

Love in the Song and eschatological glory

1. Union

In the Song we have (Alter) the 'great love poem of commingling – of different realms, different senses, and of the male and female bodies'. Here we encounter, 'the poetics of intertwinement'. Smell and taste get inside you.

In the life of the triune God there is union and communion. Humans – male and female – made in the image of God reflect that union and communion. And the end of all things sees the marriage (union and communion) of God and humankind.

In glory we enjoy union (not monism) which is both healing (the 'primal wound of separation') and maturity ('becoming like the Other').

2. Life

In the Song this union is full of Life. Life in nature (springtime, Easter-time) awakens and accompanies life in the couple. After all, love is stronger than death. Life and love go together – to love is to give my life: my life and my love are both myself.

In glory, all is life. There is no more death because we are united with God who is life. God gives us himself which is to give us life which never ends.

3. Possession

In the Song: "My beloved is mine and I am his".

In the covenant: "I will be your God and you will be my people."

This union and life are possession.

To possess is to have the life which consists in ruling (property)

To be possessed is to have the life which consists in giving (to give my life away (lay it down) is to find it).

And not only do they possess one another and themselves but they possess the world, too: "Both of them delight in the sound of the first person plural: 'our bed', 'our roofbeams', 'our rafters', 'our wall', 'our land', 'our doors', – taking possession, as a couple, of the world around them."

So in glory: God and his people possess each other, themselves, and the world in the union and life of love.

4. Praise

'The lavish exchange of compliments ... they vie in the gallantries of praise.'

In the Song; in the covenant; in glory

5. Hope

That praise has a past, a present, and a future to it. In the Song, wooing is part of praise. 'The lovers deluge one another with words and gestures of desire before they act to *fulfil* desire.' They do not assume or anticipate – 'each must be won by the other'.

There's always more. If love is giving self and God is infinite and we are his image then ... there's always more.

6. Transcendence

Recurring question – do we best conceive of the glory of the eschaton as “God in the world” or “the world in God”?

Familiar with the initial thought: “The Bride eyes not her garment, but her dear Bridegroom’s face; I shall not gaze on glory but on my King of grace; not on the crown he giveth, but on his nail-pierced hand. The Lamb is all the glory, in Immanuel’s land.”

Or (Rutherford again):

We want HIM! I should refuse heaven if Christ were not there. Take Christ away from heaven and it is but a poor, unheartsome, dark, waste dwelling. Heaven without Christ would look like the direful Land of Death. Ah, saith Christ, your joy must be full, John 14.3, then *I will come again and receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also*. I confess, mansions are but as places of briars and thorns without Christ. I want heaven in order to have Christ, not Christ in order to have heaven.

For sure, “where the beloved is, there is the Kingdom of God”. The happy couple “imparadised in one another’s arms.”

But it's not just person *rather than* environment. The garden is the promised land is the temple is Israel herself. “The lovers discover themselves in an Eden, thriving and abundant, a Promised Land of vines and fig trees, pomegranates, wheat, milk and honey.” But just as much as that, so also, “The lovers discover in themselves an Eden”.

“In more explicit erotic literature, the body in the act of love often seems to displace the rest of the world. In the Song, by contrast, the world is constantly embraced in the very process of imagining the body. The natural landscape, the cycle of the seasons, the beauty of the animal and floral realm, the profusion of goods afforded through trade, the universal skill of the artisan, the grandeur of cities, are all joyfully affirmed as love is affirmed.”

Rutherford one more time:

When Christ shall circle his glorious arm about your head and you rest in an infinite compass of surpassing glory, when glory (or ripened grace) shall be within you, and without you, above, and below, when feet of clay shall walk upon pure surpassing glory, then the thoughts of all your present soul-troubles shall be as shadows that passed away ten thousand years ago.

7. Wholeness

Wholeness and fulfilment in the Other.

The seal is identified with the person. She wants to *be* the seal. “She asks him to take her as the visible mark and surety of his own identity; she petitions to be indispensable to his being who he is.”

Eph 1.23 – “you complete me.”

Knowing and being myself truly only in and through the Other. This is a fact in the life of God. It is a fact in the life of humans. And it is a fact also in the life of God and humans together: the Father knows himself in the Son whose body is the church and whose Bride is his own self.