

THE
MUSEUM
OF
RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE:

DESIGNED TO
ILLUSTRATE RELIGIOUS TRUTH.

EDITED BY
MARCUS E. CROSS. K

Religion's all. Descending from the skies
To wretched man, the goddess in her left
Holds out *this* world, and in her right the next.
Religion! Providence! an after state!
Here is firm footing; here is solid rock!
This can support us; all is sea besides.
His eye the good man fastens on the skies
And bids earth roll, nor feels her idle whirl.

Young.

"Est brevitate opus ut currat sententia."
Let brevity despatch the rapid thought.

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No. II.

A VISION OF THE CHURCH.

BY GARDINER SPRING, D. D.

I WAS crossing a narrow strip of land which lies upon the frontiers of France and Italy, where the Alps, without losing their loftiness and sublimity, begin to incline toward the Mediterranean, and occasionally put on an appearance of freshness and verdure. I had resolved, if possible, to ascend *Mont Viso*. Though not so high as *Mont Blanc*, yet from its solitary and isolated position, it presents a more imposing appearance of grandeur. It stands almost alone; and like a colossal pyramid, rises high above the various crests, and peaks, and ridges which surround its base. It presented to my mind the aspect of some huge beacon towering amid the storm; and the strange irregularity of the scenery gave strength to the impression. It seemed as though the heaving, angry ocean had been here arrested in the extreme fury of its tempest, and as if the power which had caused, had suddenly stilled its terrors, and bound it in solid and enduring chains. Inconstancy and change seemed strongly represented in constant and changing forms—the very emblem of mutability fixed as it might seem immutable.

Already had I ascended far up the mountain, and all the beautiful plain of Italy was spread out before me. That immense reservoir of waters, that well-known extent of gardens and cities, of wealth and splendour, which the heroes of ancient and modern times pointed out to their soldiers as the reward of perseverance and victory, glittered upon my eye. At the foot of the mountain, on the one side, had once stood the elephants of Hannibal and the armies of Francis the First; on the other, the forces of Cæsar, Charlemagne, and Napoleon. So vivid was my fancy, it almost seemed that I could hear the sullen tramp of their

legions ; and the rushing of the streams around me seemed disturbed by the fording of their thronging cavalry, and all the tumult of a hurried march. I looked almost to see the Roman eagle hovering over their steps, or the lilies of France trembling to the mountain air.

The continued and almost unbroken stillness of the scene recalled me from this vision of the past. All this glory and greatness had departed. Sooner will the first drops which issued from these torrents come back from the vast ocean in which they are mingled, and flow again from their source, than aught of all this life and renown return, to trouble or astonish the scene on which they once played so conspicuous and interesting a part. Yet I dwelt long and with singular pleasure on the names of those illustrious heroes. And who does not, as he crosses the Alps ?

It was with a feeling of self-reproach that I turned at last to think of others. The glory and splendour of this world had first taken possession of my mind, while true worth and piety had also their monuments near me. I was standing in the retreat of the *ancient Vaudois*.

“ — Few remember them. They lived unknown,
Till persecution dragged them into fame,
And chased them up to heaven.”

From the eminence from which I surveyed them, four beautiful valleys spread themselves before me something in the form of a *fan*, converging from the distance, and terminating almost in a point near the spot where I stood. I had heard of this asylum of the faithful as the region of barrenness and ice. I had read of it as a desert environed with frightful precipices, and protected by eternal snows. But such was not the scene on which I gazed. A beautiful sky spread its blue arch above. The verdure was springing from the sides of the mountain, scantily it is true, but for that the more welcome. The valley below seemed spread with a carpet of rich emerald, wrought in with the brightest flowers. Nor were the light and life of civilization wanting to complete the picture. Scattered villages and villas were seen at intervals, and everywhere the vine and the fig tree enriched the plain. The Po, and the Dora too, with their almost innumerable branches, were wildly urging their waters down the rocks and through the crevices of the

mountains, till you might see them quietly stealing to the valleys and mingle with the streams below.

I stood gazing, sometimes at the naked and barren cliffs of some distant promontory; sometimes at mountains that lifted their snowy summits where the eagle is never seen to soar; and sometimes at the enchanting plain beneath. *And are these the rocks, said I, which locked down upon those sanguinary persecutions? Are these the mountains whence vibrated those songs of salvation that indicated to the foe the retreat of the faithful? Are these the streams once stained with the blood of the saints? Are these the valleys from which ascended in many a mingled column the flames of the fagot, the supplications and sighs of the martyrs, and the fiend-like exultation of their destroyers?* I felt as though I were surveying the monuments of deeds in which one scarce knows which had the pre-eminence,—the faith and constancy of the victims, or the fury of their fierce persecutors. Here once dwelt a small, poor, forgotten people; a people, weak indeed, but full of that faith which wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, escaped the edge of the sword. Here dwelt a people whose glory shone brightest in their tribulations, and to whom it was intrusted to preserve the purity of the faith through centuries of darkness, when barbarous nations ravaged and destroyed all around them, making no distinction between what was sacred and what was profane. And here still dwelt the descendants of that same people, in all the peculiarity of their language, habits, and manners, as well as in all the integrity of that faith which has survived the revolution of empires, and which is still destined to travel down the descent of time, and as successive ages roll on, exert a reforming and purifying influence over the world.

And can this be the place, thought I, where the Woman, described in the Apocalypse, *hath a place prepared of God, where she is nourished for a time, and times, and half a time, from the face of the Serpent?* While this inquiry was passing through my mind, I was lost in contemplation. My thoughts became irregular and wild. My imagination wandered, I knew not whither. Whether it were that sleep overtook me on the mountain, and what followed was the fancy of a dream, or whether a waking vision occupied my senses, I am unable to tell. I seemed raised in spirit above

the world ; and yet my hopes and fears were strangely connected with its spiritual welfare and prosperity. A subject upon which I had thought, and read, and conversed often, weighed upon my bosom, and filled it with deep and serious reflection. My anxious mind brooded over it, as some busy, restless fancy, waking to the roar of the tempest, pictures to itself evils which nothing can remedy or relieve.

I trembled for the Ark of God. Errors, deeply ruinous in doctrine and practice, were inducing desolation and decay. A smooth theology had taken the place of those wholesome truths which have in every age been the wisdom of God, and the power of God to salvation. The *meekness of wisdom* was superseded by a vaunting and arrogant spirit ; and means and measures were making progress in the church, which threatened to burn over her fairest borders, and leave them like a land that could not be tilled, or sown, or eared, or harvested for generations to come. I saw collisions of sentiment distracting the minds and dividing the counsels of those who were once *joined together in the same mind and the same judgment*. I saw also chilling alienations among those who once loved as brethren ; while the peaceful spirit who had so long hovered over this fair land, was just about to spread his pinions and fly away. Already, *the ways of Zion mourned because few came to her solemn feasts*. Already the streams of mercy seemed to be drying up, which have for so long a period been refreshing our heritage and bearing on their bosom the blessings of salvation to distant lands. *From the daughter of Zion all her beauty was departed. Her princes were become like harts that find no pasture ; and they were gone without strength before the pursuer*. I thought of her in the days of her captivity and reproach, when she hung her harp upon the willows, and wept. I remembered, and could not forbear uttering aloud, that affecting lamentation of the Prophet, *How hath the Lord covered the daughter of Zion with a cloud in his anger, and cast down from heaven unto earth the beauty of Israel, and remembered not his footstool in the day of his anger*.

Such were the thoughts which occupied me in my reverie. And they were not without close connexion and sympathy with those which had often disturbed me in my hours of waking reflection. The day seemed dark and gloomy like

one in November. The sun was enveloped in clouds, and the rough north wind roared round me. I was by the side of a lofty, weather-beaten mountain. Its top seemed to support the heavens, and its brow frowned over a deep, expansive wilderness, impervious to the eye, and immeasurable in extent. It appeared at first view as one vast desert, where was no trace of human footsteps, and where no man dwelt.

As I was walking to and fro with a mind almost as cheerless as the rugged cliffs around me, suddenly a chorus of superhuman voices filled the air. The words of their song fell distinctly upon my ear, clear and sweet as from instruments of silver. They chanted, *Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her beloved?* As I turned to look toward the desert, I beheld a female form of distinguished attractions and beauty, leaning on *One like unto the Son of man*. Her countenance was expressive of intelligence and sweetness. Her mien was humble, yet a peculiar dignity shone in her every action, and her entire appearance seemed pre-eminently fitted to please and captivate. I had heard of One dwelling in the wilderness, whom the tongues of inspired men and angels had represented as clothed with celestial comeliness and decked with beauty from the skies—a wanderer in the desert, but not alone; hand in hand with One more powerful than herself, she had her course through its strife and temptations. As my eye rested upon her for the purpose of scanning her person more carefully, that I might satisfy myself if this were indeed she of whom I had heard, I saw that she was enveloped in a dense and hazy atmosphere, through which a pale light beamed from her countenance and clothed her form, and seemed everywhere struggling to dart forth its rays. For the moment it seemed doubtful whether she would not be merged in the obscurity; but the mist was soon dissipated, and she looked forth like *the moon walking in her brightness*, luminous in her entire form, and, like *the angel standing in the sun*, conspicuous to the world.

I observed that her features were in part covered with a veil. She had an humble, lowly spirit, and though in the full power of youth and beauty, seemed utterly unconscious of her attractions. She had no desire of superiority or distinction; no undue assumption of dignity; no spirit of am-

bition or rivalry. She did not court applause, nor was she offended at rebuke. She sought not the eye of the world, neither delighted in its bustle and confusion; but rather in the shade and stillness of some beloved retreat, open only to the observation, and consecrated only by the presence of her Lord and Husband. At times she instinctively shrunk from his inspection, and hid her face in confusion. Nor was there in this any affectation of modesty, but a deep and ingenuous impression of her unworthiness that oppressed her, and often indeed found its way to her lips. *Look not upon me*, she would exclaim, *Look not upon me, because the Sun hath looked upon me!* One of her loveliest characteristics, as it seemed to me, was this humble, meek, and retiring spirit. Her progress was often rapid, yet was it noiseless and silent as the dew of heaven. Wherever she took a false step, she herself was the first to detect it, and prompt and faithful in her self-reproach. Rather than feel that she was worthy to be the object of admiration, many a time would she lay her hand upon her mouth and exclaim, *Behold, I am vile!* There was a lowliness of demeanour exemplified in her progress that reminded me of the spirit of genuine piety. She seemed at such a remove from the haughty, overbearing temper of the world, that I concluded she belonged to another race of beings. For nothing did I envy her so much as for this unearthly spirit.

And can this be she, thought I, of whom I have so often read, that was *cast out into the open field to the loathing of her person, in the day that she was born?* If so, nothing could be more striking than the contrast between her original condition, her debased parentage, and her present elevation and prospects. She was like one who had sustained a moral transformation, and had been, as it were, re-created and born anew. *Once poor and miserable, and blind and naked*, she was now *clothed with embroidered work, girded about with fine linen, covered with silk, and decked with ornaments.* *Though her birth and nativity were of the land of Canaan; though her father was a Hittite and her mother an Amorite;* yet she was now allied to a family that participates the riches and royalty of a nobler world, and *her renown went forth among the nations for her beauty.* She was the child of God—the adopted daughter of the King of heaven. Her second birth traced her lineage to the skies;—*born, not of blood, nor*

of the will of flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. She had no unborrowed splendour, yet was she covered with righteousness as with a garment, and prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. Though once soiled and blemished by her native servitude; though object in her occupation and associates; yet was she now as *the wings of a dove covered with silver and her feathers with yellow gold.* My own impressions of her loveliness were confirmed by what I distinctly heard from the lips of her royal husband. *Behold,* said he, *thou art fair, my love, behold, thou art fair. My dove, my undefiled is but one; she is the only one of her mother; she is the choice one of her that bare her.* Sometimes he spoke of the tenderness of her attachment; sometimes of her purity and faithfulness; and sometimes, breaking forth in the language of gratified joy, he exclaimed, *Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee!*

Filled with admiration, I could not but again exclaim, *Who is this?*—so depraved in her nativity, and yet so exalted in her adoption—so impure in her original, and yet so pure in her transformation—so heaven-born, so acknowledged and endeared to higher worlds, and yet in her own view so worthless? The answer was quickly upon my lips. Who but the *church of the First-born!*—the spiritual Jerusalem from God out of heaven—the *Bride, the Lamb's wife!* Who but that complex, ornate, and lovely Personage, who is a lively emblem, a typical designation of the virtuous of every age and name, here imbodyed and personified by the daughter of Zion *travelling in the greatness of her strength.*

This amiable and fair being I beheld far from the abodes of men, in the waste, howling desert. *She had no continuing city.* She was away from home, often afflicted, *tossed with tempests, and not comforted.* The place where she sojourned was a place of vicissitude and wo. There were *no sorrows like her sorrows,* and a stranger did not intermeddle with her joy. Here she *stretched forth her hands unto God, and her soul thirsted for him as a thirsty land* for the grateful and ever welcome rain. Here she met with delays, hinderances, and vexations. The powers of darkness were leagued against her, combining their strength and subtlety to perplex and embitter her mind, to retard her progress, and effect her destruction. She was

passing through an enemy's land, and had *put on the whole armour of God. Without were fightings, and within were fears.* External foes, and indwelling sins, distracting cares, painful bereavements, and a subtle adversary often filled her with despondency, and spoiled her every earth-born hope.

I observed that she did not always know how to explore her path, and that she sometimes forsook her guide and wandered from the way. Then she was depressed and discouraged, and instead of going cheerfully forward, would stray up and down in the wilderness. And then her courage faltered, her strength languished, and her beauty withered. Many a time, at such seasons, would she sit down and weep with abundant sorrow, and exclaim as though all hope had deserted her, *My heart is overwhelmed within me! All thy waves and billows have gone over my soul!* The wilderness too was long, and she was often wearied by the length of the way. Sometimes she trembled, and seemed on the point of fainting or falling; and then again she would press forward, now with a bold, now with a doubtful step.

Here she wandered amid the gloom and darkness of the desert. Here she had *a place prepared for her by God.* With his own hands he spread a table for her. The rock supplied her, and the manna descended. She fed on angels' food, and ate the bread of life. The pillar and the cloud moved before her. The God of Israel himself was with her—a friend in need, a refuge in times of trouble. In his mercy and care, in his power and faithfulness, she had resources which never failed. She sometimes grieved him, but he never abandoned her. He seemed to have no employment so delightful to his heart as to care for her. He would watch her every step. He would often throw around her the arms of his protection to save her even from imaginary harm. He would spread his banner of love over her, and support her from step to step in all her course. I heard him say to her, *I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee. Since thou wast precious in my sight, I have loved thee; therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life.* It seemed to me that he would blot out all the nations, that he would crush a thousand worlds, before one hair of her head should fall to the ground.

And yet there were sensible alternations in her spirit and condition. Sometimes she *looked for light, and beheld darkness, and for good, and beheld trouble and vexation*; and then again her most chilling fears were turned into hopes, and her deepest sorrows into joy. Sometimes her prospect was gilded by all the varied tints of spring, and all the rich maturity of autumn; while sometimes the snows of winter swept along her path, and night enshrouded it with gloom. At times the skies above her were soft and serene; at times they were black and heavy,—lowering with tempest, and dark with indignation. Her path now lay through beds of spices, and along the fruits of the valley, which the forest enriched with its softest foliage; where the murmur of the running streams, and the light breezes cheered and refreshed her, and every odour, charged with fragrance, brought pleasure to her senses; and again she was constrained, amid the wildness of the precipices and the roar of the tempest, to pass along the *lion's dens and the mountains of the leopards*.

As I was attentively observing her, a beam of light fell on her path, at a moment when the darkness had increased around her, and when despondency seemed almost to overwhelm her soul. All at once her countenance became bright, and, though still pensive, she pursued her course with revived strength and freshness. Something had roused her from her depression and put new courage into her heart. It was *the voice of her Beloved*. A multitude of conflicting emotions seemed for a moment to agitate her bosom. They were emotions of surprise, of joy, and of grief. *Rise up, my love, my fair one, said he, and come away! For lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone. The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the song of the turtle is heard in our land. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away!* At this well-known voice, a tear stood in her eye. She *looked on him whom she had pierced, and mourned*. I heard her confessions of folly, and promises of faithfulness, and felt that I could make them my own. My soul melted within me, and flowed forth in her every tear. Never shall I forget when she hid herself from his sight, as though fearful of his reproaches, and bewailed her departures from *him whom her soul loved*. Then it was that I heard him say, *O my dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, let me*

see thy countenance, let me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely! Then it was that he allured her and spake comfortably unto her, and gave her the valley of Achor for a door of hope, and she sang there as in the days of her youth. There did he wipe away the tears from her cheeks, and cheer her with the promise of his favour; while she, animated and buoyant with warm affection and eager hopes, was once more like a roe, or young hart upon the mountains of Bethel. For the moment, she forgot that she was in the wilderness. She remembered not that she was far from her destined home, so much did the presence of him she thus loved smooth her path along the desert, and render her sojourn amid its wilds a season of happiness and security.

This endured not long. Dark clouds again enfolded her, the scene put off its charms, and the way before her was curtained with its wonted gloom. There was nothing here to allure her stay, nothing suited to her large desires, nothing that could become the source of her blessedness, or the place of her repose. Nor was she either alarmed or surprised by the oft-repeated admonition, *Arise, and depart hence, for this is not your rest, because it is polluted;* for as often did she herself respond, *O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I fly away and be at rest!* To her hallowed mind, the place of her pilgrimage presented nothing but a wilderness, which she longed to leave behind her. Communion with her Lord had rendered it at times a place of delightful remembrance; but she well knew that a higher abode was awaiting her, where she should enjoy his presence uninterruptedly and forever. There was her treasure, and there her heart. Her conversation was there. Her ardent desires, her highest good was there. Heaven absorbed her attention, awakened her highest affections and passions, and exhausted the vigour of her mind. Her very sorrows and griefs indicated its aspirations and tendencies. Like the magnetic needle, amid all the variations of a transient conflict, or passing storm, her heart exhibited a trembling agitation till it reposed in one unchanging point of rest. There were moments when her faith, with more than ordinary vividness, realized the unseen world, when a hope full of immortality shed its fragrance over her spirits, and made her long for the promised land. And then, habitually watchful of the pillar and the cloud, regardless

of obstacles and fearless of danger, onward she went from conquering to conquer. The circuitous and vicissitudes of her path might at times bewilder her; the grandeur of the scenery, or its softness and beauty might for a moment allure her; but her aim was fixed,—the object single to which she aspired. *Forgetting the things that were behind, and reaching forth to those which were before, she pressed toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ.* It was the way to the Heavenly City, and she could not turn back. It was the only way, and she could not forego the expectation of that imperishable inheritance.

I stood a while wondering at her zeal and steadfastness, but my wonder ceased when I recollected that she was not alone. She leaned on One who seemed more than mortal.

“In his side he bore,
And in his hands and feet the cruel scars.”

He it was who *bore her griefs, carried her sorrows*, and even made her sins his own. It was her Lord—her Husband—her Life—her Sacrifice. It was *he who liveth and was dead, and is alive for evermore*, to succour and bless his church when all the nations die. I saw the secret of her strength. *Her life was hid with Christ in God.* Though she was perfect weakness, she had Omnipotence to lean upon. Experience had taught her her own insufficiency, and *she lived by faith in him who loved her, and gave himself for her.* I was not a little interested in this view of her progress. Literally did she come *up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved.* She did not move a step without him. She did not wait for him to lead her, but went forward *leaning upon him.* When she stood still, she always stood alone. Once I saw her so depressed and weary that she sunk to the earth; and then he took her up in his arms and carried her like a lamb in his bosom. Thus she pursued her way—for the most part wakeful, active, persevering,—and yet ever *leaning upon him.* The influence under which she acted, seemed a sort of charm upon her will, and *drew her with the cords of love as with the bands of a man.* It was her joy, as well as her strength. It gave buoyancy to her hopes, and inspired her with the confidence that he would keep her from falling and bear her

safely through. When, by some strong temptation, she lost sight of her dependence, most bitterly was she made to repent of her self-confidence and folly. Then it was that her time was spent in retracing and recovering the ground she had lost, and bemoaning her sad condition. Many a time has she then exclaimed, *O that it were with me as in months past, when the candle of the Lord shone upon my head!* But these seasons of self-reproach and pensiveness were comparatively few. Habitually she looked beyond all created things, felt herself to be his creature and child, subject to his guidance and control, dependent on his strength and grace. Never did she delight in her dependence more than during the seasons of her greatest vigour, her most rapid progress. Never could she say with a more comforted confidence, than in her most successful victories, *My soul, wait thou only upon God, for my expectation is from him.*

I thought I saw the heavenly axiom verified, *I love them that love me.* By nothing was her guide and patron more distinguished than his love for her, and by nothing was she more distinguished than her love to him. In strains sweet as angels use, I often heard her sing, *My beloved is the chief among ten thousands! Yea, he is altogether lovely!* On him she placed her fondest affection, and reposed her every hope. Her love was confiding and unsuspecting; her confidence filial and even childlike. Sometimes you might see her reclining under the shadow of his favour with great delight; sometimes lamenting his absence and watching for his return; sometimes traversing with him the loftiest mountains, and sometimes exploring the vineyards *to see if the vine flourish and the tender grape appear.* If difficulties opposed, or dangers threatened, or enemies stood ready to devour; *his grace was sufficient for her, his strength was made perfect in her weakness,* his presence was her chief joy. Leaning on him, she escaped the dangers of the wilderness, ascended the steepest mountains, stood safe on the brink of the angry precipice, penetrated hideous forests, resisted and overcame the fiercest beasts of prey. With her eye on him, and all her trust in him, she continued her course. And while *the youth became faint and were weary, and the young men had utterly fallen,* she renewed her strength; in heavenly contemplation, she mounted up with wings as an eagle, and through all her course of duty and

of trial, she *ran and was not weary, and walked and did not faint*. While others were intimidated by dangers, or discouraged by difficulty, or lost sight of their Leader; she pressed forward, because her courage was inspired from above, and her exertion had a spring, a source, an energy not her own. The dangers and trials of the wilderness were gradually left behind her, and remembered only to enhance her gratitude and perpetuate her praise.

I observed, that in leaning upon her Beloved, she was often *led in a way that she knew not, and in paths that she had not known*. She seemed to be under a sort of discipline, designed to subdue her will to an unconditional acquiescence in his; to chastise her self-confidence, and teach her to walk *by faith and not by sight*. Like the Father of the faithful, she *went forth not knowing whither she went*. She knew not whither she was going the next hour, the next moment, the next step. It was her province to follow, not to lead: to obey, not to dictate. Her hopes and fears were both subject to disappointment. She was journeying in a weary land, and beheld the way stretching out almost immeasurably before her and lengthening as she proceeded. Often was she conducted by a very diversified course—sometimes amid scenes of mercy, and sometimes amid scenes of judgment—now amid well watered meadows, and now over dry and barren lands—now to mountains whence she caught a glimpse of her promised inheritance, and now to some low valley where the light of heaven scarcely penetrated. Her path was checkered and variable, like the path of human life. It was perpetually changing—rousing her attention when she was careless—reminding her of her obligations when she was ungrateful—recalling her confidence when she had placed it upon creatures. Her disposition was thus tried, and her character formed. Many a time what she thought her best seasons, proved her worst; and what she thought her worst, proved her best; till, by an alternately painful and joyful experience, she learned to repose all her confidence in her Redeemer, and to have no will but his. I had not seen such a spirit among men. The storms of life had driven her to this wilderness; there to live eminently above the world and walk with God. There was a tenderness, a meekness, and submission, a love, a gratitude, a cheerfulness which evinced that she was not long to be an inhabitant of earth.

I could not help exclaiming, *What a glorious object is this which I behold!* The church of the first-born struggling through this world,—this moral wilderness,—is a *spectacle to God, to angels, and men.* This humble and lovely personage, thought I, may well be the object of concern, of solicitude, of admiration. While this reflection was passing in my mind; a multitude of voices, issuing I knew not whence, repeated the song, *Who is this that cometh up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved?* I turned to ascertain who they were that spoke, and it seemed to me that the atmosphere around and above her was filled with living beings. They were of various descriptions and orders, very dissimilar in their appearance, but all deeply interested in the progress and condition of this daughter of Zion. There was a peculiarity about her person, her professions, her claims, her prospects, that attracted the attention of the inhabitants of this lower world. She disclaimed the authority of its maxims and usages. She declined its pleasures, and all participation in its unhallowed amusements. And she would not, needlessly, even intermingle with its society. *She came out and was separate,* that all might know what immunities she challenged, and of what inheritance she was the expectant.

She was like *a city set on an hill.* None could help seeing her; none could view her with indifference. Good men beheld her, as identified with the glory of the Redeemer, as identifying their own happiness and glory with hers, as embodying the best interests of mankind in this world and that which is to come. Though now depressed, they saw that soon she was to be triumphant, soon to behold *her sons coming from far, and her daughters from the end of the world;* and though still bearing the marks of imperfection and servitude, ere long to share the kingdoms of this world with her Prince, and wear a diadem of gold.

Bad men beheld her, sometimes to wonder at the peculiarity of her condition—a feeble woman coming up from the wilderness, leaning upon her Beloved! Sometimes to admire her beauty, for she was *comely as Jerusalem,* and the *fairest among women;* sometimes to acknowledge her influence and power, for she was *terrible as an army with banners;* sometimes to feel the reproach of her example; for though shining in borrowed splendour, yet was she the light of the world; sometimes to be envious at her allot-

ment, for the smile of heaven played upon her countenance, and *the solitary place was glad for her*: and sometimes to hate her with perfect hatred, to vex and injure her, to persecute, and if possible destroy her.

I saw also a multitude of living spirits hovering over her path and near her person. They were messengers from a higher world—an exalted order of beings, and seemed to have come from the presence of God. Their countenances were like lightning, and their raiment white as snow. They possessed wonderful power and activity, and moved with the swiftness of the wind. They were beautiful also beyond a parallel—clothed with unfading and immortal youth, and glowing with the energy and ardour of truth and love. I saw them lifting up their hands—spreading forth their wings—and apparently in sweet discourse with one another as they watched her progress. Now, they would stoop down and bend their faces towards the ground to observe her. Again, they would fly through the air and return, as though from some unknown region whither they had gone to tell of her conquests. At times, they would range themselves in throngs and companies, and strike their lyres and tune their hymns of praise. One particularly, I observed, of elevated mien and resplendent countenance, who hovered around her head, so near indeed that the vivid light that enveloped her coloured and tinged his form, covering both as with a mantle of celestial splendour. With his finger he pointed towards Heaven and said, *Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor hath entered into the heart of man the things that God hath prepared for them that love him!*

I saw two dark and benighted spirits, irritated with malignity, corroded with envy, and scarred by God's indignation, come up as it were out of the earth, and alight about her. I trembled for her safety, for it seemed to me they *came with great wrath, as though they knew they had but a short time*. I was reassured however by the calm and confident mien with which she looked around, as though certain of protection from One mightier than they. And then I heard the clashing of arms, and saw the rushing of battle. In the tumultuous conflict which ensued, I could distinguish voices of fiend-like rage and despair, the answer of exulting, indignant courage mingled together, and at times the startling cry of some wounded, fallen combatant, resounding faint and fainter, as though borne and

hurried down to earth's very centre. With what deep interest did I await the result! Yet I did not fear for it. Soon the noise of strife gave place to shouts of victory. And from the sweet notes of praise—praise to *Him who is seated upon the throne*,—I knew they were from the victorious company who are *ministering spirits to them that shall be heirs of salvation*, and to whom the church was the object of unremitting care.

I saw also, that God her mighty Maker regarded her. More than all things else, did she illustrate his ineffable glory. He beheld her clothed with his own loveliness. *He rejoiced over her with joy; he joyed over her with singing. As a bridegroom rejoiceth over his bride, so did her God rejoice over her.* God her Redeemer was with her—her *shelter and shade, her glory and the lifter up of her head.* God her Sanctifier too had his dwelling within her heart, and made her his temple; while the ever blessed and glorious Trinity, through her, made impressive and augmenting discoveries of his own excellence.

Next to her glorious Lord, no object so well deserved, or might so well attract attention, as this pilgrim in the desert. I looked upon her with more than admiration. And while I gazed on her, as in her beauty and her might she pursued her course, I could not help repeating the vow I had made in my youth—*If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning!—let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy!*

Inexpressibly happy, thought I, is the church of God! Where is there in the world so amiable and lovely a character—where a community so favoured as this! Many a time, when she has had no resting place, and has been hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, has the Shepherd and Stone of Israel provided safety and repose for her, and kept her as the apple of his eye. Often when she has been driven from among men, and perdition like a flood has chased her, has he himself been her dwelling-place, and nourished and brought her up as an only child. Her ignorance he has instructed; her languor and depression he has changed into hope and rejoicing; her solitude he has sweetened by his presence; her danger he has driven far away. He has been *her refuge and her strength.* To the multiplied mischiefs that have passed through the earth,

he has said, *Touch not mine anointed, and do my people no harm!* He has beautified and enlarged her. He has caused her to look forth like the morning. He has *made her head like Carmel, and the hair of her head like Lebanon.* He has *set her as a seal upon his heart, as a seal upon his arm.* Nor will his purposes of love toward her be accomplished, till he has purified her from all her imperfection, decked her with majesty and excellency, and in the day of her celestial espousals, *presented her to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.*

While this train of thought was passing through my mind, I cast my eyes once more towards the wilderness. No longer was it a desert, but rather an expanse of cultivated fields, and gardens of richest shrubbery, everywhere interspersed with beautiful villages, towering palaces, lofty turrets, and living men. The corn and the vine, the olive and the palm flourished. *Instead of the thorn, was the fir-tree, and instead of the brier, the myrtle and the rose. Waters broke out in the desert.* The way through this verdant territory seemed a highway. No tedious, intricate pilgrimage was it now. Enemies had disappeared. *No lion was there, neither any ravenous beast went up thereon, it was not found there.* And the pilgrim had now thrown aside that veil which obscured her, and put on her most splendid attire. A voice reached her from the heavens, *Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.* She looked forth now as the effulgence of the world. She seemed as it were, *clothed with the sun; the moon was under her feet, and upon her head was a crown of twelve stars.* There was a halo of glory encircling her, that reminded me of the *Shekinah* that stood over the ancient tabernacle. She was near to the Deity, encompassed with glory, and living within the comprehension of his smile. Kings and princes were allured by her brightness, and the wondering people came bending to her. *The kings of Tarshish and the isles brought her presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba offered her gifts.* No longer did she falter in her course, or turn her eye backward. She was clothed with a divine panoply, and went forth *more than conquerer through him that loved her.* A banner waved over her of the purest gold, on one side of which was set in rich enamel, **THE LORD KNOWETH THEM**

THAT ARE HIS; and on the other, LET EVERY ONE THAT NAMETH THE NAME OF CHRIST DEPART FROM INIQUITY. At her approach every false system of religion was arrested in its progress; all mist and darkness, error and delusion, sin, shame, and wo fled before her. Streams of light and salvation flowed everywhere around her, and sent forth their blessings to every land. In her hand she carried a scroll, or parchment, which she unfolded before the nations, and by which she *turned them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God.* Wonderful was the transformation that attended and followed her brilliant career. Iniquity fell before her. Tyranny and oppression and unrighteousness were blasted by her breath. Misery and despair were together chased away by the light of her countenance. *Every valley was exalted, and every mountain and hill was made low; the crooked was made straight, and the rough places plain; and the glory of the Lord was revealed, and all flesh saw it together.*

“O scenes surpassing fable and yet true;
Scenes of accomplish'd bliss, which who can see
Though but in distant prospect, and not feel
His soul refresh'd with foretastes of the joy!”

The mountains and the hills broke forth before into singing, and all the trees of the field clapped their hands. The Spirit was poured from on high, and the world appeared to be turning to the service and favour of the true God. Every revolution of this diurnal sphere beheld her triumphs *from the rising of the sun to his going down.*

“Distant, barbarous climes,
Rivers unknown to song, where first the sun
Gilds Indian mountains, or his setting beam
Flames on the Atlantic isles,

alternately became the scenes of her perpetuated victories. Distant continents and islands, wandering tribes and collected empires, though once shrouded in deepest gloom, now beheld and reflected the brightness of her rising.

“One song employs all nations, and all cry,
Worthy the Lamb, for he was slain for us!
The dwellers in the vales and on the rocks
Shout to each other, and the mountain tops
From distant mountains catch the flying joy.
Till nation after nation taught the strain,
Earth rolls the rapturous hosannah round.”

My revery continued, but the gloom and depression which at first pervaded it passed away. Instead of a dark day in November, it appeared to my gratified imagination like the loveliest in May. Brown autumn had fled. Winter had been chased away by the softness and beauty of spring. The sun was just descending in his gayest chariot, and throwing his light from pole to pole. The rough north wind had yielded to the fragrant zephyr. The rugged mountain had become like the verdant lawn. The unclouded sky, the balmy air, the rich foliage of the forest, the fragrant flowers were but faintly emblematical of the unbroken serenity I felt within. The birds were chanting their songs of joy, and all nature was vocal with praise and blossoming with hope. The bow of promise threw its arch over the eastern sky, and as the sun went down, he cast forth the signals of a still brighter day.