffable delight upon such a worshiper? But of a single one only of these many interesting points must we allow ourselves at present to speak. We refer to the *incense* which every true believer in Jesus, in his character of a royal priest, offers to the Lord.

The subject presents the Christian to our view in his holiest and most solemn feature – drawing near to God, and presenting before the altar of his grace *the incense of prayer*. The typical reference to this is strikingly beautiful. "You shall make an altar to burn incense upon...and Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning; when he dresses the lamps he shall burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lights the lamps at even he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations." That this incense was typical of prayer would appear from Luke 1:10, "And the whole multitude of the people were *praying* outside *at the time of incense*." And David, though dwelling in the more shadowy age of the church, thus correctly and beautifully interprets this type: "Let my *prayer* be set before you as *incense*." It is an appropriate and an impressive figure. And thankful, dear reader, should we be to avail ourselves whatever in the Divine Word tends to teach us the nature, to illustrate the blessedness, to deepen the solemnity, and to engage our hearts in the holy duty and sweet privilege of – PRAYER. Interesting and important as are the topics upon which we have previously addressed you, all must yield to the interest and importance of this one. Prayer is the vital breath of the living soul; prayer is the mode of our approach to God; prayer is the appointed channel of all blessing. The season contemplated throughout this little volume is especially the season in which *prayer* is found the most soothing and sanctifying.

All the precious blessings which we have endeavored to bring before your sorrowful heart, as calculated to comfort and heal it, are conveyed to you through this one mode – *communion with God*. Once we can persuade you to pour out your heart to him – thus severing you from all other resources of comfort, and shutting you up exclusively to prayer; in other words, shutting you up exclusively to God, we feel that we have conducted you through the surges of your grief to the rock that is higher than you. May the Eternal Spirit be our Teacher and our Comforter while briefly we speak of the INCENSE OF PRAYER.

The believer's *censer* – what is it? From where arises the incense of prayer ascending to the throne of the Eternal? Oh, it is the *heart*. The believer's renewed, sanctified heart is the censer from where the fragrant cloud ascends. Ah, believer, there are false, there are spurious censers waved before the throne of grace. There is no precious incense in them, no fire, no cloud. God smells no sweet savor in their offering. True prayer is the incense of a heart broken for sin, humbled for its iniquity, mourning over its plague, and touched and healed and comforted with the atoning blood of God's great sacrifice. This is the true censer; this it is at which God looks. May we not quote his words again, so expressive, so solemn, so precious are they? "TO THIS MAN WILL I LOOK, EVEN TO HIM THAT IS POOR AND OF A

CONTRITE SPIRIT, AND THAT TREMBLES AT MY WORD." This is God's own chosen censer. This, and this only, will he regard. Oh! who can describe the worth, the beauty, and the acceptableness of this censer to him whose "eyes move to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of those whose *heart* is perfect towards him?" To this God looks. "For the Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but *the Lord looks on the heart*" (1 Sam. 16:7). Precious censer! molded, fashioned, beautified by God.

There exists not upon earth a more vile and unlovely thing, in the self-searching view of the true believer, than his own heart. From every other human eye that bosom is deeply, impenetrably veiled. All that is within is known only to itself. What those chambers of abomination are, God will not permit another creature to know. But oh, how dark, how loathsome, how unholy to him "who knows the plague of *his own* heart!" And yet – oh wondrous grace! God, by his renewing Spirit, has made of that heart a beautiful, costly, and precious censer, the cloud of whose incense ascends and fills all heaven with its fragrance. With all its indwelling evil and self-loathing, God sees its struggles, watches its conflict, and marks its sincerity. He has his finger upon its pulse – he feels every beat, records every throb. Not a feeling thrills it, not an emotion agitates it, not a sorrow shades it, not a sin wounds it, not a thought passes through it, of which he is not cognizant. Believer! Jesus loves that heart of yours. He purchased it with his own heart's blood, agonies, and tears, and he loves it. He inhabits it by his Spirit, and he loves it. It is his temple, his home, his censer, and never can it approach him in prayer, but he is prepared to accept both the censer and incense with a complacency and delight, which finds its best expression in the language of his own word, "I will accept you with your sweet savor."

And what is the *incense* pouring forth like a cloud from this precious censer? Oh, it is the incense of *prayer!* The most precious and fragrant incense that ever rose to heaven from a mere human heart. How shall we describe the *costliness* of this incense? Its materials, like those which Aaron cast into the censer, which the priests burned before the Lord, the offering of which was termed the "incense of spices," are most costly. They are divine materials cast into it by God himself; the heart's conviction of sin, its sense of self-loathing, its sweet contrition, its holy sorrow, its sincere repentance, its ingenuous confession, its full, free, and unreserved pouring out of itself before God, the Holy Spirit created. And that must in very deed be costly of which the Holy Spirit of God is the author.

And what shall we say of the *fragrance* of this incense? Oh how much have we yet to learn of the intrinsic sweetness of real prayer! We can but

imperfectly conceive the fragrance there must be to God in the breathing of the Divine Spirit in the heart of a poor sinner. It is perhaps but a groan, a sigh, a tear, a look, but it is the utterance of the heart, and God can hear the voice of our weeping, and interpret the language of our desires, when the lips utter not a word; so fragrant to him is the incense of prayer. And when prayer arises from a heart touched by the Spirit of adoption, and is the breathing of a child's love and confidence and strong desire in the bosom of God, oh how rich the incense then!

And is the incense of a praying heart borne down by grief, smitten, and withered like grass, less fragrant to God? No, mourning Christian, prayer is God's appointed and surest relief for your sad heart. Give but yourself unto prayer, now in the hour of your sorrow and loneliness, and your breathings sent up to heaven in tremulous accents, shall return into your own disconsolate and desolate heart, all rich and redolent of heaven's sweet consolations. The holy breathings which ascend from a believer's heart, gather and accumulate in the upper skies, and when most he needs the refreshing, they descend again in covenant blessings upon his soul. No real, believing prayer is ever lost, even as the moisture exhaled from earth is never lost. That thin, almost invisible vapor, which the morning's sun has caught up, returns again, distilling in gentle dews, or falling in plentiful rain, watering the earth and making it to bring forth and bud. That feeble desire, that faint breathing of the soul after God, and Jesus, and holiness, and heaven, shall never perish.

It was, perhaps, so weak and tremulous, so mixed with grief and sorrow, so burdened with complaint and sin, that you could scarcely discern it to be real prayer; and yet, beloved, ascending from a heart inhabited by God's Holy Spirit, and touched by God's love, it rose like the incense cloud before the throne of the Eternal, and blended with the fragrance of heaven. Around that throne prayers are gathering, like clustering angels, and although the vision may tarry, yet, waiting in humble faith God's time, those prayers will come back again freighted with the richest blessings of the everlasting covenant, "even the sure mercies of David." God will grant you the desires of your heart. Jesus *will* manifest himself to your soul. To nothing has our Heavenly Father more strongly and solemnly pledged himself than to the *answering* of the prayer of faith. "You shall call, and I will *answer*."

But there is yet one aspect of our subject indescribably glorious, unspeakably precious. From where does the incense of prayer derive its true fragrance, power, and acceptance with God? Ah! beloved, the answer is near at hand. From where, but from the incense of our Great High Priest's atoning merit offered upon earth, and by ceaseless intercession presented in heaven.

The opening of the seventh seal, in the apocalyptic vision, revealed this glorious truth to the wondering eye of the evangelist. "And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angels hand" (Rev. 8:3, 4). This angel is none other than the Angel of the covenant, Jesus, our Great High Priest who stands before the golden altar in heaven, presenting the sweet incense of his divine merits and sacrificial death; the cloud of which ascends before God "with the prayers of the saints."

Oh, it is the merit of our Immanuel, "who gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God, for a sweet-smelling savor," that imparts virtue, prevalence, and acceptableness to the incense of prayer ascending from the heart of the child of God. Each petition, each desire, each groan, each sigh, each glance, comes up before God with the "smoke of the incense" which ascends from the cross of Jesus, and from the "golden altar which is before the throne." All the imperfection and impurity which mingles with our devotions here, is separated from each petition by the atonement of our Mediator, who presents that petition as sweet incense to God. See your Great High Priest before the throne! See him waving the golden censer to and fro! See how the cloud of incense rises and envelops the throne! See how heaven is filled with its fragrance and its glory! Believer in Jesus, upon the heart of that officiating High priest *your name* is written; in the smoke of the incense which has gone up from that waving censer, *your prayers* are presented. *Jesus' blood cleanses them – Immanuel's merit perfumes them* – and our glorious High Priest thus presents both our person and our sacrifice to his Father and our Father, to his God and our God. Oh wonderful encouragement to prayer!

Who, with such an assurance that his weak, broken, and defiled, but sincere petitions shall find acceptance with God, would not breathe them at the throne of grace? Go, in the name of Jesus; go, casting yourself upon the merit which fills heaven with its fragrance; go, and pour out your grief, unveil your sorrow, confess your sin, sue out your pardon, make known your needs, with your eye of faith upon the Angel who stands at the "golden altar which is before the throne," and the incense which breathes from your oppressed and stricken heart will "ascend up before God out of the Angel's hand," as a cloud, rich, fragrant, and accepted.

O, give yourself to prayer! Say not that your censer has nothing to offer. That it contains no sweet spices, no fire, no incense. Repair with it, all empty

and cold as it is, to the Great High Priest, and as you gaze in faith upon him who is the Altar, the slain Lamb, and the Priest, thus musing upon this wondrous spectacle of Jesus' sacrifice for you, his Spirit will cast the sweet spices of grace and the glowing embers of love into your dull, cold heart, and there will come forth a cloud of precious incense, which shall ascend with the "much incense" of the Savior's merits, an "offering and a sacrifice to God of a sweet-smelling savor."

Remember, that Jesus offers with the "much incense" the prayer of *"all saints."* In that number *you*, beloved, are included. The tried saints, the sick saints, the sorrowful saints, the tempted saints, the bereaved saints, the weak and infirm saints, the wandering and restored saints. Yes, "the prayers of *all saints*" are "offered upon the golden altar which is before the throne." Nor forget that there is *evening* as well as morning incense. "When Aaron lights the lamps *at evening*, he shall burn incense." And thus when the day-season of your prosperity and joy is past, and the evening of adversity, sorrow, and loneliness draws its somber curtains around you, then take your censer and wave it before the Lord. Ah! methinks at that hour of solemn stillness and of mournful solitude, that hour when grief loves to indulge, and visions of other days dance before the eye, like shadows upon the wall, that hour when all human support and sympathy fails, that *then* the sweetest incense of prayer ascends before God. Yes, *there is no prayer so true, so powerful, so fragrant as that which sorrow presses from the heart.* O, betake yourself, suffering believer to prayer.

Are you a pilgrim, and alone?
Far from the home once called your own?
From friendship's faithful bosom wrested,
In stranger hands your comforts vested,
Your life a cheerless wintry day,
Unlit by sunshine! – Rise and pray!

Smiled on you once the bliss of earth,
And fluttering joys of transient worth?
Have you adored some idol shrine,
Or bent how many a knee at thine?
Faded those creatures of a day,
What have you left? – Arise and pray!

With tears, with bitterest agony,
The Savior wrestled, soul! for thee,
Before he could all-triumphant rise
To plead the accepted sacrifice:

So, until the world shall pass away,
 Shall stand his words – Arise and pray!

Bring forth, then, your censer, sorrowful priest of the Lord! Replenish it as the altar of Calvary, and then wave it with a strong hand before the God, until your person, your sorrows, and your guilt are all enveloped and lost in the cloud of sweet incense as it rises before the throne, and blends with the ascending cloud of the Redeemer's precious intercession. *Prayer will soothe you, prayer will calm you, prayer will unburden your heart, prayer will remove or mitigate your pain, prayer will heal your sickness, or make your sickness pleasant to bear, prayer will expel the temper, prayer will bring Jesus sensibly near to your soul, prayer will lift your heart to heaven, and will bring heaven down into your heart.* "Lord, I cry unto you: make haste unto me: give ear unto my voice when I cry unto you. Let my prayer be set forth before you as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice." "I GIVE MYSELF UNTO PRAYER."

The prayers I make will then be sweet indeed,
 If You the Spirit give by which I pray:
 My unassisted heart is barren clay,
 That of its native self can nothing feed:
 Of good and pious works You are the seed
 That quickens only where You say it may:
 Unless You show to us Your own true way,
 No man can find it: Father! You may lead.
 Oh, do then breathe those thoughts into my mind
 By which such virtue may in me bred,
 That in Your holy footsteps I may tread;
 The fetters of my tongue do You unbind,
 That I may have the power to sing of Thee,
 And sound Your praises everlastingly.

The Day Breaking

"Until the day breaks, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense"—Song Sol. 4:5.

IT is proper that we should now conduct our 'night thoughts' to a close. And with what topic more soothing and appropriate can we terminate our present reflections than the one suggested by the portion of the sweet song just quoted—the arrival of that blessed period when the shadows of our present pilgrimage will all have fled, succeeded by a "morning without clouds," and a day without a night? That we dwell so much in the region of present clouds, and so little in the meridian of the future glory, entails upon us a serious loss. We look too faintly beyond the midnight of time into the daylight of eternity. We are slow of heart to believe all that is revealed of the bliss that awaits us, and do not sufficiently realize that, in a little while,—O how soon!— the day will break,—the shadows will flee away,—and we shall bathe our souls in heaven's full, unclouded, endless light. 'Absent from the body,' we shall be 'present with the Lord.' To the consideration of this deeply interesting subject let us for a few moments; in conclusion, bend our thoughts.

We have already considered the night-season of travel as constituting a great portion of the celestial pilgrimage of the saints. Solomon, in the sacred Idyl from which we have selected the sublime stanza at the head of this chapter, again recalls our thoughts to this point, he refers to the "shadows" which gather round the pathway of the believer on his way to the eternal city. Nor is this an exaggerated description of the reality. The portrait of the Christian's life has its lights, bright and glorious: but it also has its shadows, deep and long; and both the light and the shade are essential to the perfection of the picture.

We have emerged, beloved, in our conversion, from the scene of shadows. Divine and sovereign grace has chosen and called us out of a world over which the funeral pall of the 'darkness of the shadow of death' spreads its broad mantle. "Darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people." The natural sun illumines,—its beams of light and splendor streaming alike through the windows of the palace and the lowly cot; but until Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, is revealed and known, neither 'those who dwell in kings' houses,' nor those who occupy the humblest cottage on the hillside, are guided to eternity by a single ray from heaven. Now, seeing that the path of the "child of the light" lies through this dark world, it is no marvel if shadows, often varied and thick, should brood around his steps. Let us for a

moment glance at some of them.

There are the shadows of spiritual ignorance thrown upon our path. With all our attainments, how little have we really attained! With all our knowledge, how little do we actually know! How superficially and imperfectly are we acquainted with truth, with Jesus, who is emphatically "The truth," with God, whom the truth reveals. "We know but in part." "We see through a glass darkly"—all is yet but as a riddle, compared with what we shall know when the shadows of ignorance have fled. There are, too, the enshrouding shadows of God's dark and painful dispensations. Our dealings are with a God of whom it is said, "Clouds and darkness are round about him." Who often "covers himself as with a cloud," and to whom the midnight traveler to the world of light has often occasion to address himself in the language of the church, "You are a God that hide yourself." Ah! beloved, what clouds of dark providences may be gathering and thickening around your present path! Through what a gloomy, stormy night of affliction faith may be steering your tempest-tossed bark. That faith eyeing the promise and not the providence—the "bright light that is in the cloud," and not the lowering cloud itself, will steer that trembling vessel safely through the surge. Remember that in the providences of God, the believer is passive—but with regard to the promises of God, he is active. In the one case, he is to 'be still' and know that God reigns, and that the "Judge of all earth must do right." In the other, his faith, child-like, unquestioning and unwavering, is to take hold of what God says, and of what God is, believing that what he has promised he is also able and willing to perform. This is to be "strong in faith, giving glory to God."

The divine withdrawment is another shadow, often imparting an aspect of dreariness to the path we are treading to the Zion of God. "Wherefore hide you yourself?" says Job. "For a small moment," says God to the church, "have I forsaken you. . . . In a little wrath I hid my face from you for a moment." Ah! there are many who have the quenchless light of life in their souls, who yet, like Job, are constrained to take up the lamentation, "I went mourning without the sun." There are no shadows darker to some of God's saints than this. Many professing Christians dwell so perpetually in the region of shadows, they so seldom feel the sunshine of God's presence in their souls, that they scarcely can discern when the light is withdrawn. But there are others, used to walk so near with God in the rich, personal enjoyment of their pardon, acceptance and adoption, that if but a vapor floats between their soul and the sun, in an instant they are sensible of it. O blessed are they whose walk is so close, so filial with God, whose home is so hard by the cross, who, like the Apocalyptic angel, dwell so entirely in the sun, as to feel the barometer of their soul affected by the slightest change in their

spiritual atmosphere. In other words—who walk so much beneath the light of God's reconciled countenance as to be sensible of his hidings even "for a small moment." And then there comes the last of our shadows, "the valley of the shadow of death." There they terminate. This may be the focus where they all shall meet; but it is to meet only to be entirely and forever scattered. The sentiment is as true as the figure is poetic,—"the shadow of death." It is but a 'shadow' to the believer; the body of that shadow, Jesus, the "Captain of our salvation," met on the cross, fought, and overcame. By dying he so completely destroyed death, and him that had the power of death, that the substance of death in the experience of the dying Christian dwindles into a mere shadow, and that shadow melts into eternal glory. O death! how great was your triumph, and how overwhelming was your defeat when Jesus died. Never was your gloomy domain so dark as when Essential Life bowed his head and gave up the spirit. Yet never was it illumined with an effulgence so great, as when the Divine Conqueror passed through its gloomy chambers, and with a power and a victory mightier and more glorious far than Samson's, tore away its iron gates, and demolished its strongholds; throwing a brightness and a fragrance around the bed of death, in which, "until the day dawn and the shadows flee away," those who sleep in Jesus lie down and rest. "If a man keep my sayings he shall never see death." "Whose believes in me shall never die."

"Death's terror is the mountain faith removes;
'Tis faith disarms destruction,—
Believe, and look with triumph on the tomb."

"O you timorous souls! that are terrified at the sound of the passing bell; that tremble at the sight of an opened grave; and can scarce behold a coffin without a shuddering horror; you that are in bondage to the grisly tyrant, and tremble at the shaking of his iron rod, cry mightily to the Father of your spirits for faith in his dear son! Faith will free you from your slavery. Faith will embolden you to tread on this the fiercest of serpents. Old Simeon, clasping the child Jesus in the arms of his flesh, and the glorious Mediator in the arms of his faith, departs with tranquillity and peace. That bitter persecutor Saul, having won Christ, being found in Christ, longs to be dismissed from cumbrous clay, and kindles with rapture at the prospect of dissolution. Methinks I see another of Emmanuel's followers trusting in his Savior, leaning on his beloved, go down to the silent shade with composure and alacrity. 'Knowing,' says Peter, 'that shortly I must put off this tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ has showed me.' In this powerful name, an innumerable company of sinful creatures have set up their banners and overcome through the blood of the Lamb. Authorized by the Captain of your salvation, you also may set your feet upon the neck of this 'king of

terrors.' Enriched with this antidote you may play around the hole of the asp, and put your undaunted hand on the cockatrice den. You may feel the viper fastening to your mortal part, and fear no evil; you shall one day shake it off by a joyful resurrection, and suffer no harm."

But let us turn from the shadows of night to the day-dawn, by which those shades will presently be succeeded. "Until the day break and the shadow flee away." It will not always be night with the expectants of glory. As the "children of the day and of the light," their present time-state would seem to be but an accident of their being, a temporary obscuration only, through which they are passing to the world of which it is said, "there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light: and they shall reign forever and ever." And yet we would be far from penning a sentence tending to foster in the Christian mind a spirit of discontent with his present night-season of humiliation and sorrow. We have already remarked, in a former part of this work, that there are glories revealed by the natural night, which the sun in all its splendor, so far from revealing, only hides from our view by its very brightness. We are as much indebted to the darkness of night for its magnificent unveilings of God's wonderful works, as to the noon-tide splendor which lights up the wonders and glories of earth. How limited had been our knowledge of the universe, and how partial our view of the divine affluence and greatness, had there been no natural night. A world of perpetual sunshine, would have been a world of gross mental darkness! The earth beneath and the sun above us would have been the limits of our knowledge. The beauties spread out upon the dissolving landscapes around us, we might have surveyed with admiration and delight, but the mighty expanse above us, the overspreading skies, the remote depths stretching far into space, all studded and crowded with suns and systems and constellations, would never have burst in grandeur and wonder upon our view. Of astronomy, that most delightful and fascinating of all sciences, we should have known nothing. But when the last lingering ray of the sun retires, and evening, glittering with heaven's rich jewelry, approaches; and night, wearing her diadem of star and planet, takes her allotted place in the earth's revolution,—then it is we go forth on our wondrous travel, and as we "consider the heavens, the moon, and the stars, which he has ordained," we exclaim with that devout astronomer, the Psalmist, "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the skies shows his handiwork." Thus is it with the dark dispensation of God with his people. Would you pass through a spiritual course of perpetual sunshine? Would you be exempt from the night-season of sorrow and of trial? O how little would you then know of God, and of Christ, and of truth! We hesitate not to affirm, that as in the natural world we are more deeply indebted to the instructions of the night than to those of the day, so in the spiritual world we

experimentally learn infinitely more in the night-season of deep and sanctified affliction than in the bright, sunny day of gladness and prosperity. It may be a dark and tedious night of weeping and of trial, yet is it often a night in which Christ visits us, as he visits us at no other season. But from this digression let us turn our thoughts to the day-dawn, when the shadows shall all flee away.

We have alluded to the moral darkness of man,—the spiritual unregeneracy in which he is found by nature. The first light, then, that dawns upon the soul is the day-break of grace. When that blessed period arrives, when the Sun of Righteousness has risen upon the long-benighted mind, how do the shadows of ignorance and of guilt instantly disappear! What a breaking away of, perhaps, a long night of alienation from God, of direct hostility to God, and of ignorance of the Lord Jesus, then takes place. Not, however, strongly marked is this state always at the first. The beginning of grace in the soul is frequently analogous to the beginning of day in the natural world. The dawn of grace is at first so faint, the day-break so gentle, that a skillful eye only can observe its earliest tints. The individual himself is, perhaps, ignorant of the extraordinary transition through which his soul is passing. The discovery of darkness which that day-dawn has made, the revelation it has brought to view of the desperate depravity of his heart, the utter corruption of his fallen nature, the number and the turpitude of his sins, it may be, well near overwhelms the individual with despair! But what has led to this discovery? What has revealed all this darkness and sin? O! it is the day-break of grace in the soul! One faint ray, what a change has it produced!

And is it real? Ah! just as real as that the first beam, faintly painted on the eastern sky, is a real and an essential part of light. The day-break—faint and glimmering though it be—is as really day as the meridian is day. And so is it with the day-dawn of grace in the soul. The first serious thought—the first real misgiving—the first conviction of sin—the first downfall of the eye—the first bending of the knee—the first tear—the first prayer—the first touch of faith, is as really and as essentially the day-break of God's converting grace in the soul as is the utmost perfection to which that grace can arrive. O glorious dawn is this, my reader, if now for the first time in your life, the day-break of grace has come, and the shadows of ignorance and guilt are fleeing away before the advancing light of Jesus in your soul. If now you are seeing how depraved your nature is; if now you are learning the utter worthlessness of your own righteousness; if now you are fleeing as a poor, lost sinner to Christ, relinquishing your hold of everything else, and clinging only to him; and though this be but in weakness and tremulousness, and hesitancy, yet sing for joy, for the day is breaking,—the prelude to the day of eternal glory,—and the shadows of unregeneracy are forever fleeing

away. And as this day of grace has begun, so it will advance. Nothing shall impede its course, nothing shall arrest its progress. "He which has begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." The Sun now risen upon you with healing in his beams shall never stand still—shall never go back. "He has set a tabernacle for the sun" in the renewed soul of man, and onward that sun will roll in its glorious orbit, penetrating with its beams every dark recess, until all mental shadows are merged and lost in its unclouded and eternal splendor. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day."

But there awaits the believer a day brighter far than this; such a day as earth never saw, but as earth will surely see,—the day-break of glory. "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away." O what a day is this! It will be "as the light of the morning, when the sun rises, even a morning without clouds." Grace, which was the day-dawn of glory, now yields its long-held empire; and glory, which is the perfect day of grace, begins its brilliant and endless reign. The way-worn "child of the day" has emerged from the shadows of his pilgrimage, and has entered that world of which it is said, "there shall be no night there." Contemplate for a moment, some of the attributes of this day of glory.

It will be a day of perfect knowledge. When it is said that there will be no night in heaven, it is equivalent to the assertion, that there will be no intellectual darkness in heaven; consequently there will be perfect intellectual light. It is said that we shall then 'know even as also we are known.' The entire history of God's government will then be spread out before the glorified saint, luminous in its own unveiled and yet undazzling brightness. The mysteries of providence, and the yet profounder mysteries of grace, which obscured much of the glory of that government, will then be unfolded to the wonder and admiration of the adoring mind. The misconceptions we had formed, the mistakes we had made, the discrepancies we had imagined, the difficulties that impeded us, the prophecies that bewildered us, the parables that baffled us, the controversies that agitated us, all, all will now be cleared up; the day has broken, and the shadows have fled forever. O blessed day of perfected knowledge, which will then give me reason to see, that the way along which my God is now leading me through a world of shadows, is a right way; and that where I most trembled, there I had most reason to stand firm; and that where I most yielded to fear, there I had the greatest ground for confidence; and that where my heart was the most collapsed with grief, there it had the greatest reason to awaken its strings to the most joyous melody.

It will be a day of perfect freedom from all sorrow. It must be so, since it is

written that "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." What a cluster of sweet hopes is here! What a collection of bright beams throwing, in focal power, their splendor over that cloudless day. Child of solitude and sorrow! sick ones dear to Christ! bereaved mourners! hear you these precious words, and let music break from your lips! God will dry your tears! We have told you how the mother comforts her sorrowing one. See how God will comfort his. "Will God himself wipe my tears away?" Yes, child of grief, there will be no more weeping then, for—O ecstatic thought!—"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." O kind and condescending Father! And "there shall be no more death." No more rending asunder of affection's close and tender ties; no more separations from the hearts we love; no more blinded windows, nor coffins, nor shrouds, nor plumed hearse, nor funeral procession, nor opened graves, nor sealed sepulchers, nor "dust to dust, and ashes to ashes;" the mourners no more go about the streets, for death is now swallowed up in victory! "Neither sorrow nor crying." Grief cannot find existence or place in an atmosphere of such bliss. Not a cloud floats athwart that verdant landscape, nor casts a shadow over the deep tranquillity of that sun-light scene. No frustrated plans, no bitter disappointments, no withered hopes, no corroding cares, there mingle with the deep sea of bliss, now pouring its tide of joyousness over the soul. "Neither shall there be any more pain." Children of suffering! hear you this. There will be no more pain racking the frame, torturing the limbs, and sending its influence through the system, until every nerve and fiber quivers with an indescribable agony. "The former things are passed away."

It will be a day of perfect freedom from sin. Ah! this, methinks, will be the brightest and the sweetest of all the joys of heaven. It does not yet fully appear what we shall be; "but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." The Canaanite will no more dwell in the land. Inbred corruption will be done away; the conflict within us will have ceased; no evil heart will betray into inconsistencies and sorrows, not a cloud of guilt will tarnish the unsullied purity of the soul. O assure me that there will be no more night of sin in heaven, and you have presented to my eye such a picture of its bliss, as tints the clouds of my dreary pilgrimage with the first dawn of its golden beams, and inspires my heart with yearnings to be there. You holy ones of God! weeping, mourning over indwelling and outbreking sin, the last sigh you heave will be a glad adieu to pollution,—to be tormented with it no more, to be freed from it forever. "I shall be satisfied, when I awake with your likeness." This is heaven indeed.

And when does this day begin to break, and the shadows to flee? Go, and

stand by the side of that expiring believer in Jesus—the day-break of glory is dawning upon his soul! He is nearing heaven; he will soon be there. Before long he will be nestling in the bosom of Jesus. In a few hours, perhaps moments, and O! what wonders, what glories, what bliss will burst upon his emancipated spirit. See, how he struggles to be free. Hark, how he exclaims to the loved ones who cling to him, and who gladly would detain him a little longer here,—“Let me go, for the day breaks!” O blessed day now opening upon his view, as shadow after shadow is dispersed, revealing the wall of sapphire, and the gate of pearl, and the jasper throne, and him who sits upon it, of the New Jerusalem, all inviting and beckoning him away.

But the noon-tide splendor of this day of glory will be at the second coming of our Lord in majesty and great power, to gather together his elect, and consummate the bliss of his church. “He shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all those who believe.” Precious in the sight of the Lord as is the death of his saints, and blissful to the saints themselves, as will be the time of their departure, yet not our death, but the Redeemer’s glorious appearing, is the hope set before us in the Scriptures. “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the Great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.” Death, in its mildest form, is terrible to look at. Gild it, paint it with vermilion as you may, it is a ghastly object. We shrink from dying. Faith in Jesus can indeed bear the heart upon its towering pinion above the fear and humiliation of death, yet the dreadful accompaniments of the final hour will at times crowd upon the view, and cause the Christian soldier to quake, and tremble, and misgive. But not so is the contemplation of the coming of the Lord. O how animating the thought! O how glorious the prospect! O how sanctifying the hope! We have been speaking to you much of night, and there is a sense in which this creation, since the sun of its holiness set amid clouds and darkness, has seen no day. But the day is breaking, the morning is coming—“the day of the Lord is at hand.” The ‘signs of the times’ all indicate the approach of great events. The forces are gathering, the field is clearing for the last and great battle. But what is the grand event, of which all others are but the heralds and precursors? It is the personal appearing of the Son of Man. He is coming to receive the kingdom,—to gather his elect from the four winds of heaven,—to quicken the sanctified dead, and to translate the holy living,—to reign forever with his church upon a new earth and beneath a new heaven, wherein will dwell righteousness. Suffering Christian! look rather to this blessed hope of the perfect day, than to the gloomy passage of the dark valley. “I will come again,” says your gracious Lord, “and receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also.” Let our hearts respond, “Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.”

And where shall we resort until then? We will follow the footsteps of the church. Listen to her words: "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, I will get me to the mountain of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense." The Lord has fragrant places of safety and repose for his people until he comes to fetch them to glory. What a "mountain of myrrh" is Jesus,—in whom we may abide, to whom in all lowering clouds we may repair, "until the day break and the shadows flee away." "God has anointed him with the oil of gladness above his fellows. All his garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia." Closer and closer let us cling to Christ—this precious "mountain of myrrh," whose "name is as ointment poured forth" to the Lord's faint and weary ones—until we see him face to face. Let us long for his appearing, let us invite him now to our hearts, in the language of the church: "Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be you like a roe or a young deer upon the mountains of Bether." And O! how fragrant are those "hills of frankincense," which the Lord has provided for his people, in the means of grace, to which he invites, and where he meets and communes with them "until the day break and the shadows flee away." Such is the place of secret prayer—the place of social prayer—the place of public prayer, where the incense of devotion and love ascends, so precious, so cheering and strengthening to the weary. And what is the ministration of the truth, and what is the word of God, but the "hills of frankincense" to which we are privileged to betake ourselves until our Lord comes to us, or until we go to him. To these fragrant hills of safety and repose let us constantly repair; "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as you see the day approaching."

"The night is wearing fast away,
A streak of light is dawning,—
Sweet harbinger of that bright day,
The fair Millennial morning.

"Gloomy and dark the night has been,
And long the way, and dreary;
And sad the weeping saints are seen,
And faint, and worn, and weary.

"You mourning pilgrims! cease your tears,
And hush each sigh of sorrow;
The light of that bright morn appears,
The long Sabbathic morrow.

"Lift up your heads—behold from far

A flood of splendor coming!
It is the bright and Morning Star
In living luster beaming.

"He comes—the Bridegroom promised long—
Go forth with joy to meet him;
And raise the new and nuptial song,
In cheerful strains to greet him.

"Adorn yourself, the feast prepare,
While bridal strains are swelling;
He comes, with you all joys to share,
The new earth his blessed dwelling."

"Until the day breaks and the shadows flee away; I will get to the mountain
of myrrh, and to the hill of frankincense."