Articles by Roland F. Thompson

Roland F. Thompson

First published in Food for the Flock (Food for the Flock, Inc., Ontario, Canada).

KEE Ministry Library · Faithful Men
kee-ministry-library.netlify.app

Spiritual Progress of the Soul (Dec 1962)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 8 No. 12, Dec 1962.

An Exposition of the Song of Solomon

God does not reveal His Word save to His own, to those who have come to Him by Jesus Christ. To all others this Word and this Song is a hidden mystery. God's dear people approach the Scriptures, and as babes they desire the sincere milk of the Word that they may grow thereby. God has planted in their hearts a great desire to search out the deep things of His Word, and He has promised that he who reads shall be blessed. (Lk. 11:28).

We read of the Lord that "Beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself." God's purpose in the Scriptures is to extol and exalt His beloved Son. As it takes a comparison of Scriptures to enlighten us on the Book of Revelation, so too, it takes a comparison of Scriptures to enlighten us on the Song of Solomon.

Like the Book of Revelation, the Song of Solomon gives us a prophetic picture of the Lord Jesus Christ and of the Church, His Bride. This Song depicts His earthly character and mission, both to His Bride, the Church, and to each believer who becomes a member in that Bride. The Song in this Book is their personal experience. It is a strain from the glory song that we shall sing to, and about, our beloved Bridegroom in the

eternal ages. Then we shall understand how He loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

The reading into it of marital love, or the applying a Jewish meaning to this Song is a diversional interpretation. This Song is by no means sensual for, as other portions of God's Word, this Song is only spiritually discerned. Like many other prophecies, it was not meant to be understood by the natural man, for it is foolishness unto him.

Many of God's people have found this Song difficult to understand, and, like the book of Revelation, it has seemed to be a closed book, full of mysteries. Yet, those who read the Word daily have found some verses in both of these Books that have been a "cleft in the rock" to their souls; and as they have hidden themselves in the Word, they have proved it to be a lamp unto their feet, and a light upon their path. In the light of other verses it is a lasting blessing to their souls and radiates to others.

When one seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, God will see that the hunger and thirst for the things of His Word will be satisfied. The Lord will put a new song into his mouth, even praise unto our God, so that he may say: "Thou anointest my head with oil, my cup runneth over."

How did Solomon come to write this wonderful Song of the soul? David or Solomon or any other writer of Holy Writ did not write with a carnal mind, nor with enticing words of man's wisdom, nor with the wisdom of this world. Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The Jews revered the works of Solomon. They likened the Book of Proverbs to the outer court of the temple; the Book of Ecclesiastes to the Holy place,

and the Song of Solomon to the Holy of Holies. Ecclesiastes is known as the sigh of sighs, and beside it is the Song of songs. This Song concerns Christ and His Church. While the Church is not revealed in the Old Testament as such; yet, the “New is in the Old contained; and the Old is by the New explained.”

Solomon could not have written this Song in his declining years, for in those years he had departed in heart and ways from the Lord, and when one is out of touch with God he has no song. As we read and meditate, we are led to repeat the words of our Lord Jesus, “Behold, a greater than Solomon is here.”

Chapter One

The writer of this Song was Solomon. He is one of the character types of Scripture. When we see that the Bride mentioned refers most directly to the Church of Jesus Christ, we cannot doubt that the Bride’s Beloved is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ as the Head of the Church. This is borne out in other Scriptures where Jesus Christ is meant, even though other names are applied to Him. This Song of Solomon is an allegory, for it is well understood that One greater than Solomon is here. The Bride sees her Beloved as more than an ordinary lover, and comes into His presence with a humble heart and a contrite spirit.

It was the heavenly Bridegroom Himself who caused this Song to be written. The expressions and desires of the Bride are prophetic. The Bridegroom’s kiss is a picture of the reconciliation experienced by any sinner coming to the Saviour. It is illustrated aptly in the story of the Prodigal Son. We see a father’s heart of love and

profound affection bestowing on the long-lost son the kiss of forgiveness.

The love that is better than wine may suggest another earthly scene where Christians gather together in the name of the Lord Jesus to take the bread and the wine in remembrance of their Lord's death. The members of His body, the Church, say in unison: "We love Him because He first loved us." While we partake of the bread and wine in this remembrance feast, we look beyond them and see Him. This ought to be true of every sinner that is saved by grace. We pray with Paul, "That I might know Him, and the power of His resurrection," so we join with the song of the Bride: "Thy love is better than wine."

The savour of His good ointments is seen in His coming down from Heaven to save us. The ointment of Mary who sat at Jesus' feet could not have dispensed its fragrance had she not broken the viol; when she did, its fragrance filled the whole house. The ointment of His love was shown to us in our being saved, forgiven, granted eternal life, made children of God, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ.

It is well to notice the use of the personal pronouns in this text. First, the bride prays, "draw ME." The next pronoun is "WE." "We will run after Thee." This shows that there are others in the Bride, and she wants to be joined with them in seeking her Beloved.

Even before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the angel Gabriel said to Mary: "Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call His name Jesus… He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever. And of His kingdom there shall be no end."

The king's chambers might be illustrated by the experience of the two disciples who walked on the Emmaus road, talking with a supposed stranger who spoke to them from all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself. Soon their eyes were opened, and they knew Him. His presence is suggested by "His chambers," and when we are there and feed upon His Word the Holy Spirit blesses us with new revelations of truths. In the Epistle of Peter we find seven chambers: virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity (love). May we remember His love more than the wine of temporal or earthly blessings; and sing with another:

"O Christ, He is the fountain,

The deep, sweet well of love.

The streams on earth I've tasted,

More deep I'll drink above;

… O, I am my Beloved's,

And my Beloved is mine;

He brings a poor vile sinner into His house of wine.

… The bride eyes not her garment,

But her dear Bridegroom's face;

I will not gaze at glory,

But on the King of grace.

Not at the crown He giveth,

But on His pierced hand;

The Lamb is all the glory of Immanuel's land."

“The upright love Thee.” This refers to one “who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.” When the bride says, “I am black, but comely,” we think of one who said: “Father, I have slimed against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son.” But he was comely in the sight of his father in that he was the son who had been lost and was found. The bride’s mention of “my mother’s children” suggests the nominal, the carnal, the worldly Christian, etc., for such are those who have a form of godliness but deny the power of the Gospel. They are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God, ever learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. The Bride sees her true relation to them by admitting, “They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept.” Nicodemus also was a keeper of those other vineyards; but Jesus had to show him that he had to be born again before he could be part of the Bride.

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

The Spiritual Progress of a Soul (Part 2) (Jan 1963)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 9 No. 1, Jan 1963.

Roland Thompson

Comments on the Song of Solomon

Chapter One Continued

“O Thou whom my soul loveth.” Here is the real spirit of worship, love expressing itself in appreciation. Because David likewise loved the Lord, he could go to Him for help, comfort, correction, and instruction in righteousness. This is also true of every person born into the fold of the Great Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, the Lord Jesus. One can say to the Lord, “In Thee, O Lord, do I put my trust.”

“Tell me, … where Thou feedest Thy flock,” enquired the Bride. Jesus said, “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled” (Matt. 5:6). The Bride not only hungered but she longed for fellowship with others in the Bridegroom’s flock. It was not at all satisfactory to her to be turned aside by the flocks of His companions, she could not be contented elsewhere than with Himself. Consequently, the Bridegroom looked upon His Bride in a very different way than He did upon the daughters of Jerusalem.

The Church repeatedly is compared to a woman, therefore, as being the spouse of Christ. It is in this relationship He addresses her saying, “Go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock.” He does not instruct her to

follow the daughters of Jerusalem, but to proceed along a path which He had marked out for her. How much each in the flock of God needs the company of the others! Do not the strong help to bear the burdens of the weak? Do not all need to be fed with the Word that is given from the Lord by the under-shepherd? All need to be shepherded in order that they grow. “He is our God; and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand” (Psa. 95:7). The ideas contained in the words “flock” and “sheep” are applied here to the Lord’s people, even to those who now follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.”

The Lord Jesus commissioned Peter, “Feed My Sheep,” “Feed My lambs” (John 21:15-17). The Scriptures indicate who the under-shepherds of the flock really are; we read, “Let him that is taught in the Word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good thing” (Gal. 6:6). “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation” (Heb. 13:7). “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you” (Heb. 13:17). The Apostle Paul said to his own children in the faith, “Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1).

“Feed thy kids beside the shepherds’ tents” was the instruction of the Bridegroom to the Bride. Spiritual fathers and Christian parents are guided by the law of love and by the Spirit of God, and therefore should be suitable guides for their own children. They are expected by the Lord to give the proper training that

will save them from the evils so prevalent in this day of juvenile delinquency. Godly care coupled with true prayer will solve most of the problems that arise among both our spiritual and natural children. Parents should first of all give themselves to the Lord, for in so doing they will become examples before the young.

Young believers need to be nourished with the green pasture of the Word of God; they need to be strengthened thereby that they might obey the admonitions of the Lord.

“I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh’s chariots.” The reference here to the Bride being similar in some respects to a company of horses suggests a unity in spite of diversity. While there are many who love and serve the heavenly Bridegroom, there is only one Bride. “There is one body, and one spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Eph. 4:4-6). When the Anti-type of king Solomon, the Lord Jesus, likened His own to Pharaoh’s chariot horses, He intimated that He had purchased them at a great price, and that He had trained them to serve Him and to reflect His own character. The charming picture of the Bride in the eyes of her Bridegroom reveals what Christians ought to manifest before Him and before the world. Their comeliness in Christ is again expressed in a string of jewels. These would remind us of the fruit of the Spirit: “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:22-23). The works of the flesh are not under consideration here for the emphasis is upon the righteousness and the beauty of Christ.

Notwithstanding, we need to remind ourselves of the teaching of Romans 6:19. “For as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.” The jewels that were put on Rebecca came from Isaac’s land; even so the fruit of the Spirit is heavenly in its origin.

The Lord Jesus said in His intercessory prayer, “I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me.… And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them” (John 17:8-26). In this way the Lord adorns and beautifies His own Bride.

Notice that the Bridegroom speaks in a future tense of the crowns (plaits) of gold with ornaments of silver. This entire song shows progressively the gold of divine perfection; it reveals the gold (the intrinsic value) of the grace of Christ in His Bride. She is thus sustained by His redemptive grace as suggested by the uprights (studs) of silver. It is through the grace of the Lord Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit that eventually the Bride of Christ will appear in crowns of silver.

We are at the King’s table when experientially in the presence of the Lord Jesus. When we make Him Lord in our hearts, we may speak possessively of Him and say, “The Lord is my Shepherd.” It is then that we can be at rest and sit at His table to sup with Him, and He with us.

Like the box in which the Bride brought her spikenard, our pride and our self-righteousness and self-will have to

be broken before the fragrance of humility may be poured out. The Psalmist intimates this figurative experience of breaking the box and pouring out the ointment; he writes, “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise” (Psa.- 51:17).

The Lord Jesus is pictured here as a bundle of myrrh that perfumes the person of the Bride. Christ has taken up His abiding in the believer’s heart, and there He will remain during the dark night of this dispensation. As the bundle of myrrh lay in her bosom, the Bride was thinking of the virtues of her lover. The little act of affection that put it there shows her own appreciation of His personal character, and at the same time indicated that they were a fragrance to others. In his letter to the Colossians, the Apostle Paul wrote, “We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints” (Col. 1:3-4). Their faith and love which delighted the heart of the Apostle were the result of the indwelling of the Lord through His Spirit.

“Thou hast doves’ eyes.” As the eye of the dove is turned toward her mate as being single, the Bride was ready to serve and to commune with her lover in sincerity and transparency of heart. The reply of the Bride to the endearments of her Bridegroom is interesting, “Our bed is green.” The use of the pronouns in the Epistle to the Ephesians “our”, “us,” and “we,” indicate that believers are joined in and to the Lord Jesus. They are one in Christ as well as one with Christ.

The colour green has a definite spiritual application. The blue speaks of our Lord's heavenly character, and the yellow or gold, of His divine righteousness. The two together produce the green reminding us that here on earth we have the eternal and immutable promises of God. No red is here to be seen, for the sin question is considered settled forever.

We read on one occasion that when Jesus was alone with His disciples, He expounded unto them all things. Yes,

"Alone with God, the world forbidden;

Alone with God, O safe retreat!

Alone with God, and in Him hidden

To hold with Him communion sweet."

It mattered not to Mary how many others were in the house; she was occupied with the love of Christ, and there sought to pour out her love upon Him, even so should it be with every member of the Bride of Christ. All was peace and joy in the presence of the Lord. Jesus and Mary were undisturbed completely by the storm of hatred and wickedness that was gathering outside in the streets. She was in the presence of the Prince of Peace, the Lord of Life, and that for her was enough.

The beams of cedar may symbolize the humanity of our Lord Jesus. God in this era is building for Himself a house, a house supported by the nature and the accomplished work of Him who is God manifest in the flesh. The rafters were of red fir, probably suggesting the indestructability of Christ's atonement at the cross.

The Spiritual Progress of a Soul (Part 3) (Feb 1963)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 9 No. 2, Feb 1963.

Roland Thompson

Comments on the Song of Solomon, continued

Many roses are in Sharon, many lilies are in the valleys, but our heavenly Solomon says specifically, “I am the rose, … I am the lily.” Christ was indeed the Rose of Sharon to the man out of whom he had cast the legion of devils, and to the woman who fell at His feet in adoration and poured upon them the ointment from the alabaster box. The daughters of Jerusalem are as thorns to the Bridegroom, but His Bride is as a lily among these thorns. They engage only in the strife of tongues when they speak; later in the Song they mock the Bride who is the fairest among women, for they say to her, “What is thy Beloved more than another?” Furthermore, they smite her, and wound her, and take away her vail.

The Apple Tree in this Song is likened to the Beloved of the Bride; there is something about this fruit tree that makes it stand out with importance among all the other trees in the woods. Jesus gave the meaning of the other trees as well as that of the Apple Tree when He said that many false prophets are gone out into the world, but that He had come that men might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. The Lord Jesus, then, is that Tree of Life. It is not sufficient to find the Apple Tree, but we must abide there, sitting down under its shadow. The Bride should not only taste the fruit, but

she should eat and be filled. By this means she will grow and be strong in the power of His might.

The Beloved One who took her into His chambers, now brings her into His banqueting house. This act might speak of communion, a new and deeper fellowship, a more familiar intimacy. The Bride is made glad by the presence of her King, so the supper on His table merges into a banquet of wine. The banner that flutters over her head suggests the love and devotion of Christ to His Church, that love that led Him to purchase at such a cost the Church. That same love leads Him now to protect her, and eventually will impell Him to present her to Himself a glorious Church without spot or wrinkle.

While the Bride is always mentioned in the singular, the picture is a collective one, symbolizing the corporate body of a great multitude of believers, all members of that future glorified Bride.

The flagons of wine mentioned intimate the abundant joy the Bride finds in her Bridegroom. The word means to uphold, to support; upon the strength of the love and joy He imparts, she may lean heavily, for through these He will sustain her in every hour. She gave to Him of her precious spikenard, and this He receives in His grace, and at the same time imparts to her all His own merits. Upon these she may rest contentedly.

“Comfort me with apples,” the Bride requests; she knows that He is the only One who produces this fruit of nourishment and sustenance; furthermore, she knows that His fruit is sweet to her taste. She realizes that through Him she is nourished, strengthened, and cheered, therefore, she earnestly longs for more.

A woman who wished for the comfort of His heart, and who was sick for His love, said to Him one day, “Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not.” His disciples also said unto Him, “Lord, evermore give us this bread.”

“His left hand,” “His right hand.” Since we learn from Proverbs chapter eight that wisdom was set up from everlasting, from the beginning or ever the earth was, we assume that wisdom is another title for our heavenly Bridegroom. As wisdom personified, in His left hand are riches and honour, while length of days are in His right hand. “His right hand doth embrace me,” says the Bride. Let no one look at this statement in any profane way, for like almost everything in this wonderful Song, it pertains solely to the spiritual growth and welfare of the child of God. The right hand signifies strength and power, one’s greatest might. David said, “My soul followeth hard after Thee, O God; Thy right hand upholdeth me.”

The roes and the hinds of the woods quickly pick up sounds which are not heard by the ears of others, and cart away so swiftly that the hunter does not see them disappear. When our Lord Jesus was in seclusion with His disciples, away from the eyes and the ears of the worldly wise, He reveals to them the deep things of God. Such precious moments of communion one does not like to disturb. The prayer of the Bride’s heart might well be expressed in the language of the hymn:

“O Lamb of God still keep me

Near to Thy wounded side;

’Tis only there in safety

And peace I can abide.

What foes and snares surround me!

What lusts and fears within!

The grace that sought and found me

Alone can keep me clean.”

The Bride exclaims, “It is the voice of my Beloved!” There are times when the Lord seems to withdraw himself, seems to hide himself until there is in our hearts a hunger and a thirst for His presence. We are informed that when sheep are ill, they will listen to the voice of strangers and follow them. This is obviously true of the members of God’s flock who become spiritually ill. They go astray into other paths; they listen to other voices rather than to that of their Beloved. Eventually, in some circumstance the Bride discerns His approach, and exclaims, “Behold, He cometh!” He leaps over the hills, the circumstances which have produced in her heart the fears and the doubts. Sometimes the Lord leaves a circumstance in our lives as a “thorn in the flesh.” When He does so, He assures us, saying, “My grace is sufficient for thee.”

There is a mental or spiritual wall behind which He sometimes appears, a wall that separates the Christian from his Lord. This wall may result from ignorance, unbelief, or unfaithfulness. We think that we are doing well with our arrangements and schemes, only to discover that our Bridegroom has hidden himself, and is standing behind our wall. Thank God, when our heavenly Bridegroom appears behind our wall, He will be ready to leap over it to our help!

“My Beloved spake.” He speaks to each and every one who receives Him and believes His Word and He promises a blessing to those who keep it.

The passing of the winter and the appearing of the spring, so it has been suggested by some, is the passing of the old dispensation of the law and the ushering in of the new dispensation of grace. The law of God was fulfilled in our Lord Jesus, and this could not be done in or by any natural man. The darkness and winter of God's wrath and judgment which rested upon man has been endured by the Lord Jesus Christ who has satisfied every demand of the law. Refreshing rain results from the doing away of the law and of the wrath of God, this rain softens the ground and prepares it for the bringing in of the better covenant of grace.

The flowers which appear in the land may be used as metaphors, as also the birds and the turtle-dove. These may intimate the grace of God bestowed on man at the first advent of Christ. The singing of the birds may represent the rejoicing that comes into the lives of God's dear people, the music and melody within the heart of the new-born soul.

The voice of the turtle-dove suggests the voice of the Spirit. The voice of the Holy Spirit is heard in the Church today proclaiming the soon coming of the Lord Jesus, our Bridegroom, and the cry is being raised, "Go ye forth to meet Him."

"Let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely." Such is the admonition of the Bridegroom to His Bride. Do we, members of the Bride of Christ, want to experience His blessing? We must, then, let Him see our countenance, our faces, in prayer. We must seek Him in our daily devotions through the reading of the Holy Scriptures,

seek Him in every experience of life, seek Him constantly in intercession.

“Take us the foxes, the little foxes, that spoil the vines: for our vines have tender grapes.” These not only spoil the vines but they hinder fruit-bearing. H. A. Ironside pointed out that some of these little foxes which hinder our growth are those of the human heart: neglect of the Bible, neglect of prayer, and neglect of fellowship with God’s people. These are some of the points which so easily deprive us of communion, of strength and of fruit in our lives.

“Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my Beloved, and be Thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether.” While the night is sometimes thought of as the long period of sin, we must not think of it in that way here; this is the night of the absence of the Beloved One from His Bride, an absence over which she mourns. He is now separated by the mountains of Bether. Like a young hart He will come leaping over these to claim His long-loved Bride. May she remain faithful to Him, and eagerly await that moment when she shall see Him face to face.

Spiritual Progress of the Soul (Part 4) (Mar 1963)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 9 No. 3, Mar 1963.

Roland Thompson

Comments on the Song of Solomon—Chapter 3

The Bride seeks her beloved in the hours when she cannot sleep. In this she reminds us of Pilgrim in Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress." He had many experiences similar to that of the Bride in this Song. On his journey to the Celestial City, he caught glimpses of it now and again.

We cannot seek the Lord half-heartedly, or turn away from Him to mundane or selfish projects, going even for a day's journey without Him as did Joseph and Mary, and not expect trouble, sorrow, and anxiety. King David had such an experience, and said afterward, "Thou didst hide Thy face and I was troubled." We occasionally separate ourselves from the Lord in the day of prosperity, but turn to Him in the darkness, or on the bed of illness, and, of course, we do not readily find Him. Where did the Bride search for her Beloved? Did she find Him in the City, in the streets of business, social excitement, and confusion, or on the broad ways of worldly pleasures and amusements? It was when Peter was with a worldly crowd that he denied his Lord. He was travelling the wrong way on the wrong street, away from the presence and the fellowship of his Master. Jesus had earlier reproved Peter and the other slumbering disciples with His question, "What, could ye

not watch with Me one hour?" Peter apparently could not.

Just who the watchmen were to whom the Bride made reference may be deduced from the Song itself. Since they were not known to either the Bride or the Bridegroom, they may represent the leaders of other faiths, other religions, which are false to all of Christianity. The persons indicated by "the daughters of Jerusalem" and "the daughters of Zion" may suggest members of the apostate Church, in the same class as the Pharisees, Sadducees, and hypocrites, who clamoured for the death of the Messiah, and who taught for "doctrines the commandments of men." If they had been true shepherds, without doubt they would have directed her in the right paths. She addressed them as shepherds, but they did not help her in the dilemma. Soon after she had left them, she found Him without their help.

There are two different groups of people spoken of in this Song, just as there are two groups all through the Bible; there is the true Church and the apostate Church. The Church of God is being builded by the Lord Jesus, and is made up of all who are born again; such form the Body of Christ. The apostate Church is composed of those who profess to accept Christianity, but who in particular reject the Bible as divine revelation. The parable of the ten virgins illustrates this for us.

The Bride wished to bring her Beloved to her kinsmen; she longed that they would leave the vineyards of the world for better ones. Her heart went out to them; she wished that her Beloved might become their Beloved. Just as the slightest noise will frighten away the roe or

the hart, so will a little bitterness, strife, jealousy, frivolity, etc., mar the communings of love.

“Who is this?” was the question asked by the people of Jerusalem when Jesus rode into their city. His own disciples answered, “This is Jesus, the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.” Whether it is asked by saint or sinner, it is always answered in the one person, the Lord Jesus.

There are two senses in which our Lord Jesus came up out of the wilderness, He came up out of the temptation in the wilderness and He came up out of the wilderness of His earthly life. In both of these He travelled in the greatness of His strength.

When we partake of the bread and the wine at the Lord’s Supper, we are reminded that first of all the wheat was cut down, that it was crushed and ground, and that then it passed through the heated oven; all of which is a reminder of the Lord Jesus going through the fires of man’s rejection and of God’s judgment for us. In this respect the remembrance feast is like pillars of smoke as we recall His substitutionary death.

Why the myrrh? Because, the bride and we must ever keep in remembrance the One who loved us and gave Himself for us. How often we have sensed the sweet-smelling myrrh on a person coming up out of the waters of baptism. Because of his identification with Christ in His death, he was morally and spiritually happy. His obedience to the will of God filled his heart with joy.

Was not our Lord Jesus the merchant man who “went and sold all that He had and bought the field, that He might obtain the one pearl of great price? Where did He

find that pearl? Was it not in the field of the world? He purchased the field in order to possess the pearl.

The name of Solomon here is prophetic, and suggests our heavenly Bridegroom, our Lord Jesus. The threescore valient men of Israel who protected Solomon cause us to think of the angels and their ministry during the life of our Lord on earth. They were with Him at His birth, at His baptism, at the time of His temptation, in Gethsemane, and in the tomb after He arose from the dead. These valients are also with His Bride; we read, "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them."

Any little grievance is more exaggerated at night than in the day. In all our fears we can say with Isaiah, "God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid" (Isa. 12:2).

The chariot mentioned in this chapter could not have been a vehicle of travel or of war, for its description proves it to be emblematic. Pillars mean support: our salvation rests upon the strong support, the atonement accomplished by Christ on the cross. Silver abides the hot fire, so the work of redemption is eternal in its efficacy. The seat, like the mercy-seat on the ark of the covenant was of gold, symbolic of Christ's divine nature.

This meaning in the Song is precious, and draws us closer to Him in a more intimate relationship of love. As we come to Him we find grace to help in times of need.

The Bride will be eventually without spot or wrinkle, which idea corresponds with the colour of blue, it is heavenly. "If ye suffer with Him (the scarlet), we shall also reign with Him" (the purple).

How easy it is to read the text casually, and see only the crowning of a king in his earthly glory! If we understand through the reading of this beautiful Song the hidden truths of the Church of the Firstborn, we will not only say, but obey, “Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach” (Heb. 13:13).

The Progress of the Soul (Part 5) (Apr 1963)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 9 No. 4, Apr 1963.

Comments on the Song of Solomon — Chapter Four

The Scriptures are likened to a mirror in both the Old and New Testaments. They may thus be used to show a man the failures of his behaviour. Alas, there are times when one thus using them turns away and forgets what manner of individual he is. There is still another way in which the Scriptures may be used as a mirror, and that is to see in them the Lord and Saviour. If truly exercised, even although the picture may be blurred because of man’s defective vision, he sees himself growing more and more like the Blessed One reflected in the divine looking glass.

In the first part of this chapter, the loveliness of the bride is seen in the seven feminine features mentioned. This fact illustrates that Christ looks upon the Church as beautiful. Christ sees her what He has made her now as well as what she shall be when He presents her before His Father without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. He speaks of her as having doves’ eyes toward Him, her lover and comforter; He also speaks of her as having eyes of sympathy, grace, and forgiveness for others, even them that are without.

The bride’s long hair seems to be akin to that of the Nazarite, in that she wills it to be so, as an outward expression of love and devotion to her beloved. The long hair of the goat was the pride and glory of Gilead. The Bible says that the long hair of the woman is her glory.

The teeth have a vital connection with food and health, with proper digestion and assimilation. This is no less true of spiritual food and health. When Solomon pleaded, “Feed me with food convenient,” he meant spiritual food, for he added, “Lest I say, who is the Lord?”

Can our beloved say of us, “Thy speech is comely?” How often we let evil remarks escape our lips with a smile! Do our words reflect a soul that “has come up from the washing?” The bride has no broken teeth, not one lost, none set on edge through eating wild grapes. Sheep are clean animals which do not feed on unsuitable food, but in green pastures and beside the still waters.

God is not speaking to the worldly person in this Song, but to a heavenly people. Christ prophectically speaks here of His Bride in different aspects. He wants His glory to be reflected by her demeanour. The scarlet thread of her lips is the evidence of His redemptive power, for it is His blood that cleanseth from all sin. King David prayed, “Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth, and keep the door of my lips.” The bridegroom does not refer to the whole pomegranate, but to a piece of one. The reference is to the red and white centre of the fruit. The broken seeds give out a reddish liquid, and the pulp of the fruit is white mixed with red. These colours indicate the chaste life of one redeemed by the blood of Christ.

Solomon said, “The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it, and are safe.” Weapons are mentioned here which are used for the protection of the Bride: the shield, the truth, and the sword. The shield is her faith, the truth is divine doctrine, and the

sword is the Bible. How many professing Christians are side-tracked because of their neglect of the Word of God, their sword is rusty, dusty, or mislaid, and not available when needed! Not only is our armour in this tower, but there are also one thousand shields of mighty men that have been taken from the enemy. God does not want us to be satisfied with a few victories in life, but many, for we are “more than conquerors through Him that loved us.”

Before the new day breaks, the day of glorious resurrection, the sin of unbelief and all the shadows it casts will be done away. “His eyes are purer than to behold evil, and He cannot look on iniquity.”

There is an odour in the spiritual frankincense of this Song. Here it is: “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, whence cometh my help; my help cometh from the Lord.” What is this fragrance? Listen! Here it is: “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth Me; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation of the Lord.” When that day breaks, and the shadows flee away, may we not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

The way to become relatively perfect before Him is to do His will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ.

There are some reasons why the bridegroom does not want his bride to remain in the mountains; there are dangers there. The borderland mountains of Canaan illustrate far us spiritual perils from which our heavenly Bridegroom would call us. “Come with Me, My spouse,” come entirely away from those borderlands of the world; “Come out from among them and be ye separate.”

The bridegroom sees in her eye the reflection of his own love, and admires her eyes and her whole person. One chain of her neck, the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, is in his sight of great price. Our Beloved delights to see in us the fruit of the Spirit. When a soul is born again, it begins a new life in Christ Jesus with a new behaviour. The Lord says, “To him that ordereth his conversation aright will I show the salvation.” This is associated with the sacrifice of praise, the fruit of our lips giving thanks in His name.

Paul was as a garden enclosed in that he was a chosen vessel unto Christ. In a lesser measure we can say, “God who hath sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” A pomegranate is the symbol of a chaste life, a pure heart, a spiritual fruitfulness, and a close discipleship with the Lord. Paul spoke of himself as “always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.” The bride in this Song is likened not only to a garden enclosed but to a fountain of gardens. This could mean that other gardens were the outcome of hers. One woman, a Canaanite stranger, received the words of the Lord Jesus, and her conversation resulted in the salvation of many of the Samaritans. Solomon spoke also of the well-spring of wisdom, the words of a man’s mouth. The prophet Amos bids us to “let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as mighty streams.”

Troubles of the mind and soul are just as real as any tangible problem in life. Whatever adversity that may come into our lives, and that we may call “the north wind” is known to our heavenly Father. Jesus said to Nicodemus, “The wind bloweth where it listeth,” but the

winds allowed of God in our lives do not come by chance. He knows how to temper the north wind by the south. “The Lord hath His way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of His feet.”

The Bible says, “Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands.” How many homes are broken up, lives marred, and children lost to the home, and some to the Lord forlack of this! Notice God’s order for a happy fruitful home life! The Lord says, “Husbands, love your wives.” Before actually speaking to either wife or husband, He says, “Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.” When one can pray as did the Lord, “Not My will, but Thine be done,” then this prayer of the bride will become his prayer also. The wife would then be willing to be all that the Lord expects her to be. The husband as the head of the home would in like manner realize that Christ was head over him. Together they could then sing truthfully, “Take my life, and let it be consecrated Lord to Thee.”

The Progress of the Soul (Part 6) (May 1963)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 9 No. 5, May 1963.

Comments on the Song of Solomon — Chapter Five

In this part of the Song, the Bridegroom speaks in the past tense of an event still future. Isaiah the Prophet does likewise, he points forward to the coming of Christ, yet speaks of Him as if He had already come: “He was despised… He hath borne our griefs,… He was wounded for our transgressions, … He hath put Him to grief” (Isa. 53). These words refer not to the coming of Christ as the Bridegroom, but to His coming as Saviour to do the will of God. Not only did He come to redeem man, to salvage what was possible from a lost and condemned world, but He came also to win for Himself a Bride. “Christ loved the Church, and gave Himself for it.” Inasmuch as God has given us the power to become the children of God, we are said to be members of His Body, of His flesh, and of His bones. This, O Friends, is why the Bridegroom in our Song can call mortals “My sister, My spouse.” Paul espoused the Church as a chaste virgin unto Christ.

Myrrh is very bitter to the taste, but it yields an exceeding pleasant odour. The myrrh of Jesus’ cup which was given to Him of the Father was bitter indeed for He prayed, “O My Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me except I drink it, Thy will be done.” Yet, its odour was a sweet savour to the Lord. “It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief; when Thou shalt make His soul an offering for sin, He shall

see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand."

The spices speak of the fragrance produced by the reproaches which He suffered from His own people, before the tribunal of Herod, before Pilate, and at the hands of the soldiers.

That our Lord Jesus drank His wine with His milk may be taken to mean the wine of cheer and of blessing. When He prayed in the garden, did not an angel appear to strengthen Him? After the last passover, He took "bread to strengthen and wine to cheer." This Bridegroom speaks of His friends. "For all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you. Ye are My friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you." "He that cometh to Me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst."

Sleep for rest and recuperation is one matter, but sleep because of negligence and indolence is quite another. The Scripture warns, "Therefore, let us not sleep as do others; but let us watch and be sober."

In Matthew's Gospel it is stated, "And when He had sent the multitude away, He went up into a mountain apart to pray." And Luke tells us that "He continued all night in prayer to God." Many other times Jesus crossed the brook Cedron, where was a garden, a place which Mark says "was named Gethsemane." Need we wonder then, that His blessed head was filled with dew? How vividly do we see this prophecy of our Song fulfilled in the Lord Jesus!

From verse two throughout the rest of the chapter, the voice of the Bride is heard; she has taken off her coat, settled down, and does not want to be disturbed. Are we

too as ready to condole our weak spiritual condition with make-shift excuse? The Lord never forces Himself into the privacy of anyone's heart. He was on the outside of Nicodemus' heart, but appealed for admittance, and thus kindly told him, "Ye must be born again."

The Bride becomes aroused and moved deeply as she sees the hand of her Bridegroom at the door. How gracious He is! "He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities."

We spend so much for that which is not bread, and our labour for that which satisfieth not with eternal values. It is no wonder that our Beloved withdraws Himself. Need it surprise us that long minutes of silence prevail in our worship meetings? These occasions ought to be filled with praise, adoration, and thanksgiving to our Beloved. We cannot seek Him with a divided heart, spending our affections upon mundane attractions.

The Bride was smitten and wounded by the city watchmen. It is the humble Christians who are chided by the religious element of society. Peter and John represented their Lord in Jerusalem, but the priests and captains of the temple came upon them, and smote them with their tongues, demanding, "By what power or by what name have ye done this?" They then took away their liberty, their vail, "and put them in hold unto the next day."

"If ye find my Beloved, tell Him that I am sick of (for) love." The Bride here is seen in Christ, "Therefore, if any man be in Christ he is a new creature." Her testimony to them, whether they hear or forbear is, "Tell my Beloved that I love Him, and that I need Him constantly, every hour; no tender voice like His can peace afford; I am

hungry for His love." When others asked her, "What is thy Beloved more than another Beloved?" they were admitting that they did not know Him, and that they were following other leaders; they were showing that some believed and some believed not.

"My Beloved is white and ruddy," said the Bride. The colour white suggests purity, and reminds one of the sinlessness of the Lord Jesus. "The Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying: Take you a lamb…, your lamb shall be without blemish." The white and the red signify the spotless One without blame, the slain One, the Lord Jesus.

Christ is the Head over all. The most fine gold symbolizes His Deity. The Prince of the kings of the earth is indeed God; notwithstanding, He loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood. Although "He was cut off out of the land of the living," He did not lose His youthfulness, nor did He die without generation. The Bride saw Him, as you and I may also see Him by faith, "The same yesterday, today, and forever."

The washing of His eyes with milk may suggest that all His actions in blessing upon His Church or in wrath upon His enemies, that all His words and doings are in accordance with the Word of God. His eyes are fitly set because He guides the affairs of men with righteousness and judgment. As spices yield their odours when crushed, even so was the life of the Lord Jesus fragrant under the reproaches suffered at the hands of wicked men.

The lips of her Beloved were pure as a lily because He spoke only the commandments of His Father. "The

words of the Lord are pure words," very pure, therefore the Bride loveth them.

The Bride views His hands with reverence. The beryl means that through all of Jesus' words and works we see the gold of His divine righteousness mingled with the blue of His heavenly character; His Diety is predominent over all. Jesus said of Himself, "Him hath God the Father sealed." He was sealed, so to speak, at His baptism by the voice from Heaven and by the descent of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove… We read in the Epistle to the Hebrews. "A body hast Thou prepared Me" (Heb. 10:5). Psalm 45 intimates that this blessed One in bodily form came out from the ivory palaces of Heaven. "All Thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made Thee glad" (V. 8).

The Good Samaritan was moved with compassion when he saw the man lying half dead by the roadside; even so, our Lord Jesus had compassion upon the multitude when He saw them faint and scattered abroad as sheep without a shepherd. All these figures of speech signify a deep feeling of divine compassion, symbolized by the wrought ivory.

The word for marble in our text is the same as that translated "fine linen" in other Scriptures. It expresses whiteness, and, of course, this typifies righteousness.

His countenance reminds us of another Scripture or two: "I will make a man more precious than fine gold." "The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace."

"His fruit was sweet to my taste." Whatever He said to men, He had first received and known the sweetness of

it Himself. The Bride looked at Him in every possible manner, and she found no fault in Him. May we too sing with another member of the heavenly Bride,

“Altogether lovely, He is altogether lovely,

And the fairest of ten thousand,

This wonderful Friend divine;

He gave Himself to save me,

Now He lives in Heaven to keep me,

He is altogether lovely,

Is this wonderful Saviour of mine.”

Spiritual Progress of the Soul (Part 7) (June 1963)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 9 No. 6, June 1963.

Roland Thompson

Comments On The Song Of Solomon — Chapter Six

In this chapter, for the second time, the daughters of Jerusalem address the Bride as “Thou fairest among women.” These daughters of Jerusalem may represent the religious people who know about the Bride of Christ, but who have not received Him as their Beloved.

Let us try to discover who were the righteous and who were the wicked. The Lord Jesus said to the Pharisees, “Ye are they which justify themselves among men, but God knoweth your hearts.” He also spoke about certain who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and despised others, telling them of a parable about two men who went up into the temple to pray, and indicating that only one of them was justified before God. Stephen asked the Jews, “Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted, and slain? And ye have been now the betrayers and murders of the Just One.” To whom was Stephen speaking on that occasion? To the high priest, the whole Jewish Counsel, and to false witnesses. Did they not know that he was witnessing to them about his Beloved Lord? They did; “They stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, and cast him out of the city, and stoned him.”

These Jews were not the heathen, the ungodly, or the openly wicked; they were part of the nation of Israel, the

children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They deemed themselves to be righteous, to be sure, and despised others, rejecting the Prince of Peace, saying, “We will not have this man to reign over us.” How can one think these daughters of Jerusalem wanted to seek the Beloved with an honest heart? With a desire to worship Him? The Lord knoweth them that trust in Him.

“My Beloved is gone down into His garden.” His garden was not a literal one of shrubbery and herbs. This garden was in Mary’s heart and He was there enjoying communion. This is indicated by her talk to one whom she supposed to be the gardener, Jesus, after He had arisen from the tomb. The spices mentioned were the sorrows He suffered at the hand of man, His rejection, the rebellion of the masses against Him, and the jeers of the ungodly.

As the Bridegroom feeds in the garden of the heart, He expects also to gather lilies. Nicodemus was one of the lilies our Beloved gathered. He calls His lilies out of the world, for He is, during this era, taking out a people for Himself. These are the lilies He came to gather. He says, “Gather My saints together unto Me.”

How many hymns and spiritual songs have been written embracing the grand thought, “Oh! I am my Beloved’s, and my Beloved’s mine.” “I know He’s mine, this Friend so dear; He walks with me, He’s ever near. Ten Thousand charms around Him shine, but best of all, I know He’s mine!”

The name Tirzah means benevolent, well-pleasing. Because she has been faithful and true to her Beloved, she is an overcomer, and to Him she is beautiful. He sees more and more of Himself in her love, her devotion,

her loyalty, and her worship. May we, too, grow into Christ's image, and be renewed in the inward man day by day, until, on the Day of the Lord Jesus, we are fully like Him.

The hair of the Nazarite was the symbol of separation, and the meaning of Gilead is a hill of witness. The goats of Gilead with their long hair were not peculiar to one another, but to persons seeing them. To the Great Shepherd, His own are a very special prize, with a value like to that of the pearl of great price. The Beloved of the Bride had His own reasons for speaking of some of her features. The Bride's beauty that had been marred had now been changed by the hearing of His voice. She had returned to feeding among His flocks, and that had resulted in her sanctification.

Since this Song is about the Bride, the true Church, the mention of queens, concubines, and virgins, may be taken as an allegory of spurious religious elements. The overall picture of this Song is futuristic. The heavenly Bride is seen growing from Pentecost; the false bride, Her imitator, since shortly after; they grow together like the wheat and the tares.

The Scriptures tell us that many thousands of Israel came out of Egypt, yet God viewed them as one people, calling the entire nation Israel, a peculiar treasure. "So, we, being many are one Body in Christ, and every one members one of another. For there is one Body, and one Spirit." There was no Eve until Adam fell into the deep sleep; furthermore, there was no Church until after Christ died and rose again. As Eve was taken from Adam's side, even so does the Church come from Christ, and is "bone of His bone, and flesh of His flesh."

There are occasions when men persecute God's children; yet, there are other times when they bless them and realize that it is through the children of God that they are being blessed. Laban said, "I have learned by experience that the Lord hath blessed me for thy sake."

The picture of the Bride being "as fair as the moon" may be considered prophetically of the Church as she passed through "the dark ages." In the life of Paul his conversion was the beginning of a new day, a new morning. Nevertheless, there were dark periods in his service. For example, "The Jews spake against those things which were spoken by Paul, contradicting and blaspheming." Eventually, he shone fair as the moon in the jail at Philipi. Others saw the light of the glory of Christ in the faces of Paul and Silas.

The garden mentioned here is different from others mentioned in this Song. In a garden little grows naturally of itself, all requires cultivation, so nothing is good in the heart but what is planted there by the heavenly Husbandman.

The whole theme of the Song of Solomon is that of spiritual growth among God's people, the life and development of the Bride. The pomegranates may refer therefore to the priesthood of believers coming before the Lord in worship. The fruit and its colouring suggest crucifixion and the buds and blossoms new life to come. The Apostle Paul wrote, "I am crucified with Christ nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Spiritual Progress of the Soul (Part 8) (July 1963)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 9 No. 7, July 1963.

Roland Thompson

Comments on the Song of Solomon — Chapter Seven

The marks of royalty are upon the Bride! The Church, of which she is a type, is like her Lord. Is He heavenly; then she also is heavenly. Behold, what maner of love He has bestowed upon her, that she should be called, “O Prince’s daughter.” A consideration of what He has done for her, and what He has done for us, causes the heart to bow in adoration and worship.

Throughout the Song, the Bridegroom called the Bride, “My love,” “My dove,” for she was precious to Him, very precious.

Long ago He had advised her to “go thy way forth by the footsteps of the flock,” now He, her Beloved, rejoices in her obedience, and exclaims, “How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O Prince’s daughter!” The prophet states why her feet were so lovely, “How beautiful upon the mountain are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth salvation.” The Bride had been witnessing to those in the city, and that enhanced her greatly in the eyes of her Beloved.

Shoes suggest that the Bride possessed dignity and at the same time a peaceful disposition for the shoes speak of being shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace. Jesus’ first words to His disciples after His resurrection were, “Peace be unto you.”

“The joints of thy thighs… the work of the hands of a cunning workman.” The expression used in these verses may seem crude to some, but “to the pure all things are pure.” These statements are a description of the Church in feminine form. The thigh is that part of the leg in which lies the strength for walking and running. It is the symbol of steadfastness and stability in our spiritual walk. The hips, or loins, are supported by the girdle of truth. What a “jewel” truth is! We are exhorted to “stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth.” The navel and the belly would speak of the secret parts of the person, the vitals. Jeremiah quoted the saying of the Lord, “I will put My law in their inward parts.”

“A heap of wheat:” This too is an analogy. The wheat symbolizes food, and reminds us of the words of the Lord Jesus, “I am the bread of life.” Our Lord Jesus is the only sustenance upon which believers can feed and grow. Oh, that God’s people in this regard were like the Bride, that they would feed upon the bread of life in order that they be strengthened for their confession of Christ!

“Thy two breasts:” These represent faith and love, the expressions of these Christian graces in our lives. In her early growth, the Church exercised faith in God and in His word, and much love to all the people of God. These are as vital and necessary in the present as they were in the church at Ephesus. Although she was persecuted and ridiculed earlier in this Song by those of the city, she still retained her faith and love as much a part of herself as her breasts.

“Thy neck:” The Beloved sees her growing spiritually, and likens her neck to a tower of ivory. This speaks of

wealth as well as strength for only kings could possess thrones of ivory and live in high towers.

“Thine eyes, like fishpools:” The fishpools give the thought of quietness and depth. The eyes of this Prince’s daughter had impressed her Beloved; He discerns in them a depth of perception.

“Thy hair like unto purple:” The idea of the hair being like purple may suggest that the early Christians yielded their glory to their heavenly King. They said with the Apostle Paul: “I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.”

“Thy stature like a palm tree:” The palm tree is frequently used in Scripture as a symbol of uprightness and of fruitfulness. We read, “They are upright as the palm tree.” The stature of the Bride is likened to the palm tree because it grows straight up in spite of heat and storm and winds. The Church will still stand before the Lamb clothed with white robes, and palms (of victory) in her hands. But why is the Bride made so upright and flourishing? The Psalmist gives the answer, “To show that the Lord is upright, He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him.”

“Thy breasts are clusters of grapes:” Why should these parts of her anatomy be associated with grapes? Did they not suggest the inseparable graces, faith and love? Yes, but here the added idea is that of the operation of faith and love which is precious fruit. That is why Christians are spoken of as branches of the vine; they are the channels used by the Beloved to give “the new wine of the Kingdom” to others. The Church is His body, and it is through the members of His body now on earth,

that He takes hold to save. When men open the door of their hearts to His knocking, He enters in to sup with them.

“His desire is toward me:” We do not know exactly when the Bride first received her Beloved, but shortly after she had made His acquaintance, she was taken by her King Lover into the chambers of fellowship and communion. He was not only to her a place of hiding and salvation, but He extended to her every possible blessing, He set her at His table in His banqueting house. She claimed Him personally so that she could say, “I am my Beloved’s and His desire is toward me.”

“Let us lodge in the villages:” The Bride sensed that she did not have to walk alone, that there was One closely associated with her, so she exclaimed: “Let us go forth!” “Let us lodge!” “Let us see!” It may be that she felt as Moses did when he prayed, “If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence.” Eventually, he also said, “Let my Lord go among us.” Moses could not go without God; the Bride could not go without her Beloved; no Christian can face the world without the companionship of the Lord Jesus.

“My loves:” Such was her love for her Bridegroom, she mentions it in the plural. The Bride bore all manner of virtues, but none greater than her love. This was the spiritual fruit in which she excelled. The Spirit of God tells us what some of this wonderful fruit might be, “Every scribe … is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.” This is what the Church, the Bride of Christ has been doing ever since Pentecost.

The Spiritual Progress of a Soul (Part 9) (Aug 1963)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 9 No. 8, Aug 1963.

Roland Thompson

Comments on the Song of Solomon — Chapter VIII

My brother!" "My mother!" exclaimed the Bride. In other words, she implied, if the daughters of Jerusalem and the men of the city were as dear to her as her brother, they would not ridicule nor look down upon her as they had been doing. Hence the inference, these were not of the divine family. One day when Jesus was alone with His disciples, He said, "Unto you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God; but unto them that are without all these things are done in parables."

The affections of which the Bride here speaks is that forgiveness and love the Christian manifests toward those who are without. Only those who belong to the Lord Jesus and are part of His Bride manifest divine love in the sphere of intimate fellowship.

Cuff, a negro slave, was cruelly beaten because he sought to witness for the Lord and exercise the ministry of intercession. Eventually the Lord began to deal with his worldly master. One night when his heart was deeply troubled about the things of God, the master sent for his slave, Cuff, and asked, "O! could you please pray earnestly for me?" Although his back was stinging with the lashes he had received, Cuff replied, "Yesm, bwess de Lawd, Massa, I'se ben praying for you all de night."

This illustrates the love that all who belong to the Bride of Christ should show toward them that are without.

The thought of the Bride leading others into her mother's house reminds one of Martha who received the Lord Jesus into her house, and of Paul who yearned over new converts as with a mother's heart. Members of the heavenly Bride should be busy inviting men and women into the house of God, their mother's house. The chief object in so doing would be to introduce others to their beloved. The spiced wine mentioned is for all such. Spiced wine suggests a mixture of joy and sorrow, of trial and triumph. The story is told of three Russian Christians who were awaiting the day of execution. As they sat in their cells, they sang praises to God. Other prisoners heard them, and finally through their testimony of the Lord, accepted Christ as Saviour, and joined in the singing. When the last day finally arrived, there were seven men who went singing into Heaven.

"His left hand." "His right hand." When her Beloved took her into His banqueting house, He revealed the left hand of His support under her head, and the right hand of His skill performing His will in her life. Much more does His hand support and His providence support His own now. Like the Bride in this Song, Christians during the dark ages were falsely accused and were made to suffer violent persecution; nevertheless, they knew His hands were under them to strengthen and to enbolden them with courage. Each could say, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day."

"Leaning upon her Beloved." This idea may be applied to every believer in the Lord Jesus. We often pray that God

might not lead us into temptation, into more trials than we are able to bear. For example Paul besought the Lord to remove the messenger of Satan, the thorn in the flesh which the Lord sent in order that he be not exalted above measure. Notwithstanding the prayer, the Apostle submitted to the will of the Lord; he knew the blessing of leaning upon his Beloved, the Lord Himself. He asserted, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.”

The early Christians had the same perfect assurance that the hymn-writer expressed: “Under His wings, I am safely abiding; Though the night deepens, and tempests are wild; Still I can trust Him; I know He will keep me; He has redeemed me, I am His child.”

“Thy mother brought thee forth.” Paul speaks of two mothers in the Epistle to the Galatians chapter four which represent two systems, the one of bondage the other of liberty. One is the legal system connected with Sinai, the other the spiritual system of grace and freedom called “Jerusalem which is from above.” Paul says of the latter, “Jerusalem which is from above and is the mother of us all.” To this statement he adds another, “So then, brethren, we are not the children of the bond woman but of the free.”

“A seal upon thine heart.” Did not the bride set her Beloved upon her heart as a seal? Did she not know that she was sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, and that she was to close her heart to all others save the Lord Jesus?

“Love is strong as death.” That is divine love, which like death overcomes every obstacle.

“Jealousy is cruel as the grave.” Why did Herod slay all the children of Bethlehem, from two years old and under? He was jealous of the One who had been born King of the Jews, the One the Wise Men spoke about. Why did Herod kill John the Baptist? Because he was guilty of gross sin, and was jealous of him as a prophet. How cruel jealousy is!

“Coals of fire.” Many because of their Christian faith have suffered in the flames of jealousy. A servant of Christ, by name Walther, was considered a dangerous heretic; although he evaded capture for years, he was finally caught near Cologne, Germany, and burned at the stake. Another Dutch Christian refused to recant, and was likewise thrown into the flames.

“Many waters cannot quench love.” In times of trial and affliction some of God’s children have felt like Jonah when he said, “The waters compassed me about, even to the soul.” During such periods of infirmity and persecution the Bride of Christ has heard His words of comfort, “Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine.”

“We have a little sister.” This sister of the Bride is small of stature in comparison to her older sister the Bride who is likened by her Beloved to a palm tree. This little sister is quite immature; consequently, there is no sign of full development. In contrast to the Church this may be true of Israel. Alas, it is true of many Christians for when they should be fully grown, they need still to be nursed, and when they should be eating the strong meat of the Word of God, they need to be fed with milk.