

Rills from the Fountains of Israel.

LOVE TO CHRIST OUGHT TO BE, IN INDIVIDUALS AND IN CHURCHES, NOT A DECLINING
BUT A GROWING PRINCIPLE.

The "first love," should be the last love; only with the difference of a constantly progressive accumulation of energy, during the entire course of Christian experience. "The last" should be "more than the first." The case is a widely different one from that of any love we can bear to a fellow creature. When, in an earthly friend, we discover those excellencies which become the basis of an admiring and fond attachment—that friend may indeed turn out one whose engaging qualities, the longer and the closer our intimacy, are ever presenting themselves in increasingly attractive and interesting lights, and in whom, to our partial fancy at least, new ones are ever opening to our view. But where, among human friends, is that extraordinary one to be found, in whom such intimacy detects no failure, no defects, no flaws, no drawbacks? In the case of the Saviour, on the contrary, the character is one in which all is the absolute perfection of divine and human excellence,—unblemished loveliness—every attribute of the divine, infinite—of the human, sinless. There is no defect, no flaw, no drawback there. And, as to what he has done for us, and the amount of obligation under which he has laid us, we must be able to comprehend divinity and eternity, before we can form a just estimate of either. Before we can calculate the amount of his condescension and grace, when, "though he was rich,"—divinely rich—"for our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be rich." We must comprehend *divinity*, so as to measure the distance between what he was and what he became—between the throne of the universe and the manger of Bethlehem; and before we can duly appreciate the value of those riches which, in possession and in hope, he has made ours, we must comprehend *eternity*, with all the difference, too, between that eternity in hell, and that eternity in heaven. Here, then,—whether our "first love" be regarded as the love of gratitude for blessings bestowed, or the love of complacency in character manifested—we see room for everlasting increase; the excellencies of the character, and the glories of the work, being alike inexhaustible; every fresh contemplation of them, enhances those excellencies and that glory, to our minds, fills us with a growing admiration, and imparts additional intensity to both our delight and our thankfulness. And this will be the case *for ever*. The increase will be eternally progressive. We say of our love, that in heaven it will be *perfect*. And in a certain sense it is true. There will be no alloy in our love, no feeling out of harmony with it; and our hearts will be as full of it as they can hold. But if by *perfect* we mean *incapable of increase*, it is not true. It will be ever growing. This, through eternity, will be the case with our conceptions of the person, and character, and work of the Son of God. What mind, even in heaven, will ever be able to take in a full comprehension of that which, from its nature, is infinite? And what heart there will ever be able to love him up to the full extent of his desert to be loved, that desert too, being infinite? The angelic knowledge of God was, from the beginning, perfect. There was no error in it; and there was no deficiency from any one of its perfections being left out. They knew it in all its harmonious completeness. But still it was knowledge that admitted of infinite increase and amplification. It grew with their growing observations and experience of the creative and administrative wisdom, and power, and goodness, of the Maker and Governor of the universe. When our world was framed and furnished, "these Morning Stars sang together—these Sons of God shouted for joy." It gave them a new view of God. It amplified their conceptions of him, and elevated their sentiments and emotions of adoring homage. And incomparably more was this the case, as the mysteries of redemption were unfolded. By that most glorious of God's plans and doings, their knowledge of him was still more enlarged and elevated. "Unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places was made