

THE GRAPES OF ESHCOL

— OR —

Gleanings from the Land of Promise

— OR —

*Meditations on the Glories of
Heaven*

By John MacDuff, 1861

"And they came unto the brook of Eshcol, and cut down from thence a branch with one cluster of grapes, and they bare it between two upon a staff; and they brought of the pomegranates, and of the figs. The place was called the brook Eshcol, because of the cluster of grapes which the children of Israel cut down from thence. And they returned from searching of the land after forty days. And they went and came to Moses, and to Aaron, and to all the congregation of the children of Israel, unto the wilderness of Paran, to Kadesh; and brought back word unto them, and unto all the congregation, and showed them the fruit of the land. And they told him, and said, We came unto the land where you sent us, and surely it flows with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it." — Numbers 13:23-27

"But as it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him." — 1 Corinthians 2:9

PREFACE

Speculative discussion, attractive illustration, or the systematic treatment of a great theme, will not be found in these pages. They consist mainly of simple meditations on the glories of a Future World — fragmentary thoughts and reflections, written with special reference to the chamber of sickness, the couch of suffering, and the home of bereavement.

Nothing surely can so cheer the fainting believer, bowed down with sin and sorrow, as the prospect of Heavenly bliss. It is the thought of the joy in the morning of immortality which dries earth's bitterest tears. The heart of the child leaps at the sight of his Father's house. The lights in the distant windows cannot fail to revive his spirit and quicken his footsteps.

The following are a few such distant rays from "the Excellent Glory" — a few GRAPES gathered by Faith and Hope, the two spies from the true Canaan — a few Pisgah-glimpses of its Vineyards and Olive-yards. Glimpses, indeed, they only are — at best fitful and transient; for even the mount of faith is oftentimes wreathed with clouds and vapors, dimming to the brightest vision its views of the future. But shadowy and indistinct as at best they must be, they may help us the better to descend the Valley, complete our warfare, and, finally, with our pilgrim-staff, "to pass over this Jordan." By revealing a distant view of the crown, we may be enabled the more cheerfully to bear the cross.

"The very hope we have of Heaven, works wonderful joy in the heart of a Christian. David did not live to see the glory of Solomon's temple, but he made provision for it, and cast the model of it, and he took much delight in the contemplation of what it would be. Here are some sparks, some beginnings of the Glory of Heaven, and of that great joy which we shall have hereafter." (Usher, 1638)

The night-watch, with some whose eyes may trace these pages, cannot now be long. Already the gray streaks of morning may be telling that they are

"nearing sunrise." New strains of celestial music may be wafted from the half-opened portal — new voices from the spirit-land heard saying, "Come up here." "Strangers and pilgrims" on the earth! let your thoughts be in Heaven. Let the gaps and cracks which trial, in its varied forms, may have made in the walls of your frail earthly tabernacle, only serve to let the rays of the ineffable glory shine more brightly through. May these feeble foretastes quicken your longings for the full and gladsome fruition.

There has been no attempt to link the chapters together by any train of consecutive thought. Each, purposely short, is independent of what precedes or follows. The reader may, moreover, find similar ideas or reflections more than once reappearing. But as the grand leading characteristics of Heavenly happiness, revealed in Scripture, are comparatively few, such repetition (in the case of a devotional series) was, to a certain extent, unavoidable; and by those who read for profit, not for criticism, will be readily understood and forgiven.

REST

"There remains therefore a rest to the people of God." — Hebrews 4:9

How sweet the music of this first heavenly chime floating across the waters of death from the towers of the new Jerusalem!

Pilgrim, faint under your long and arduous pilgrimage, hear it! It is REST. Soldier, carrying still upon you the blood and dust of battle, hear it! It is REST. Voyager, tossed on the waves of sin and sorrow, driven here and there on the world's heaving ocean of vicissitude, hear it! The haven is in sight! The very waves that are breaking on the shore seem to murmur — "So He gives His beloved REST." It is the long-drawn sigh of

existence at last answered. The toil and travail of earth's protracted week is at an end. The calm of its unbroken Sabbath is begun.

This Heavenly Rest will be a rest from SIN.

Sin is the great disturber of the moral universe. The world — the soul — was once like an Aeolian harp; every passing zephyr woke it into melody. Now it is tuneless, unstrung; its notes dissonant and harsh. Not until the Sabbath morning of Heaven dawns, will the old harmonies be restored. Joyful anticipation! Perfect and entire emancipation, not only from all temptation without, but from all bias to evil within. No latent principle of corruption — no depressing consciousness of inherent sin — no germinating seeds or roots that can develop themselves into fruit — no languid frames — no guilty fears and apprehensions — no sorrowful estrangements from that Love whose smile is Heaven — a rest from Satan's deceitful wiles and insidious snares — these no longer felt or feared. What more can be needed? A rest from sin, and a rest in God. As the needle in the compass, after many tremulous vibrations, at last settles in steady repose in the direction of its pole, so the redeemed spirit — all its tremblings, and faintings, and fitful aberrations at an end — shall remain, with its refined energies, its ennobled powers, and purified aspirations undeviatingly fixed and centered on Jehovah Himself. Its eternal motto will be — "This is my rest forever."

Heaven will be a Rest from all DOUBT and ERROR.

Here on earth, how much there is of darkness and uncertainty! The volume of the Divine ways is a mysterious volume. As the breath dims the window-pane in looking out on the fairest landscape, so the breath on the windows of sense and sight often obscures the glory of the moral landscape, causing us to exclaim — "Now we see through a glass darkly!" The material world around us, and the spiritual world within us, are full of enigmas which we cannot solve; much more may we expect marvels and mysteries in the ways and dealings of God — "deep judgments!"

But then all will be cleared up. "In Your light shall we see light." The day will then break, and the looming murky shadows shall forever flee away. Doctrinal difficulties will be explained, apparent inconsistencies removed, withering doubts forever silenced. No more impeachments of the Divine veracity, or questionings of the Divine procedure. Looking down from the summit of the everlasting hills on the mazy windings of the earthly pilgrimage, every ransomed tongue will have the one confession — "He has done all things well."

The Rest of Heaven will be a rest from SORROW and SUFFERING.

This is a weeping world. Deny it who may; it has its smiles, but it has as often its tears. You who have the cup of its joys fullest, be thankful while it is yours; but carry it with a trembling hand. The head that is now planning its golden projects may tomorrow be laid on the pillow of sickness, with the dim night-lamp its companion for weary months. The joyous circle, now uninvaded by the King of Terrors, may tomorrow be speaking of their loved and lost." The towering fabric of human happiness, which is now rapidly being built, may, in the twinkling of an eye, become a mass of ruins.

But if "weeping endures for the night," "joy comes in the morning." Yet a little while, mourning believer! and you will shed your last tear, heave your last pang. Once enter that peaceful haven, and not one wave of trouble shall ever afterwards roll. The very fountain of your tears will be dried. Your remembrance of all the tribulations of the nether world will be like the visions of some unquiet dream of an earthly night, which the gladsome sunshine of morning has dispelled, the confused memories of which are all that remain. "And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away."

Here on earth, our trials are needed. The angel has to come down "to trouble the waters," in order to make us sensible of His presence. It is when the pool is disturbed we see most of our God. But in Heaven, though the Great Angel will be ever present, there will be no more waters to trouble. It is "a sea of glass." The last ripple of the last murmuring billow will break upon the shores of Jordan, and "immediately" there will be "a great calm."

The Rest of Heaven is a rest which REMAINS.

Nothing is permanent here. The best of earthly joys are evanescent — like the bubble rising to the surface of the stream, which glitters for a moment in the sunshine in its rainbow-hues, and then is gone, the place that knew it knowing it no more! But the rest above is eternal — no foe can invade it, no storms can disturb it. It is the rest of a final home, over the portals of which is written, "You shall go out no more."

Reader, do not pitch your tabernacle here on earth! Yours now is, or ought to be, a tent or nomad life. The Christian is a nomad in the present probation state. He has no fixed abode. His dwelling is constructed not of stones or enduring material. The rope, and the canvas, and the wooden pins, all indicate "a pilgrim and stranger on the earth."

It is a wilderness rest. He must be content with wilderness provision. If you have many sources of earthly happiness, regard them loosely. Let these rills only draw you nearer the Fountain-head — let these gifts only unite you closer to the Giver. "He gave them," says Richard Baxter, "to be refreshments in your journey; and would you dwell in your inn, and go no further?" Soon He Himself — your "exceeding joy" — will supersede them. The rill will be no longer needed when you have the Great Source; neither the starlight when you have the Sunlight; nor the creature-comforts when you have the Infinite Presence.

"There remains a rest!" Listen to this, child of suffering and sorrow! You who are beaten about now with "a great fight of afflictions," you will soon be at home — soon with God — and nothing then, evermore, to break the rapture of your bliss! Every time the sounding line is let down, the response is, "Nearer shore!" Sainted ones in that spirit-world, like the birds which greet the earthly voyager as he approaches land, are hovering around you, telling that your Home is at hand — that soon you shall furl your sails, and reach the desired haven. "My little bark," says one who has now realized her glowing anticipations, "is riding serenely through the storm, and soon I shall drop my anchor in the still waters of eternal rest and glory."

The joys of the Heavenly Rest will be ENHANCED BY CONTRAST.

This is one beautiful element in the contemplation of future bliss, which angels know nothing of — the joy of contrast. These Blessed Beings never knew what it was to sin or to suffer. These glorious Vessels, launched on the "summer seas of eternity," never knew what it was to wrestle with the tempest, or, like the shipwrecked apostle, to be "nights and days in the depths" of trial.

The blind man exults in the blessing of restored sight, in a way which others who have never known its loss can experience. The sick man appreciates the return of vigorous health, in a way which others can know nothing of who have never felt its privation. The laborer enjoys his nightly repose all the more by contrast with the hours of toil which preceded it. The soldier, after years of suffering and privation, appreciates the music of that word "home," as he never could have done unless he had undergone the terrible discipline of trench, and night-watch, and battlefield.

Will it not be the same with the believer in entering on his Rest? Will not his former experiences of suffering, and sin, and sorrow, enhance all his new-

born joys? It is said of saints, that they will be "equal to the angels." But in this respect they will be superior! The angel never knew what it was to have an eye dimmed with tears, or to be covered with the soil of conflict. He never can know the exquisite beauty of that Bible picture (none but the weeping pilgrim of earth can understand or experience it) where, as the climax of heavenly bliss, God is represented as "wiping away all tears from their eyes!" Beautiful thought! The weary ones from the pilgrim-valley seated by the calm river of life, bathing their temples — laving their wounds — ungirding their armor — the dust of battle forever washed away — and listening to the proclamation from the inner sanctuary — the soft strain stealing down from the Sabbath-bells of glory — "The days of your mourning are ended!"

Christian, has this glorious rest the place in your thoughts it ought to occupy? Are you delighting to have frequent Pisgah-glimpses of this Land of Promise? Are you living as the inheritor and heir of such a blessed immortality, "declaring plainly" that you "seek a better country?"

How sad, how strange, that the eye of faith should be dimmed to these glorious realities by the ephemeral and passing things of sense. Grovelers that we are! With all this wealth of glory within reach — with these deathless spirits claiming to outlive all time — that we should allow the seen and the temporal to eclipse the splendors of eternal day! "Reader, look to yourself, and resolve the question; ask conscience, and allow it to tell you truly that you put your eternal rest before your eyes as the great business you have to do in this world. Have you watched and labored with all your might that no man take your crown?" (Baxter)

Sit no longer cowering in darkness when light is streaming from your Father's windows and inviting you upwards. A few more rolling suns — a few more swings of Time's pendulum — and the world's curfew-bell will toll, announcing the Sabbath of eternity has come. Seek rest in Christ now. Flee to the crevices of

the Rock of Ages now, if you would nestle forever in the golden eaves of the eternal Temple. Be ever sitting on the edge of your nest, pluming yourself for flight — so that when death comes, "with wings like a dove" — the celestial plumage of faith, hope, and love — you may soar upwards to the Sabbath of your God, and be at rest FOREVER!

CEASELESS ACTIVITY

"They rest not day and night." — Revelation 4:8

What a seeming paradox is this! We last contemplated Heaven under the beautiful and significant figure of a state of rest — here it is spoken of as a state of unrest! "They rest" — "they rest not." It is what the old writers quaintly designate, "The rest without a rest." The combination of these two similitudes involves no inconsistency; they bring together two different but not antagonistic elements of happiness, which will have their highest exemplification in the bliss of a perfect world. The emblem suggests TWO VIEWS OF A FUTURE HEAVEN — First,

It is a state of ceaseless activity in the service of God.

Constituted as we now are, a condition of listlessness and inactivity is most detrimental to true happiness. Indeed, if we can judge from the references in Scripture to the constitution of higher and nobler natures, we are led to infer that activity is a great moral law among the loftiest orders of intelligent beings. Angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, the "burning ones and the shining ones," are "ministering spirits," engaged in untiring errands of love to redeemed man, and probably also to other provinces in God's vast empire. More, with reverence be it said, the Great God Himself is ever putting forth the unceasing activities of His omnipotence. "He who

keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps." "My Father," said Christ, "works hitherto, and I work." It is sublimely said of Him, "He faints not, neither is weary."

The human spirit has the same lofty heritage. Activity is linked with pure and unsullied enjoyment. The very curse of the sweat of the brow — the birthright of toil — is the birthright of mercy. A philosopher of ancient times said, if he had truth in his grasp, he would open his hand and let it fly away that he might enjoy the pursuit of it. Transfer this to Heaven. There the law and love of activity will still be a governing principle among the spirits of the glorified; and in this we shall be assimilated to the "living ones," whose very name indicates the ardor of their holy being. "They rest not!" There will be no more of the lassitude and languor of earth. Here our bodies are clogs and hindrances to mental activity. There the glorified frame will be a help and auxiliary to the ecstatic soul. Here the remains of indwelling corruption is like the chained corpse which criminals of old were compelled to drag behind them. It elicits the mournful cry, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?" That soliloquy will be heard no more in the "better country." There, every chain will be unloosed, and the uncaged spirit soar upwards unhampered by the impediments of its earthly fetters.

Glorious description! "They serve Him day and night." No more pauses from weariness or faintness; no more fitful frames and feelings. It has been said of God's people in the present world, *"Though they do not weary of their Master's work, they often weary in the work."* Their experience is impressively given in the Song of Solomon, when the Church, or believer in his earthly state, is represented as saying, "I sleep, but my heart wakes" — worldly cares and business and engrossments chaining down the soul, and inducing a state of drowsy insensibility. But there, they shall not require to "lift up the hands that hang down, and the feeble knees." No more waking up refreshed from the repose of exhausted nature — no more complaining that "the spirit is willing, but the

flesh is weak." If any of us have felt the pleasurable of doing good, even in a present imperfect, world, what will — what must — this feeling be, in a state of holy activity, with no sin or weakness to repress our ardor or dampen our energies?

And let us note the chief ingredient, the grand element, in this state of ceaseless employment. It will be THE SERVICE OF GOD. "They rest not day nor night," uttering the threefold ascription to a Triune-Jehovah — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit — "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord God of hosts." If activity be an essential element in true happiness, surely that happiness will be enhanced by the attractiveness of the service in which it is our privilege to be engaged. An earthly servant, possessed of an honorable nature, would feel himself obligated to perform work faithfully and conscientiously even to a bad master; but how would his joy in the performance of his duty be increased by the consciousness that he was serving some lofty and beneficent spirit who was an ornament to his station and revered by all? If we carry this law to the pinnacle of all greatness and moral excellence, surely here will be the crown and consummation of creature-happiness — cheerful duty in the service of Him whose favor is life!

What is the truest source of joy to an earthly child? Is it not by active duty, as well as by passive obedience, fulfilling his parent's wishes? Will he not even suffer much for the parent he loves? The earthly relationship is in this, as in many other respects, a beautiful type of the heavenly. What pure and unsullied delight will it afford the sainted spirit to be engaged constantly in doing the will of Him who is better and kinder than the best of earthly parents! Look at Him who, being "very man" as well as "very God," understood all the tenderest sensibilities of the human heart! What was the great (shall we say, the only) joy which brightened the pilgrimage of the Man of Sorrows? What was the one source of purest, ineffable delight to Him, as He toiled on His blood-stained path? Was it not the elevating consciousness of doing His heavenly

Father's will? — "My food is to do the will of Him that sent Me, and to finish His work!"

We are always most willing to serve those we love most. With what bounding joy, then, shall we embark in Heaven on errands of active service, when we shall there have unfolded to us (what we here know so little of) the unspeakable love of Him who for us spared not His own, His only Son! Oh, what a motive will there be here for all the energies of the glorified body, and all the faculties of the glorified spirit — to love, and serve, and honor, and adore Him, around whom our deepest affections are centered, and our heart of hearts entwined — getting ever nearer Him and more like Him — gazing more intently on His matchless perfections — diving more into the ocean-depths and mysteries of His love, and becoming the channels of conveyance of that love to others! Then, indeed, will duty be turned into enjoyment, and supreme and unswerving devotedness to His service be its own best reward.

It will be a consecration, too, not only of unfettered, unclogged, unwearied powers which earth never knew; there will be the still further element of a

PURE AND SINGLE-EYED DEVOTEDNESS.

Here, alas! in the holiest activities of the present state of being, there are ever, even when we ourselves may be insensible to them, the existence of mingled motives. Wretched SELF, in its thousand insidious forms, so imperceptibly creeps in, marring and mutilating our best endeavors to please God. Our best offerings are full of blemishes — our best thoughts are polluted with low, groveling cares. But there, SELF will forever be dethroned. This usurping Dagon will then be broken forever in pieces before the presence of the true Ark, in that temple wherein "there is nothing that defiles." God's glory will then be the one grand, absorbing, and terminating object of all desires and all aspirations — then, for the first time in reality, shall we come to realize and exemplify that great truth, which many from their childhood

have had on their lips — "Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever."

Thus will active and ceaseless occupation in the service of God form one of the sweetest employments and sources of happiness in the upper sanctuary. *"They rest," in a blessed absence from all sin, all suffering, all trial. "They rest not," in the lofty engagements of holiness.* Believers are called in this world by the name of "servants," "workmen," "husband-men." They will still retain these same designations of active duty. "His servants," we read, "shall serve Him." God, in every portion of His wide universe, seems to work by creature agency. He does not require to do so. A simple volition of His sovereign will would suffice to fulfill His counsels as effectually as if never an angel sped on His embassy of love! But as on earth He accomplishes His purposes in His Church by human agency, and as in Heaven He employs angelic agency — those who "excel in strength" "doing His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word" — so it would seem, as if in merciful consideration for the happiness of His glorified saints, He is to make this a permanent law through eternity; so that Heaven will be only a development of the present condition of Grace — with this single, but important difference, that there will be no sin.

Indeed, it is this very idea of Heaven as a state of action, that brings out the beauty of the former representation as a state of rest. Rest, to be enjoyed, supposes previous activity or labor; and although it can have no such relation in a place where weariness and fatigue are unknown, we can readily carry out the beautiful idea of Pollok, in his "Course of Time," of the ransomed spirit retiring from the loud hallelujahs around the throne, to hold its silent meditations apart by "the living fountains of waters" — this, however, only for a time — once more to return with unflagging and unabated energy to resume the song, and speed on new errands of love.

Reader, is this your anticipation of Heaven? — Heaven, not as it is pictured in the dreams of the sentimental or contemplative religionist — neither a drowsy Mohammedan paradise nor a state of torpor and inaction; but as it is known to angels, who are now, though unseen to us, traveling down to our world in ceaseless agencies of love and comfort? Do we realize this, and in realizing the grand truth, are we training for these lofty duties? — ready to take the angels' place, or to join the angels' company, on similar ministries to some other distant provinces of creation? What the poet has said of the present life is as true of its glorious counterpart hereafter — "Life is real, life is earnest."

Rest not until you have attained a well-grounded assurance that this future state of active blessedness is to be yours — that you are looking for it, preparing for it, ready for it. Test your fitness for the Heaven that is before you by the question, Do I delight now in energetic employment in the service of my God? Is prayer a season of refreshing? Does praise call into willing and gladsome exercise all the renewed affections of a Heaven-born nature? Is Sunday a joyful pausing-place in life's chequered journey — not a mere interlude of repose for the tired and jaded body after the incessant toils and cares of the week, but the day which summons into exercise the loftier activities of my nobler being? Do I spend it under the feeling of Eternity being an everlasting Sabbath, and that everlasting Sabbath occupied in some personal ministry of holiness and love?

In this present life there should, at least, be assimilations to the life hereafter. Though not in degree, it should be the same in kind. If activity in a little child gives indication of the energy and resolution of the man, so activity in the service of God, in a state of grace, will be the pledge and earnest of nobler activities in a state of glory.

"O blessed rest! when we 'rest not day and night, saying, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty!' — when we shall rest from sin, but not from worship — from

suffering and sorrow, but not from joy! O blessed day! when I shall rest with God — when I shall rest in knowing, loving, rejoicing, and praising! — when my perfect soul and body shall together perfectly enjoy the most perfect God — when God, who is love itself, shall perfectly love me, and rest in His love to me, and I shall rest in my love to Him — when He shall rejoice over me with joy, and joy over me with singing, and I shall rejoice in Him." (Baxter)

CONTINUAL PROGRESS

"They rest not day and night." — Revelation 4:8

We have already regarded this description of the Redeemed in Heaven — "They rest not" — as denoting a condition of ceaseless employment in the service of God. We may consider it now as suggesting a state of CONTINUAL PROGRESS.

If we have found activity to be a law of our nature, we may assert the same, with equal truth, with reference to progress. The mind is ever aspiring after advancement. "Not as though I had already attained," is the utterance not merely of the renewed spiritual nature — it is the voice of man's restless spirit in all the varied phases and conditions of humanity. It is exemplified in everyday life. Without the consciousness of advancement we have not a perfect idea of happiness.

Who does not feel, for example, a ceaseless and ever-increasing aspiration after more knowledge? This is all the more remarkable, too, in the case of those who have made the largest acquisitions in human learning. The range of their acquirements, instead of satisfying, seems rather to whet their appetite for more; so that the noblest and most gifted of the human species — our Lockes, and Bacons, and Newtons — are those who are alike most conscious of

the limited range of present knowledge, and most ardently desirous of adding to their intellectual wealth.

Transfer this to Heaven. In Heaven, there will be a constant aspiration after increased knowledge, holiness, love, and resemblance to God. All our present mental capacities will doubtless be indefinitely expanded on our entrance into bliss; but this will be only a fresh starting-point for loftier acquisitions. The soul and its glorified aspirations will be like the sun "coming forth from his chamber, and rejoicing like a strong man to run his race;" ever climbing the skies, yet never reaching the meridian; coming nearer "the excellent glory," and yet speaking of it as "light inaccessible!"

We have some pledge or foretaste given us of this advancement, even in our present spiritual state. The renewed man goes "from strength to strength;" he advances in the divine life; he becomes more and more "fit," by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, for the heavenly inheritance. May we not warrantably infer from analogy, that this advancement will not be arrested, but rather increased and carried on in a mightier magnitude? "If grace," says the author of the "Saint's Rest," "makes a Christian differ so much from what he was, as to say, 'I am not the man I was;' how much more will glory make us differ! Doubtless as God advances our senses and enlarges our capacity, so will He advance the happiness of those senses, and fill up with Himself all that capacity."

Add to all this — this element of progression will be in one direction. Not as on earth, where there was also a law of perpetual progress, but it was often a downward progress — where the aphorism, "Knowledge is power," had, alas! too often the fatal interpretation attached to it of a power for evil; not bringing the heart nearer God, but assimilating it more with the fiend, enlarging the intellect only for its degradation. But the advancement of the soul, in all the future phases of its moral and spiritual being, will

be entirely God-wards. — It will be the eagle's flight, soaring ever upward, nearer the sun, until lost in the blaze of "the excellent glory."

God is alone of all beings unchangeable. He is as incapable of any addition to His essential glory and happiness, as these are incapable of detraction. — "He is without variableness or the least shadow of turning." The devils in a lost state are subject to a continual and progressive change, but it is a downward and progressive deterioration; with the sainted spirit it will be entirely improvement. While the others are sinking deeper and deeper in the abyss of woe, or retreating into wider and more bizarre orbits from the great central Sun of all light and happiness, the redeemed will ever be narrowing their orbits, coming nearer and nearer the great central throne.

Reader, you are lisping here only the alphabet of knowledge; you know nothing as you are yet to know. Heaven will be, in a nobler sense than ever was realized on earth, a student's life. The angels, we read, "desire to look into" the mysteries of salvation. They "stoop over" (as the word literally means) this vast volume in the archives of eternity. You will then unite with these principalities and powers in tasking your immortal intellect with fresh discoveries of "the manifold wisdom of God." We know that those saints on earth who have attained most knowledge of God, are those who have longed with greatest ardor to know more of Him. Though Moses had seen more of His glory than others, his prayer is, "I beseech You, show me Your glory." David, whose thirst had been quenched more than most at the Fountain of infinite love and excellence, is heard exclaiming, "My soul thirsts for God." Paul, who had soared to the third heaven, and who "counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ," still prays, like a lisping learner, "that I may know Him."

Nor will it be one theme only that will engross and engage the saints' glorified powers and activities. We must not think of Heaven as some startling and

violent revolution of present tastes, and studies, and occupations; as if we shall then be no longer the beings we once were, and be able to find no traces of personal identity. Our feelings, our tastes, our studies, may continue the same as they were, only glorified, sanctified, and purified from the dross of sin! In Heaven, may we not possibly delight still to unravel the mysteries of science, the laws which govern a renovated creation; or to ponder the story of Providence past — this, too, not confined to one atom-world, but as unfolded in God's works and ways in other provinces of His empire?

The very feelings and affections, also, of our present nature (the best, at least, and noblest of them) will not be quenched or annihilated; they will, on the contrary, have vaster objects and loftier spheres for their exercise. Take, for example, apparently the most airy and visionary of all our present emotions, HOPE. Hope will not perish with the present preliminary state. Poetry, under a beautiful impersonation, has truthfully represented her as relighting her torch "at nature's funeral pile." It is, in one sense indeed, true, that Hope will then be changed into fruition; all distracting fears and misgivings will cease. The hope of eternal life, the hope full of immortality, the hope of being with God and His Christ, which in our moments of depression and faithlessness is clouded here, that hope will be "swallowed up" in complete fulfillment. But many of the present joyous elements of hope will still remain — the hope of reaching higher degrees of perfection, the hope of acquiring deeper and yet deeper views of the character and glory of Him who is past finding out; the hope of becoming more and more assimilated to His holy image, climbing higher and higher the altitudes of bliss, and obtaining a wider and still wider sweep of the moral landscape that grows upon our view with the widening horizon.

I love that beautiful description of Heaven, as the "rest" of God's people; when the clarion-call of battle is hushed — every storm-cloud past — every weary night-watch at an end — the spirit cradled in perfect

peace — the Sabbath of eternity! But more elevating and glorious still seems the description of Heaven as a place of endless and ceaseless progression; the spirit making giant advances in all that is pure, and lovely, and godlike; ever adding to the domain of knowledge; having new and more wondrous revelations of the Divine character and attributes — comprehending more and more the mysteries of Redeeming love, and yet these mysteries growing with every fresh discovery; still speaking of its "heights and depths," its "lengths and breadths," — and these, as "passing understanding!"

MANY MANSIONS

"In my Father's house are many mansions." — John
14:2

"Mansions" — "many mansions" — "a house" — "my Father's house." How many reflections are crowded into this one brief utterance of our gracious Redeemer! With what a homelike aspect do they invest our every thought of Heaven! They were among His last words; He Himself was on His way to that peaceful "homestead" of which He speaks. Let us gather around Him, with the house of His Father in sight, and taste this Eshcol grape which He Himself plucks from the borders of the Heavenly Canaan.

The verse speaks of MULTIPLICITY — "many mansions."

Had He been addressing His own disciples alone, the assurance would have been sufficient, "There will be a home for each of you." But He is discoursing for all time. His omniscient eye discerned at that moment the unborn myriads whom this chapter and this verse were to console and cheer. He would, therefore, certify that there is abundant provision made for all — patriarchs, prophets, saints, martyrs — from the time

that righteous Abel bent alone, a righteous, redeemed saint, before the throne — the first sheaf of a mighty harvest — until the garners be filled, and the song of the ransomed become "as the voice of many people, and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thundering." He is to bring "many sons unto glory."

There is grace for all — crowns for all — mansions for all! Heaven has been filling for six thousand years, and still there is room. How different its "recompense of reward" from worldly crowns and worldly honors! In the earthly race "many run, but one (only) receives the prize." In the heavenly race the competition is open to "whoever will." There is no jarring of interests in this loftier arena. The glorification of one is not attained there at the expense of another's downfall or exclusion. The mansions are many. The candidates are a mighty multitude which no man can number. Believer! "so run that you may obtain!"

The verse speaks of PERMANENCY — they are "mansions."

The word in the original is not a tent or temporary tabernacle, but a durable residence, never to be altered or demolished. Eothen, the most graphic of Eastern travelers thus gives a description of tent-life, which, by contrast, affords the best illustration of the mansion-life of Heaven: "When the cold, sullen morning dawned, and my people began to load the camels, I always felt hesitant to give back to the waste this little spot of ground, that had glowed for a while with the cheerfulness of a human dwelling. My tent was spared to the last, but when all else was ready for the start, then came its fall. The pegs were drawn, the canvas shivered, and in less than a minute there was nothing that remained of my genial home, but only a pole and a bundle."

"The tents of the East," says Professor Hackett, "seldom remain long in the same place. The traveler erects his temporary abode for the night, takes it down in the morning, and journeys onward. The

shepherds of the country are also always moving from one place to another. The brook dries up on which they relied for water, or the grass required for the support of their flocks is consumed, and they wander on to a new station."

How strikingly illustrative is this of the Bible figure, "the house of our earthly tabernacle" being "dissolved" (or taken down). The framework of mortality, like the nomadic tent, is up-reared for a time, but, after serving its temporary purpose, it is, pin by pin, demolished, and the place that once knew it knows it no more.

Not so the ever-enduring mansions of our Father's house. They are "incorruptible" and "eternal in the Heavens." No failing of brooks there! No joys there will be withered and smitten like the grass of the wilderness. "The Lamb that is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and lead them to living fountains of waters." Ah! it is the saddest, the most humiliating feature of the joys of earth, that, however pure, noble, elevating they may be at the moment, there is no calculating on their permanency. The mind will, in spite of itself, be haunted with the dark possibility of that ruthless invader of all happiness coming and dashing the full cup in a thousand fragments on the ground. In Heaven no shadow of vicissitude or change can ever enter to dim an ever-brightening future. Once within that heavenly fold, we are in the fold forever. On the lintels of the eternal mansion are inscribed the words, "You shall go out no more." Our happiness and joy will be as immutable and stable as everlasting love and power and faithfulness can make them.

The verse speaks of DIVERSITY — there are "many mansions;" — not only many in number, but manifold in their degrees of glory.

All will be happy. A halo of unutterable bliss and glory will encircle each separate dwelling, beyond what eye has seen, or ear heard, or heart conceived. But as "one star differs from another star in glory," so, also,

we believe, there will be gradations in the scale of future blessedness.

The allusion here is evidently to the different courts of the Jewish temple. These were diverse in name and character. The outer and inner courts, the court of the Gentiles, the courts of the priests, the Holy of Holies. All these were consecrated as portions of the same "House of the Lord." The lowliest Israelite was within sight of the altar, and within hearing of the High Priest's benediction. But there were some courts more hallowed and glorious than others — their sacredness increasing the nearer the worshiper approached the place where dwelt the mystic Shekinah. It will be the same with the "many mansions" of the Heavenly Temple. All the vast multitude in the new Jerusalem will be within range of the benediction of the Great High Priest; and as such they must be blessed.

But there will be "inner courts" and enclosures of greater honor and glory. The more intense and exalted his love and devotedness on earth, the nearer will the believer be permitted to approach the Holiest of all — the nearer admission will he have to the Father's presence, and receive the more distinguishing badges of the Father's love. There will be one mansion for him whose pound has "gained five pounds," and another mansion for him whose pound has "gained ten pounds." Each, too, will be apportioned according to some earthly antecedents. There will be the special mansion of the martyr, who was borne from his earthly tent in the chariot of fire. There will be the special mansion of the missionary, who surrendered home, ease and worldly honor for his noble embassy, and stood alone, un-befriended on Pagan shores, witnessing for a despised Savior. There will be the mansion for the minister of Christ, who boldly proclaimed the message of life and death. There will be the mansion for the Sunday-school teacher, who toiled to bring youthful trophies to the foot of the cross. There will be the mansion for the pining sufferer, who glorified God by patience and uncomplaining resignation — for the child, that fell on

earth a withered blossom, whose tent was taken down "while it was yet day," but reconstructed into a building of God eternal in the heavens. There will be a mansion for the old veteran of the cross, the champion in a hundred battles of the faith; and for the youthful soldier, who was only buckling on his armor when summoned from the earthly struggle.

The least in the kingdom, I repeat, will have blessedness to the full — a glory and a joy which leaves no void or vacuum. As in the terrestrial, so in the celestial skies. Though every planet circling round the Sun of Deity will shine with a borrowed splendor, yet the larger the planet, and the nearer its orbit is to its grand center, the greater will be its radiance and glory. Though every flower will in itself be perfect, reflecting the lovely hues and tints of Heaven, yet they will be of diverse form and color. Some will diffuse a sweeter fragrance, or cluster in larger and richer groups than others. But all, large and small, the saint a hundred years old and the believing child, will (notwithstanding this diversity) have the same quality of bliss. The planet at the outskirts of the heavenly sphere and that nearest the center will be bathed in one and the same rays of ineffable glory.

But while the verse speaks of Diversity, it speaks also of UNITY.

There will be diversity in unity, and unity in diversity. The Church triumphant is one house. The Church on earth, alas! is a house divided against itself — church divided against church — Christian against Christian. Nominally the children of one Father, but dwelling in separate tabernacles. One saying, "I am of Paul," and another, "I of Apollos." Nominally pilgrims on one road, traversing the same wilderness, but each keeping his own peculiar and separate pathway, journeying on often with no look of kindly recognition exchanged, as if they were aliens and foreigners, instead of brethren and sisters in a common Lord.

But in yonder bright and happy home, discord, division, separation will be known no more. Once

within that sacred portal, the exclamation will pass from tongue to tongue — "What! so long together on the pilgrimage, and maintaining a cold and chilling reserve and alienation! Alas! is it only now we are to begin to know what we should have known ages ago, 'how good and how pleasant a thing it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!'"

You who are mourning over these sad estrangements in the Church of God, rejoice at this glorious prospect. All shall be one then! One house — one home — one Father — one Elder Brother — one motive for praise — one theme for eternal song — a united Church under its one glorious and glorified Head!

MANY MANSIONS

"In my Father's house are many mansions." — John
14:2

In our last, we considered the "many mansions" of coming glory as betokening Multiplicity; Permanency; Diversity; Unity.

Let us revert to the same figure, as still further suggestive of SAFETY.

Where can a child be so safe as in his Father's house? Trials, discouragements, buffetings, unkindness he may experience elsewhere; here at least he is secure and happy.

What music is there, even on earth, in that word "Home!" The garner of happiness — the haunt of tender affections — the cherisher of bright hope — the hallowed spot where the spent spirit's weary wing folds itself to rest — the glad retreat in "the dark and cloudy day." What must be the Home of Heaven? With what surpassing tenderness does that one word invest these many mansions, "My Father's house!"

and how does it link us to the Savior, when He thus addresses each heavenward and homeward-bound pilgrim — "My Father and your Father, My God and your God!"

To enter Heaven, the dwelling-place of the great Jehovah — to be ushered into the presence-chamber of "the High and Lofty One who inhabits eternity!" — there might be much to awe and overwhelm the spirit in such a contemplation. But this beauteous homeward deprives it of all its dreadfulness, and invests it with all that is winning and captivating. Each believer, in the prospect of these bright mansions, may, without irreverence, adopt the words of the Redeemer, and say, "If you loved me, you would rejoice, because I said, I go unto my Father."

Would that we oftener realized Heaven as such; and, amid earth's troubles and vicissitudes and sorrows, were led to regard every new trial, every new epoch of existence, every returning week and month and anniversary, as fresh chimes of celestial music floating from the towers of glory, and sounding in our ears, "Nearer home, nearer home!" Our Lord has taught us, while we "desire" in our daily prayer "a better country," to make it a filial aspiration — "Our Father, who is in Heaven," "Your kingdom come." Heaven, in the noblest sense, is "the Church in the House."

The verse still further speaks of HONOR.

It speaks of admission into God's presence, and to stand in that presence in the relation of children to a father. Even to be laid, like Lazarus, at the portals of Heaven, and fed with the crumbs falling from the table, would have been more than what, as sinners, we deserve. What will it be to be "within the house," honored with a place at the King's own banquet?

There are two Greek words used in the New Testament to describe the believer's relation to God. Both are significant. The former literally means a slave, and such His redeemed child really is. He is the

willing slave of righteousness, "bought with a price" by a gracious Master. He feels it to be alike his highest honor and obligation to be called "the servant of God." The other word, though translated by the same term (servant), has a higher meaning. It has rather reference to the believer's heavenly calling. It speaks of his lofty designation and employment in his Father's house, when he becomes a "ministering one." His earthly service is over — "Henceforth I call you not servants, but friends."

"In My Father's house!" "Yes," said a dying believer, as he quoted these words; "our Lord tells me, you have been an out-door servant long enough, I will make you an in-door servant, and take you out of the wind and rain, to give you a glorified body, better wages and a better mansion." What a wondrous transition from the clay tenement to the everlasting mansions! Well may the poet exclaim, describing the emancipated spirit — "O change! O wondrous change!"

Finally, the verse tells us that all these wondrous home-mansions JESUS has gone to make ready for us.

"I go to prepare a place for you." No, more, He confers them as a right. He speaks as the "Heir of all things." Observe, it is not "your Father's house," but "My Father's house." As "the Son of the everlasting God," He seems to say, "I am not ashamed to call you brethren; and for My sake He will not be ashamed to own and welcome you as sons and daughters. My name, as 'the Beloved of the Father,' and My work, as the surety Redeemer, will form a passport and title to every room in these paternal halls!"

The value of a gift is enhanced by the character and worth of the donor. The gift of an earthly sovereign would be highly prized. Here is a gift bestowed by the "Prince of the kings of the earth," purchased by blood and toil and agony. These blood-bought mansions form the crown and consummation of all His other

gifts. "This is THE gift, that God has given us eternal life, and that life is in His Son." "Everything else that He `did and taught and suffered,' had a reference to the opening of the kingdom of Heaven to all believers. His coming from Heaven was to show Heaven to us. His going again there was to prepare a place for us. His sitting at the right hand of God is to promote our interest in Heaven. His coming in judgment is to take us back with Him to it." (Manton)

If He has gone "to prepare this place" for us, be it ours to endeavor to be prepared for "the place;" seeking every returning morning to have our tent pitched "a day's march nearer home" — nearer the house of our Father. "Yet a little while, and He who shall come will come, and will not tarry." "He will not stay," says Goodwin, "a minute longer than needs must. He tarries only until He has, throughout all ages, by His intercession, prepared every room for each saint, that He may entertain them altogether, and have them all about Him."

And shall we pause to ask, Where is that glorious home? where these sparkling waters, these palms ever green, these robes ever bright? Does the spirit at the hour of death wing its arrowy flight to some distant province of creation? Or may Heaven be some mysterious, impalpable spirit-world around us? Though we hear no gush of the crystal waters, and gaze on no "city of the crystal sea," may it not be that angel-wings are hovering over us, and that it is only these dull senses of ours that hide from us the celestial vision?

But what though we can observe no dim outline of the everlasting hills? What though we look in vain for the lights gleaming in the distant windows of these "many mansions?" It is enough to know that One has gone to prepare them for us. And when completed, His voice will be heard, saying, "Come, for all things are ready!" "THEN shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of THEIR FATHER."

JOYFUL REUNIONS

*"And so shall we ever be with the Lord." — 1
Thessalonians 4:17*

Our fondest wishes respond in the affirmative. The noblest affections and emotions of our immortal natures indorse the poet's utterances. Our Bibles, in manifold direct as well as indirect passages, foster the inspiring hope that the hallowed intimacies of earth will be renewed and perpetuated in glory. The thought of the loved and lost — now the loved and glorified — being "the loved and known again!" — does not this tinge our every anticipation of Heaven with a golden hue, and form a new and holy link binding us to the throne of God!

Our blessed Lord Himself, alike by His discourses and His example, has strengthened our belief in the future reunion and recognition of saints. He speaks of "Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" as distinct people in "the Kingdom of Heaven." He speaks of "the beggar" — the identical person laid on earth at "the rich man's gate" — now in "Abraham's bosom." His consolatory announcement, when He comforted the hearts of the bereaved sisters of Bethany, was not "Lazarus shall rise" but "Your brother shall rise again." The old hallowed earthly link of affection was to be restored at the Great Day — the brother of the earthly was to be known and welcomed as brother in the heavenly home! On Mount Tabor, Moses and Elijah came down, in form and feature the same as they were when they dwelt in their earthly tabernacles. Could we venture the strange conjecture that their recognized identity was a mere accommodation for the ecstatic scene — that, though known for that little while to themselves and the disciples, when the vision passed away they again melted into shades — their hallowed fellowship ceasing as they returned to the spirit-world? We cannot think so.

We speak of "the communion of saints" in the Church below. We know how blessed it is when in sacred bonds of gospel fellowship, even in a world of imperfection, spirit is linked to spirit. Some of the holiest moments of earth are those in which the children of God "take sweet counsel together," and unburden into one another's ears the experience of their Lord's faithfulness and love. Shall all this terminate at the hour of death? Are pilgrim-spirits, who have wept and prayed and rejoiced together — mutual helpers until they reached the very gates of glory — are they — just when the object of their united hopes and prayers is attained — when the crown is in sight — to exchange a cheerless farewell? Are they to be permitted to walk to "the house of God in company" on earth, but forbidden to do so in Heaven? We cannot think so!

Shall Martha, and Mary, and Lazarus have no happiness there in recounting Bethany-scenes of love and friendship? Shall the Marys have no wondrous joy in re-traversing in thought their way to the tomb? Shall the disciples (no longer disconsolate) be forbidden to retrace together in glory their steps on the Emmaus road, and at the mutual recital, cause their hearts again to burn within them? We cannot think so! We cannot suppose that all the rills of earth's purest spiritual enjoyment would thus in a moment be so strangely cut off. Rather, whatever on earth is "pure, good, lovely, and of good report," Heaven is the expansion and amplification.

"If it be a happiness," says Baxter, "to live with the saints in their imperfection, where they have sin to embitter, what will it be to live with them in their perfection, when saints are only and wholly saints?" On earth, the accidental meetings of youth not infrequently ripen, as years roll on, into hallowed intimacies. If we view the present world as the childhood of immortality, the infancy of endless life — may we not picture its incipient attachments reaching their prime in that glorious manhood of being! The reverse of all we have now said would involve a total extinction of the most exalted feelings of our nature.

Earthly friendship is one of the flowers of Heaven — an exotic growing in the crevices of man's rocky heart — it will be nurtured (surely not extirpated) in its native climate. Jesus Himself experienced and cherished its hallowed influence — He Himself reposed under this solitary column in the ruined temple of humanity. He has left Bethany behind Him as the memorial of the purest friendship earth ever witnessed; and while all the disciples were dearly loved by Him, there were congenialities and idiosyncrasies in the spirit of the "Disciple of love" which drew the Master to him specially as "His own." What Jesus hallowed by His own example, shall we count it unhallowed to cherish when we meet Him and His in glory?

Paul invites us to entertain the same consoling assurance. He himself looked forward to his joy and crown. What was it? "YOU in the presence of the Lord Jesus!" "YOU." He had individual churches and members of these churches in his eye. He looked forward (can we doubt it?) to re-traverse many a hallowed scene in his and their chequered earthly path. How fondly he clung to the intimacies of his apostleship! How "his spirit had no rest because he found not Titus his brother!" How Luke lightened his toilsome journey! How Epaphroditus and Timothy cheered his imprisonment! How the brethren from Appia Forum kindled the waning luster of his dimmed eye! Shall that sympathetic spirit sympathize no more in a better and brighter world with those with whom he toiled in the great work of the gospel here? Shall all those for whom he labored and travailed until Christ was formed in them, be unknown to him beyond the grave? Is this mighty star to dwell apart in the spiritual skies, and never recognize the many who, by its earthly shining, were "turned to righteousness?"

No, rather may we not think of him as a spiritual father gathering his myriad children around him in glory, rejoicing in the permanency of friendships, which on earth were often unstable? No Demas now to forsake him — no "present evil world" to lure from

his constancy. We may think of him as the sun of a little "system" of saints — redeemed planets clustering around him — bound to one another by that still closer and holier tie which binds them all to Jesus. And, just as astronomers tell us that our own is a mere integral part of a mightier astral system, of which Alcyone in the Pleiades is the wondrous center — so, while they who "turn many to righteousness" shall "shine as the fixed stars" (central suns) "forever and ever" — these are but subordinates — owning the presence and power of a mightier Lord — the great Alcyone (if we can with reverence use the simile) of the Heavenly system, who binds all together by the gravitation of His own supreme Love!

Yes! I fondly cling to the hope (the belief) that in Heaven there will be joyful reunions and recognitions, in which the tear of bereavement shall never more dim the eye, and the march of the funeral crowd shall never more be heard. To imagine the reverse would, I repeat, be doing violence to all the analogies of earth and all the deepest emotions of our moral and social natures. We may exult in the anticipation of pouring into other hearts the story of redeeming love, and singing "the new song" in concert with voices that have been attuned with our own! If even the Patriarchs, the pilgrim-fathers of earlier times, exulted at death in the thought of being "gathered to their people," shall we, as Christians, be divested of this consolatory hope? No, no. The grave will not be permitted to efface the memorials of the past, and destroy our personal identity. The resurrection-body will wear its old smiles of love and tenderness. "Those also who sleep in Jesus (lit., laid to sleep by Jesus) will God bring with Him." It is the mother hushing her infant in its night-cradle, to rise the same as it lay down, in the morning-light of immortality. Friend will embrace friend — parent will embrace child — and child embrace parent!

"So Shall WE ever be with the Lord!" It will be no dreamy solitude — no hermit life. Ever and anon we may imagine groups of the redeemed, known to one another on earth, hushing the music of the universal

song, and retiring to hold peaceful fellowship beside the still fountains of water — there refreshing their spirits with the memories of Time — and, after the sacred recitals, returning again to resume, with deeper cadence, the lofty anthem.

Nor need we so limit these ennobled friendships as to restrict them to that of contemporary and personal acquaintance. May we not rather picture them as embracing the vast multitude of pious dead, whose names (though they lived in other lands and centuries) are among us as "household words" — those whose example has animated our faith, quickened our love, and who, though dead, have been long heard to speak! Think of the untold joy of being ushered into the glorified presence and fellowship of such as Abraham, and Moses, and David, and Paul, and John! Think of the lesser cloud of witnesses, in times nearer our own. Sainted men; the modern Stephens who have suffered — the Enochs who have walked with God — burning and shining lights, whose words and deeds have embalmed them in our dearest memories! How the heart bounds at the thought of this wondrous expansion of friendship in its noblest form; associated, in the sublime services of the upper sanctuary with the Great and Good of every successive age in the Church's history — "the glorious company of the apostles, the goodly fellowship of the prophets, the noble army of martyrs!" We have but traced while on earth their "footsteps on the sands of time;" what will it be to stand with them on the shores of the glassy sea, and to sing together the "Song of Moses, the servant of God, and the Song of the Lamb!"

Yes! Live under the cheering hope of a joyful reunion with the white-robed multitude, and the dearer and tenderer hope of meeting with those who on earth have rejoiced with you in all your spiritual joys, and shared with you in your sorrows. Think of those spoken of as taking part in the sublime closing gospel invitation — "The BRIDE says, Come!" The Bride! It is the Church triumphant — beloved ones, now silent on

earth — whose beaming spirits in "the better land" are beckoning you upwards to exult in ties that shall never know dissolution. They beckon you to fresh ardor in running your Christian race! Think of them crowding the walls of glory — eager to welcome those they have left for a little behind them, to buffet the wilderness-storms — waiting to lead them, hand in hand, up the golden streets! Think of them seated on the everlasting hills, tracing together every rill and streamlet in the "nether valley," and acknowledging how all had been combining mysteriously for good. Meanwhile, as you gather and taste this grape of the Heavenly Vintage, let it refresh your spirit, and cheer your footsteps towards your joyous home! A royal mourner, as he wept over a rosebud prematurely plucked, has left a brief motto-verse for all who have nameless treasures IN the tomb and BEYOND the tomb — "I MAY GO TO HIM!"

NO SICKNESS

*"The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick." — Isaiah
33:24*

Suffering believers, laid on beds of languishing, can alone appreciate the sweetness of this gleaning from the Eshcol-clusters. How many of God's children are at this moment tossed on couches of distress, shut out from the light and sunshine of a busy world, their experience that of the afflicted patriarch of Uz — "I am made to possess months of vanity, and wearisome nights are appointed unto me. When I lie down, I say, When shall I arise, and the night be gone? and I am full of tossings to and fro unto the dawning of the day."

But in yonder bright world of purity and love, "there shall be no more pain." How often on the earthly sick-bed is the patient grateful for a single hour's release from oppressive suffering! What will it be in that

glorious land where not so much as one pang shall ever be experienced! Here, how much present happiness is clouded by real or imaginary apprehensions. How often are the strong, robust and vigorous haunted with the dread that their strength may be prostrated. Even when life's sun is shining most brightly, the intrusive thought will steal across the spirit, that this lease of long health may not always last. How often, too, have these fore-shadowings been too truthfully verified; either we ourselves laid low with sickness, or else brought to watch with agonizing anxiety by the couch of some beloved relative! Oh, the blessedness of a world where the fear of fearful things will be unknown — where nothing shall ruffle our deep, everlasting repose! No Lazarus can be laid at Heaven's gate, "full of sores." No sunny countenance in a moment shrouded with paleness. No elastic step arrested with the spoiler's touch, and the brightness of morning changed into the shadow of death. The suffering caused by accident, infirmities of age, decay of intellectual vigor, or oppression of the spirit by sudden bereavement — all will be strange in that un-suffering state.

We know that sickness, in addition to its own attendant pain and uneasiness, unfits both mind and body for active duty and service. The emaciated, languid invalid is like the wounded bird struggling with disabled wing in the furrow and attempting, in vain, its former joyous soaring. But in Heaven nothing can weaken or impair the immortal energies. No longer will the renovated framework be the prey of disease, or subject to decay. No longer will there arise feverish anxieties about others; those moments of dread suspense that seem more like hours, when life, and all that life counts dear, is "balanced in a breath." Over the earthly portals is written, "We have the sentence of death in ourselves." Over the gate of Heaven, "Neither shall they die any more."

And how will this exemption from present experiences of suffering and pain be secured? How will the new heaven and the new earth give forth no longer, as

here, a plaintive "miserere?" Let the words following our motto-verse explain, "The people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity." It is Sin which has made this world of ours dim with weeping. The glimmering lamp in every sufferer's chamber reads, in its sickly hue, the sad tale of transgression. It is sin that is forcing from his lips the plaintive soliloquy, "Would God it were evening! would God it were morning!" Here, and by reason of sin, the body is, in its every pore and muscle, susceptible of pain. Its nervous fibers can, in a moment, become chords of anguish. Science may be profuse of her inventions to mitigate disease in its thousand insidious forms, but still "the head will be sick," "the heart faint," the body bowed down with suffering, the healthy cheek furrowed with age; "the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves."

All the marvels and mysteries of the healing arts in vain can stem the tide of distress, quicken the ebbing pulses of life, ward off the bitter parting, or reanimate the silent ashes. Gourds are still withering; buds of promise are still drooping to decay; the wail of anguished humanity is as loud as ever. Not until the morning of a sinless immortality dawns, will the tongue of the sufferer be tuned to the better melody — "The days of our mourning are forever ended."

Happy, happy prospect! "The inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick." You who are now laid on beds of languishing and pain, listen to this. Now, as the shadows of each returning evening begin to fall, you may have nothing but gloomy anticipations. The morrow's light, which brings health and joy to a busy world, may bring nothing to you but fresh prostration and anguish. Sunday comes round, but its once joyous bells ring only in your ears the memory of forfeited joys — the lonely bird, still pining in its earthly cage, wailing, in muffled notes, "Oh that I could fly away from this weary prison-house of sorrow and pain, and be at rest!"

Yes! but that rest is at hand. Soon will you mount on eagle's wings to these golden gates. Pilgrims, now

often pacing along the wilderness-path with bleeding feet and fevered brow, the thorny path will soon be over. No more pain to harass you. No more "archers" to wound you. No more languor to depress you. "The former things shall have passed away." How will one moment in that sorrowless Heaven lead you to forget your present long experience of prostration and suffering! It will appear in the retrospect only as the shadow of a passing cloud — a dream of the night which the morning light has dispelled — voices on all sides sounding in your ears, "There shall be no more curse."

Meanwhile, as you lie tossing on your sickbed, do not ask — "Am I getting the better of my pain?" But ask — "Am I made the better for it? Is it executing the great mission for which it has been sent of God? Is it sanctifying me, purging away the dross, and fitting me for glory?" He has some wise end in view in laying you upon the bed of languishing. Sickness is one of His own chosen messengers — one of the arrows of His quiver. As the mother lavishes her tenderest affection on her invalid child, so may it be truthfully said regarding the suffering believer, "Lord, he whom You love is sick." He takes you apart by yourself — secludes you from the world, that through the rents of your shattered earthly tabernacle He may give you glimpses of coming glory. When your tongue is "failing you for thirst," He brings grapes, plucked by His own hand, from Canaan. Your soul, like that of aged Jacob, revives!

How often has the couch of suffering thus been made as the very gate of Heaven. Be assured you will yet come to acknowledge infinite mercy in this very discipline. In preparing to transplant His own tree to paradise — instead of cutting you down, or wrenching you up by the roots, hurrying you away without a note of warning into an un-provided-for eternity — He is pruning branch by branch, that you may fall gently. He is "purging you, that you may bring forth more fruit." Seek to exhibit the grace of patience under your trial. This is one of the few Christian virtues which can only be manifested on earth. In Heaven

there is no suffering to call forth its exercise. "Let patience" now therefore "have its perfect work."

Seek to feel that the end your God has in these "light afflictions" is to work out for you "a far more exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory." Tossed on this troubled sea, let the eye and the longings of faith frequently rest on the quiet haven. "Oh, the blessed tranquility of that region," says Richard Baxter, himself no stranger to a couch of prolonged distress — "where there is nothing but sweet, continued peace! O healthful place where none are sick! O happy land, where all are kings! O holy assembly, where all are priests! How free a state, where none are servants but to their supreme Monarch! O my soul, bear with the infirmities of your earthly tabernacle! It will be thus but a little while. The sound of my Redeemer's feet is even at the door."

THE DEATH OF DEATH

"He will swallow up death in victory." — Isaiah 25:8

Victory is a cheering word! Joyous is the return to their own land of a band of warriors after a long and triumphant campaign. Inspiring are the hosannas of welcome poured upon them by an applauding country; and sweeter still the music of home-voices. The memory of past suffering is forgotten, or remembered only to enhance the gladness of reunion!

What shall it be when the Christian, freed from the last conflict, enters the gates of the Heavenly City, the hosannas of angels and saints resounding through the streets of the new Jerusalem! Each toil-worn warrior bathing his wounds in the river of the water of life — death-divided friends gathered to welcome him to his everlasting home!

Looking back from the heights of glory on earth's long battlefield; it is a gloomy and chequered retrospect of stern foes, stubborn temptations, mountains of difficulties that had to be climbed, valleys of humiliation that had to be descended — yes, and the sadder memory of un-watchfulness and betrayal, temporary defeat and disaster. But all is now crowned with "VICTORY," and the last and most recent foe — Death itself — disarmed.

How great the contrast NOW and THEN!

Now, alas! Death is the unsparing invader of every household; all our precautions, all our wisest human expedients in vain are employed to disarm him of his power, and arrest his advancing footsteps. He reigns on earth with a frightful force! He comes in the hour least expected — often just when the fondest visions of earthly joy are being realized.

Do we think of it — we who may be living all careless and thoughtless, lulled by the dream of prosperity, presuming on our present cloudless horizon — that each moment, with sleepless vigilance, the stealthy foe is creeping nearer and nearer? — that the smooth current is gliding slowly but surely onward and still onward towards the brink of the waterfall, where all at once the irrevocable leap will and must be taken?

Reader, perchance you can even now tell the tale! You may at present be reading it, or you may have recently done so, with tearful eyes and a breaking heart. You may be marking the vacant seat at your table, missing the accents of some well-known voice, or the sound of some well-remembered footfall; a beaming eye in your daily walk may be gone, and gone forth forever from time! What other antidote for hearts smitten down by these hurricane-blasts which leave earth a blackened wilderness — but a look beyond, to that Better Land, where this enemy's power is neither felt nor feared?

In that glorious resurrection-morning, the scepter which death has wielded for six thousand years will

be wrested from his grasp, and that chorus will begin for which centuries of suffering hearts have been willfully longing, "O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?" Sounding trumpets commenced the song of the Lord in the temple of old. It was a type of a mightier festival in the temple of glory. "The trumpet of God" is to sound first. Slumbering millions will start at the summons, "Awake and sing, you that dwell in dust!"

Believer! seek to contemplate death from the heavenward side, as a foe doomed and conquered. If you are now in Jesus, victory over death is yours by anticipation. You cannot sing the song of victory completed; but you can be weaving the garlands of triumph, and tuning your harp for the prophetic strain! But although death is between us and the heavenly paradise, the monster's sting has been plucked away, and cast into the flames of the Savior's sacrifice. Safe in Christ! — then, indeed, is death disarmed of its real terrors. It becomes a stupendous triumphal arch, through which God's redeemed legions pass into glory. A dark Valley, but bridged by the rainbow of promise, with its radiant hues of love, joy, and peace! Lean on the promises now; they alone will support you, like Elijah's horses and chariots of fire, in the hour of death. Living now near to Jesus, you will have nothing to do when the last solemn hour does arrive, but to step into these chariots, and be upborne by angels to your Father's house!

O blissful consummation! once across that threshold, and every remembrance of sadness which death generates here, and which often makes life one valley of Baca — a "valley of weeping" — will be obliterated, and that forever! No sun going down "while it is yet day;" no glory of manhood suddenly eclipsed; no early blossoms nipped in the bud; no venerable trees, under whose shadow we have long reposed, succumbing to the axe of the Destroyer. Viewing death from the earthly side, it seems the mournful "exodus of life" — the fatal extinguisher, the dread annihilator of fondest hopes and purest happiness.

Taking the heavenward view, it is what Matthew Henry significantly calls "the parenthesis of being." It is the bridge from the finite to the infinite; the birthday of immortality; the momentary rasping of the shallows in entering the quiet haven; the day which, while it terminates the joys of the worldling, only truly begins those of the believer!

Suffering saints of God! you who may have been tossed about with "a great fight of afflictions," long out on the stormy sea, neither sun nor stars appearing, and, like the seamen in Adria of old, "wistfully looking for the day" — be comforted. Each day is bringing you nearer and nearer these peaceful shores. You may even now be discovering indications that you cannot be far from the desired port!

"Afflicted, tempest-tossed, and not yet comforted," "lift up your heads with joy, for your redemption draws near!" Yet a little while and He who shall come, will come, and will not tarry. Every new sorrow that visits you; every new season which passes over you; every friend taken from you; these are so many silent messengers from the shores of glory, whispering, "Nearer eternity!" Time itself seems not to be without significant monitors — signals scattered on its ocean that "the day is at hand!" Prophecy is fast fulfilling. There are those who, from the shrouds and rigging, can observe, in the hazy distance, the dim outline of a more glorious hemisphere than that of earth — "the new world" — even "the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwells righteousness!"

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the old heaven and the old earth had disappeared. And the sea was also gone. I heard a loud shout from the throne, saying, "Look, the home of God is now among His people! He will live with them, and they will be His people. God Himself will be with them. He will remove all of their sorrows, and there will be NO MORE DEATH or sorrow or crying or pain. For the old world and its evils are gone forever."

WAKING REALITIES

"I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with your likeness." — Psalm 17:15

What a glorious awaking, after earth's unquiet dream! With God! Like God! Happiness has been well defined to be "the harmonizing of the finite will with the Infinite." On earth that harmonizing is never perfect. There are disturbing forces in the moral atmosphere tempting the soul ever and anon, like some wandering planet, to break loose from the sphere of the Divine favor, and pursue a devious and erratic orbit. Strange, indeed, that, despite of lessons constantly enforced, it should cling so fondly to the delusion that there are elements of heart-satisfying happiness independent of God. Vain thought! Even when the objects on which the affections are lavished seem the purest and noblest, there is ever a consciousness of unfulfilled longings, yearnings after something better, which earth cannot give. In this chase after happiness a point may be reached, but not retained. In grasping the imaginary good, it is but a shadow. It appeared, in approaching, fair and captivating. It proved, in reality, a piece of fairy frost-work; on touching it, it fell apart.

But in Heaven the harmonizing will be complete. Man's will and love will there be entirely subordinate to the will and love of God. The lineaments of the Divine image, erased and effaced at the Fall, will there be again imprinted. There will be no competing affection to alienate from the great Source of happiness — no vacuity requiring anything else to fill it. The streams will be unneeded in the presence of the great Fountain-Head — Him who is essential love, essential goodness, essential glory.

"Lord," says Augustine, "You have made us for Yourself, and our heart is unquiet until it reposes in You!" There will be nothing more to be desired or longed for; and the rejoicing soul, gazing around on

the floods of the excellent glory, will be able to say, "I am satisfied!"

"Once I dreamed," says Payson, "of being transported to Heaven; and being surprised to find myself so calm and tranquil in the midst of my happiness, I inquired the cause. The reply was, 'When you were on earth, you resembled a bottle partly filled with water, which was agitated by the least motion — now you are like the same bottle filled to the brim, which cannot be disturbed.'" Yes! then every soul will become a temple, and its distinguishing glory will be that of Solomon's on the day of consecration — "the house was filled with the glory of the Lord!" Other and minor sources of happiness there may be. There may be the waving of incense, sounds of sweet melody, the high praises of God chanted by a mighty multitude which no man can number, and the lofty companionship of cherubim and seraphim; but the believer's pre-eminent dignity and blessedness will consist in his own soul becoming a consecrated shrine for the mystic Shekinah — "God dwelling in him, and he in God."

Reader! whatever be the Divine dealings and discipline in fitting you for such a Heaven, and such a likeness, submit to them. To employ a well-known but beautiful illustration — The refining of silver is not complete, until the refiner beholds his own image reflected brightly in the fused metal. And, if He who calls Himself "a Refiner of silver" keeps you long in the crucible — subjecting you long in the furnace — it is only that every grain and speck of alloy may be purged away, and that in Heaven you may awake rejoicing, and "satisfied" in "His likeness."

What a glorious and strange transformation! Who would recognize the spirit that is now chafed and buffeted with temptation and sin, corruption and iniquity, then made resplendent with the image of a holy God? Just as the shapeless, unseemly root of a flower or plant struggling amid rubbish and stones and cheerless darkness, after fastening its fibers in the soil, sends up a graceful stalk, efflorescing in

loveliness and beauty, its leaves waving in the sunlight, and filling the summer air with their fragrance — so will it be with the soul. It is here sown in corruption. It fastens its roots in a world dark and cheerless, by reason of sin. Its immortal fibers are nursed and disciplined amid trials and sorrows, difficulties and perplexities. It is soiled and degraded with the corruptible elements through which it has to fight its upward way. But there is a glorious summer-time at hand, when the root thus nurtured shall burst its mortal chains, and its leaves and blossoms shall not only be bathed in the hues of Heaven, but their every tint will be resplendent with a glory reflected from the Great Source of all light and joy.

FACE TO FACE

"Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face." — 1 Corinthians 13:12

What an extension in the domain of knowledge on that blessed morning when "the day shall break," and earth's twilight shadows shall "flee away forever." The mysteries in Providence, the "deep things" in Scripture, the apparent discrepancies in God's moral government, all unfolded, vindicated, explained. "In Your light," O God, we shall "see light." How this new illumination will be effected we cannot say. We can only venture a few dim conjectures on a great problem which the future alone can solve. Much of our curtailed and partial knowledge here, is owing to the limited range of our present faculties. It is quite possible, in part, to conceive a future world of vast and indefinite extension and amplification of our present mental and bodily powers; such an amplification as the man born blind experiences when his eyes are opened for the first time, on a world of whose glories he has only been previously cognizant by hearing about them. We can imagine some faculty which either we do not now possess, or which

hitherto, like the sight of the blind man we have supposed, has been lying sealed and dormant, all at once imparted — "eyes of our understanding" opened, which are now closed — new powers, shall we say, of thought and reasoning, taking in knowledge by intuition, which now requires years of laborious thought.

Even in the case of the lower animals, we see powers and instincts which we do not possess, but which, if we did possess them, would add incalculably to our capacities. Instance, as familiar examples, the flight of the migratory birds, or that of the bee winging its way to a vast distance from its hive; yet, notwithstanding its complex aerial journey, finding, with unerring precision, its way back to the hidden nook where it started.

The present limited range alike of our physical and moral powers of observation may have been, as an able writer surmises, the reason why Paul, when he was caught up into the third heaven, tells us he saw things which it is not "possible for a man to utter." Why not possible? Simply because he was not gifted with earthly powers or faculties or language capable of giving expression to what he saw. The phenomena of heavenly glory (if I might so call them) were alike, in kind and degree, so diverse from all he had been conversant with here, that he would have needed another dialect and vocabulary to unfold his meaning.

"But THEN shall I know!" All enigma and difficulty will then vanish — all will be made plain to ennobled, refined, and purified powers. Here on earth, a passing breath from a carnal world dims my glass, and obscures my spiritual vision. There in Heaven, there will be no taint of sin to mar or blight my lofty contemplations. Here, amid the twilight shadows of an imperfect state, there is much to cause doubt, and, alas! disagreement among God's children. There, all shall see "eye to eye;" they will only wonder that trifles should have been allowed so sadly to divide and estrange. Here, we are in the gloomy crypt, walking amid the humiliating wrecks of sin and death,

reading the mysterious records of mortality. There, it will be in the "cathedral aisles" of light and love, harmony and peace — the noon-day splendor of eternity. Glorious prospect! all made bright before that Sapphire Throne.

That mysterious PROVIDENCE, that desolating bereavement which, like a sweeping avalanche, tore up by the roots the fibers of affection, then I shall know, and see, and acknowledge it to have been all for good. Then I shall understand, (what my aching heart cannot now) that the child I wept over — the parent I laid prematurely in the grave — the friend, early severed from my side — were all thereby taken from much evil to come, and invested with an earlier bliss. I shall wonder how I could ever have sorrowed on their behalf.

Meanwhile let me bow submissive to my Righteous Father's will, however dark and startling sometimes it may be. In infancy, the child takes much on trust; in matured life, he gets his difficulties explained. Let this be my position regarding the "deep things" of providence and grace. Wait patiently the explanation of my Father in Heaven. I shall see in the completed plan that all events had their mission and end — the Lord bringing glory to Himself from all. At present I behold only one or a few links, while He has the whole chain in His hands. Then, in retracing that long line of unbroken kindness, I shall feel satisfied that not only all was for the best, but truly the best. The whole by-past wilderness, as seen from the hills of glory, will appear carpeted with love. Like a traveler after a dark night, I shall look back along the region I have crossed; and noting the perils I had escaped by His gracious guidance, wonder at the way by which God has led me.

Above all, I shall grow in the knowledge of HIMSELF; and have amazing views — such as I have never had here — of His glory as the great end of life and being. Our present knowledge of God, even revealed knowledge, is but like the prattling of infancy, a mere attempt at a spoken language, most of which is still

unintelligible. But then I shall be "filled with all the fullness of God." Not by any means that my knowledge of Him can be perfect. There will always be depths in that ocean-fullness, beyond the fathoming of any finite mind. No, further, the more I know, the more I shall feel that I have to know. When I know most, my befitting exclamation will be, "Oh the depth!" "It PASSES knowledge!"

"This is eternal life — to know You." God, by His varied discipline, is meanwhile training me in this knowledge. And, as a sainted writer has well said, "we must wait until we get entirely home to have lesson-books put by forever. But what ever are the gradations in our books, or in whatever shape the lesson comes to us, this is the one grand blessed object aimed at by our wondrous Teacher in all, Acquaint yourself now with HIM, and be at peace." (Miss Plumtre)

UNNEEDED LUMINARIES

"And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." — Revelation 21:23

Heaven is here compared to a city. But it is neither created orbs, nor material luminaries, which light up its glorious edifices. These are superseded. There is no longer need of the intervention of *means* as on earth. All the knowledge and light and glory of the Church triumphant emanate directly from the Divine Source of all excellence. The immediate presence of the Creator and the Lamb will render unnecessary every other medium of communication. As a vessel requires props before being launched to sea — or a house, in the building stage, requires scaffolding before it can be completed — so the Church, in its earthly condition, requires the props and scaffolding

of ordinances and means of grace. But when finished — the last stone placed on the consummated structure — then the scaffolding is removed — it is needed no more. "There shall be no more prayer there," says Baxter, "because no more necessity; but the full enjoyment of the thing prayed for. God's *face* shall be the Scripture where we shall read the truth."

We have *servants* in the lower banqueting-house — angels are ministering spirits sent forth "to minister to the heirs of salvation." The Church has ordained office-bearers to carry the vessels of the sanctuary. *Here* it is *mediately* through the creature our spiritual needs are supplied—*there* all will be supplied *directly* from God and the Lamb. It is "THE LAMB who leads to the living fountains of water." It is "*God*" who "wipes away all tears from the eyes!" *Here on earth*, the use of means is indispensable. They are adapted for our state of *imperfection*. The infant or sick man cannot bear the full blaze of the sun — they must have the curtain drawn, or the brightness tempered and subdued; it is only with increasing age or returning health that either are able to look on the light. So in the infancy and weakness of our probation-state we could not bear to gaze on the unveiled majesty of God's glory — we could not endure its intolerable brightness; it would blind and consume us. The figurative "sun" and "moon" of ordinances are, therefore, graciously appointed for the feebleness of our earthly condition. But when invested with the nobler powers of our heavenly manhood, we shall be able to dispense with these — we shall be able to draw aside the veiling curtain, which is needed now to subdue and modify, to then gaze with eagle-eye on the brightness of Jehovah's presence.

To borrow an apt illustration: None of the lower animals can hold, in the noblest sense of the word, *fellowship* with man, as they are at present constituted; but let one of them have suddenly imparted to it the gift of *reason*, *then* it becomes immediately fitted to do so. So it is with regard to our present and future relation to God. We are unable,

with our present limited powers, to hold, in the highest sense, intimate fellowship with Him — we have the feeblest conceptions of His glory, the most inadequate apprehension of His goodness, and power, and excellency, and majesty. But when we come in a glorified state to have higher and nobler spiritual endowments conferred on us, we shall be able to *see*, as we cannot do now, His glorious perfections, and to *enjoy*, as we cannot do now, His presence and favor, His fellowship and love.

The city will then have no "*need*" of the sun! It is *needed* now, while on earth — the softer and more subdued light is required *now*; but earth's darkness will then be past, and the true Light will shine. We shall be able (without being, like Moses, hidden in the cleft of any sheltering rock) to "see God and live!"

And *what a fellowship* will this be!—The Being of all beings, the Light of all lights! David felt it to be subject-matter of gratitude and joy — "*I am companion to those who fear you.*" He had a hallowed joy in the fellowship of kindred spirits on earth. What will it be to be the companion of God Himself? — to be linked with all that is essentially *great*, and *glorious*, and *good*, in the universe — not only to be brother to the angelic hosts, but, in a higher sense than even Abraham, the father of the faithful, knew it, "to be called" (and to BE) "the *friend* of God!"

If, even on earth, I have known something of Him as my "Light" and my "Salvation" — if I have seen somewhat of His glory shining through the battered chinks of my ruined soul — what will it be to bask in the floods of infinite light and love before the Throne? "What can be desired," says one now in the midst of the glorious realities on which he often dwelt, "beyond the bliss imparted by the consciousness of loving and being loved by Him, in whose smile of love the highest archangels find the very Heaven of Heaven to consist?"

I shall be independent of all that contributes to light up my earthly pathway. Friends I may have then among the angels — hallowed reunions of earthly affection may and *will* take place in that world of glory; but though I expect to prize and cherish them, I shall have no "NEED" of them. They will be among the "lesser glories," having no glory (comparatively) by reason of "the glory that excels." The sunlight and the moonlight will pale into *nothingness* in the presence of mightier beams!

But while I shall be lost in amazement at the exceeding greatness and excellency of this great Being, who is enthroned "in light, inaccessible, and full of glory" — while all the eloquence of earth that has tried to portray the majesty of His glory will fall immeasurably short — it will, at the same time, be a *softened* glory. Never, in these sublime pictures of Heaven which we have in the Book of Revelation, is the Lord God Almighty spoken of but in conjunction with "*the Lamb*." John "saw no temple; the Lord God Almighty and *the Lamb* were the temple." Now he sees no light. The luster of earthly sun, and moon, and stars, have faded, and are quenched forever, but "*the Lord God Almighty AND THE LAMB are the light thereof*." He hears the redeemed multitude sing a lofty anthem — "*Salvation to our God that sits upon the throne, AND UNTO THE LAMB*." What is the design of this often-recurring imagery and symbol but to keep ever before the Church, even in its triumphant state, the intervention of a Mediator, by whom alone it is that we can see God and live? "*The Lamb is the light thereof!*" Calvary's cross and Calvary's Savior will still be the *theme* and *mystery* of eternity!

And if light be the emblem of purity, how I ought, in the prospect of such a Heaven and such a Presence, to make it my great ambition to be "*perfecting*" that "*holiness, without which no man can see the Lord!*" Holiness becomes that city! Its gates are never shut except against sin. Let me seek, as its chartered citizen, that every vestige of *the accursed thing* be now put away. What a happy world, where

temptation shall no longer be felt or feared! — where I shall never more, by reason of sin, be mourning an absent Lord — never more, in the midst of my own erring estrangements, be uttering the plaintive soliloquy of the patriarch, "*Oh that I knew where I might find HIM!*" but ever reposing in the joyous consciousness, "*I am still with You!*"

VISION AND FRUITION

"We shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."
— 1 John 3:2

This beautiful verse of John comprises the two grand elements of heavenly glory: To "*SEE* God" — to be "*LIKE* God." It describes the matured manhood of the Christian.

We are now in a state of infancy and childhood. As a child on earth is incapable of comprehending much that is made plain in after years, so, with regard to divine knowledge, "we know in part, and we prophesy in part." But in the full development of our spiritual being we shall "see Him face to face." The earthly prayer will, for the first time, in all its amplitude, be fulfilled — "I beseech You, show me Your glory."

See Him! What an advance does this announcement indicate in the moral capacities and privileges of the glorified, beyond what they enjoyed on earth! We cannot bear to look even on the natural sun here; we are dazzled and blinded with his intolerable brightness. But *there*, "the Lord our God" is to be our "everlasting light." The spiritual vision will be enlarged and adapted for the augmented glories of this higher manifestation.

See Him! What an honor! The Jewish High Priest was highly favored in being permitted, *once a year*, to gaze on the majestic symbol of the Divine presence —

the Temple Shekinah Glory. What will it be to enjoy the eternal and uninterrupted contemplation of the great God Himself — that, too, undimmed by any mystic or shadowy rites; but "with open face," (*lit.* face unveiled) "beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord." And it is to "see Him *as He is*." Not canopied in clouds and wreathed in rainbow-form, dreadful, inapproachable — but God in our nature, "Immanuel, God with us. It is plain that it is *Jesus* of whom the Apostle of love speaks in our motto-verse. Jesus as He was, is, and ever shall be — the Elder Brother — the kinsman Redeemer — "the same yesterday, and today, and forever."

Often are we conscious of the thought presenting itself, "Would that I had been among the number of those who of old were privileged to hear that loving voice, and gaze on that countenance, 'fairer than the children of men!' Would that I had sat on the Hill of Beatitudes, and listened to those words of matchless wisdom; or stood by the sea-shore of Gennesaret, or in the graveyard of Bethany, or mingled in the jubilant crowd on Olivet!" This honor is ours in Heaven. We *shall* "see the King in His beauty." "Tell the daughter of Zion, Behold, your King comes." "They shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads." It will be said of His redeemed people in glory, as the queen of Sheba said of Solomon, "Happy are your men, happy are these your servants, which stand continually before you!"

"Like Him!" This is spoken of here as the second element in Heavenly bliss. Even on earth the contemplation of Christ by faith is represented as bringing about a resemblance to Himself. *"We are changed into the same image from glory to glory."* How much more, when, as divine artists, gazing on His unveiled luster, we shall be enabled to copy the Divine Original, feature by feature! "We shall be *like* Him, FOR we shall SEE Him." We cannot, even in the present world, be much in the company of an individual without insensibly contracting a resemblance to him — catching up his tones, his manners, his habits of taste and thought. So will it be

in Heaven with Jesus. We shall become more and more "*Savior-like*." Oh, surely if it be an exalted honor to *see* Him, with what glory will it invest the ransomed thus, in any feeble measure, to *resemble* Him! If it be the Christian's secret aspiration on earth to be like Abraham, or Moses, or David, or John, or Paul, what will it be to be "like HIM," of whom these are but the faintest shadows?

But, more than this — not only is likeness to Jesus an honor; it is a necessary requirement or qualification to render the believer fit for the enjoyment of Heaven. I need, in some degree at least, conformity to Him in character, in order to be able to appreciate His home of purity and love. The most beautiful landscape may be placed before the blind man, but, deprived of the organ of vision, by which alone its beauties can be apprehended, he can see no loveliness in it. So Heaven in its holiness would be one vacant and dreary blank, if I have no moral eye with which to behold it. But that moral vision will be imparted. The perfectly-renewed heart, a copy of its Lord's, will then be the true "organ of sight." There will be no sin to mar the contemplation of the Divine Original — nothing to disturb or divert the spiritual eye. The heart's affections will repose with full delight on Him, the great center of attraction. There will be perfect unison with His will, and entire, unreserved consecration to His glory; all the ennobled, renovated, sanctified powers of the glorified nature will be willingly embarked in His service. The feet will run for Him; the heart will be an altar consecrated to His worship; memory will be a labyrinth of remembered mercies; the tongue will be a glorified instrument to resound His praise; the whole regenerated being a storehouse of collected materials to proclaim and testify of His greatness and majesty — His grace, and truth, and love.

Be this, then, the view of Heaven I seek to have constantly before me — that I am to be "*like my Lord*." What a solemn and searching test is thus afforded with which to try my anticipations of future bliss! Amid the most intense worldliness, there may

be ethereal speculations about the glory of the *saints' everlasting dwelling-place*. But do I long after its mansions because their bliss consists in having a heart assimilated in holiness to that of Christ? Like the Elder Brother, and in Him to the whole brotherhood in glory — saints, angels, God!

Oh, if the consciousness of following, as His ransomed Israel, the pillar of His presence in the wilderness be delightful, what will it be to follow Him in the Promised Land? If the Eshcol pledges be gratifying, what will it be to pluck for ourselves in the heavenly vineyard, under the shadow of the living Vine Himself? 'Lord Jesus! prepare me for meeting You, seeing You, enjoying You.'

Were I going, in a few years, to reside in a distant land, how I would strive now to master its language — to know its history — to put myself in a state of training for its *habits* and *occupations*. Heaven is that country; and this is the message sent by letter from its shores to every stranger and pilgrim on the earth, "*And everyone who has THIS HOPE in him purifies himself, even as Christ is pure.*" The priests in the earthly temple had to wash and purify themselves before they could engage in priestly service. So, if I am to be a "priest unto God" in the heavenly Jerusalem, I must sanctify myself for this everlasting feast.

It is a quaint but a true saying, "The man who does not find Heaven in his soul here, will not find his soul in Heaven hereafter." Unlike Jesus now, I cannot expect to be like Him forever. The fine chiselings of the perfected model, indeed, will be added in glory; but the seed of the likeness — the bold outlines of the moral sculpture — must be begun on earth. Meanwhile, let the words sound in my ears, like the preparation-bell for the great Sunday-services of the Church in Heaven — let them follow me like a celestial monitor wherever I am, and howsoever engaged, "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*"

LOCALITY AND CHARACTER

"Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwells righteousness."— 2 Peter 3:13

Little has been said in Scripture fitted to gratify an idle curiosity regarding the circumstantial of future bliss. The extreme and studied reserve, indeed, of the sacred writers on this subject forms one of the striking indirect evidences that they were neither impostors nor enthusiasts — neither pleasers of men, nor compilers of cunningly-devised fables. Had they been so, they would doubtless have appealed more than they have done to the imaginations and passions of their readers, expatiating on the scenery and splendors of the world to come.

While, however, the statements are brief and fragmentary regarding the locality and characteristics of Heaven, it becomes us, with a modest precaution, to be "wise up to what is written." The verse of the apostle Peter offers us two themes for meditation on a future state of bliss — two Grapes to be gleaned from the Eshcol clusters.

1st, We are to look for "*new heavens and a new earth.*"

The present globe on which we dwell is to undergo a purifying process by fire. When the day of the Lord comes "as a thief in the night," "*the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.*" Although, however, a conflagration be here spoken of, we have strong reason to conjecture that this planet, over which "the morning stars sang together," and which the Almighty Creator Himself pronounced to be "*very good,*" is not to be annihilated — not to be expunged

from the "records of creation" — but rather only remolded and reconstructed into a "*new earth*," nobler and more beautiful than when the Sons of God shouted over it their lofty anthems. Again, (although we have no positive authority in assigning a special locality for the future home of the glorified) we can affirm, with strong grounds of certainty, that that home — be it where it may — must consist of a *material* habitation of some kind, suited to *material* bodies. Whatever change may take place hereafter on our physical frames — however refined and even spiritual in one sense they may be — we know that a glorified *body* cannot, in the nature of things, be an ethereal, angelic, spiritual essence; floating, in dreamy, shadowy form, through the regions of space. It must assume a substantial, visible, tangible shape. It is to be "*fashioned*" like unto the glorious resurrection-body of Jesus.

Much of our present corporeal organism, as we may afterwards more particularly note, *may*, and most probably *will*, be retained and restored; only their functions vastly augmented, and the sphere of activity vastly enlarged. If, then, for these glorified bodies some local material habitation must necessarily be provided, another step leads to the probable (the natural) inference, that their old abode, purified and renovated, would form the most befitting locality for their eternal residence.

We have seen, in the previous Meditation, that the Great Being, at whose feet they are to cast their crowns, is most frequently spoken of and adored by them under His suffering title, "*The Lamb*." If He delights to remember earth as the scene of His *humiliation* — if He delighted to dwell in its "habitable parts" in eras long antecedent to the Incarnation, and before the millions He was to save were called into existence — how much more will He delight to traverse it, when "His blood, His pain, His toils" all past — it becomes the monument and trophy of His unspeakable grace and love! Is it not reasonable to infer that the theater on which His redemption-work was achieved, so far from being erased from the

universe, will rather be retained — in restored and renovated beauty — a lustrous point on which principalities and powers will delight to fix their wondering gaze, and get from its memories fresh matter and motive for praise? Will not the song listened to by Isaiah in the old Jerusalem temple — when he heard "one cry to another" — rise to its full cadence, in the ingathered Church of the Redeemed, when, on the platform of "the new earth," and under the dome of "the new heavens," the ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands will be heard rolling in the threefold ascription — *"Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts! The whole EARTH is full of His glory?"*

If we are forbidden to hazard stronger assertion, we may, at all events, speak of all this as substantial conjecture. Earth (our own present sin-stricken, woe-worn earth) may only have to put off these her ashen robes of guilt and woe, to become a heavenly and eternal home for her ransomed children — beautiful amid "a sisterhood of worlds." Scripture significantly speaks, not of the *renewing* or remodeling of all things, but of "the *restitution* of all things." It is the building of the old fabric which the earthquake had shattered — the disentangling of stone by stone from the matting weeds and ivy, and chiseling them afresh for the heavenly Temple. All that sin has left uncorrupted may remain as it is. We may have the same glorious sky for a canopy — the same everlasting mountains to gaze upon — the same grateful vicissitude of seasons, the same winds to chant — the same waves to chime, "Glory to God in the highest!"

The *eye* may be charmed, as now, with harmonious coloring — the *ear* delighted, as now, with music and song. The *senses* may be as susceptible (or more susceptible) than they now are of the sublime and beautiful in nature — are may vindicate, under nobler auspices, her claim to be the handmaid of all that is pure and lovely and of good report — the harpers, harping on a glassy sea, undimmed and unfretted by a ripple of sin or sorrow — the very words which are

now at times attuned to our sinful lips in a sinful world, may be set to the higher music and melodies of a world of purity and love — *"O Lord, how manifold are Your works! in wisdom have You made them all! THE EARTH is full of your riches!"*

The 2nd statement in the words of Peter, is the *special characteristic* of these "new heavens and new earth, *wherein dwells righteousness.*"

This brings us again to the great truth, that it is the moral aspect and *character* of Heaven, and not its *locality*, which *most* concerns us. If the Bible descriptions and pictures of a future state teach us anything, it is this — not to indulge in fanciful theories about the accessories of heavenly bliss, but to keep our minds focused on this great truth — that *holiness characterizes that kingdom!* It matters comparatively little *where* we shall be, but it matters much, and it concerns us much, to know *what* we shall be. We may not be able categorically to pronounce whether Heaven is on some distant, and as yet un-traversed nook in creation; or whether it may be this very earth, consecrated by so many mingled memories of sin, suffering, and glory. But this we do know, that *Righteousness* will be the great law of that blissful empire. We repeat the great truth dwelt upon in the previous chapter — *"It does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be LIKE Him."*

It is SIN which forms the foul curse and blot on the "present *evil* world." In itself, our earth is all one could wish as a beautiful and befitting habitation for glorified natures. Take sin away, which has blighted and blasted whatever is fair within it, and you transmute it at once into a "Paradise restored." Yes! imagine this world — this very world — purged of its evils — its selfishness — its profligacy — its covetousness — its jealousies — its backbiting — each heart a transparent fountain of pure and holy thought — each household a little Bethel — every life within it an incense-breathing altar — each nation linked with its fellow in everlasting brotherhood — the

curse of Babel removed, and the one universal tongue is the language of *love!*

Then, following the expulsion of *sin*, picture the expulsion of SUFFERING. The cries of infancy — the pains of sickness — the pangs of disease — the ashen cheek (the sad premonitory symptom of coming dissolution) — the bitter bereavement — the tolling of the funeral bell — the crowded graveyard — the weeds of mourning, and deeper yawning chasms of bitterness in the soul which no human plummet can gauge — imagine all these unknown — these "former things passed away."

Moreover, add to this *negative*, the POSITIVE view of a world of bliss — the presence of God — the personal love of an ever-present Savior — fellowship with angels — communion with all that is holy and happy! Oh, I need not go and make the sun my chariot, and sweep the azure skies — I need not traverse the nightly plains, and make every star a resting-place in my search for a happy heaven — I have it wherever God and righteousness is! He might erect for me in infinite space some gigantic palace, glittering with coruscations of unearthly splendor — its halls gleaming with the treasures of the universe — resplendent with beauty, resonant with song. But if sin were there — Heaven it could not be! "*Blessed are the pure in heart; they alone can see*" — they alone can enjoy "*God!*"

Is my mind and character *now*, in any feeble measure, fitted for this sinless abode? No un-renewed, unregenerate man could be happy there. Take a peasant from the plough, and set him on a throne; how ill at ease would he feel at the strange transition! — how ill qualified to cope with the duties and cares and responsibilities of an empire! Take a deaf man to listen to melodious music — or a blind man to gaze on the glories of a landscape, both would fail to imbibe one pleasurable emotion, seeing they are destitute of the requisite inlets of enjoyment. The objects of pleasure are, in both cases, locked to their senses.

So likewise in Heaven. Without holiness, I could have no relish for communion with God. I must have a moral vision to render me capable of appreciating the moral loveliness of its scenery — I must have spiritual tastes and likings to render its holy society congenial. As little could an inhabitant of our earth, with this present bodily organization, be able to sustain life on a planet nearer the sun, (such as *Mercury*) as the sinner, with his spiritual organization unchanged, be able to bear the blaze of that Heaven of unsullied purity!

O happy time! when alike the world without and the world within will be purified — hallowed — "made fit for the Master's use." Every sinful passion quelled — every usurper overthrown — when from this creation, now "groaning and travailing in pain," shall arise a perpetual hymn of praise and love — when sin, which like a vast avalanche has been crushing it down, shall have melted away forever! And more than this, when my own heart — regenerated, glorified — will become a consecrated altar, on which the sacrifices of righteousness will be offered continually — self, sin, corruption, no longer burning their defiled incense and strange fire, but all shall "*grow*" into a "*holy temple in the Lord.*"

Lord! I would seek to have this Heaven begun! Let me not only *see* the Eshcol clusters — let me *taste* them. Give me grace to become more and more holy. Let the power of evil wax weaker and weaker, and the power of holiness wax stronger and stronger. It has been beautifully said, "The lower streets of glory are on earth." Let it be so with me. Let my heart become now a miniature Heaven. Let me know, in my blissful experience, the truth of the Savior's words, "*The kingdom of God is WITHIN you.*"

THE MUTUAL JOY

"Father, I will that they also, whom you have given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory."— John 17:24

An emigrant is about to sail for a distant land. As the vessel weighs anchor, and his family are gathered on the shore to bid a sorrowful farewell, his last words remind them that it is but a temporary separation — that in a few brief years, by a favoring Providence, he will be back again, to take them along with him to his adopted home!

Or, a father gathers his children around his death-bed, to give them his last blessing. With his eye looking upwards to the glorious world on which his spirit is about to enter, he tells them, in faltering accents, to dry their tears; for in a little while they will be reunited in that "better land" which knows no parting.

Here is the utterance of a departing Savior to His orphaned children. It forms a petition in His last intercessory prayer, when about to leave the world, and return to the Father. "Oh, the full joys," says Richard Baxter, speaking of this verse in his 'Saint's Rest,' "offered to a believer in this one sentence of Christ! Every word full of life and joy!"

The verse brings before us these two thoughts in connection with a state of future bliss—

*The SAVIOR'S joy in Heaven in being with His people;
and His PEOPLE'S joy in Heaven in being with their
Savior.*

The Savior here speaks of HIS OWN JOY in having His saints with Him in glory. The language is that of a conqueror claiming a stipulated reward. God seems to say to Him, "Ask of Me, and I will give it to You. Son, You are ever with Me, and all that I have is Yours." And what *does* He ask? He had Heaven at His command — "thrones, and dominions, and powers, and principalities." But He prefers to be crowned as "Lord of all," in the midst of His saints — that

redeemed sinners, like celestial planets, might through eternity circle and constellate around Him, their central Sun. "He will rest in His love; He will rejoice over them with singing."

On earth, a man likes to live and die among those he venerates. The old village patriarch desires to be laid where his fathers sleep, in his native churchyard. The Jew will travel back from the most distant region of the world, that his bones may be laid in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, under the shadow of Olivet, and within hearing of the Kedron. "Where you die," said Ruth to the one she loved, "I shall die, and there shall I be buried."

So speaks also an ever-living Savior of His people. "Where I live," He says, "there you are to live also; eternity shall not separate between you and Me." The well-known tomb of a great earthly architect is placed immediately under the dome of the vast temple that his genius had reared. With reverence we say, Jesus is through eternity to be enshrined in the Temple of His saints, the living stones rising tier on tier around — each glowing with the inscription, "He loved me, and gave Himself for me."

What joy thus to behold around Him the travail of His soul, the purchase of His agony! If we value great results generally in proportion to the labor and toil bestowed on them — if the philosopher, in arriving at some brilliant achievement in science, has all the greater joy when he thinks of it as the result of months and years of patient and unwearied exertion; if the artist or sculptor has all the greater joy in contemplating his completed work, by re-traversing in thought years of incessant labor, the line by line, and stroke by stroke, until he worked it up to the now "breathing" marble — if the Great God Himself, in resting from the work of creation, when He contemplated its magnitude, had delight when He pronounced it "very good" — what must be the transcendent joy with which the adorable Redeemer beholds in the completion of an undertaking which involved in it so unparalleled a cost of humiliation and

pain and woe! What shall be the delight with which He, the mighty Architect, contemplates the living, breathing forms of immortal life, which, by His own and His Spirit's work, were chiseled and fashioned to adorn the Heavenly Temple!

Here was "the joy" we read "that was set before Him;" — the joy of seeing "a multitude which no man can number" who had "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." If the courageous mariner has joy, who, at the risk of his life, bravely dashed into the water, and rescued some struggling castaway from the weltering waves — if the Patriot-Philanthropist could with joy stand in thought amid the grateful millions whose fetters he had struck off, and into whose lips he had put the music of freedom — if the honored minister has joy, who, on his death-bed, can say, at the retrospect of a lifetime of self-sacrificing devotedness in his Master's cause, "Blessed be God, my work is done," — what shall we say (if we can compare the earthly with the heavenly — the finite with the infinite) of that everlasting joy which shall fill the bosom of the Savior as He sees those once bound with the fetters of sin, struggling in the waves of despair, now saved with a great salvation, exulting in "the glorious liberty of the sons of God!"

If He had joy — as we believe He had — when in the depths of a bypast eternity He said, "Lo, I come," (though in that coming He had all the appalling prospect of ignominy and shame) — if "*Wisdom*" had "delights with the sons of men and rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth," when the solitary treading of the wine-press had yet to be borne; if He had joy when He stretched forth His hands over His "Church in the wilderness," and said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" — what intenser and holier joy must *that* be, when, every woe and pang and sorrow at an end, His people shall be with Him "where He is;" earth's battle, with its "confused noise and garments rolled in blood," terminated; the everlasting triumphal procession of eternity begun — immortal palm-branches strewed in

the way — and the streets of the new Jerusalem echoing to the cry, "*Hosanna to the Son of David*" — "*Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigns!*"

Behold, then, Heaven as a place where the Savior Himself shall rejoice over His ransomed ones. They are "glorified together." *They* are glorified in Him, and *He* is glorified in them. "Heaven would not be enough for Jesus without His people. It seems as if their presence were essential, not to His deity, (this cannot be) but to His mediatorial happiness." (Evans) The joy in that happy world would seem to begin at the center, and to be deepest there, but sending out its waves to the circumference of glory.

THE MUTUAL JOY

"Father, I will that they also, whom you have given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory." — John 17:24

In our last chapter, we considered this verse as expressive of the Savior's joy in Heaven in being with His people. We may consider it now as expressive of *HIS PEOPLE'S JOY in Heaven in being with their Savior*. Let us enumerate some of the causes or reasons of this joy.

1. *The very fact of HIS being joyful will give them joy.*

When a son hears of some honor done to his hoary-headed parent, or of some event or occurrence that has given him pleasure, the joy or the pride in the parent's bosom will be transfused into that of his child, and become part of his own. Or if we hear of the promotion of a brother or a friend — that by dint of intellect or goodness or worth he has risen to some position of honorable eminence — what a joy his success gives to us! And shall it not be so in an infinite degree with the redeemed in glory? When

they behold the Brother of brothers, the Friend of friends, reaping the fruits of the "travail of His soul," and "being satisfied," His joy will be their own!

2. *The thought of His being near them and with them will impart to them joy.*

It makes us happy to have those we love near us. We never enjoy friendship so much as when that friend is by our side. We may be cheered from time to time by an absent brother's letters, his kind messages, and warm expressions of attachment; but the *written* epistle does not supply the blank of the *living* one — we long to see him face to face before our joy can be complete.

So likewise in Heaven with Jesus. "In Your *presence*," "there is *fullness* of joy." Then and there shall that presence be fully unveiled.

If even in this twilight world the Christian can say, in the enjoyment of a present Savior, "It is good for me to be *here*;" how good to be *there*! If even now the messages of this absent Elder Brother, through His Word and Spirit, be cheering and joyful, what will be the vision and fruition of the Brother Himself! If the manna from the banqueting-table be precious, what will it be to have the vision and fruition of the Master of assemblies!

3. *The thought of His not only being with them and near them, but EVER with them, and EVER near them, will greatly intensify their joy.*

A friend or brother comes from a distant land. His visit is cheering at the time, but it is only a passing glimpse. The joy of his home-coming is soon damped by the necessity or summons again to return. The joy of the disciples in having their Lord with them in the days of His flesh was sadly clouded by the announcement, "It is expedient for you that I go away." "Because I have said these things unto you, sorrow has filled your heart."

Not so will it be with His second and more glorious coming. "The Master has come," will be the joyful message and cry, "and He will never more be taken from us" — He will be no longer "a wayfaring man that turns aside to tarry for a night" — no farewell tear will ever again be shed — no Olivet in Heaven, like the earthly one, where He is to be *"parted* from them!" Oh, the joy comprehended in that key-note to the song of the Redeemed, *"And so shall we EVER be with the Lord!"*

4. One other element of the joy of the Redeemed in Heaven in having Jesus with them, is that *His presence will through eternity be the pledge and guarantee of their SAFETY.*

The Tree of Life in the first Eden was the guarantee of Adam's safety, so long as he continued faithful to his Maker. Christ is the Tree of Life in the midst of the *Heavenly* paradise — the immortal pledge of His people's covenant security. *"Because I live you shall live also."* Their happiness through eternity is secured by His meritorious work — they are there as His blood-bought trophies — their presence in Heaven is an answer to the prayer we are now considering; it is the glorious Victor claiming His purchased rights, *"Father, I WILL."* And not until He revokes that *"will"* — in other words, not until an unchanging Savior becomes *changeable* — can His people's happiness be altered or impaired.

Reader! learn from all this the same practical lesson we have previously enforced, "how little it matters where the *locality* of Heaven is. It is "with Christ." That is enough. *"With ME! where I AM!"* and the Christian needs no more. The last words of invitation of Jesus to His Church, when that Church is taking its transition step from the *militant* to the *triumphant* state, will be, *"Come, you blessed of My Father!"* Observe, it is not, *"Go, you blessed ones, to some paradise of My providing. I am about to return to My heavenly throne. I have marked out some new Eden for you; some blissful solitude where you can reign alone — but though separated from Me, I have made*

provision for the fullest measure of joy." No! this would hush every harp, and cloud every spirit. It would be like sending them to a universe without a sun. It would be to tell them they were to be dependent on the fitful luster of glimmering stars. But it is, "COME, you blessed ones! Come with ME! I ascend to *My* Father and *your* Father — to My God and your God. We go together. I will be your forerunner. I will show you the path of life. My glory is to be *your* glory. My gladness is to be *your* gladness. Enter into the joy of *your Lord*."

In some exalted sense, may we not put the words of the apostle into the mouth of his Lord and Master, and suppose Him thus to address His saints on the Great Day — "What is My joy or crown of rejoicing? Is it not you in My own presence?"

The prayer of Jesus we have been considering is ascending *now*. It has been ascending and fulfilling for six thousand years. Though unseen to mortal eye, He, the great covenant Angel, is even now standing before the throne, with the breastplate of His unchanging priesthood. *The hand that was once transfixed to the tree*, is pointing to the names engraved there, and saying, "Father, I will" that those here imperishably inscribed "be with Me where I am."

With what solemn significance may we connect the utterance of that prayer with every believer's death. The Church on earth may be weeping and mourning over some bright light on the eve of being extinguished, wondering, perhaps, at the mysterious providence which is about to carry bereavement into a stricken household. Could they listen to the transactions in the *upper sanctuary*, every repining word would be hushed into silence. They would find *the death-bed on earth* was the answer to the request in Heaven — "Father, *I will*;" — angels hovering over it with the joyful summons, "The Master has come, and is calling for you!"

Christian! exult in this "blessed hope." Covet the possession of this fullness of joy — beholding Jesus

as He is, rejoicing over you with all the joy of His infinite Godhead and His glorified humanity. Here we are merely among the *shallows* of this ocean of infinite love; what will it be when we shall be "able to comprehend with all saints, what is the height and depth, and length and breadth, and to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge!"

DIVERSE MAGNITUDES

*"One star differs from another star in glory." — 1
Corinthians 15:41*

In that world of light, and love, and glory, *all will be supremely blessed*. But it is a thoroughly scriptural view of the happiness of the Redeemed in glory, to represent it, though the same in *kind*, as differing in *degree*. The saints will be classified — "enrolled in moral genealogies."

DIVERSITY is a law of God's universe. It extends to great things as well as to little things. Some flowers are more beautiful than others. Some intellects are more lofty than others. One planet in the skies is of greater magnitude than another. There are gradations too in the heavenly hierarchy. Angels and archangels — principalities and powers — "the greatest and the least" in the kingdom of Heaven.

And have we not reason also to believe that it will be so with glorified saints? All, indeed, will have reached their thrones and their crowns through "the only *ONE* way." We cannot speak of any of that white-robed multitude as being more justified than others; for they equally point, as the ground of their justification, to the finished work and righteousness of their adorable Surety. They all equally feel that, in being saved, they were "saved by *grace*" — that nothing but the blood of that precious Lamb of God was between them and everlasting ruin! And just as one law binds

the planets and the atoms which compose them; so the one great principle of love to Him who died for them, will bind together the vast family of the ransomed, from the soaring Paul to the weeping Magdalene.

But *the degree of the saints' happiness* will be regulated according to their advances in holiness. Our blessed Lord Himself very emphatically enunciates this same truth, more especially in His parable of the Talents, where the amount of the reward is in exact proportion to diligence and fidelity in trading — a parable the lesson of which the great Apostle has thus translated into one of his weighty aphorisms: "*Whatever a man sows, that shall he also reap.*"

Works will form no plea or ground whatever for *acceptance* before the throne. But while it is not said of the "blessed dead" that their works "go *before* them," (as a *passport* to their crowns) it is said "their works do *follow* them." There will be a vast difference between the happiness of the man who had done much for Christ on earth — who had long stood "a pillar in the temple of God" — and that of the monument of grace who had just been plucked at the eleventh hour "a brand from the burning."

As memory, we have reason to know, will form a fearful element in the misery of the lost, so we may conclude, will the exercise of the same ennobled faculty form an element of exalted bliss in the case of the saved. The recollection of all that we have done out of love to the Savior, to promote His cause on earth — the sacrifices, little though they be, we have made for Him — the denial of self for the furtherance of His glory — the affection we have borne to His people — the pleasures we have forsworn and forgone for His sake — all such will be matter of hallowed joy. Jesus will love to recount them — His words will carry their approving echo through all eternity — "*Inasmuch as you did it to the least of these, you did it unto me.*" "*You have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things.*"

But yet, with all this diversity in bliss and glory, there will be no strife among the heavenly, as once among the earthly disciples, as to "who should be the greatest." In this present world, the race for distinction is limited and restricted; only a favored few attain pre-eminence. "They which run" (on earth) "a race, *all* run, but *only one* receives the prize." In Heaven, each will receive his reward. The runner may be distanced in the earthly course by his competitor — not so in the heavenly. "In the race for most worldly objects, one who has *prepared* himself, however well, runs uncertainly, since, after all his exertions, another may outstrip him; whereas he who aids a brother in striving for the incorruptible crown, is ever benefiting Himself." (Whately) There will be crowns with varying luster, and harps of varying tone; but, like the blending of different colors to the eye, or different notes to the ear, all will be pervaded by one beautiful harmony. The saint on the loftiest pinnacle of glory, and the saint on the outskirts of the spiritual horizon, will have the same confession — "We are all one in Christ Jesus."

There will, moreover, be a felt and acknowledged *equity* in this future reckoning. The grace or virtue most assiduously cultivated by the believer on earth, will, (in subordination to God's glory) be the main channel of his happiness in Heaven. In the words of Richard Baxter, "We shall join with Moses in his song — with David in his psalm of praise. We shall see Enoch walking with God — Noah enjoying the end of his singularity — Joseph of his integrity — Job of his patience — Hezekiah of his uprightness, and all the saints the end of their faith."

On earth, the cultivation of particular branches of knowledge brings a pleasure to their possessors which is denied to those ignorant of them. The man, for example, who has cultivated the science of *music*, is capable of enjoying the elaborate composition and exquisite harmonies of some great master, in a way which another cannot do who has neglected this study. So likewise in Heaven; we believe that whatever may have been the tree of righteousness —

the Christian grace or virtue or labor — that you have most assiduously nurtured and cultivated here, you will through eternity encamp under its shadow and partake of its fruits. Whatever were the desires to which your lips and your heart were most frequently attuned below, you will resume with most intense pleasure amid the sublime harmonies of "the new heavens and the new earth." Whatever kindled your luster as an earthly star, that radiance will be perpetuated in the celestial skies. Heaven will not extinguish your earthly tastes and longings — your earthly energies and activities. As a luminous orb you will still shine for God — not absorbing your light, but delighting to be a holy medium in giving forth radiations to others. Not a volume bound up and put under lock and key in the library of Heaven, but continued as a living epistle to be read by other orders of intelligent beings. Not a life of dreamy inaction — all its moral activities halted upon entering the spirit-world, but occupied in true angel-work — endless ministries of love.

Jesus, knowing the tastes and capacities of His ransomed, will delight to lead from fountain to fountain — from scene to scene — from eminence to eminence, as He knows they will be severally able to appreciate them.

Oh, what an incentive is this to be "up and doing" — to be adding to your faith the catalogue of Christian graces! Seek an *"abundant entrance."* It will be joy indeed, happiness far transcending earth's happiest hours, to bask as a star on the *outskirts* of glory. But why not be fired by the noble ambition to be near the *all-glorious Center?* Your crown, given by grace and sprinkled with blood, can never be dim, but why not strive now, that when the Lord the righteous judge shall reward you, you may be "found unto *praise*, and *honor*, and *glory*," at His second appearing?

GLORIFIED BODIES

"Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body." — Philippians 3:21

Is this frail BODY to share none of the glories of immortality? Is the decaying tenement to slumber on — a heap of unconscious dust — to be at last swept into annihilation at the dissolution of all things?

"The voice said, Cry! and he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is GRASS!" (the noble! the beautiful! the ornamental!) all like withering, fading grass of the field! Such is the Bible's humiliating description of the body here, and it is echoed back in mournful experience from ten thousand tomb-stones, and ten thousand aching hearts.

But *"our perishable earthly bodies must be transformed into heavenly bodies that will never die."* The resurrection-body, freed from the last vestige of corruption — purged from the last taint of earthliness — ennobled, purified, etherealized — shall stand "without fault before the throne," the crowning and culminating triumph of the redemption work.

We need not dwell on nature's familiar analogies. The *seed* expanding into the perfect blossom — the little *grain* of corn, buried in its tiny grave of inert clod, bursting forth in the appointed spring-time — the torpid *caterpillar* cradled in a dark cell — a loathsome dungeon — yet that dungeon becoming the birthplace of a beauteous butterfly, mounting to heaven on wings of purple and gold. These are the mute utterances of the outer world on the possibility of a truth beyond the province of reason.

But Scripture comes in where reason is speechless or ambiguous. It tells me of the reconstruction of the dissolved earthly tabernacle into *"a building of God eternal in the heavens."* It tells more — that the spiritual body is to be "fashioned" like that of the glorified Redeemer. It tells that there is at this

moment a MAN wearing a glorified Human body on the throne. "Christ, the first-fruits" — the first Sheaf of the immortal harvest — has been waved in the new Jerusalem temple, the pledge of the myriad sheaves that are to follow; and His saints (raised up in their bodies) will be *"caught up together in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so be forever with the Lord."*

It is vain to attempt conjectures as to the nature of the incorruptible and glorified frame — what changes will take place on the present condition of our bodily system. That there will be new powers and susceptibilities of enjoyment added to what we now possess, we have the strongest reason to believe. There will be no greater change, indeed, in a glorified state on our physical structure than is absolutely *necessary*. We know, however, the dependence of the mind on the body; and it is quite possible to conceive, by a finer bodily organization, a corresponding enlargement of the mental faculties and powers. We may be deprived of some important sources of happiness at present, owing to the lack in our existing bodily frames of some necessary inlets for these. A man deprived of eyesight has a *mind* as susceptible as others of taking impressions of beauty; but having no organ to be the medium of their conveyance, he forfeits the pleasures which his fellows enjoy.

So, may it not be possible in Heaven, by means of a more perfect bodily structure — a physical frame even more "fearfully and wonderfully made" than our present one — to have the way opened for new inlets of exalted enjoyment? It may be like a waking of energy dormant powers of which we are now as unconscious as the *deaf* man is of the sweets of music, or the *blind* man of the glories of the sun, or the tiny *infant* of the philosopher's speculations.

We may infer, moreover, that whatever be the nature of the change, and however vast, *it will not be so vast as to destroy personal identity*. We might recur to earthly analogies here also. The grown-up man has

an entirely different body in its component parts from what he had as an infant. The particles which make up his material framework have again and again been renewed, yet in *person* he remains the *same*. Heaven will be the manhood of our earthly being. But though the transformation must necessarily be great from our present "infant state," personal identity will remain undestroyed. "*Then shall I know, as also I am (here) known.*"

The features of my buried believing friend I shall recognize again. The beaming face of cherished affection shall wear the old impress of earth — no change but this, that the shifting *tent* is transmuted into "a *building* of God," made of permanent and imperishable materials — a bodily structure knowing no decrepitude — smiles that shall never die — new powers conferred which earth may have longed for, but never possessed — all emulous for the divine glory, and instinct with burning and untiring zeal in His service!

And more than all, it will be Humanity in its noblest type — "*fashioned like Christ's glorious body.*" There will be a *family resemblance* to the Elder Brother, bodily, spiritually. It is said that He shall come to be "glorified" not only BY His saints, but "IN His saints," as they bear His image, and wear His likeness. "*We know that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.*" Some of our loveliest garden flowers, are *grafts* from wild plants found in brush and forest-thicket and hedgerow. So beauteous are these transplants as almost belie their pedigree. Their perfect tints, and symmetrical forms, and sweet perfume, however, prove the culture and development of which the plant or flower in its native state was incapable.

So shall it be in a far higher and nobler sense with flowers transplanted into the garden above. The glorified body! how immeasurably will it transcend in physical and moral beauty the old earthly tabernacle! "Sown in corruption, raised in incorruption; sown in weakness, raised in power; sown a natural body,

raised a spiritual body." The first was "of the earth," the second is fashioned like the glorious body of "the Lord from Heaven!"

Glorious body, indeed! without sin, without pain, without weakness, or weariness, or infirmity. The thought of dissolution, which now casts its cold shadow across our path, no longer known or dreaded! Paul's earthly soliloquy changed to this, "O *happy* man that I am, now that I am *delivered* from this body of death!" The Christian's grave, however lowly, is thus "hallowed ground." There slumbers, in these clods of the valley, *redeemed dust*. The mausoleum of clay becomes the casket of a gem which is to sparkle through eternal ages in the Redeemer's crown!

"It is the same way for the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies, which die and decay, will be different when they are resurrected, for they will never die. Our bodies now disappoint us, but when they are raised, they will be full of glory. They are weak now, but when they are raised, they will be full of power. They are natural human bodies now, but when they are raised, they will be spiritual bodies."

NO TEMPLE

*"And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it."—
Revelation 21:22*

HEAVEN WITHOUT A TEMPLE! How strange, at first sight, is this figurative description! The temple was "the excellency of beauty" in the earthly Jerusalem. It was the place of solemnities, the sanctuary of prayer, the frequented resort of angels; the visible pavilion where God Himself in mystic splendor dwelt. To the exile of Patmos it had more than an Israelite's customary hallowed associations. Through its

"Beautiful Gate" he had often and again passed, in company with his Divine Master. In its sacred porticos he had listened to the voice of Him who spoke as never a man spoke. But as the celestial vision now passes before him, he looks in vain, amid the shining portals, and jasper walls, and golden-paved streets, for a similar sacred shrine. John is struck with the mysterious absence. *"I saw no temple therein!"*

This apparent omission in the inspired picture tells us that there will be *no more need of Temples in Heaven*. There was no temple required in the first Eden! *There* our first parents, in the days of their innocence, worshiped God under the blue vault of *nature's* temple!

The angels in Heaven, so far as we know, have no visible sanctuary, there is nothing in their sinless world to interrupt their interchanges of love and fellowship, or to mar the cadence of their song. *Sin* first demanded some special localities for religious worship — consecrated spots partitioned off from the world. There was no need of sheepfolds, so long as no wolf prowled abroad. But when sin and Satan gained entrance, the little flock required the sheltering refuge, wherein they might rest in safety amid *"the mountains of prey."*

As it was of old in the earthly paradise, so will it be amid the glories of "Eden restored" — there will be no "present evil world" to disturb its worshipers, and render needful the quiet and seclusion of hallowed edifices, to secure the sanctities of devotion. *Every place in the vast domain of Heaven will be a Temple — every spot hallowed ground.*

Divisions, too, there will be none. Here, alas! the existence of many and separate Temples, is too often the painful indication of divided churches and severed believers; worshiping apart — refusing to hold fellowship in one and the same church, and drawing lines of improper demarcation between each other. In *Heaven*, all shall see "eye to eye." No walls of separation there. No rival Gerizims and Zions *there*.

The worshipers being assimilated to God, shall be assimilated to one another. They shall have *one* temple, *one* motive, *one* heart, *one* song. "See how these glorified Christians love one another!"

But if the apostle, in gazing on the apocalyptic vision, "saw NO temple," what was the substitute? The lack of the earthly symbol of glory and beauty, must surely be supplied by something nobler and sublimer! Yes, there IS to be a Temple in Glory, but it is a house "not made with hands." Materialism, with all its magnificent dimensions, melts away — "*The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof.*"

There is one sense, indeed, in which, at this moment, God and the Lamb are the Temple of the universe. God's presence is all-pervading. The splendors of the visible skies are but the hangings and drapery of a more magnificent and vast temple. But I cannot now, with my feeble faculties, discern the majesty of His glory. I feel that in this "childhood-world" I am like *the infant in the assembly of philosophers*, who is all unconscious of the superiority of the minds around him, and can hold no fellowship with them in their lofty themes of converse. Though surrounded on all hands with the footprints and manifestations of a present Divinity, my befitting exclamation is, "*Can you by searching find out God?*"

In *Heaven* there is to be a vast revelation and unveiling, of a "hidden God." In the Temple on earth, He was screened by an interposing veil — that veil in glory is withdrawn. No, I am to be *enshrined* in Deity! Heaven is not to be so much the temple of God, as *God* the temple of Heaven. His attributes are to be the walls and bulwarks of my everlasting security.

But this verse of our present Meditation tells us more than this. Jesus "*the Lamb*" is to form the "Gate Beautiful" of this Temple — the Revealer of Him who dwells "*in the light which no man can approach unto!*"

We believe it will be as true of the *glorified* saint, as of the ransomed on earth, "*No man has seen God at*

any time: the only-begotten SON who is in the bosom of the Father; He has declared Him." He will be the true Angel "standing in the sun," the all-glorious medium through which we can see God and live!

"The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple thereof!" This tells me that all my knowledge will come *directly* from *God in Christ*. Now, there is needed the intervention of the Word, Ordinances, Sacraments. *Then*, the spiritual world will no more be lighted up by *satellites*; the "fairness of the moon" will give way to the "brightness of the Sun;" — the starlight will be quenched and superseded by the Great Spiritual Luminary. "You have but now and then seen your Beloved looking through the lattice of ordinances — what a burst of joy awaits you when you shall see Him face to face, and evermore be with Him!" (Miss Plumtre)

Yes, indeed, ineffable bliss! fullness of joy! *No more yearning desires* after "something better;" — the infinite all-satisfying "good" attained — as happy as everlasting goodness and wisdom and omnipotence can make me. My feeble voice swelling the joyous anthem within temple-walls whose only confines are light and love.

Is my title clear to this glorious Heaven? Am I fitted now to be the inhabitant of such a Temple? — to dwell *with* God, (yes, *in* God) occupying these inner chambers of Deity? Heaven is a City. The thought of reigning there with the King of kings is an amazing privilege. But not less elevating, surely, the thought of Heaven as a Temple, where I shall be occupied as a ministering priest — "a priest unto *God*" — ready to cast my censer as well as my crown at His feet, and "offer the sacrifice of praise continually!"

Be it mine to prepare for the priestly work. "*Holiness to the Lord*," was written on the high priest's frontlet of old. Let it be my superscription now. Let the eye of faith delight to dwell especially on the *great* High Priest — He who, as the Covenant Angel, is interceding for me; and who, through eternity, will

form the blood-besprinkled entrance, the ever-open gate conducting into the Holy Place. There may, and doubtless will be many other anthems that shall resound in that temple; but *"Worthy is the Lamb that was slain,"* will ever be the most sublime chant of the Church of the first-born. We shall exult in its other glories. But it will be the inscription over the portal that will be the theme of eternity — "Boldness to enter into the Holiest by the *blood of Jesus.*"

THE GLORIOUS TRANSITION

"Absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." — 2 Corinthians 5:8

Again the curtain of glory is lifted, and what do we see? The emancipated spirit bursting its cocoon shell — soaring upwards on immortal wings to be "with the Lord," and that "forever!" We are interested in the first look we get of *"a great man"* on earth. What must the first glance be in Heaven of JESUS! — that mystic name which has here put music into the heart in many a dark hour, and lighted up its wilderness with a halo of joy! If Jacob longed intently to see Joseph, what will be the saint's ardent desire to gaze on the true Joseph — Him whom his "soul loves!" Yes, on entering Heaven, it will not be the burning ranks of angel and archangel, cherubim and seraphim, that will fix his arrested gaze. His exclamation will be, as his eye wanders upwards to the central Throne, and settles on a Countenance there beaming with unutterable loveliness — "Is *that* indeed the Savior, whom, though so long unseen, I have nevertheless loved!"

And what shall the believer see? It will be the same Lord to whose sublime utterances of love he has so often listened in thought, as eighteen hundred years ago He "spoke as never a man spoke." The same Being who wept, and groaned, and sympathized, and

suffered. He will think of Him at Sychar's well — on Tabor — on Tiberias — on Olivet — by the Kedron — at Bethany — at Calvary. It is "*that same Jesus*" — He who once lay in a borrowed cradle, a helpless babe at Bethlehem; He who spoke comfortable words to the bereaved, and gave back to widowed and yearning hearts their perished joys; He who invited the weary to rest, and never scorned the penitent's tears, or left un-helped the call of mercy; He who lay in anguish on the cold ground of Gethsemane; He who bowed His head on the bitter tree; He who met the weeping Mary with words of joy as she stood disconsolate by His grave, and addressed Peter with the gentlest and most tender of rebukes. I shall see (if I be one of His ransomed people) "*that same Jesus*" — I shall enjoy with Him near and confidential communion, and nothing shall ever separate me from His love!

Of old, some of the transient earthly glimpses of this Savior were blessed and consoling. If it were gladdening when Jacob saw Him in His angel-form at Peniel — or aged Simeon clasped Him in his withered arms in the temple — or the disciples beheld Him on Tabor — or Martha and Mary wept with Him at Bethany — or when the beloved apostle leaned on His bosom, or met Him on the way to Emmaus, or on the lonely shores of Patmos; what will it be to have these seasons of communion renewed without their transience — to bask through eternal years under the radiance of His smile — His own words obtaining an everlasting fulfillment — "*Where I AM, there shall also My servant be!*"

Here, too, we are again reminded that *means and agencies* will be required no longer in His communications with us. The streams will come welling fresh from the living fountain — the rays will be untainted and undimmed by transmission through any impurer medium — there will be *personal* communings between every saint and his living Head — "*They shall see His face.*" Whatever may be the believer's relation to the infinite circumference of Heaven — to the thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers — he will be ever near to

the all-glorious Center! "He," it has been well said, "who is now in every saint the *hope* of glory, will then be in every saint the possession, realization, and fullness of glory."

And, observe from our motto verse, it is an *immediate* transition. The spirit, "with a bound," at the hour of death, as it forsakes its earthly tabernacle, enters the Divine presence and the heavenly Home. Be assured, Paul would never have uttered the wish for departure, in order to lapse into a mesmeric trance or lethargic slumber. Never would he have used such language as this — "*We are confident*" (we are *bold*, as the word means, in the prospect of death) "*and willing rather to be absent from the body,*" if he had any less elevating desire and prospect than to be "*present with the Lord.*" Far rather would he have remained on earth, enjoying the blessed experiences of the Savior's felt presence and love, and the consciousness of promoting His cause, than to have passed into a state of dreamy, drowsy insensibility and torpor. The exchange, in such circumstances, would have been a positive *diminishing* of blessedness. It would have been the withdrawal from active work and warfare in the Church below — an inglorious transition for his hero-spirit. Dungeon, chains, watching, fasting, stripes and sufferings *with* Christ on earth, would have been, to a soul like his, infinitely preferable to such a state of slumberous oblivion and unconsciousness. But he specially guards us against any such supposition: "*Not,*" says he, "*that we would be unclothed*" — not that I long merely to leave the trammels of the flesh, in order to escape from the encumbering clay — "*but to be clothed with our heavenly dwelling, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.*"

Am I prepared for this presence? am I living under the power of this "*blessed hope?*" Were I to be ushered into the presence of an earthly sovereign, how careful would I be in my preparation for so regal a privilege! What shall it be in the prospect of appearing before Him in comparison with whom the loftiest monarch of earth is but as a passing shadow

— an atom of dust — the mote of a sunbeam!
"Present with the Lord!" What an honor! The
brightest of those bright and holy beings who bow
before His throne with adoring reverence, know no
higher!

"It is not here on earth," says the author of the
'Saint's Rest,' "that He has prepared the presence-
chamber of His glory; He has drawn the curtain
between us and Him; we are far from Him as
creatures, and farther as frail mortals, and farthest as
sinners." Death is the dressing-room, where the
ragged pilgrim-garment is thrown off, and where, as
glorified guests, we shall receive our wedding attire.
But the barrier shall in due time be taken down, and
we shall be ushered amid the un-curtained splendors
of the "new heavens and the new earth." Then shall
His own voice be heard announcing the believer's
consummated bliss, and its mightiest element—*"Enter
into the joy of Your Lord."*

THE ALL IN ALL

"That God may be all in all." — 1 Corinthians 15:28

We may shift and alter the heavenly kaleidoscope,
but God is still the center of its ineffable bliss — "the
glory of its glory." In union and communion with *Him*
alone, will the longings of the immortal spirit be at
length fully and forever satisfied.

Existence is one long endeavor after some infinite
good. The disciples of Plato, in their gropings in the
dark, aspired after a mystical, undefined "Fullness,"
the possession of which was associated with perfect
happiness. This mythical dream of pagan philosophy
has its reality in "the fullness of Him that fills all in
all." Here on earth, we have at best only some feeble
foretastes of the "fullness of God" — some *sips* at the
earthly fountain — what shall it be when we come to

stand on the margin of the infinite ocean! Ask the angels who are now peopling that world of bliss — or the myriads of ransomed saints whose probation is finished and their glorification begun, in what their supreme happiness consists. Their response would be in words they had often before used, but whose true meaning they had only learned in Glory — *"It is good for us to draw near unto GOD."*

The best *earthly types of Heaven* in Scripture were designedly imperfect. How often, for example, was the earthly Zion spoken of as the pattern and image of the Heavenly. But even in this "perfection of beauty" there were defects and blemishes. No river (save the tiniest of brooks) flowed past its walls. No war-ship (as in other earthly capitals) was ever seen sailing by, or ship of commerce unloading its stores. "But," says God, in beautiful allusion to these needs in the earthly Zion, "I shall come in place of them in the Jerusalem above." *"The Lord will be our Mighty One. He will be like a wide river of protection that no enemy can cross."*

All other joys will be but reflections of the Great Joy. We shall be independent of *starlight* blessings when we have the central *sun* — of the rivulet when we have the ocean. Were the alternative presented, rather would the ranks of the glorified have God without Heaven, than Heaven without God. There will be a devout consciousness throughout all their wide circle of a sweet and holy dependence on Him. They will never forget the pilgrim prayer of earth — *"Hold me up, and I shall be safe."* They will feel, even with the crown on their head and the victor-song on their lips, that it is "He alone who makes them to dwell in safety." Pensioners on earth, they will exult in the feeling that they are pensioners still. The confession of time will be the anthem of eternity — "By the grace of God we are what we are."

We read of the saints that, glorified though they be, they still *"fall down before the throne."* Their ascription, crowned though they be, is this, *"Salvation to our God who sits upon the throne."* The stream

may sooner do without its fountain — the parched furrow without its refreshing shower — the sky without its sun — than they without Him who is the source and fountain-head of all life, and light, and joy. *"God Himself shall be with them and be their God, and they shall see His face."* The infinite center of an infinite circumference, they shall love all in *Him*, and *Him* in all! Not more surely on earth do the rivers run to the ocean, than in Heaven will every aspiration of the Church triumphant be turned Godwards; and it will be our happiness thus supremely to love — supremely to adore Him.

Here on earth, how often, how constantly, has the Christian to watch over the objects of his love, lest ever and anon he be betrayed into some sinful excess of idolatrous attachment. There will be no such bound set in Heaven, because no such need for it. What a glory it imparts to the soul of man — what an ennobling consciousness it gives of our true dignity — *future communion with, yes, future assimilation to, the great Jehovah!* — gravitating towards Him as an all-glorious center — the aim and object of an infinite existence, perfectly to please Him!

Let me prepare for this lofty destiny, by making God more than ever "the portion of my inheritance;" having a more constant and habitual aim that His will and glory be the regulators of my daily being. This was my Savior's desire for Himself. It constituted the happiness of His spotless life — doing His Father's will and not His own. "I do think," says Lady Powerscourt, "one chief part of our happiness hereafter will consist in our being done with wretched SELF — God being all in all." Oh! what a solemnizing influence would it exert on all our thoughts and feelings, our duties and engagements, our pursuits and pleasures, our sleeping and waking, our airy visions and worldly plans, were we to think that soon — very soon — we shall be with God, and that forever and ever!

SUFFERING AND GLORY

"For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." — Romans 8:18

Thus does a master-hand strike the balance between present sufferings and future glory. "*I reckon*" (I make the calculation, and the deliberate result is), that the trials of earth are not to be named in contrast or comparison with the peerless joys of Heaven.

The great Apostle was one specially fitted to make such a calculation. He himself was abundantly acquainted in the school of suffering, and well able to cast up the balance-sheet. Few pilgrims that ever trod the lower valley, were more honored than he; but few had greater weights to carry. He felt that all these earthly weights added together and combined, were far outweighed by *one* other, and that was the "*weight of glory.*"

His language here is remarkable. He institutes a comparison between present suffering and future bliss — two things which we may think can-not be compared. The following may have been a few points of antithesis which suggested themselves, as His mind made the sanctified reckoning:

All present sufferings have intervals of release. There are lulls in the storm. The fevered patient may have his snatches of repose, fitful and un-refreshing though they be. But in the glory that is to follow, there are no intervals, no ebbings in the ever-advancing tide of happiness and joy.

In the sufferings of this life there are many alleviations. The bitterest cup is mingled with *some* sweet drops—the most aching soul is seldom without some supporting solaces. But the glory which follows knows no modifications. The golden vessels there are indeed always filling — always increasing, but yet they are always full. The "just made perfect," though

ever aspiring after fresh draughts of the living fountain, will never be heard uttering the voice of complaint — "Oh, that it were with me as in months past!" The glory is a progressive glory — the joy a progressive joy — their change is a change for the better, never for the worse.

The sufferings of the present, in the case of the believer, much as they may cloud and darken his earthly and outward happiness, *cannot affect the unassailable bliss of his inner life*. But the heavenly glory will interpenetrate alike his outer and his inner being. He will be *steeped in bliss!* He will have around and on every side of him a glory which imagination has never ventured to conceive — while his glorified spirit will reflect, without speck or stain, the image of an all-glorious God!

"The sufferings of the present!" Go up to that bright and glorious multitude harping with their harps, and crowding the shores of the glassy sea. Hear their one, united testimony. It is, that but for their trials they would never have been there. Every page in their history bears the signet-mark of "much tribulation." It is endorsed with the words, *"So He brought them to their desired haven!"* *"So!"* It was by a way not of their own choosing. *"So!"* It was through winds, and waves, and buffeting elements — the ship tacking about — "neither sun nor stars for many days appeared, and no small tempest lay upon them." They love now to trace all the mystic windings in that untoward voyage; the "deep calling to deep" — the wave responding to wave. They love to think, "It was *thus* He brought me!" There was a time when I was prone to question His wisdom — to arraign His faithfulness; but now, I realize that I could not have lacked one thorn, one bitter drop, one tear.

As the contrary winds which carry high the migratory birds are found in reality to assist their flight, so with the soul; when the winds are contrary — the storm beating fiercely — it only leads it to soar higher and higher — upwards and heavenwards — further from earth — nearer its God! Oh, if we only saw our trials,

not through the misty haze of this world, but in the light of eternity; the reckoning would not be how *little* they have been, but how *precious* they have been! How all (yes, *all*) were needed to effect the desired end, all were composite parts of one way, and that way was *love*! It is with the believer as with the diamond; the more facets — the brighter it sparkles; so, the more the tools of sanctified affliction have been on him, the brighter and more gloriously will he shine in Heaven!

Let me seek, then, to look beyond these portals of sadness, and repose on the glory that is to be revealed. Soon the curfew-bell of time will toll, telling that the fires of affliction and trial are extinguished forever, and that the weary Church may now retire to the rest which remains for the people of God! "Live in Christ," says Rutherford, "and you are in the suburbs of Heaven. There is but a thin wall between you and the land of praises. You are within one hour's sailing of the shore of the new Canaan."

It is a mighty procession that is sweeping onwards to the Land of Promise. A sainted writer has beautifully compared it to the vast host of Israel entering the earthly Canaan. Some had crossed Jordan; their footsteps were treading the covenanted soil, the land of the patriarchs — others were passing through the river-channel, the waters standing up to make a way "for the ransomed to pass over;" — others were patiently occupying their allotted place in the rear, until those that preceded them had traversed the dry bed of the border river. But all were moving on; and those furthest behind knew that every tread of their footstep was bringing them nearer the moment when their desert trials and privations would be at an end, and their voices too would blend in the song of victory. And so it is with the Church of God on earth. Some are already in Heaven — glorified, safe on the Canaan side. Some are at this moment crossing the Jordan of death — the dark river separating the wilderness from the heavenly land. Some are still in the pilgrim rear, amid the smoldering fires and ashes of their encampment, casting a longing glance

towards those who have already begun their everlasting ascription of praise. But the mighty mass moves on! The desert is retreating and the heavenly shores are nearing. Thousands on thousands of the ransomed Israel of God are already safely landed — "clean escaped," and their triumphant song should only inspire us with fresh ardor to follow their steps and share their crowns! The true Joshua-Jesus, the Heavenly Precursor, is even now standing on the celestial shore, and to every faint and toil-worn traveler proclaiming, "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is about to be revealed!"

How the thought of that blessed Heaven of eternal respite and rest, should reconcile me to any trial the Lord may see fit to lay upon me here! It was the prospect of future glory which led this heavenly reckoner to make so little of his earthly trials. He called that a "*light affliction*," which he had borne for thirty years!

Let me often school myself in the *devout arithmetic* of the tried Apostle — putting all my trials into one scale, and all the blessings — from grace to glory, which my God bestows — into the other, and then dare I murmur?

Lord! it is my prayer that my trial (my peculiar trial, be what it may), may be sanctified. It is a "muffled drum" in the march of life; but it is beating "*Home, brothers! home!*" Let every promise of Scripture seem as if a bright angel hung out from the skies a guiding signal, saying, "The darkness will soon be past, and the true light will shine!" "Yet a little while, and He who shall come will come, and will not tarry," and *then*, the reckonings of *earthly* trial will give way to the reckonings of unending bliss. The voice of the Beloved will thus be heard calling on His weeping Bride to dry every tear and prepare for a tearless home — "*Lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers appear on the earth. The time of the singing of birds has come, and the voice of the*

turtle-dove is heard in our land. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away."

THE MARRIAGE SUPPER

"Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb."— Revelation 19:9

Under a new and beautiful symbol, we are called to behold Jesus as the Heavenly Bridegroom, seated at His own marriage-feast, summoning His glorified guests around Him! — the true Solomon, "crowned in the day of His espousals, and the day of the gladness of His heart!" "Alone," says a writer, "in the depths of eternity stood Christ and His Church before the altar of that divine espousal; none was witness but the Father and the Holy Spirit when the vow was plighted, and the contract sealed." (Butler)

But all Heaven is now to be spectator of the gladsome consummation. The bridal-day has come! He has *"sent His angels with a great sound of a trumpet to gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of Heaven to the other,"* and lo! a multitude which no man can number, "all-glorious within, their clothing of wrought gold," are seen passing through the gates of the city "with gladness and rejoicing," on their way to the King's palace! The Bride for six thousand weary years has been calling for her Lord to *"Come!"* The voice of the Beloved has at last been heard; the King has *"brought her into His banqueting-house, and His banner over her is love!"*

In that scene of festive joy, behold—

1. Jesus Glorified.

"He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied." Oh, what a moment of joy will that be to the Church's Divine Head, when *all* His blood-bought

people (not one of the sealed myriads missing) shall be assembled with Him to share His bliss — "betrothed unto Him forever;" "presented a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing!" If "Wisdom" rejoiced in the mere *anticipation* of redemption — if even then His "delights were with the sons of men" dwelling in "the habitable parts of the earth," what will the rejoicing be, when the vast undertaking is all completed, and the trophies of His grace are seated by His side! What a new and more glorious meaning will be given to His words of intercession on earth: "*All Yours are Mine, and Mine are Yours, and I am glorified in them!*" It is *their* glory and joy in which much of His own mediatorial happiness will consist. As "the Master," He girds Himself at the marriage-feast, and "comes forth to serve them." He has them in view in His every thought of Heaven: "I go to prepare a place for *you*, ...that where *I am*, there *you* may be also" — "I shall drink no more of the fruit of the vine until I drink it new *with you* in My Father's kingdom."

2. Behold the Church glorified.

"Called" to the Master's immediate presence, not to eat of the crumbs falling from His table, but of the children's bread; to see His face; to participate in His triumph; and with faith changed into sight, and hope into full fruition, to exclaim, "*My Beloved is mine, and I am His!*"

Seated at the wedding-feast! What nearness and intimacy of fellowship is here indicated! Even on earth, the believer's most blissful hours are those spent in intimate communion with his Lord. How the pain and weariness of the sickbed are alleviated—how the pang of the crushing bereavement has been mitigated, by that Presence and Name which puts music and joy into the saddest heart! What will it be in glory, with no sin to mar our communion, and no sorrow to dim our eye — the consummated union and communion of everlasting love! Truly, the glorified guests will be able to say to their heavenly Lord, as

was said in His hearing at a marriage-feast on earth,
"You have kept the *best* wine until now!"

On that coronation-day of the Church triumphant, angels will listen with amazement, as each ransomed one tells the story of blended grace and faithfulness — principalities and powers will stoop to hear the Church's perpetual *new song*, the keynote of which will be, "*the manifold wisdom of God!*" It will not be with the disciples in Heaven as with the disciples below. When they got a momentary glimpse of their Lord's glory on Tabor, we read, "They *feared* as they entered the cloud." Perfect love will then cast out fear. It is no stranger — no inaccessible, awe-inspiring Being who is to gather them around Him. It will indeed be a day of *Kingly* espousals. On His head there will be "many crowns." The Bride will "enter the *King's* palace." It will be a regal — a coronation anthem that will be sung by the lips of the great multitude, "*Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent REIGNS.*"

But it is also called the "marriage-supper of *the Lamb;*" — "that same Jesus" who in His person is so well known to us on earth — whose character and life are so beautifully and truthfully portrayed in what we may call His four inspired biographies, that we seem to feel as if we knew Him — knew Him intimately — had seen Him — had sat with Him on Tiberias' shores, and talked with Him at Jacob's well, and wept with Him at the Bethany grave! We enjoy to be with those who have been kind to us; who so kind as "*the MAN Christ Jesus!*" what fellowship so blissful as with the all-glorious One, who has loved us with a love, in comparison with which the most endearing earthly friendship is coldness itself! How joyous when *He* shall meet us at the threshold of glory, conduct us to the coronation-hall to receive our crowns, and become guests at His table!

3. *Behold here a holy and happy meeting between guest and guest.*

The improper estrangements of the present will there be unknown forever. Cold looks, and averted faces, and distant and un-cordial recognitions, will be all at an end. The guests will only wonder they could have allowed petty differences to have sundered them so long and so strangely below. *Like* their beloved Lord, they will become *like* one another. Many a Christian on earth is nearer in heart and love and sympathy to a brother Christian, we believe, than the conventional distinctions — the Shibboleth of sect and party — will permit him to avow. In Heaven there will be no such reserve. The slumbering harmonies of the heart will then break forth, without one jarring note.

Let me delight often to carry my eye onward to the celebration of these espousals — to draw aside the world's scenes of *painted* glory, and to get a sight of "the invisible" — the great Sabbath of eternity inaugurated by this nuptial festival, where every redeemed Vessel, like the earthly types at Cana, are "filled to the brim." Jesus, who went forth from His eternal throne as the weeping "Man of sorrows," now comes again with rejoicing, to bring all His ransomed sheaves with Him!

"Will you not," says Baxter, "be almost ready to draw back, and say, 'What! I, Lord? I, the unworthy neglecter of Your grace, disesteemer of Your blood, and slighter of Your love, may *I* have this glory? I am utterly unworthy to be called a son.' But Love will have it so. Therefore you must enter into His joy."

THE BRIMMING FOUNTAIN

"In your presence is fullness of joy; at your right hand there are pleasures for evermore." — Psalm 16:11

FULLNESS of joy! Can that be said of anything on this side Heaven? There is a restless craving in the human bosom for something better than this world can give.

There are aching voids — deep, yawning chasms in the soul of man, which the world and all its tinsel pleasures can never fill. Hope is ever gilding the future with the prospect of that happiness which the present denies. Lured and dazzled, the worldling pursues the phantom. But each successive failure more painfully convinces him that all here is a delusion. Happiness, the object of his life-search, is as far from him as ever!

These longings of the heart are only satisfied when it finds in God its "*fullness of joy*." The old nature, like the old philosophy, *will* cleave to the *world* as the center of its system. It holds its happiness in "minding earthly things." The new nature, like Copernicus, finds out "the secret hid from ages and generations." It dethrones a usurping earth, and makes all its affections circle and constellate around God Himself, the true "*Sun of the soul*." What will this be in that blessed world of purity, where there will be no disturbing forces to interfere with the saint's spiritual orbit, or dim and darken the emanations from the great Source of light and life, happiness and joy!

Happiness even on earth is proportioned to the *worthiness* of the object on which our hearts are fixed in connection with it. What must be the happiness of the glorified spirit which has its affections centered on Him who is unsearchable in His wisdom, boundless in His resources, unchanging in His love! David said regarding earthly things — "I have seen an end of all perfection." In Heaven the soul will have, in the enjoyment of God, the perfection of bliss. All the perfection of earth is finite; that of Heaven is infinite. All earthly bliss has its bounds and limits; in Heaven and in God's presence that bliss will be unbounded.

Think of the happiness of having no unfulfilled desire, nothing to be dreaded, nothing to be delivered from! To have the vision and fruition of God to guarantee all, and stamp permanency and immutability on every joy. Insecurity is the attribute of all worldly joys. Ours today, they may be gone tomorrow. How the thought of *the slender tie* which binds to life must haunt the

idolater of earthly affection! — that in the twinkling of an eye the cup of creature-love may be dashed from his lips — his most fondly cherished fabric become a heap of humiliating ruins! often in one's happiest moments we have (do as we like) the chilling forebodings of coming trial — the feeling, *All this cannot last*. This gladsome music — earth's high holiday — may this night give place to the dirge of sorrow!

In Heaven, "our sun shall go down no more." No real or imagined evils will loom in a troubled future — the music of its eternal festival will never be suspended or hushed by the intrusion of sadder notes. *Here*, one main source of the believer's joy is in the words, "*no condemnation!*" *There*, it will rather be, "*no separation!*" His sorrow will be turned into joy, and that joy no one will take from him. The wheat will be "gathered into the garner." So long as it is unharvested — standing in the open field — it is exposed to furious winds and corroding rains. But the angel-reapers have made it secure. These garnered sheaves of bliss are as safe as everlasting love and faithfulness and power can make them!

And while it is "*fullness of joy*" (denoting its *perfection*), and "*pleasures for evermore*" (denoting their *security*), let us not forget the nobler and grander attribute of that heavenly bliss — "*In Your presence*." Is it this which is drawing me to Heaven — the prospect of being admitted into union and communion with my God? Some are eager to leave this world, because they have been the victims of disappointed hope and crossed affections. In a fit of morbid moroseness, they hate life, and look to the grave as a refuge from its ills! Am I conscious of nobler and loftier motives in my Heavenward aspirations? Is it the thought of *seeing* GOD, *enjoying* GOD, *loving* GOD, which is drawing me there? Other hallowed ties and motives I may have, beckoning me upwards. Voices hushed on earth may be stealing down, in tones of celestial music, from the spirit-land — "The Bride" (the blessed dead, among whom my fondest earthly memories linger) may be saying,

"Come." But do I feel that even such a sacred incentive as this, is subordinate to the voice of the *Bridegroom?*— that these are but star-light glories, compared to the meridian sun — "the glory that excels?" Oh! how wondrous the thought that God's pleasures are to be my pleasures — that I am to be linked through eternity in congeniality of sentiment and enjoyment, with essential goodness, essential greatness, essential love! I will rejoice in God, and the Lord my God will rejoice over *me*. He shall make me to "drink of the river of His pleasures!"

And soon — very soon — all this happiness may be mine. A few more beats of the pulse — a few more falling grains of the sandglass, and I may be by that river's brink, washing off the dust and scars of battle, and bathing in the floods of ineffable joy! Meanwhile, let me seek to aspire after closer and more intimate communion with God, so as to feel that no blessing on earth can be comparable to His favor, and no loss equal to the forfeiture of His love. Let me often think of death as the moment which will admit me into the full possession of this transcendent bliss; and see the promises of the gospel, like so many lights hung out from the windows of my Father's house, beckoning me Home!

IMMEDIATE ENTRANCE

"Today shall you be with me in paradise." — Luke
23:43

WHEN shall I be admitted into this glorious Heaven — to pluck for myself the Grapes of Eshcol, and enjoy the sweets of the true Land of Promise? Does the hour of death usher me at once into the mansions of my heavenly Father? Or is there some intermediate state of purification, preparatory to being introduced into the presence of the Lord? Is the disembodied spirit destined to remain in dream-land — a condition

of unconsciousness and torpor — until awakened by the trumpet of God, along with the risen and glorified body, on the resurrection morning?

We have already seen, in a previous Meditation, that the Bible answer is explicit. We may return for a little, to ponder the same comforting theme. There *is* an "immediate entrance." *The same moment in which I close my eyes on a world of sin and suffering, I open them in glory!* Whenever I pass through the swellings of Jordan, my feet shall touch the shores of "the better country;" — *that day* I am "with Jesus in paradise!"

Paul's verdict, as we previously noted, is conclusive: *"Having a desire to depart and to BE WITH CHRIST."* Can we suppose he would have expressed this longing desire to leave his work — to abandon his apostleship — to forego the delight of winning souls to Jesus — if his spirit, in leaving this earth, was to slumber in a state of inaction and unconsciousness until the 'day of God'? We can conceive of no other possible consideration but the thought of being ushered into the immediate presence of his Lord, that could make it to him a "gain to die." Nothing BUT this instantaneous beatific vision and fruition could have led him to add the strong assertion, *"which is far better."*

Again, how does he speak of the dissolution of the earthly *tent* ("tabernacle")? He seldom speaks more confidently. His words are expressed in the authoritative and confident formula of a creed, *"We KNOW that if this house of our earthly tabernacle is dissolved, We HAVE a building of God."* The pin is taken out — the cord is slipped — the tent is down! But *"immediately"* a nobler and more imperishable structure rises — *"a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens!"*

Why would he urge, in another place — as an incentive to believers to run the Christian race — that they are gazed upon by a cloud of sainted witnesses, (mentioned in the previous context) if "the spirits of

the just" remain in a state of unconsciousness until the final resurrection?

Can we suppose that Stephen, as he gazed upwards from his martyr-pillow on "the general assembly and church of the first-born," uttered an unanswered prayer, when he said, "*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit*"? No, rather, when he saw his Lord "*standing* at the right hand of God," can we think the beautiful comment of Chrysostom an unnatural one, that the Savior rose and stooped from His throne, to receive with outstretched arms the spirit of the first of that "noble army of martyrs," who were afterwards to "praise Him?"

Our blessed Lord's own teaching is all confirmatory of the same view. It was no mere accidental embellishment, surely, in the account of the rich man and Lazarus, but an essential part of the truth it was intended to convey, when the angels are represented as carrying the spirit of the beggar into Abraham's bosom. His words to the dying thief are themselves (independent of all other proof) sufficient to set at rest this comforting assurance, that *the gate of death and the gate of glory are one!*

Vision adds its attestation — for the ransomed multitude are represented now in glory, "standing before the throne" with "palms in their hands." Thrice blessed thought! The uncaged spirit will all at once fly upwards to nestle in the golden eaves of Heaven! The saint, when he enters glory, can say, in the words of one of earth's inspired songs regarding the death-bed he has just left, "*I laid me down and slept — I awaked, for the Lord sustained me!*" "*This is none other than the house of God, this is the gate of Heaven!*" "Faithful souls," says Richard Baxter, "no sooner leave their pinions of flesh, but angels will be their convoy, Christ, with all the perfected spirits of the just, will be their companions, Heaven will be their residence, and God their happiness." No wonder that Paul with such a blessed certainty could say, "*We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body and present with the Lord.*"

It is true, indeed, that though "the souls of believers are at death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory," their *full* and *perfect* glorification does not then take place. The great coronation-day of the Church triumphant must come, before the saint ("complete in Christ") is invested with all his purchased privileges. The body until then, slumbers in weakness and dishonor. Its reunion with the spirit must take place — the grave must be rifled of its treasures — before the Divine Victor has reaped in all His trophies, and the believer receives full investiture of his rights. A writer beautifully speaks of the "blessed dead," as "a silent and veiled company, like the gathering worshipers of earth resting side by side until the bells cease, and vacant places fill, and all begin to sing one anthem." But be their present *intermediate* condition (shall we call it) what it may, they are *with Christ* — that is enough.

"With Me!" Safe in the presence of their adorable Redeemer. The *needle* at last fixed true to its pole — all the old earthly vibrations and oscillations at an end. The *ship*, with all its tossings over, has reached its port, cast anchor in "the Rock" within the veil! The *sun-flower* drooped only for a moment in the evening of life, as the death-shades fell over it. But the morning of glory dawns — The Sun of Righteousness shines; and in His "unsetting beams" the leaves expand again, in unfading and undying glory.

"With ME!" Christ in our nature, our Friend, our Brother! We are happy on earth in the presence of those who have befriended us, and given us proofs of kindness and affection. Who has ever been friend or brother to us like Jesus? ETERNITY is a solemn word. Death ushers us into an un-traveled country. The soul mounts in its arrowy flight into a region which "eye has not seen, nor ear heard." But *Christ is there*; and that assurance inverts it with a home-like aspect. I need not fear the fords of Jordan, when there is a well-known voice heard on the farther shores — *"Fear not! It is I! Be not afraid!"*

Let me look forward, then, with bounding heart, to the hour of death, as the hour of my entrance on endless bliss, the birthday of eternity. Oh, if there was "joy in Heaven among the angels of God" at the hour of conversion, what will it be at the hour of glorification! If God the Father even on earth has joy in seeing His returning prodigal; what will it be when He welcomes him to His everlasting home! *"He will rejoice over him with joy; He will rest in His love; He will rejoice over him with singing."* The Redeemer utters His intercessory prayer over the death-bed on earth, *"Father, I will that this one whom You have given Me be with Me where I am, to behold My glory."* The prayer is heard — the angels are sent down — and, swift as the volleyed lightning leaps from the cloud, *THAT HOUR, and forever, he is "with Jesus in paradise!"*

FROM GLORY TO GLORY

"But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day." —
Proverbs 4:18

As the Believer's path on earth is, or ought to be, a progressive one, in knowledge, love, happiness, and joy; so, in a loftier and more ennobling sense, will it be in a future world. The sun of his bliss will ever be climbing higher and higher in the skies, but yet never attaining its full meridian. Heaven, indeed, as we have seen in a former Meditation, would be lacking in one chief element of happiness were *advancement* unknown. The glorified spirit, constituted as our feelings at present are, would not be satisfied with a *stationary* bliss. "Perfect security from all danger of a *change for the worse*, is a highly gratifying idea; but the expectation of a change for the *better*, is an essential ingredient in all our present notions of happiness." (Whately) The Redeemed in heaven — "vessels of glory" "fitted for the Master's use" — while

they will be always filled, yet, if it seems not a paradox, they will be always filling — ever increasing in the divine knowledge and likeness, progressing along the line of infinite blessedness flowing from God's presence and smile.

It is the privilege of the believer, even in this world, to be ever aspiring after a more intimate acquaintance with the Divine character, works, and ways. *David*, notwithstanding all that he had seen of Jehovah, says, "*My soul THIRSTS FOR GOD.*" *Paul*, notwithstanding his exalted attainments, prays, "*That I MAY KNOW HIM.*" The whole Christian dispensation, from the earliest times until now, has been *progressive* in its character. Those living anterior to the flood had but dim perceptions of the glorious things which our eyes have seen, and our ears have heard. Redemption was more fully unfolded to the patriarchs — more fully still to the prophets — and "in these last days," in which He has "spoken unto us by His Son," more fully than all. This *gradual development* will still characterize "the ages to come" — each cycle of these ages evolving some new manifestation of the Divine character and attributes. As the saints advanced on earth from grace to grace; so then they will be ascending from "glory to glory" — with each new pause on the everlasting hills only unfolding new and more amazing discoveries of God's grace and love.

Nor shall we ever reach that point where our knowledge of the Infinite will be complete — where we shall be able to fold the wing in its upward soaring. An old English writer beautifully compares the believer's knowledge of God in a future world, to the two well-known mathematical lines, which, though approaching nearer and nearer to one another, never meet. So the ransomed spirit, borne upwards nearer and nearer the great Sun of all knowledge, will never reach the confines of that light which is spoken of as "inaccessible, and full of glory." Every new height reached in the infinite progress of the soul, while it will give more insight into the mysteries of God's dealings, will only inspire with

greater longings to know more of His ineffable glories.

The song of the redeemed is represented as swelling louder and louder, the more that the mingled wisdom, and faithfulness, and love of the Almighty is unfolded. "The voice of a great multitude" increases to the "noise of many waters;" — deeper still, to "the voice of mighty thundering." Here we are but children-dreamers. Our path lies through misty shadows and murky clouds — our sun, either smiting with its beams, or wading through a stormy sky, or "going down while it is yet day." Here, the believer walks in darkness and can see no light; or when he has light for a time, it is often fitful and transient; like the luminous wake of a vessel on a midnight sea, which gilds, only for a moment, the waves over which it bounds, and then leaves them as dark as ever. But once across the threshold of glory, the "darkness is past, and the true light shines." His, then, is an "unsmiting and unsetting sun." *"The sun shall not smite you,"* says one. *"Your sun shall no more go down,"* says another. It is called *"the inheritance of the saints IN LIGHT."*

Have I begun this path of heavenly love and knowledge now? Am I progressing in it? Do I feel some dawnings of the heavenly light — pledges and foretastes of the full day of glory? Let all God's dealings serve to quicken me in my way. Let every affliction it may please Him to send, be as the moving pillar-cloud of old, beckoning me to move my tent onwards — saying, *"Arise and depart, for this is not your rest."* Let me be often standing now on faith's lofty eminences, looking for "the day of God" — the rising sun which is to set no more in weeping clouds.

Wondrous progression! How will all of earth's learning — its boasted acquirements and eagle-eyed philosophy — sink into the lispings of very infancy in comparison with this manhood of knowledge! Heaven will be the true *"Excelsior."* Its song, *"a song of degrees;"* — Jesus leading His people from height to

height of glory, and saying, as He said to Nathaniel,
"You shall see GREATER things than these!"

And — most elevating thought of all! — I shall be
advancing gradually in resemblance to my Divine Lord
and Master! And yet the further I advance, with more
fervent lip and devout ardor shall I sing — *"Nearer,
my God, to You!"*

THE HEAVENLY SKIES

*"And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness
of the firmament; and they that turn many to
righteousness as the stars forever and ever." —
Daniel 12:3*

Here is another Grape from the Eshcol clusters —
another glimpse of coming glory. Though suggestive
of truths on which we have already dwelt, these may
well bear repetition, presenting us, under a different
aspect, with fresh motives and encouragements for
pursuing with ardor our heavenly way.

We are here reminded that *there will be different
gradations of bliss in the coming Heaven.*

This system of gradation, shown throughout all the
other diverse works of the Creator, may in this
respect be taken as a shadow of heavenly things:

1. In the *material* world, we ascend from the grain of
dust and invisible atom, by giant strides, to satellites,
planets, suns. In our own globe, we have the pleasing
diversity and undulation of *surface*, from the little
mound on the bosom of the plain, to the stupendous
Alp and Andes.
2. In the *vegetable* kingdom, we have a graduating
scale, from the tiny moss and lichen and blade of

grass, through the ascending series of plants and shrubs to the monarch oak and cedar.

3. In the *animal* kingdom, we ascend from the animalcule and mollusk to the lordly lion. A still higher step brings us to the region of human intellect and intelligence; while this, again, in its diversities of ranks, affords fresh evidence of the law of which we speak.

It will be the same in glory. There will be varying eminences in the Heavenly landscape — diversified grades in the Heavenly family. It will have its "thrones and dominions," its "principalities and powers" — the "*first*" and the "*least* in the kingdom."

God, in a striking passage in the prophecies of Isaiah, represents "the fir, the pine, and the cypress *together*," as "beautifying the place of His sanctuary." It is a picture of the heavenly courts — the celestial gardens. An assemblage of diverse trees, each perfect in their kind, from the lowly cypress to the stately pine. But they are "*together*" — in the same place — a glorious group — each branch and each leaf combining to "beautify" the holy place — glorifying the "house of His glory!"

The verse further tells us, that *all in Heaven will be happy*.

The "*wise*" are to have one reward; "*those who turn many to righteousness*" will have a higher and greater.

The "wise" — that is, they who have sought on earth the true "wisdom which comes from above" — they who have reposed with undivided and unwavering trust in Christ, the "*Wisdom of God*;" — who have been diligent in the cultivation of personal piety — *they shall shine "as the brightness of the skies."* They may have been little known on earth; their graces may have shone dimly and in obscurity; their faith may have even been comparatively weak, and their love languid and fitful; yet, being "the children of the

kingdom," they will be invested with a happiness beyond the power of heart to conceive, or tongue to tell.

Let each ask, "Am I among the number of these 'wise'?" Let me see to it that mine is not the mere lamp of profession, destitute of the oil of grace, leaving me at last among the foolish "dreamers" and loiterers upon whom "the door is shut!" Let me make true Christianity a matter of earnest, downright, *personal* concernment. Let me prove in my happy experience even now, that wisdom's ways are "*ways of pleasantness,*" and wisdom's paths "*paths of peace.*" So that at last, in the day when He "makes up His jewels," I may be "*a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of my God!*"

This verse further reminds us, that *there will be preeminent rewards and blessedness in store for those who have been energetic in the cause and service of God on earth.*

I must seek to be "*wise*" first — to have my own soul deeply imbued with Divine things — to have a personal and saving interest in the great salvation. But if I be aspiring after Heaven's loftiest recompense, I must "*add*" to my faith "*fortitude,*" and the other exalted graces of the Christian character. The privilege of shining as the fixed stars "*forever and ever,*" is reserved for "*those who turn many unto righteousness.*"

There is a Christianity — a true and sincere life of faith — which, though we cannot call it selfish, is more negative, and less influential and expansive, than it ought to be. Like the quiet lake into which a stone has fallen, the center of the heart has been touched by a sanctified power; but we see at best only dim indications of the widening circles of beneficence and charity, self-denying love and holy deed. The nobler phase which true religion assumes, is that which manifests a diffusive influence: when the believer becomes an "*epistle of Christ, known and read of all men;*" — a living tree, not only deeply

rooted in faith and love, but waving with the fruits of holy living and holy acting — love towards God expanding into a sanctified love towards all mankind. Following the footsteps of the Great Exemplar, he delights in doing good, and in attracting sinners to that glorious righteousness which is "unto all, and upon all those who believe."

While the faithful ambassador of Christ, the honored and self-denying missionary, are those who are preeminently referred to in this ennobling promise, it dare not be limited or restricted to these. Those in humbler and less prominent spheres in the Church and the world, have an equal warrant to appropriate it. It is a bold and beautiful figure, intended to express the recompense in store for earnest individual effort — whether by station, money, influence, or character — in the cause of God. The pious parent, the faithful teacher, the district visitor, the devout philanthropist, the generous giver for the sake of Christ; and, more than all, those who exhibit the hallowed power of a devout, unselfish, Christ-like demeanor, the every-day and perpetual lesson of a holy walk and a holy life; these are hereafter to shine as the brightest constellations in the celestial skies.

There are many stars invisible to us, which are exerting an important influence among the heavenly bodies. So there are many lowly believers whose influence now is unknown — invisible — secret — who are yet telling upon others, often most powerfully, when least conscious of it themselves. The calm eloquence of a Christian's life and a Christian's death has impressed and convinced, when the most labored pulpit oratory has been of no avail. Remember the Bible picture of the judgment-day. "What! I saw *You* hungry, or naked, or thirsty? — I, who occupied no prominent part in Your Church on earth! — I, a lowly believer who lived and died in obscurity!" It is enough! "*You did it to the least of these My brethren,*" and in doing so, "*you did it unto ME!*"

Be it mine to aspire after higher and higher manifestations of Christian excellence. Let me take the lofty motto of the apostle: *"Not as though I had already attained;"* — *"always abounding in the work of the Lord."* The more of practical holiness now, the more of transcendent blessedness hereafter. The original *one* pound deposit may, by diligent trading, gain me ten pounds. As "the sleep of the laboring man" is said to be "sweet," so, sweeter will be the rest of glory to those who have toiled bravely, and worked earnestly. Not one tiny seed of all I sow can be lost. It will spring up at last, and yield an hundredfold of recompense, to the praise, and honor, and glory of God.

Is there nothing I can do in the way of turning some of my fellow-sinners to righteousness? What a transcendent honor to hear through eternity from the lips of some glorified saint, "You were the means of leading me first to think of my soul! You were the first to unfold to me the beauty and glory of the Savior's character, and His infinite adaptation to all the needs and necessities of my tried and suffering and tempted nature!" How blessed the thought, that as "jewels" set in Immanuel's crown, we shall, (like the gems of earth when placed in the same diadem) enhance by mutual reflection each other's brightness — all redounding to the glory of Jesus, at whose feet each gem and each crown will be cast.

Reader! let not the poor engrossments of earth eclipse the brightness of this glorious heritage. Seek to be able to say, with one who had Heaven ever in his eye, *"We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are NOT seen!"* He seems to say: So glorious and out-dazzling are the prospects of coming glory, that they are like the sun extinguishing the candle. The things of earth are not worth looking at — they pale into nothing, when brought side by side with the grandeur of the future.

Hear your Lord's voice saying, *"Occupy until I come."* Make the most of fleeting opportunities. The night of earth is "far spent," the day of eternity is close "at

hand." Do not forget, it is *now* or *never*. In most other earthly things, there are new chances — new experiments; in familiar language, "we can try again." But in eternity, once across yonder boundary of time, an irrevocable seal is stamped on the transactions of the past.

THE VICTOR'S SONG

"And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing." — Revelation 5:11-12

Here is the Song of Heaven! It is sung by a mighty chorus — concentric ranks of the redeemed along with the angels, archangels, cherubim, and seraphim. The prophet of Patmos gets only a distant glimpse of the vast multitude — he sees a few twinkling lights, as it were, in the suburbs of the eternal city. But the voice he hears is *"as the noise of many waters!"*

It is one section of that myriad throng on which the eye is most intently fixed — "the elders;" — *that is*, the ransomed from the earth.

How diverse and varied their antecedent histories! Some are there, who had died young. Some, who on earth had grown gray in the service of their heavenly Master. Some, who had been arrayed in worldly greatness, but who were yet "clothed with humility" — into whose lap had been poured the full cup of prosperity, but whose lives had been consecrated as a perpetual thank-offering of praise to the Giver. Others again, whose only earthly heritage was the beggar's hovel — whose path had been strewn with thorns,

and their eyes dimmed with tears — yet who had borne all with un murmuring submission. Some, who were champions of the faith — their names in all the churches. Others, "the Lord's hidden ones" — their deeds of faith, and love, and charity, unknown to all except to Him who sees in secret.

1. *This vision speaks of the UNITY pervading the vast multitude.*

All unite in one song, "*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain!*" No one worshiper will look with disdainful eye on another. The angels great in might — the cherubim burning with devotion — the seraphim soaring in intellectual power — will be bound to the lowliest saint in Heaven by the one cementing principle of *love!* These "redeemed from the earth" may have lived in diverse periods of the world, different epochs of the Church — they may have dwelt in different climates — they may have lisped the name of Jesus in different tongues, they may have belonged to varied denominations — wearing on earth different attire, and though looking to one Shepherd, may have clung to separate sheepfolds. Now, they are drawn into holy unity by *the sweet attraction of the same cross.* Having no longer any separate interests, each member of the glorified throng is actively employed in promoting the interests and happiness of his fellows. "Whether there be tongues, *they shall cease.*" Language is now on earth, a greater barrier between church and church, than are mountains and rivers, continents and oceans; but these different dialects of earth shall then be merged into the one sublime language of eternity.

Well may the gifted author of the "Saint's Rest" say, "What a blessed society will the family of Heaven be, and those peaceful inhabitants of the new Jerusalem, where there is no division, nor differing judgments, no disaffection, nor coldness; no deceitful friendship, nor an angry look or thought — no, not one unkind expression; but all are one in Christ, who is one with the Father, and all live in the love of Him who is love itself."

2. The sublime vision of John seems further to indicate, that *the Church triumphant will then be COMPLETE.*

Not one hair of glory will be missing — not one stone of the stupendous temple missing — not one sheaf of the glorious harvest lost. The number is "*ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands!*"

That was an hour of deep interest in the past, when the spirit of *Abel* entered Heaven, and stooped solitary and alone before the throne of God. He sung his song alone; he was the sole representative of the redeemed Church — the first sheaf in the future teeming harvest of ransomed immortals! But *now* the Great Gardener gathers the wheat into His garner, and, lo! it is "*a multitude which no man can number!*" How gladdening to think that vast convocation is every day, every year increasing. When John was on earth it was a feeble band. He said, "*We are of God and the whole world lies in wickedness!*" The Church then was like a spark in chaos — a tiny ark tossed on a great flood of evil; but before long, the number of His elect will be "as the sand on the sea-shore." "The children of God" now "scattered abroad" will be brought in — "the whole building, fitly framed together," will stand complete and glorious — a "holy temple in the Lord." *But,*

3. the "*top-stone*" will be brought forth "with shoutings," and the cry will be "Grace, grace unto *it.*" The song of this great multitude is an ascription of PRAISE to a Redeeming God — "*Worthy is the Lamb who was slain!*"

Yes! this will be the sweet bond of union — "*all one in Christ Jesus.*" The hallelujah chorus of eternity will be the glorifying of His adorable Person and Name! How painful on earth it is to a generous heart, to see a kind and devoted friend unjustly calumniated and scorned. The believer is in this world constantly compelled to see his adorable Redeemer despised, rejected, slighted, blasphemed. *Then,* he will behold

Him, honored, lauded, "crowned Lord of all!" *Jesus glorified!* — We shall be "eye-witnesses of His majesty." If, even here, we delight to see honor conferred on those we love—how shall we exult in joining our feeble ascriptions with those of the great multitude, in celebrating the glory of Him whose love will there shine forth in all its peerless and transcendent magnitude!

"The Lamb" — "the Lamb who was slain." It seems, at first, a strange name and a strange theme, in a place where suffering is unknown and where pain never enters! But it significantly tells, that the work of Christ is to be the theme of eternity; that it is the heights of Redeeming Love the saints are to be engaged in scaling — the depths of grace they are to be engaged in fathoming. They will ever have the wondrous truth recalled, *"But for that dying, bleeding Lamb, we must have been eternally lost — but for that wondrous grace of His, ours must now, and forever, have been a portion in the restless surges of that fiery burning lake!"* "Doubtless," says Baxter, "this will be our everlasting admiration, that so rich a crown should fit the head of so vile a sinner. Let DESERVED be written on the door of Hell; but on the door of Heaven and life, *the FREE GIFT.*"

Reader! prepare for this lofty society — the presence of angels — the presence of Jesus. Oh surpassing honor! the prospect of being linked through everlasting ages with every glorious being in the universe — a brotherhood with seraphim, cherubim, saints, martyrs — yes, union and communion with God Himself!

If there be "joy in Heaven among the angels of God over *one* sinner that repents;" what will be that lofty burst of jubilee resounding from a ransomed Church, when *all* its members shall be gathered in; and when the crowns of "ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands," shall be cast at the feet of "Him who sits upon the throne" and "the Lamb, forever and ever!"

THE VICTOR'S DRESS

"Clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."
— Revelation 7:9

What a transition! from earth to Heaven — from the mortal to the immortal — from partial sanctification to complete and everlasting purity. The beggar "lifted from the ash-heap," "set among princes," and caused to inherit "a throne of glory!"

"Clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands."
It is a figurative representation of glorified saints, as *"priests* and *kings* unto God." The "white robe" is the *priestly* emblem — the "palm" is the *kingly* emblem. They are to have *censers* as well as *crowns*. They are to be employed as consecrated Levites in the Heavenly Temple, as well as to reign invested with regal dignity. As in all the Bible pictures of Heaven, so, here, there is a beautiful union of active *service* with royal *honor*. "His servants shall SERVE Him." — "They shall *reign* forever and ever."

The expression, *"standing* before the throne," denotes boldness and confidence — acceptance. They are "accepted in the Beloved." They could have no other boldness but in Jesus. Their robes derive all their whiteness, their palms all their greenness, from Him before whom every palm is waved and at whose feet every crown is cast. They sang by anticipation in their militant state, and they may love to repeat it still as "a song of remembrance" —

Bold shall I stand at that great day;
For who anything to my charge shall lay?
While by Your blood absolved I am,
From sin's tremendous guilt and shame!

Have *I* this boldness and confidence now? Am I now clothed in the imputed righteousness of Immanuel?

And do I look forward to the time when I shall stand arrayed also in the stainless robe of *personal* holiness — that "*clothing clean and white, which is the righteousness of the saints?*" Do I love to think of Heaven as a place of living employment; where, as a member of the glorified *priesthood*, I shall minister at God's altar, and be filled with zeal for His honor and glory? Jesus comes down *now* to earth to "sup" with me. Then I shall sit down at His everlasting banquet, and hold uninterrupted fellowship with Him. "*They shall walk with ME in white, for they are worthy.*"

But I shall be a king too. I shall stand *with a palm-branch in my hand!* The weapons of earthly toil and warfare will then be laid aside; the emblems of triumph and victory take their place. The Roman conqueror ascending to the capitol of old, with the laurel on his brow, and the palm-branch waving above his head, was a feeble type of the sinner saved by grace, passing through the triumphal arch of glory, to receive "the crown of life" which his Lord has promised! "*The kings of the earth,*" we read, "*bring their glory and honor unto it.*" — that is to say, all the pomp and splendor of earthly sovereignty is taken to typify and image forth the transcendent greatness of Heaven.

We may well pause and wonder at these royal honors in reserve for us! "*Kings unto God!*" All the splendors of sovereignty, without its harassments and burdens! No thorn in the crown; no "suspended sword" from the "fretted ceiling," dimming the sparkling jewels with its shadow; and painfully reminding that the crown is "corruptible," often "defiled," always *fading!*

In Revelation 4:4 we read, that "round about the thrones were twenty-four seats" (or, "thrones" as might be better and more literally rendered). Every head is to be a crowned one. "*I appoint unto you*" by covenant, says Christ, "*a kingdom, even as My Father has appointed unto Me.*"

While believers are designated "a priesthood," they are a "*royal* priesthood" — royally born — royally fed

— royally attended — royally crowned! Some are to have regal authority "over five," some "over ten cities," according to the fidelity with which they have discharged their trusts during the period of earthly probation.

Am I preparing for these royal honors? Having "*palms* in their hands" indicates that, as victors and victorious, these sainted conquerors were once engaged in the strife of battle. Am I *fighting* now? Do I feel the world — my own heart — to be a battle-field, and that there is no discharge from that spiritual warfare until I reach the gates of glory? Let me not dream of the crown, unless I am conscious of striving for it. It is alone promised "*to him who overcomes.*" It has been quaintly said by a writer on this verse, that "*a station on the feet* in front of the throne in *Heaven*, is the effect of being often *on the knees* before the throne on *earth.*" Oh for faith, and grace, and spiritual fortitude here, to "*fight the good fight of faith, and to lay hold on eternal life!*" How will the everlasting respite from pain and sorrow, corruption and sin, be all the more enjoyed, by reason of the struggles and conflicts which have preceded it!

Believer, think of this! Once within yonder peaceful gates, the blood and dust of the earthly arena will be washed away forever. The long "white robe" speaks beautifully of this promised *rest*. The toil of the militant state is over. There may then be used the flowing vesture. There will be no need of fleeing, and of girding up the garment, when there is none to pursue. When we reach the battlements of glory, we shall be able to say, "*O enemy! destructions are now come to a PERPETUAL end.*"

Glorious time! — when we shall stand before the throne, faultless monuments of God's wondrous grace. How blessed if, at a dying hour, we can exclaim, in the prospect of this royal priesthood, this white robe, and evergreen palm, "*Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day!*" Be of good cheer, Christian, the time is near when

God and you shall be near, and as near as you can well desire. You shall ever stand before Him; around His throne — in the room with Him — in His presence-chamber! Would you yet be nearer? You shall be *His child*, and He your Father. Yes, you shall be an heir of His kingdom!

THE NIGHTLESS WORLD

"There shall be no night there." — Revelation 22:5

Here is another gleaning from the clusters of Canaan — another bright lamp hung out of our Father's distant dwelling! Amid the *falling shadows of earth*, let us come and anticipate the *noontide glories* of the better world, and enumerate a few respects in which it may be said — *"There shall be no night there!"*

We found, in our first Meditation, Heaven spoken of under the emblem of *Rest*. The present figure is suggestive of kindred reflections; which, though in some respects an echo of the former, we may, for the sake of the beautiful and expressive symbol itself, be permitted for a little to pursue.

There shall be no night of weakness or weariness there.

Here on earth, we are incapable of serving God without intervals of repose. The weary, jaded framework requires a periodic cessation from activity. Overly encumber either the body or mental powers, and we are sure to suffer for it. *Here*, how often does *night* suggest the memory of *pain* and sickness — the fevered pulse — the throbbing brow — the sickly candle burning to its socket — the terrible moments of anxiety, when the spirit of some loved one was struggling on the confines of eternity.

Or, if the body be comparatively exempt from prostration or suffering, how often has the believer to complain of a weak and languishing frame of *soul*— the chill dews of night-fall creeping over his best affections — no, often deprived of the sensible tokens of God's presence and favor, groping in darkness and seeing no light!

But, "*there is no night THERE!*" — no languor to steal over the body — no lassitude to chain down and hamper the eagle-soarings of the spirit; no physical weariness or debility to cause a cessation in the eternal song — no remnants of corruption to produce one solitary moment or experience of estrangement from the great Source of all light, and love, and happiness! The tide of love ever full — never ebbing — the sun of our bliss ever climbing higher and higher the meridian, and never shaded by so much as a passing cloud! "Oh! what a moment," says a now sainted spirit, "will that be, when *the lamp of faith* will be extinguished — not amid the darkness of eternal *night* — but amid the splendors of everlasting day!"

There shall be no night of ignorance there.

We are encompassed here on every side with enigmas — the doctrines of Scripture (not a few of them) irreconcilable with the dogmas of proud reason. The ways of God! — they are often a "great deep" — misapprehended — misinterpreted! *Here*, we are in the *twilight* of our being — Scripture speaks of it as "neither light nor dark." What, if revealed in broad day, would be all symmetrical in form, assumes dim and distorted and shadowy shapes.

Even in the *acquisition of knowledge*, the mind climbs its tedious way by slow and laborious processes. The ore is dug by dint of incessant toil; and often when the coveted load is just reached, the exhausted explorer has to resign his task! But *there*, the "glass darkly" will give way to the "face to face." All will be made luminous. "In your light," O God, "we shall see light." Knowledge, which is here the result of

assiduous labor, will there be gained by intuition. To *see* will be to *understand*.

And what shall be said of what we call "*mysterious PROVIDENCES?*" Eternity will unravel every mazy labyrinth in them. It will be one of Heaven's loftiest occupations, studying the volumes of the past — discovering them to be volumes of *faithfulness* — every page, which on earth seemed blurred, will then stand forth in illuminated characters, endorsed with, "*God is Love!*" The cloudiest sky will be seen to have had its rainbow, some token of covenant mercy. The higher we climb the mountains of glory, the wider spread at our feet will be the discoveries of Jehovah's wisdom. There will be no more room for misgivings. The "why" and the "wherefore" of every earthly dealing will be revealed. "The channels of the deep waters will be all made plain, through which the Almighty held His darksome way." (M'Ewen)

There shall be no night of sorrow there.

A melancholy minor-note runs its under-tone through all our present joys. Even when the *cup* is full, there is the aching thought, "This cannot always last." Even when the *gourd* is most flourishing, there is often the too truthful foreboding, that the *worm* may come — in a moment, and *it is DOWN!*

Night!—poetry has ever spoken of it as the significant type and emblem of *Death*. How impressively it recalls that chamber of mysterious silence, where the footfall echoed no sound but its own, and the living lip of cherished friendship was sealed forever! With how many the mind is like a hall draped in sackcloth — the long winding passages of memory hung with portraits of those "who are not" — the memorials of *buried love!*

But *there*, "sorrow and sighing will forever flee away." Joy will be un-diluted. The angel of death no longer crosses that threshold. Every shaft is expended. The last night on earth will be the last night of weeping. Not one *shadow* will flit across that bright sky— not

one scalding tear will dim the eyes of the crowned and glorified. As the verse in Psalm 30 may be beautifully and literally rendered, "*Sorrow*" (like a wayfaring man, a sojourner) "*lodges* for a night," (the night of earth) "BUT, joy comes in the *morning!*" Happy time! As I reach the gates of glory, the last burden of *sorrow* will roll from my back, and I shall go my heavenly way rejoicing!

There shall be no night of sin there.

It is sin that bound its death-bands over the world's fevered brow. "What is soul-rest," says Richard Baxter, "but our freedom from sin?" Give me all that the world can bestow, so long as this nature of mine remains at the best only partially sanctified — continuing to drag about with it a body of SIN, I cannot be *perfectly happy*. What a blessed world would the present be, were sin expunged from it! What a joyful world that SHALL be, where we *know* that sin is to be forever expelled — the trail of the serpent never polluting its blessed soil! *Here*, Satan approached with his foul assaults even the holy Son of God. "Cast Yourself down," was his blasphemous appeal, as he took Him to the Temple summit. But the prince of this world will in vain plant his footsteps on the pinnacle of the New Jerusalem Temple — into it nothing that is unholy shall ever enter. "The spirits of the just" will then be "*made perfect!*" *Here*, there is sin in the best and holiest. There are decayed branches in the stateliest Lebanon cedars — flaws in the purest cisterns — ripples of corruption in the clearest fountains; but *there*, all will be presented "without fault" before the throne — not a trace or lineament of sin adhering — nothing to be feared — no dark contingencies — no real or imagined evils.

Night here on earth, is a shadowy-time — full of spectral images, types of uncertainty, mutability, change. But looking forward to Heaven, we have the "*hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began.*" Oh! thrice blessed moment, when the stormy night-watch will be over — when we shall feel the shallows underneath us — see

the haven in sight — the morning light breaking over the towers of the heavenly city — angels pointing to them as they crowd the shore, and exclaiming, in contrast with what we have left behind us — "THERE SHALL BE NO NIGHT THERE!"

LIVING FOUNTAINS

"They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." — Revelation 7:16-17

This is a glorious note of celestial music, one of the sweetest chimes of the upper sanctuary. All that poetry ever wrote, or touching pathos conceived, falls immeasurably short of the grandeur of this passage.

The verse contains another of the many *negative* descriptions of Heaven; for the Bible most frequently describes Heaven, not by what it *is*, but by what it is *not*. The glorified band of once sin-stricken and woe-worn pilgrims, have now reached the pure river of the water of life. They are like Israel of old when seated under the walls of Jericho, to keep their first Passover in Canaan. The manna had ceased — they were eating the new corn of the land — the hunger, the thirst, the sun-blight of the desert were ended — Jordan was crossed. Their weary feet were treading the Land of Promise, for which they had toiled and suffered during forty protracted years of wilderness-privation. But the memory of these was all that now remained. Their Marahs and Achors — their scorching marches — the burning sands by day — the chilly damps of night — their conflict with the disciplined warriors of Amalek — the recollection of all this only served to enhance the prospect of peaceful repose in the Covenanted Heritage: "the land of brooks and

fountains of waters," a land "flowing with milk and honey."

This verse unfolds the same element of joy in the future blessedness of the true Israel of God, which we referred to in speaking of Heaven under a former *emblem — the joy of contrast.*

Here, and There, how startling the COMPARISON!

Here, in this sinning, sorrowing, weeping world, the believer weeps, suffers. There "God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes." As the word "Eye," to the Jew, was synonymous with "Fountain," it would seem to denote that the gracious hand of a gracious God will dry up the very fountain of weeping; so that not so much as one tear-drop will again bedim or bedew the face!

*Here, the sin-burdened and sorrow-burdened pilgrim — exposed to the fiery sun and the desert blast — hunger and thirst — toil and conflict. There, in yonder tearless world, "he shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." The un-fallen angels know nothing of these experiences; they never sinned, and therefore they have never known what it is to suffer. These words are unknown to *them!**

Here, the burning rays of trial often wither up his best joys. Affliction, like the desolating windstorm, sweeps down in a moment his most cherished props and fondest shelters. There, no withering blast can burst upon him — no "fiery trial can try him;" — the furnace-heat of the desert can no longer be felt or feared!

Here, he "hungers," panting after the attainment of earthly objects, which, even when attained, never satisfy the longings of his immortal spirit. Often like the fevered patient, turning from side to side on his anguished couch, imagining every change of posture will be easier. There, he shall be eternally and everlastingly satisfied. No longer shall there be so

much as one longing unanswered, or one aching void unfilled.

Here, he "thirsts" — "he seeks water and there is none." The world's sources of refreshment are like the summer's brook, dry when most needed. Read the inscription on that earthly cistern — "It is leaky;" it "can hold no water!" But there the vessel is ever full, ever flowing, overflowing — "They shall drink of the river of Your pleasures" — "With You," O God, "is the fountain of life."

Often, *here*, as weary wandering birds, with drooping wing and wailing cry, we roam over earth's ocean of change. *There*, we shall fold our wings forever — nestling in safety within the true ark of God.

Here, it is "outside the camp, bearing His reproach." *There*, it is *within* the gates, sharing His glory!

Oh, what a comfort to traverse in thought that glorious white-robed company, and to think, in the midst of my own vileness, "They were once as vile as I!" Every robe there, was stained with sin. *"Who are these?"* One was haughty, a persecutor, injurious. Another was a thief, translated from a felon's cross to a believer's crown. Another is a saint who had escaped the contaminating influences of "Caesar's household," and was made by grace a monument of mercy. Another was once a weeping Magdalene. But all had "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." If the angels who have never sinned, find their chief happiness in God's service, what a deepened intensity of joy will there be in the happiness of sainted believers! The angels know God only as their Creator and Benefactor; believers know Him as their Redeeming God in Jesus. The one can sing, *"Worthy is the Lamb!"* the others alone can add, *"He was slain for us!"*

Do any mourners read this page? Be comforted. Listen once more to the sublime dialogue, "Who are these?" *"These are they who have come out of great tribulation!"* There is an identity of experience

between you and every member of that glorified multitude. They have all graduated in a school of trial. You may now be sowing in tears, but, like them, you will soon "reap in joy." And, better than all — "the Lamb" shall *"feed you and lead you,"* and *with His own gentle hand* wipe away every lingering tear-drop! If it was delightful even on earth to repose in our every anxiety on Him — what will it be to rest in the arms of His love, when anxiety, sorrow, weakness, weariness, are known no more! He has loved us in the past — There, we are told He is to love us and tend us forever and ever. On earth we have loved perishable friends too much, but here is One we cannot love too well. In eternity we shall speak of "the great love with which He *loved us*" — no, with which He *loves us*!

Reader, often anticipate that blessed communion and exalted fellowship, when you shall hear His voice of tenderness calling down from "the living fountains of waters," by which He is eternally to lead you, saying, "Come up here!" Soon your head will ache no more — your heart break no more — cherished earthly ties will be sundered no more — sin will reign no more. There will be no furrowed features there — no withered gourds — no blighted hopes — no dread of desolating afflictions. The days of your mourning will be ended. When you see Him and throw yourself at His feet, what will be your confession from the sunlit summit looking back on the windings of the lower valley? *"He has done all things WELL!"*

FOREVER

"I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever."—
Psalm 23:6

So mused a saint of God six thousand years ago, who is now a safe "Dweller" in "the House" of which he so sweetly sung. Can I also pluck for myself this last

Eshcol Grape — and go on through the wilderness, joyously treading whatever path my God may see fit to allot me, looking beyond the path and beyond the wilderness to the glorious termination? Can I close this little volume, endorsing every page with Paul's happy superscription, which made him rise superior to all trials, and exult in all tribulations: "*And so shall we EVER be with the Lord?*" Let us gather up a few closing thoughts of coming bliss which our motto-verse suggests.

1. "I will *dwell.*" An expression of Perfect Security.

The great haven is reached; the raging waters are all past; nothing can ever disturb the deep rapture of Heavenly repose. Shall we repeat once more the often-reiterated assertion in these pages, that on earth all is mutation, change, insecurity, and that when the sea of life is least ruffled, there is often the too truthful foreboding of the gathering tempest!

Even our spiritual frames, and feelings, and experiences, how fitful and uncertain. Today, the entry in the soul-diary is, "*You are my portion, O God.*" Tomorrow, it is, "*My soul is cast down within me.*" No sooner do we get a glimpse at the third heavens than a "messenger of Satan" is waiting to "buffet" us, and the soaring eagle falls with disabled wing to the earth. But not one shadow of change or temptation will ever flit across these heavenly skies. Stars may be quenched, suns annihilated, the world pass away; but the Believer in Glory stands *secure* — the crown must be plucked from the Redeemer's brow, before *his* can be touched! This is the guarantee of His bliss — "*Because I live you shall live also.*" "The unregenerate," says an old writer, "will be past hope, and the saints past fear, forever." Yes! "I will DWELL." It will be an *unchangeable* happiness; or, *if* changing, changing only "*from glory to glory!*"

2. "I will dwell *in the House of the Lord.*" Speaks of Happiness and Rest.

It is a *Home* word — it invests Heaven with a home-aspect — it is a household sanctuary. "*Absent*," says Paul, "*from the body*" — "at home" "*with the Lord*." *Here*, we are out-door servants, exposed to the "windy storm and tempest." *There*, we shall be taken and welcomed within the royal palace; clothed, fed, honored, inside the halls of our "Father's dwelling." "Did He love you, an enemy — you, a sinner — you, who even loathes yourself; and received you when you disclaimed yourself? and will He not now immeasurably love you as a son — you a perfect saint? When perfect created love and most perfect uncreated love meet together, it will not be like Joseph and his brethren who lay upon one another's necks weeping; it will be loving and rejoicing, not loving and sorrowing." (Baxter) "You now begin," said Chrysostom to a friend during his exile— "*you* now begin to lament my banishment, but I have done so for a long time; for since I knew that Heaven is my home, I have esteemed the whole world a place of exile."

3. "I will dwell in the House of the Lord *forever*."
Realizes its Perpetuity.

"The last jewel of our crown," says Baxter, "is that it will be an *everlasting* rest. Our earthly paradise in Eden had a way *out*, but no entrance that we could ever find *in* again; but this eternal paradise has a way *in*, but no way *out* again."

Blessed assurance, amid so much that is transitory! All the most enduring things of earth *are* passing and *have* passed away. The palaces of Babylon, the towers of Zion, the bulwarks of Tyre, they have had their proud magnificence written, but it was written on the sands of time! Where are they now? The tide of ages has washed nearly every vestige away! Every little *home*, too, is a world in miniature. Its joys, they are passing; its friendships, they are perishable; its props and shelters, in one night the storm sweeps them down! "*But*," says Jesus of His redeemed saint, "*I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out*."

The true Ark will bring its crowded millions to the summit of the heavenly Ararat, not to go forth again amid storm and tempest, to battle with sin and sorrow, but to repose amid the unbroken sunshine of the everlasting hills. On earth "there is a time to be born, and a time to die." In Heaven, *"they neither marry nor are given in marriage."* There are neither births nor deaths as here; no wearing out of successive generations—*"neither shall they die any more."*

What a volume is contained in these two words, "FOREVER!" To think that after millions on millions of years and ages shall have rolled by, still I shall be but on the threshold of immortal being, on the confines and outskirts of limitless life. My lifetime commensurate with that of God Himself. His throne the center of my bliss, *eternity* the circumference. "O Eternity! Eternity!" says one, who has now entered on the reality, "it is yours to crown the joys above. You are the knot which binds the bundle of life together. Without the thought of you, dim sadness would not spare the faces of the blessed; their songs would be marred with dreadful discordance, and all the blissful bowers would lose their charms."

Is this "House of the Lord" to be my everlasting dwelling-place? Let me seek to regard it with a home-feeling; to have my affections more centered on it. Let the intervention of no lower object dim or obscure its glories. It is said of good Philip Henry, that when his children visited him, he used to pray "that their next meeting might be either *in* Heaven or further on in their way *towards* it."

Soon the morning hour shall strike. The canopy of night is now glittering with stars of promise — pledges of the day of glory. Already gleams of light steal through the distant casement — "The Beloved" is "looking through the lattice," and saying that the "little while" of earth will soon be over, and "He who *shall* come, *will* come." The precise day of His coming is unknown, that we may attend upon every day, and

that we may not have our "scroll" to search for, when the sound of His chariot-wheels is heard!

We have been traversing in thought the glories of a coming Heaven — plucking a few *Eshcol-clusters* from the celestial vineyard; yet, after all, how poor, how inadequate is our conception of future bliss! Two inspired penmen have written on the same theme. *John saw* Heaven in his visions on Patmos — he *attempts* to describe it. He paints its walls of jasper, and gates of crystal, and streets of gold. *Paul saw* Heaven, when he was caught up to its gates. He gazed where mortal eye had never gazed before. He saw glory rising on glory. He obtained a sight of "the invisible." When he returns to earth to commit the wondrous apocalypse to writing, he is *silent* — the pen drops from his hand; he gives, as the noblest description of it he *can* give, that it is *indescribable*. "*I saw,*" he says, "*what it is not possible for a man to utter.*"

O God! do grant, by the aids of that Holy Spirit whose office and work it is "to show us things to come," that these feeble thoughts and musings on coming glory, may tend to wean me from earth, and train me for Heaven; leading me to live more habitually under the power of things unseen — to have more of the girded loins and the burning lamps, and "so much the more" as I see "the day approaching."

"Time passes on," says the saintly Baxter — who always seems to stand as if one foot had already crossed the heavenly threshold — "yet a few days and we shall be here no more. Many diseases are ready to assault us. We who are now preaching, and hearing, and talking, and walking, must very shortly be carried and laid in the dust. We are almost there already. We know not whether we shall have another sermon, or Sunday, or hour! How active should they be who know they have so short a space for so great a work."

Reader, may these "sips of the heavenly fountain" refresh you for your onward journey. May these

vintage-gleanings in the desert lead you to long more ardently for the fullness and fruition of the true Canaan. Press forward, "uphill and downhill, to the city which has foundations;" so that when death comes, you may have nothing to do *but to die* — to leave the pilgrim-staff, and take up the pilgrim-crown — to step ashore from the vessel of life, and make your final "leap into the arms of Infinite Love."

"Already," said Edward Bickersteth, when in sight of Glory, "already I see the distant shore! I behold the Holy City having the glory of God, where are gone many dear friends. There I hope to meet many of those now so justly dear to me. What more do I need? God is *there*, my portion, my joy, my happiness, and in *His* presence is 'fullness of joy.' Animated with these hopes, what is the painted pageant of this world?"

"No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love Him."

"So, dear friends, while you are waiting for these things to happen, make every effort to live a pure and blameless life. And be at peace with God."

"Amen! Even So! Come, Lord Jesus!"