

Heaven: The Future Home of the Redeemed

by Andrew Borland

THAT there should be increased interest in the future as recorded in the Bible is a hopeful sign of the times. Whether that is a precursor of a genuine revival among God's people or not, it would be premature to say, but it is to be hoped that the diligence shown in acquiring information with respect to the return of the Lord, will be accompanied as it should be, by a corresponding diligence in being pure "even as He is pure" (1 John 3. 3).

I. SOURCES OF INFORMATION.

Man is instinctively inquisitive about the future. Its very uncertainty fascinates him. With irrepressible longing he craves knowledge not only of to-morrow, but also of the life that lies beyond "time's allotted span." In vain does he attempt to extinguish the flame of desire, for in spite of sarcastic protests from his intellectual "superior" fellow-man, the man in the street nurses, at particular occurrences in his life, a prurient inquisitiveness regarding the ultimate end of existence.

Three questions constantly assail the human mind and prompt it to investigation, namely: Whence have I come? Whither am I bound? Why am I here?

Origin, Destiny, Purpose!

Evolution, the supposed panacea for resolving all man's doubts in these concerns, answers the first and second of these questions in terms of a now thread-bare theory that offers no ultimate assurance, and leaves the questioner in a disconcerting quandary regarding the third. If man has come out of "nowhere," and must finally be snuffed out like a candle flame, of what purpose can be his existence in a universe where blind chance rules and man is the plaything of soulless force?

But as the intention of this chapter is strictly limited, it does not fall within its province to discuss matters relating either to the origin or to the purpose of life. Consequently, too, it is not necessary to discuss the question of man's immortality—reason and faith cry out for it, while revelation definitely asserts it. Nor does it fall within the writer's scope to investigate the problem of the destiny of all men; his more pleasant task is to attempt to supply some instruction regarding THE HOME OF THE REDEEMED.

Scientific Investigation.

Enlightenment has been sought by questioning souls in various sources. Let us briefly summarise these.

Science, as such, can neither affirm nor deny the possibility of a life of endless bliss in a Heavenly Home prepared by a beneficent Saviour for the children of the Father's House. It may, or it may not, predict a cataclysmic end to the present scheme of the material universe, but it can make no scientific pronouncement regarding the souls of men, each of which, in the estimation of God, is of infinitely more value than are the myriads of stars thrown under view by the magnificent telescopes of our generation. Nowhere in the spatial deeps, raked by the most powerful lenses, have astronomers scanned the Home of the redeemed, and revelled in such beauties as thrilled the heart of the seer, John.

Philosophical Speculation.

Philosophy has for its province the whole universe of knowledge. It builds upon "systems of interpretation," and in vain does the layman, hungering for positive information, sit at the feet of his teacher. It traffics in descriptions of such vague terminology that ordinary individuals are at a loss to discover the meaning of its learned jargon. Heaven for the philosopher is not a definable locality. The word is simply a convenient term for an infinite sphere of existence, so etherialised, so tenuous, that it might as well not be. The soul becomes a wanderer in the vastness of a spiritual world where it finds "God, and its own immortality." Such is the language of philosophy.

Spiritualistic Materialisations.

Alert to trade on the natural curiosity of mankind, the Devil, for assuming whose personal existence we need not apologise in this article, has satisfied that craving by communicating through mediums, chosen often for his purpose because of their debased character, information which is a disgusting travesty of the reality, a burlesque of the highest aspirations of the human heart.

With Spiritists, Heaven, the common gathering place of all men, irrespective of their morality or their beliefs, their character or their creed, is a glorified projection of the earth, with its failures as well as its longings. There the inhabitants still have human appetites and human characteristics, eat cakes, drink wine, smoke cigars, and behave themselves just as they please. A *materialised* Heaven is the home of the *Spiritist!!*

That men, eminently sensible and recognised authorities in other walks of life, should be apologists even in the remotest sense, for this

recrudescence of an ancient pagan cult is almost past comprehension. Spiritism, in spite of its learned advocates, has nothing to offer of real comfort and joy regarding the abode of the "saints of God. "

Uninstructed Imagination.

Even for those of us who do not find our aspirations satisfied in the Heaven of either the scientist, the philosopher, or the Spiritist, how much of our conception of Heaven has been formed by the phraseology of our hymns.

Minds, poetically inclined, have taken the symbolism of an Oriental people and transliterated it into western vocabulary without the slightest explanation of the fact that poetical expressions are not to be taken literally. Some of these hymns present the Home of the redeemed almost as material (if not as grossly so) as the "Heaven" of the Spiritist. Failing to appreciate the meaning of the language of the Scriptures, imagination has been lured into descriptions of bliss that appeal to the senses rather than to the spirit. Quotation is needless, Heaven is pictured as a place where there are "gold-paved streets," encircled by "fields of fadeless green," etc. The symbolism expresses a reality, the sense of which only material concepts could convey to the human understanding. While delighting in the pictorial representation of our future abode, we should constantly remind ourselves that it is still *only representation*.

Divine Revelation.

The only reliable source of information regarding Heaven is the Bible. Such a statement may be trite, but it is none the less true. The veracity of the Bible, proved with regard to the past, may be confidently assumed in its pronouncements regarding the future. From its pages we may derive instruction in our subject in three ways, viz., by direct and specific declaration, by intelligent inference, and by symbolic description.

1. BY DIRECT AND SPECIFIC DECLARATION. Scattered throughout the New Testament are affirmations both by the Lord Himself and by His disciples concerning the Home of the redeemed. The Lord spoke with personal authority, the disciples spoke with the authority of personal revelation from the Lord Himself. Such affirmations are couched in terms which admit of no dubiety.

The Declarations are of Certainties, inviolable because part of the eternal purpose of God.

Philosophising interpreters of the Scriptures rob many passages of their intrinsic worth by spiritualising what is evidently intended to be literal. We shall return to a consideration of these passages later.

2. BY INTELLIGENT INFERENCE. By comparing Scripture with Scripture, and by applying legitimate information regarding the "conditions of life" in the eternal state. How prone are we to allow ourselves to forget that one of God's favourite methods of imparting instruction is contained in the words: "Search the Scriptures."

It is recorded of the Bereans that they "searched the Scriptures" (Acts 17. 11), the verb suggesting that they adopted the method that surveyors would when engaged in mapping out a tract of land. That was

Arduous Study of the Word.

We, too, will never arrive at a clear knowledge of the mind of God unless we are prepared to adopt the same method. We may add to our stock of information from direct declaration by legitimate inference.

3. By INTERPRETATION OF SYMBOLIC DESCRIPTION. Sometimes, but in the main, not very often, it may be difficult to decide whether the interpretation should be literal or metaphorical, but in most cases the interpretation of the context will decide for us. If the context is built on symbolism then we may be almost sure that the separate items are intended to be symbolic. The Book of the Revelation is the chief source of information here.

This much, then, may be asserted, that the Bible is our sole

Source of Reliable Information

regarding the future, and that the conditions for deriving benefit therefrom are diligent study and obedient will.

A necessary qualification is the possession of spiritual affinity with Heavenly things through the "new birth" (John 3.3), and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, whose work it is to reveal things to come to those who patiently seek His guidance. Let us not be wise above what is written, but let us claim as our province of investigation the blessed fact made known regarding the Home to which each saint is travelling and whither for us the Saviour has already gone that He Himself might prepare it for us, awaiting the moment when He will rapture His own to be with Himself. When that takes place, then shall we know in experience what we may learn to anticipate through a knowledge of the Word.

II. THE FATHER'S HOUSE.

First personal pronouns are the language of intimacy. As no one else could, Christ spoke of God as "My FATHER," for He had come, as He

Himself stated concerning His mission, to reveal God as the Father. The Jewish nation knew God by revelation as Jehovah, the Creator of the universe, but the Christian Church knows Him as the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 1.3). To the Jews the imposing pile of architecture occupying the most prominent position in the city of Jerusalem was known as the Temple of Jehovah. There they worshipped and served Him in the manner prescribed in their Scriptures and through the ritual of the divinely-appointed priesthood. The orthodox Jew with spiritual faculty to discern the reality behind the ceremonial observances, trembled as he thought of the august Presence Whose symbol that Temple was.

When, however, Christ came, He disclosed the solitariness of His being, and

The Uniqueness of His Experience,

for He spoke of the Temple in terms of the utmost familiarity, not the familiarity that betokens ignorance and vulgarity, but that indicates knowledge of the most tender intimacy. To Him the building was "MY Father's House." It is true that He had no priestly right to function in its symbolical ritual, yet He manifested His superiority to an earthly priesthood by a consciousness that He was at Home in the very place where they performed their services with fear and trembling. With Him was the intimacy of personal acquaintance. His disciples must often have heard Him speak of the Temple as "MY FATHER'S HOUSE." The term must have worn an impressive meaning to them, since they had learned that He was Christ the Son of the Living God.

Now He is on the eve of departure from them. Towards the revelation He was about to make to them their Master had been bringing them. The time is ripe for further disclosure regarding

His Future and Theirs as Associated

with Him. Taught as they had been in Old Testament literature, and trained in orthodox Jewish thought, these eleven men had belief in a resurrection, but their knowledge of the world beyond the grave was meagre in the extreme. During His sojourn with them, Christ had scattered glimpses about Heaven, but on no occasion had He given them a personal assurance that His future had a mission as well as had His present. He had come to prepare the way to the Father, now, on the verge of what was to them at least the unseen, He discloses the fact that His mission as He went from them was to prepare a place with the Father for all who would thereafter follow Him. How familiar to us have become words which to these disciples must have been a startling

announcement, for they encompass so much truth that they allow a reverent meditation

Unbounded Scope for Thought as it traffics in things unseen.

Read His words again, and ponder over them as you read. "In MY FATHER's House are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there may ye be also" (John 14.2,3). In such simple, homely language did Christ make His fullest revelation concerning the Home of the Redeemed. The simplicity is the language of sympathy and sincerity. The thoughtful student cannot but notice, and it is important that he should, that although the Saviour knew infinitely more about Heaven than He cared to reveal, He refrained from making disclosures regarding

The Details of the Home.

And why? Evidently because minds dealing with a material world in terms of human language, were as yet incapable of appreciating the "spiritualness" of the realm to which Christ was going and to which He would soon call them. For it is impossible to rid the mind of materialistic concepts in treating of a spiritual world. Our Lord's language, consequently, is vague and guarded, and yet precise enough to convey such information as will enable us to form worthy thoughts regarding that world to which He has gone.

It is noticeable, too, that His words are those of

Authoritative Certainty.

He had come from Heaven, was familiar with all that went to make it, and was about to return thither. His purpose He could announce without either hesitancy or ambiguity. He is aware of the future. He knows because He has seen. He speaks because He knows. Men, on the contrary, make investigations, and they broadcast their deductions from the facts they have observed. They institute societies for psychical research, but their information is valueless. It is puerile, because it is not based on fact and experience. Christ was able to disclose the truth because of His own personal relationship to the matter He was announcing. His disclosures in a few sentences is worth all the volumes packed with the findings of human investigations. Its certainty should shame the crudities of their pronouncements.

Further, our Lord's assuring words are a tender evidence of

His Faithfulness and Trustworthiness.

He would not deceive His followers with a false hope. "If it were not so, I would have told you, " are not the words of a mere enthusiast. Such is the veracity of His statement that not one need be deceived, but rather expect with certainty that all who love Him will follow Him into the Father's House, and find there the completest acceptance in Him their Lord. There, too, shall they find God perfectly accessible in the person of their Saviour, and find, besides, every hope of glory gained because His Word is true.

This announcement of Christ is no mere talk, but simple, unadorned truth, reliable because of His authority. So much so is this, that the Epistle to the Hebrews pictures the glorified Son before the Throne of God, in the midst of the great congregation—the many sons brought to Glory by the Captain of their Salvation, singing, "Behold I and the children which God hast given Me" (Heb. 2.13).

As assuring, too, are His further words, "I will come again and receive you unto Myself" (v. 3). How consoling are such words! "UNTO MYSELF," dispels every fear.

He is There to Welcome,

and the saint knows Him. But "unto Myself " is only a stage in the journey. The ultimate objective is the Father. He is the Heart of the Home. Here Christ acts as Divine Usher. "I am the Way...no man cometh unto THE FATHER but by Me" (John 14.6). What a welcome awaits the follower of the Son when he is brought unto the Father and presented "before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24).

"There no stranger God will meet thee,
Stranger thou in courts above;
He who to His rest will greet thee,
Greet thee with a well-known love."

The heart of this revelation, then, is this:

Heaven is a place which Christ Went to Prepare.

What are we to understand by such a declaration? We must, as we have already insisted, discard notions of a material home, and therefore abandon the too prevalent idea that imagines that the words convey the thought of constant labour to bring an "imperfect structure" to a state of perfect habitation. We must think only of the moral perfections connected with the place. The preparation was that of His own Home-going as the Forerunner of the many who should follow. His entrance into the "Many Mansions" was to be the guarantee that entrance would

not be denied to any who came to the Father by Him. There, too, He would await to introduce His own to their new surroundings and escort them through the abodes of the blessed in the companionship of the redeemed. *"With the words of Christ there enters a conviction that when we pass out of this life we shall find ourselves as much fuller of life and deeper in joy as we are nearer God...and that when we come to the gates of God's dwelling it will not be as the vagabond and beggar unknown to the household, and who can give no good account of himself, but as the child whose room is ready for him, whose coming is expected and prepared for, and who has indeed been sent for."*

To Christ, Heaven was

"My Father's House."

And He would make it that for His followers. "Go," said He to Mary, "to My brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father" (John 20.17). There, in such a Home cannot be aught but satisfaction and joy, bliss and perfect freedom. In that Heavenly Temple, built not with hands, will dwell for ever the glory of God and His holiness. And to such perfection will the spirits of just men be brought that they will find every aspiration attained and every spiritual impulse satisfied. There, too, because it is the Father's House, ample provision will be made within the "many mansions" for all the children, and none will be afraid, but all will live within the brightness of His countenance. "There we shall be with cherubim and seraphim, creatures that will dazzle your eyes to look upon them. There also you shall meet with thousands and ten thousands that have gone before us to that place; none of them are hurtful, but loving and holy; every one walking in the sight of God, and standing in His presence with acceptance for ever. In a word, there we shall see the elders with their golden crowns; there we shall see the holy virgins with their golden harps; there we shall see men that by the world were cut in pieces, burnt in flames, eaten of beasts, drowned in the seas, for the love they bore to the Lord of the place; all well and clothed with immortality as with a garment." *That Home which we call Heaven will be the most attractive spot in the Universe.*

Of the occupations and activities and

Joys of our Future State

the Master said nothing; but this surely we feel and know that all those proclivities and tendencies which link us with the earth now will for ever disappear, and the needs and necessities of a material life will pass as we enter, like Christ with a spiritual body into a realm of far-distances, emerging from the valley of the shadow into the glory that surrounds the

House of the Lord. We shall then be at Home with our Lord in the Father's House.

III. THE CITY OF THE LIVING GOD.

To impress the minds of His bewildered disciples with the sense of the freedom and society that they would enjoy in Heaven, the Lord used the simple synonym, "My Father's House." Notwithstanding the fact that their future abode would be a holy place like the Temple in the city, yet they were encouraged to think of it as a sphere of intimacies and fellowships because they would dwell together like a family brought to the Father through the love and labour of the Son.

As the company of the redeemed grew through the preaching of the Gospel, further revelations were given, and different similitudes were used to teach the saints truths concerning the life beyond time. Four symbols are thus found in the later writings of the New Testament, a Temple, a Bride, a Body, and a City.

The saints in Philippi, a Greek city which was recognised as a colony of Rome, looking to the Imperial City for all its laws and directions, were informed that

Their Citizenship was in Heaven

from whence they were to expect their Saviour. Hebrew Christians acquainted with the story of the Old Testament were reminded that they had "come unto...the City of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem" [Heb. 12.22]. When he wrote to the retrograde Galatians, the Apostle Paul, drawing a comparison between the economy of Law and the rule of Grace, introduced the idea of another city besides the earthly Jerusalem. It is called "the Jerusalem which is above," the counterpart in the Heavenly state of "the city that now is." Abraham, too, we are informed, "looked for

A City which hath Foundations,

whose Builder and Maker is God" (Heb. 11.10). Strangers and pilgrims here, because they "have no continuing city," are exhorted to seek for "the City which is to come."

No reader of the Bible, therefore, need be astonished, as he peruses the pages of the Revelation and learns of things beyond death that the writer frequently draws his attention to the city which God has built. In chapter 3, it is seen as the "New Jerusalem which cometh down out of Heaven," while at the close of the Book the seer views from the "specular mount" a city of which he gives a ravishing description.

Our study of the subject may be greatly simplified if generalities are considered first. Thereafter it may be much easier to discover the interpretations of the details. These generalities consist of

Names and Comparisons.

This "city" state of existence is one of the items contained in the announcement, "Behold I make all things new" (Rev. 21.5). In the Greek version of the New Testament two words are used for *new*. One of these refers to time, and conveys the idea of "*recent*." The other refers to quality, and bears the signification of "*flesh*." It is the latter word which is used throughout in the description of the New Jerusalem. The condition suggested, then, in the declaration is one of eternal freshness, stainless, incorruptibility, a state that corresponds with the announcement of Paul concerning the Church glorious that Christ will present it to Himself "not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing" (Eph. 5.27). John, too, informs us that into the city there will enter nothing that defileth.

The freshness of a new creation will characterise the Home of the Redeemed, and that freshness will never suffer decay or corruption. The rude tooth of time will play no havoc with its newness, nor will the stain of sin besmirch its undying glory and beauty. Eden and

More than Eden, will be Restored

without the remotest possibility of a malignant intruder spoiling the work which a Redeemer God has wrought.

The city is called

"The New Jerusalem,

coming down from God out of Heaven" [Rev. 21.2]. "Jerusalem which now is" (Gal. 4.25) is a material city chosen of old as the earthly centre where Jehovah placed His Name, and in which the Temple was reared as the visible symbol of His presence. But this vision-city of the Revelation is not the evolution of man's progress. It is not of the earth, earthy; it descends from God out of Heaven. It is Heavenly in its origin, its sphere, its characteristics, its inhabitants. It is the Home for those who, passing through the earth, thought of the end of life, and lived on earth in the light of eternity. That city-state is one of completest harmony with the will of God expressing itself in unabating worship of Him Whose glory is the light thereof.

A further appellation is

"The Holy City,"

"the Holy Jerusalem." Holiness is the ultimate goal of the Redeemer's activities, for in Him God chose saints "before the foundation of the world" that they might be "holy and without blame before Him" (Eph. 1.4). Towards the achievement of that purpose the Holy Spirit is at present working in the obedient believer, so that each one doing the will of God and walking by the rule of the Spirit is "perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

On earth there can only be constant approximation to ideal perfection, but John here depicts a state in which the glorified saints dwell in the "holy city." Holiness is health, in the highest connotation of the term, when every faculty of body and mind is brought into unison with the will of God and works harmoniously in the circle of His beneficent purpose. To such complete accord with His will does God bring every one of His redeemed that the perfection for which they sighed and the holiness which they never attained will become theirs, not through effort, but through the transforming power of His might.

"Prepared as a bride adorned for her husband," that city is further described as

"The Bride, the Lamb's Wife."

The imagery suggests not only the sacrificial bond that unites the saints to Christ, but also the idea of meticulous care in adornment for the day of espousals. The redeemed will reflect for ever not their own glories, but all the worth of their Redeemer, and will enjoy that unique fellowship suggested in the symbolism of "husband and wife." All the joy of a bride in her bridal attire for her nuptials will be theirs. All the hallowed intimacies of fellowship suggested by the conjugal tie will be theirs. Unchanging affection and unstinted loyalty will mark the Heavenly state.

"The Tabernacle of God"

is a further descriptive metaphor. Paul employs the imagery of a temple when he writes to the Ephesians whose city housed the famous image of Diana in the magnificent temple dedicated to her worship. They thought of a deity presiding within the vast edifice, and Paul, quick to make use of the mental content of his readers in conveying spiritual truths, declared that God was building an invisible structure, rearing a spiritual edifice upon Christ, the Chief Corner Stone, "in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit" (Eph. 2.21,22).

But John saw in his vision, not a temple, but a tabernacle. Such a metaphor can convey to Bible students only one message. The Shekinah glory of Jehovah dwelt upon the wilderness structure of old, and became the symbol of the presence of God. By that glory-cloud the Presence seemed to be localised, and the Israelites were made aware of Jehovah's nearness. But over Israel's later history had to be written Ichabod. God, however, visited His people again, and it is the writer of the Apocalypse who defines that visitation in these terms: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt [tabernacled] among us, and we beheld His glory" (John 1.14). Now he sees the "tabernacle of God" descending out of Heaven and having the glory of God; the saints become the habitation of God, for He tabernacles with them. Subsequently John tells us that he saw "no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the Temple" (Rev. 21.22). God is everywhere accessible to every one, but that right of access has been procured only through sacrifice. The Divine presence is diffused equally, and there is no need for aids in that perfect state, when God through the Lamb makes Himself known without intermediary to all the saints.

Heaven, then, will be a state in which

The Saints will Reach Spiritual Perfection,

will retain throughout eternity the marks of unfading freshness, will have unimpeded access to God through the Lamb, will reflect the moral glories of their Redeemer, and, dwelling together as an habitation of God through the Spirit, will perform His will with perfect devotion and unstained holiness.

IV. DETAILS OF THE HEAVENLY CITY.

Having discussed briefly the general characteristics of the city, it may be of interest to seek to learn somewhat of the more particular details with which the vision furnishes us. In doing so our present purpose may be the better served if the details are taken, not so much in the order in which they are given, but grouped together so as to impress upon our minds certain outstanding features of that future state.

It will have been observed by careful readers that the description deals more at length with the external aspect of the City than with those which are internal. The inhabitants are not described, perhaps, because they are already referred to in the description of the City itself. Think, however, of those who are within this City.

The Throne of God and of the Lamb

are there. In chapter 4 the vision is of the Throne of God in all its

unsullied governmental splendour, a splendour of holiness which repels everything that is not in the strictest harmony therewith. In chapter 5 the Lamb approaches that Throne, associates Himself therewith and now the ideas are combined, and within the eternal City there is seen the "Throne of God and of the Lamb," one throne, one centre of government with a dual character.

The story of the Bible centres round the Throne of God. It is the story of the warring of God against sin and rebellion as He establishes His Throne upon justice and mercy, ruling and yet saving a people out of disaster. Rebellion against God and His Throne has characterised man since the Devil and his angels, themselves fallen from Heaven by an act of impious revolt, seduced him from his loyalty and led him into disobedience.

The Book of the Revelation details

The Final Catastrophe

which overtakes these wicked spirits and unrepentant men, and discloses the fact that the Throne of God remains immovably fixed in Heaven, retains its impregnable character in spite of malicious assault and persistent disobedience, and in the end centralises the government of the New Heavens and the New Earth. But these governmental dealings are eternally associated with "the Lamb." Glory and grace, power and sacrifice, are harmoniously combined and in perfect unison.

Attention is focused upon the fact that

Heaven is Redolent with Sacrifice,

as prominence is given to the Lamb. The city is called "the Lamb's wife," the apostles are "the apostles of the Lamb" [Rev. 21.14], "the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple" [Rev. 21.22] of the City, only those which "are written in the Lamb's book of life" [Rev. 21.27], are allowed access to the City, while the Lamb is the lamp of the Glory, which lightens the City.

Thus the government of God, established through grace and on the ground of sacrifice, is acknowledged throughout the vast domain as all rejoice around the Throne and declare "the Lamb is all the glory of Immanuel's Land."

This idea of the perfection of the Divine government is further suggested by the employment of

The Numerical Symbol, Twelve.

Here we read of twelve gates, twelve angels, twelve apostles, twelve thousand furlongs, one hundred and forty and four cubits, twelve foundation stones, twelve pearls and twelve manner of fruits. The harmonious outworking of God's eternal purpose has reached its full fruition, every evil has been banished, righteous government has been established beyond assault and the glory of it all is centred in the Lamb.

Associated with the Throne, as being intimately connected with the governmental dealings of God, are

The Tree of Life

and the River of Water of Life. Such expression cannot fail to drive us back to the story of man's first home—Eden.

Sin, in its foul disobedient act, shattered the primitive bliss, because it was disloyalty to the Throne, an affront to the government of God. Now the consequences of the Fall have been removed, Eden, and more than Eden, has been restored, and man, redeemed from the curse, has entered into a state of which his first home was but a picture.

Life in all its fulness (fruit and water), with endless opportunity to express its vitality, without possibility of decay and weariness, maintained in incorruptible purity and perennial freshness, with the bloom of a new creation for ever in its constitution, is the portion of every one. Proceeding as it does from the Throne of God and of the Lamb, the River of Life carries with it from God exhaustless tides of supply for all the redeemed, so that their "health" is guaranteed for ever, for the fruits of the tree speaks of kindly variety in the fulness of Divine knowledge. Here there is no tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for evil has been excluded for ever, and all knowledge is wrapt up in the endless unfolding of the Divine wisdom of which the Lamb is the embodiment. And because that is so there shall be no more curse. The unadorned statement conveys its own volume of truth, which needs no expansion.

"No more curse."

Angels, patriarchs, and

Apostles are There.

What a company! The angels are those who kept their first estate and fell not. They have unceasingly lived within the presence of Jehovah, waiting to do His will, posting "o'er land and ocean without rest." They have required no physical transformation to fit them for this eternal abode. "At the gates" of the City they stand in readiness to carry out

each behest of their Lord, a picture of unceasing service ungrudgingly performed. Angelic ministrations will not cease throughout the eternal state.

Here, too, are those who, like Abraham,

The Father of the Faithful,

desired "a better country, that is, an Heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a City" (Heb. 11.16), those who, like Simeon and Anna, longed for the salvation of God, or looked for redemption in Israel. What a galaxy of saints redeemed out of Israel in virtue of the Blood of Christ.

Prominence, however, is reserved for the

Foundations of the City,

for on these are inscribed the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. Is not that a symbolic manner of intimating a fact already plainly stated by the Apostle Paul? "Ye are...fellowcitizens with the saints...and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone" (Eph. 2.19,20).

Out of every kindred, tribe, people, and nation, have been gathered together the hosts of the redeemed, displaying in all their beauty and variety the glories of God, their Redeemer, Who has made them "all one in Christ Jesus," and has granted them a place in that City in which each one, retaining his own individuality, yet resplendent with glory, will be to the praise of His grace. In no other way, perhaps, could the Divine Spirit have conveyed to our minds such a transporting picture of the everlasting splendour of the saints in their corporate life, as by this display of magnificence in the precious stones that reflect the glory of God.

Two outstanding phrases are used to describe the appearance of the city.

"The City Lieth Foursquare,"

and "the city was pure gold, like unto clear glass." Much speculation has surrounded the interpretation of the former statement along with the description given supplementary to it. Literalists have calculated the dimensions of the city, and, assigning so many square feet per inhabitant, have arrived at the population of 39,204,000,000 people. Surely that is not the intention of the Holy Spirit! Since the length, breadth, and height of it are equal, there is presented the symbol of perfect symmetry, in which all is in true proportion, and viewed from any side displays the completeness of the Divine ideal without distortion

of any kind.

Again, there is a divergence of opinion as to whether the shape is cubical or pyramidal. No hint is given as to which is correct, for it could be either without violation of the dimensions given. The writer's opinion, notwithstanding the beauty attached to some interpretations demanding the pyramidal form, is that the shape is that of a cube. So frequently does the seer draw attention to the fact that the City has the glory of God upon it, that it seems justifiable to conclude that he had in his vision something which reminded him of the innermost sanctuary of the Temple which was a cube. That was the symbol of the dwelling place of Jehovah, and was associated in a Jewish mind with the manifestation of His glory. Here the whole City is cubical in form, suggesting what other statements infer that the City itself is the Temple of Jehovah, or to use words already familiar, "the tabernacle of God is with men." God is in the midst, dwelling with His people, their God.

Twice Gold is Mentioned

in the description of the City, once as to its general appearance, and a second time when we read: "And the street of the City was pure gold, as it were transparent glass" [Rev. 21.21]. Purity is stamped on the vision from beginning to end.

The whole aspect of the City betokens a display of Divine righteousness reflected in every transaction of the inhabitants. Transparency characterises all. Men to-day hide themselves from their neighbours; in that day there will be no need for darkness, for the glory of God lightens every corner of the City, and the transparency of the gold of the street suggests that in all work, walk, and ways there will be unsullied righteousness and untarnished holiness. *What a state!*

V. THE CONSUMMATION.

It is but fitting that certain details should be reserved for the last, reminding us of what are not to be found within that "city-state."

A String of Negatives

throws into vivid relief the perfect bliss of the home to which Christ will take His own. "There shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." These gone, and gone for ever, we can understand how God shall wipe away all tears from every eye. He does so by removing the causes of sorrow, so that tears there are none. Two quotations may fitly bring this chapter to a close. The first is taken from Dr. Pierson's "God's Living Oracles":

"The Grand Sevenfold Consummation

of all the Redemption plan is given in the twenty-second chapter of Revelation:

"And there shall be no more curse'—*Perfect sinlessness*.

"And the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it'—*Perfect authority*.

"And His servants shall serve Him'—*Perfect obedience*.

"And they shall see His face'—*Perfect communion*.

"And His Name shall be in their foreheads'—*Perfect consecration*.

"And there shall be no night there'—*Perfect blessedness*.

"And they shall reign for ever and ever'—*Perfect glory*.

"What visions of such sevenfold perfection are found anywhere outside of the Oracles of God!"

"The light of Heaven," writes someone, "is the face of Jesus, the joy of Heaven is the presence of Jesus, the melody of Heaven the Name of Jesus, the harmony of Heaven the praise of Jesus, the theme of Heaven the work of Jesus, the employment of Heaven the service of Jesus, the fulness of Heaven, JESUS HIMSELF. "

To that bliss there will be no end, for not only are all defilements excluded, but the Spirit declares that "there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie" (Rev. 21.27).

History began in a garden, it ends in a garden city. The first city was built by the first murderer to hide himself therein, the last city is one into which no stain of any kind will find entrance. This garden city is the Home of God and the redeemed, a place of dazzling splendour, of unassailable security, of marvellous accessibility, of impregnable strength, of inconceivable compass, of ravishing beauty, of unparalleled blessedness, of stainless purity, with guarded entrance, and withal, redolent with the memory of the death of the Lamb.

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