

**STAIR STEPS
INTO
HEAVEN'S GLORIES!**

By

Ron Christian

"Testmonies of Victory In Dying"

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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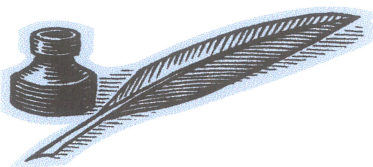
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"A
GLIMPSE
OF
HEAVEN!"

Section I

"IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE ARE MANY MANSIONS!"

Someone said, "DEATH is the most democratic institution on earth. It comes to all men regardless of color, education, wealth, or rank. It allows no discrimination, tolerates no exception. The morality rate of mankind is the same the world over: one death per person." (Fred Duehner)

Not only is death the one universal fact of life, but death is the one fact of life that forces every person to make a choice!

A choice between what? Death compels everyone to choose between faith and despair. "Either we despair, or we believe. There is no middle course, no razor-edge of non-committal on which to balance precariously." (Whale) The man who has no faith in God is likely to say the same thing as the man of the world, who said regarding death: "The wise man is remembered no longer than the fool, for, as the passing days multiply, all will be forgotten. Alas, wise man and fool die the same death. 'So I came to hate life, since everything that was done here under the sun was a trouble to me; for all is emptiness and chasing the wind.'" (Ecclesiastes 2:16-18)

The atheist, Bertrand Russell, said, "That no intensity of thought and feeling can preserve an individual life beyond the grave. That all the labors of the ages, all the devotion, all the inspiration, all the noonday brightness of human genius, are destined to extinction in the vast death of the solar system, and that the whole temple of man's achievement must inevitably be buried beneath the debris of a universe in ruins." (Quoted by Stewart in "The Gates of New Life"; pg. 29)

"Only he who believes in God wins the victory over despair. Only the infinite mercy of the Eternal Love, incarnate, suffering, dying, rising from the dead, is big enough for the tragedy of human existence." (Whale)

The Christian with strong faith in God knows that death does not end it all, but that the perish ability of death will someday be swallowed up in the imperishability of eternal life. With the Apostle Paul, the true Christian declares, "This perishable being must be clothed with the imperishable, and what is mortal must be clothed with immortality. And when our mortality has been clothed with immortality, then the saying of Scripture will come true: 'Death is swallowed up; victory is won.' 'O Death, where is your victory? O Death, where is your sting?' The sting of death is sin; and sin gains its power from the law; but, God be praised, he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (I Corinthians 15:53-57)

Death will inevitably cause you to say one of two things, either "All is emptiness and chasing after wind," or "God be praised, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Death compels everyone to choose between faith and despair.

The person of faith is the one who believes that there is glorious life after death. Christians believe not only in the resurrection of the personality of the believer, but also in the resurrection of the body of the believer. Let us look at the teaching of God's Word regarding the resurrection of the Body, or "Life after Death".

"Don't be Troubled in Your heart", said Jesus. (John 14) How often these circumstances tend to trouble us! The thought of separation from loved ones trouble us, just as the thought troubled the disciples. Sorrow is legitimate for Christians, for feelings are a real part of being human. When we shed tears, Jesus sheds tears with us.

However, when we believe, put trust in Jesus, our sorrows are soothed, our broken hearts are mended and our voids of loneliness are filled.

What is the basis of our comfort in sorrow?

Contemplation of our Heavenly Father! The Father has a mansion ready for us and we need not fear. There is a place for us!

Where we feel at home, not alone, a feeling of belonging, (like we felt when, as a child, we put total trust in our earthly father's provision.) There will be nothing strange about heaven!

Where there is plenty abundance. There are mansions in heaven, especially suited to each of us. There is no lack in heaven. Our every need will be supplied, our every desire fulfilled, and our every capacity developed. No overcrowding in heaven, there is room for all! There is neither positioning nor deprivation! There we will have total fellowship with one another! There will be no isolation or loneliness in heaven! To a far greater extent than is true of the fellowship between loving family members in the best of earthly homes, there will be deep and blessed fellowship in heaven with loved ones who have gone on before us, and will come after us. It is our 'Father's House' where we will dwell, and this speaks of intimate and warm fellowship and sharing, no competition but fullest cooperation.

The Heavenly Father loves all His heavenly children equally, never favoring one above another. I believe, however, that because of varying moral capabilities among the heavenly children, there will be varying degrees of responsibility in heaven. In addition, while mutual care for one another will be the normal loving relationship between heavenly children, it is entirely conceivable that there will be (as it were) more mature heavenly children caring for less mature heavenly children. This is only conjecture, but a conjecture that makes sense when one realizes that the saints in heaven will have differing degrees of moral capacity. Capacities that are developed differently on earth are experienced differently in heaven.

Heaven is more than a mere state of being; also, heaven is not a materialistic place as we think of 'places' on earth. But, this Scripture (John 14) seems to teach that Heaven is a localized place, a place where all will be known and recognized, a place of sweet and conscious fellowship, a place where redeemed spirits have been embodied with a new and resurrected body like as to their resurrection Lord. A place also where there is unspeakable joy, relaxation, total health, and at times hilarious laughter! Remember, Jesus had a sense of humor on earth, and we are God-like creatures with the ability to laugh! We will have spiritual, localized, and recognizable bodies that are similar, if not identical, to the body of the Resurrected Lord! Heaven has a local habitation, and is a place in the great universe of God. Jesus Christ has at this moment a human body, glorified.

There are 'many' mansions in heaven! This means that there is room for all in heaven. The Bible describes heaven as a place where there is an innumerable company of saints, and yet a place where there is room for all and where each inhabitant is treated

tenderly and personally. No one is lonely, no one is 'lost in the crowd', no one is intimidated, and no one is, or will be, treated impersonally. Heaven is big enough to contain every earthly inhabitant, for it is God's will that none should perish, but that all should come to repentance. It is the Father's good pleasure to give the Kingdom of heaven to all persons, but only those whose repentance and faith are genuine will find a place in heaven.

"There will be a great many occupants of the mansions in heaven that Christian men here on earth - the most catholic of them will be very much surprised to see them, and thousands will find their entrance there that never found their entrance into any communities of so called Christians here on earth." (Ibid; 268)

This is to say that there will be those in heaven, who never had the joy of hearing of the Christ, but who walked in the lesser lights of God revealed to them in nature or through the conscience, or even through inferior systems of religion. But all who walk in all the light of truth they receive nevertheless make it to heaven (and make it to heaven by the merits of Christ's righteous sacrifice) whether or not they have had opportunity personally to respond to the best and the only perfect light of God, which light is Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God. All who make it to heaven make it to heaven because of Jesus Christ, whether or not they had opportunity to respond to Jesus Christ personally?

"John Newton once said that if he ever entered heaven, he might probably meet three great wonders: (1) Finding some there whom he had supposed would not be there. (2) In not finding some there, whom he had expected would be there. (3) But, most of all in finding himself there." (Binney's Theological Commend; 147)

"A chamber in the great (heavenly) Temple waits for each of us, and the question is, shall we occupy it, or shall we not?" (Ibid; 268)

Comforting are the words from the pen of Robert Murray McCheyne (highly respected minister of the early 19th century, who died a premature death at the age of 30): "Christ doesn't intend for us to live here always; He has gone on a far journey in order to prepare a place for us. Oh Christians, believe in Christ preparing a place for you. It will greatly take away the fear of dying. It is an awful thing to die, even for a forgiven and sanctified soul, to enter a world unknown, unseen, and untried. One thing takes away fear; Christ is preparing a place quite suitable for my soul. He knows all the wants and weaknesses of my frame. I know He will make it a pleasant home for me." (The Best of Robert Murray McCheyne; pg. 76)

During my more than 25 yearlong pastorates in Fort Collins, Colorado, I had the privilege of knowing many saintly persons who left this earthly life with victory in their souls. I will never be the same, for having experienced fellowship with these loving persons. One person, Sharon Atwood, lost her heroic battle with cancer when she was only 55 years old. She was a radiant, beautiful, vivacious Christian lady that was deeply dedicated to her noble husband, and to her caring family members. She was one of the most liked persons in our small, but growing, local Church. Shortly before Sharon died of her devastating disease, she shared that she was troubled - not troubled because of any doubts regarding her sure entry into heaven, since she had deep faith in Christ as her Savior, but troubled because she wondered how, amidst the vast crowd in heaven, she would be able to find (to locate) her loved ones when she entered the "Gates of

heaven". She was troubled and disturbed for several days before her "welcome death" (for she was suffering terribly). Then, as is always true of "God's mercy and provision", Sharon was given what might be called a "glorious vision" - a "vision of reassurance".

God gave her an "overwhelming assurance that, as soon as she left this "earthly realm of existence" and entered the "land of glory", she would be immediately greeted by all her loved ones who would welcome her to her "heavenly home." She would not need to worry that she could not find her loved ones in heaven, amidst the throngs of sainted people. She would immediately feel at home in heaven. Her loved ones, who would be there to welcome her, alongside Jesus Himself, would first greet her! What glorious assurance was given to her, during her closing hours here on earth! Heaven is where we first meet our blessed Savior who will gather our dearest ones to us, to welcome us to our Heavenly Home.

One of the most respected and best-known Catholic authors of the 19th century was Cardinal John Henry Newman. This perceptive writer shared the following brief crisp statements regarding his understanding of heaven. "If we live well, and die in the grace of God, we shall, all of us, hereafter be taken up by our Incarnate God to that place where angels dwell; that our bodies shall be raised from the dust, and be taken to heaven; that we shall be really united to God. That we shall be partakers of the Divine nature, that each of us, soul and body, shall be plunged into the abyss of glory which surrounds the Almighty. That we shall see Him, and share His blessedness, according to the text, 'Whosoever shall do the will of My Father that is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.'" (Meditations and Devotions by Cardinal John Henry Newman; pg. 128)

Heaven is described as a glorious city, and likened to pure gold and clear glass. Heaven is God's dwelling place prepared for those earthlings who love and who serve Christ, a place of holiness and beauty and unity and perfection and joy.

Heaven is a place where there are no tears of sorrow and grief, and no sickness or pain or death. A place where there is no sin, temptation, trials, or hard tests.

Heaven is a place where there is no need for the sun or the moon, for Christ Himself is the source of all light. In heaven, there is no night. There is no aging. No separation from those we love.

Heaven is a place where the focus of all is on Christ alone. A place where there is no competition or comparison among jealous-ridden persons, all of whom are seeking selfish glory and praise and applause. A place where all serve each other with holy love and gladness. A place of perfect harmony and unity where all is for each and each is for all, serving each other without the physical limitations of a human body.

Heaven is a place of joyful singing and happy serving and constant learning. A place where all the saints will learn from one another and all will learn forever from the 'Master Teacher' Himself - the Lord Jesus Christ.

Heaven is a place where each will become more like God forever - without, of course, ever actually becoming gods. The excitement of eternal growth in knowledge, holy wisdom, and understanding! No longer seeing reality as if peering through a hazy glass, but instead seeing reality with our spiritual eyes as a result of being given a 'spiritual body'.

Heaven is a place where we will no longer walk by faith, but a place where we shall behold Christ, face to face in all His glory!

Death for the believer is like going from the basement of the house to the top story of the house. Death allows the Christian to reach his destination. Death for the Christian is like crossing the "finish line" after a long marathon run.

Death is not a loss for the believer; death is the doorway into eternal life in heaven. Paul wrote, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain!" Christians are only pilgrims on the planet. Dying allows the believer to 'go home'! John 14:1-3 reads, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am there ye may be also."

Placing your faith in the Deathless One - Jesus Christ - you shall never die! Of course, your body will die and return to dust, but you as a believer will never die! Said Jesus, "If a man keeps my saying he shall never see death." (John 8:5) "Whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die." (John 11:16) Notes J.B. Phillips, "It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the meaning that Christ intended to convey was that death was a completely negligible experience to the man who had already begun to live life of the eternal quality." (The Newborn Christian; pg. 212)

Said the great 19th century evangelist D.L. Moody; "Someday you will read in the papers that D.L. Moody of East Northfield is dead. Don't you believe a word of it. At that moment, I shall be more alive than I am now. I shall have gone up higher, that is all, out of this old clay tenement into a house that is immortal; a body that death cannot touch, that sin cannot taint, a body fashioned like unto His glorious body. That which is born of flesh may die, that which is born of the Spirit will live forever." (Quoted in Angels by Billy Graham, pgs. 162, 163)

Concerning the 'glory' of heaven for which all true Christians 'hunger and thirst', the famous author C.S. Lewis writes: "The promise of glory is the promise, almost incredible and only possible by the work of Christ, that some of us, that any of us who really chooses, shall actually survive that examination, shall find approval, and shall please God. To please God, to be a real ingredient in the divine happiness, to be loved by God, not merely pitied, but delighted in as an artist delights in his work or a father in a son, it seems impossible, a weight or burden of glory which our thoughts can hardly sustain. But so it is.

"For glory means good report with God, acceptance by God, response, acknowledgement, and welcome into the heart of things. The door on which we have been knocking all our lives will open at last."

"Apparently, then, our lifelong nostalgia, our longing to be reunited with something in the universe from which we now feel cut off, to be on the inside of some door which we have always seen from the outside, is no mere neurotic fancy, but the truest index of our real situation. And to be at last summoned inside would be both glory and honour beyond all our merits, and also the healing of the old ache."

"We are to shine as the sun; we are to be given the morning star."

"We want something else which can hardly be put into words - to be united with the beauty we see, to pass into it, to receive it into ourselves, to bathe in it, to become part of it."

"At present we are on the outside of the world, the wrong side of the door. We discern the freshness and purity of morning, but they do not make us fresh and pure. We cannot mingle with the splendors we see. But all the leaves of the New Testament are rustling with the rumor that it will not always be so. Someday, God willing, we shall get in."

"The whole man is to drink joy from the fountain of joy. As St. Augustine said, the rapture of the saved soul will 'flow over' into the glorified body." (Portions from C. S. Lewis's sermon entitled "The Weight of Glory")

Wrote Paul, "For we know that when this tent we live in now is taken down - when we die and leave these bodies - we will have wonderful new bodies in heaven, homes that will be ours forevermore, made for us by God himself, and not by human hands. How weary we grow of our present bodies. That is why we look forward eagerly to the day when we shall have heavenly bodies which we shall put on like new clothes. For we shall not be merely spirits without bodies. These earthly bodies make us groan and sigh, but we would not like to think of dying and having no bodies at all. We want to slip into our new bodies so that these dying bodies will, as it were, be swallowed up by everlasting life. This is what God has prepared for us and, as a guarantee, he has given us His Holy Spirit." (2 Corinthians 5:1-5, Living Bible)

God loves the human race, including the "least", the "last", the overlooked, the "most unworthy". The high and the low, the most gifted and the least gifted, the wealthy and the poor, the beautiful and the ugly, the powerful ones, the weak ones, the high profile ones and the obscure ones, the highly educated ones and the most illiterate ones. The highly positioned ones and the most overlooked ones, the unusually beautiful ones, the out rightly repulsive ones, the young adults, the decrepit aging ones, the up-and-out moralistic sinners, and the down-and-out immoral and 'raw' sinners!

If God would have His way, there would not be one person who would die in his (unrepeated) sin! If God had His way (that is, if His "perfect will" were carried out) there would be universal, spiritual health, as the result of the forgiveness of every sin of every person! None would perish, and all would enjoy abundant life on this earth (amidst problems and trials) and enjoy eternal life hereafter! Hell was prepared for the devil and his fallen angels (demons) - NOT for human beings! God is doing everything in His power (short of coercion) to keep every soul out of hell, and to take every human to heaven! But one's eternal destiny depends upon one thing and one thing only - the kind of "heart response" that a person gives to God's revelation of Light that He gives to a person (even if that "Light" comes in a diminished form of "General Revelation" and not "Special Revelation"). Those only will be in heaven who have honestly and positively, responded in their hearts to God's revelation of "Light" (whether it is response to the "Concealed Christ or response to the "Known Christ")!

It is encouraging for us members of a "Fallen Race" to know that God did not abandon us when, through our Race's Representative, the entire human race miserably "fell into sin!" Through a rather long and complex plan (over a period of many centuries), God finally brought His Son into the world to accomplish His plan for "world redemption". No human can fully understand the "mystery of iniquity (sin)" or the "mystery of divinely - accomplished redemption through the cross and resurrection", or the "mystery

of the human free will" - but God, nevertheless, mightily "works his miracles" of human transformation! There are millions of persons today, throughout the world in probably every country, who are 'openly acknowledging and serving Christ', and doubtless (because of the universal "work of the Holy Spirit"), there are also many more persons whose hearts are turned toward the Living God, seeking Him as best as they know with their very limited knowledge and with their narrow opportunities, spiritually speaking.

We humans seem to be impressed (even awe-struck) by large crowds - whether they are in an athletic stadium, or at a political convention, or even in a large sanctuary at a "mega-Church"! But the "large crowd" surrounding the "Throne of God" in heaven will be "mammoth" (huge, awe-inspiring, overwhelming compared to any human crowd on earth). God of that great gathering of the Saints gave the apostle John a vision for all the ages! He wrote, "After this I looked and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands. And they cried out in a loud voice: 'Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb.'" (Revelation 7:9-10)

Based on an understanding of the "wideness of God's mercy" which encompasses every human being on earth, - that mercy being extended to "every nation, tribe, people, and language," (Revelation 7:9), through the light that lighteth every person who comes into the world", revealing either the "concealed Christ" or the "known Christ" - it is likely that the vast majority of the entire human race will compose that "vast multitude that no one could count" around the throne of God, all praising the "Lamb of God"!

I believe that when (only by the grace and mercy of God) I become a participant in that vast crowd of "praising saints" in heaven, I shall come to know, throughout the "endless ages of eternity", the millions of God's children, from every century and from every nation and tribe and people group. I believe that many of them will be persons who learned about Jesus for the very first time, when they took their first "celestial breath" from heaven's atmosphere! I believe that there will be many who will make heaven their eternal home, who put their trust in God, as God was revealed to them on earth (unfortunately) "very faintly" (through "General Revelation" instead of through "Special Revelation"). But these persons, whose hearts were most responsive to these "lesser forms of divine Light" (Nature, Truth from non-Christian Religions, untrained Conscience, Ethical Teachings of Philosophers like Aristotle and Plato, the truth of God faintly revealed through all forms of worldly beauty, etc.) - these persons with "God-honoring and sincere hearts" (but without accurate head knowledge based on "Special Revelation") - will be standing beside the more fortunate Christians who responded on earth rightly with both their heads (knowledge) and their hearts (emotions) to "Special Revelation" of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection! Both will be there - the persons who on earth were deprived of Special Revelation (but who responded sincerely with their little knowledge to a "General Revelation"), and those who were fortunate enough to know God's "Special Revelation" (Incarnation) and to respond with both their head and heart to that greatest revelation! None will be excluded from heaven, simply because of ignorance. God only expects people on earth to respond to the "degree" of "light" which they have been given - whether it is the much lesser "light" of "General Revelation" (which is "Christ concealed"), or whether it is the greatest degree of "light" which is "Special Revelation" (which is "Christ clearly revealed")!

All will be in heaven who on earth "walked in the light of truth" as God gave them light. Some will enter heaven, possessing so much more knowledge of Jesus than others who

received so much less light on earth and who possessed little or no accurate knowledge of Jesus. What God will judge, in the end of human existence, for every person, are not the accuracy of mental knowledge about God, Man, Sin, and Jesus Christ and the intricacies of Salvation (atonement, justification, regeneration, sanctification, etc.). However, it will be the condition of the human heart (receptivity to the Holy Spirit's multiple work of enlightenment, conviction, offer of forgiveness and new life, etc.).

If a person's heart is right with God (and only God can fully and accurately determine this), then that person will be welcomed into God's eternal kingdom, to enjoy the glories of heaven, along with the saints who early in their lives responded to the "revealed Christ" of "Special Revelation"! Both the 'privileged ones', and the 'much less privileged ones', will be together in heaven!

No person, regardless of the amount and the accuracy of knowledge that he possesses of Christ, will find out when he gets to heaven, that he possesses very much knowledge regarding the Holy Trinity (the God of Eternity)! All inhabitants of heaven - regardless of how little or how much knowledge of Christ they possessed on earth - will find themselves thrilled with the amount of knowledge of God (mentally and experientially) that they will progressively receive throughout the "Endless ages of eternity". There will be so much to learn about the infinite love of our eternal God, and God will not only teach us directly, but I believe He will use all His heavenly citizens to "teach each other"! I believe, as Christians of the heavenly kingdom, we will all enjoy sharing and hearing each other's personal stories of divinely - wrought transformation, which we all experienced on earth, as a result of God's Light that came to us in unique ways.

If you felt 'frustrated' because, on earth, you as a believer had little opportunity (because you were a member of a tiny church in an obscure village, or because you were confined in a prison in Russia for your 'Faith'), to share God's mercy in your life and your unique testimony for Christ, well, in heaven you will have countless ages to "tell your story" to countless millions of the saints (who will also share their stories with you). Mutual rejoicing and mutual praise for Christ, the Wonderful and Merciful Savior!

Learning more and more about God, and yet never coming to an end in that learning experience - and all of this learning about God will result in more and greater worship of the "Holy Trinity of Love"!

Yes, it is true that God will reward every person hereafter (in eternity) according to the degree and quality of works, which each person (on earth) has performed. Only God (in mercy) is qualified to Judge on that "Great Day of Evaluation". There will be different degrees or levels of rewards in heaven - based on the quality of life each person has lived for Christ on earth. But with this awesome "Judgment of Evaluation" in mind (which every Christian must anticipate and prepare for), however, each Christian must not panic or become competitive for greater "success" (fruitfulness) on earth (in order that he might get greater rewards in heaven, for himself). Why do we work on earth, as Christians? Just to build up a greater "store" of accomplishments, so that we will be assured of greater rewards hereafter? Surely not! For is not such reasoning an expression of "egotism" and "selfishness"? We work because we deeply love Christ and sincerely love others! Love is the greater motivator of our actions (good works).

If Christ has truly begun a good work in you, He will perform it until the day of Christ Jesus. Christ says, "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End" (Revelation 1:8). "Whenever He begins, He will make an end. Whenever He builds a

stone as the foundation, He will preserve it unshaken until the end. Only make sure that you are up on the foundation, that you are reconciled, that you have true peace with God. Then you may look across the mountains and rivers that are between you and that day, and say, 'He is able to keep me from falling'. You have but two shallow brooks to pass through - sickness and death - and He has promised to meet you, to go with you, foot by foot. A few more tears, a few more temptations, in a few more agonizing prayers, a few more sacraments, and you will stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion!" (The Best of Robert Murray McCheyne: pgs. 172, 173)

"I am persuaded that we begin the next life where we leave off this one, and there will be an eternal growth in the Divine image, the finite forever approaching the growth in the Divine image, the finite forever approaching the infinite in character and life, but never becoming the Infinite. In that, growth in the Divine Image will be our eternal happiness. For our growth in the Divine Image will be our eternal happiness.

For we are happy only as we fulfill the laws of our being, and those laws that demand growth and creation for their fulfillment. To sit down forever and rest might fit the life of a man of a tropical country who said, "God is good. He made the nights to sleep in and the days to rest in." But it wouldn't be the heaven of a live man.

For to be alive is to be alive to creation and development. God, the eternal Creator within us, would make us eternally creative. We find, but we find that there is more to be found. Every experience becomes an exploration - for more." (Mastery; by E. Stanley Jones; pg. 39)

"If a man keeps my saying he shall never see death'. (John 8:51); 'whosoever liveth and believeth on Me shall never die.' (John 11:26) It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the meaning that Christ intended to convey was that death was a completely negligible experience to the man who had already begun to live life of the eternal quality. 'Jesus Christ hath abolished death', wrote Paul many years ago, but there have been very few since his day who appears to have believed it. The power of the dark old god, rooted no doubt in instinctive fear is hard to shake, and a great many Christian writers, though possessing the brightest hopes of 'Life Hereafter' cannot, it seems, accept the abolition of death. 'The valley of the shadow', 'Death's gloomy portal', 'the bitter pains of death', and a thousand other expressions all bear witness to the fact that a vast number of Christians do not really believe what Christ said. Probably the greatest offender is John Bunyan, writing in his book, 'Pilgrim's Progress' of the icy river through which the pilgrims must pass before they reach the Celestial City. Thousands, possibly millions, must have been influenced in their impressionable years, by reading 'Pilgrim's Progress.' Yet the 'icy river' is entirely a product of Bunyan's own fears, and the New Testament will be searched in vain for the slightest endorsement of his idea. To 'sleep in Christ', 'to depart and be with Christ', 'to fall asleep' - these are the expressions the New Testament uses. It is high time the 'icy river', 'the gloomy portal', 'the bitter pains', and all the rest of the melancholy images were brought face to face with the fact. 'Jesus Christ hath abolished death'.

"The fact seems too many to be too good to be true. But if it does seem so, it is because we have not really accepted the revolutionary character of God's personal entry into the world. Once it dawns upon us that God (incredible as it may well sound) has actually identified Himself with man, that He has taken the initiative in effecting the necessary Reconciliation of Man with Himself, and has shown the way by which little human

personalities can begin to embark on that immense adventure of Living of which God is the Center, death - the discarding of a temporary machine adapted only for a temporary stage - may begin to seem negligible.” (The Newborn Christian, Phillips: pgs. 212, 213)

Christians who die do not lose their identity in eternity. I believe that the believer's new body will be similar to Jesus' body after the resurrection, just prior to His ascension. A tangible body, yet a spiritual body: a body not confined to limitations of the material world. When Jesus arose, He “was seen and known.” We, too in heaven will have our personal identity. We shall be known and recognizable. Notes Sam Shoemaker, “Because I live, ye shall live also’. He pioneered the way for us. His Resurrection made clear to us what Christian immortality is - not the vague wandering on of lonely and orphaned spirits, floating somewhere between earth and heaven - but the continuation of ourselves, in communion with Him and with one another. We are not a drop that falls into the sea of being and is lost in it, we are individual and responsible souls that return to their Creator. Christ's Resurrection has immeasurably strengthened our faith in the resurrection of the human soul.” (Twenty Centuries of Great Preaching; vol. 11; pg. 83)

Death is simply a bridge that spans the gulf between time and eternity. One who is a true believer in Christ goes over that bridge into the nearer presence of Christ. For all eternity, the believer will praise and glorify Christ. Heaven is a place of indescribable joy, as all the hosts of heaven join in corporate praise to God.

The apostle John had a vision of heaven: “After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindred, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.” (Revelation 7:9, 10)

Death for the Christian is the end to earth's labors, and is the beginning to heaven's eternal development and labor. Said Victor Hugo, “For half a century I have been writing my thoughts in prose, verse, history, philosophy, drama, romance, tradition, satire, ode, and song - I have tried them all. But I feel I have not said the thousandth part of what is in me. When I go down to the grave I can say like so many others, ‘I have finished my day's work’. But I cannot say, ‘I have finished my life’. My day's work will begin again next morning. The tomb is not a blind alley, it is a thoroughfare. It closes on the twilight to open with the dawn.”

CONCLUSION:

“Our earthly bodies, the ones we have now that can die, must be transformed into heavenly bodies that cannot perish but will live forever. When this happens, then at last this Scripture will come true - ‘Death is swallowed up in victory’. O death, where then your victory? Where then your sting? For sin - the sting that causes death - will all be gone; and the law, which reveals our sins, will no longer be our judge. How we thank God for all this! It is he who makes us victorious through Jesus Christ our Lord! So, my dear brothers, since future victory is sure, be strong and steady, always abounding in the Lord's work, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever wasted as it would be if there were no resurrection.” (I Corinthians 15:53-58, Living Bible)

WHAT ABOUT THE DEAD WHO DIE IN CHRIST?

*"No, not cold beneath the grasses,
All forgotten in the tomb;
Rather, in my Father's mansion,
Living, in another room."*

*"Living, like the one who loves me,
Like yon child with cheeks abloom,
Out of sight, at desk or schoolbook,
Busy in another room."*

*"Nearer than the youth whom fortune
Beckons where the strange lands loom,
Just behind the hanging curtain,
Working in another room."*

DYING WORDS

"The chariot has come, and I am ready to step in." - Margaret Prior

"Eternity rolls up before me like a sea of glory." - Jordan Antie

"How bright the room! How full of angels!" - Martha McCrackin

"I wish I had the power of writing; I would describe how pleasant it is to die." - Dr. Cullen

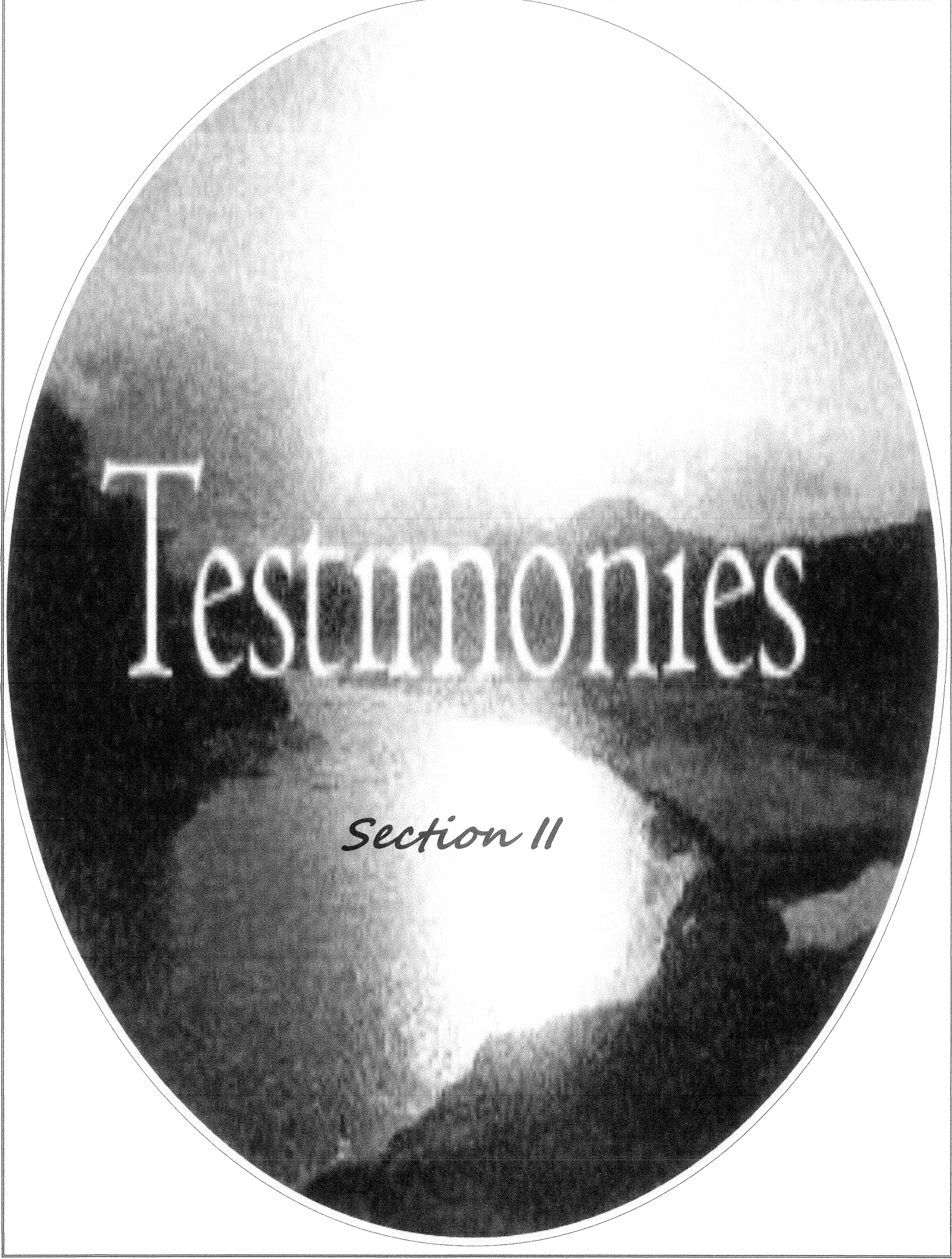
"The sun is setting; mine is rising. I go from this bed to a crown. Farewell." - S. B. Bangs

"Can this be death? Why, it is better than living! Tell them I die happy in Jesus." - John Arthur Lyth

"I am in perfect peace, resting alone on the Blood of Christ. I find this amply sufficient with which to enter the presence of God." - Trotter

"Oh, that I could tell you what joy I possess! I am full of rapture. The Lord doth shine with such power upon my soul. He is come! He is come!" - Mrs. Mary Frances

(Quotes from Shoe-Leather Faith; by Garth and Merv Rosell; No. 141)



Testimonies

Section II

Our end may be nearer than we realize. When it comes, let us not cringe before death as a tyrant. If He who conquered death and all its powers is resident within the heart, then death is only a departing to be with the Lord, which is far better. No fear will be ours. "How strange this fear of death is!" George Macdonald once exclaimed to a friend, "Yet we are never frightened at a sunset". And what is death to the Christian, but a glorious sunset and the dawning of a more blessed day in a Summerland where eyes are never wet with the tears of separation.

"All the Last Words of Saints and Sinners" by Herbert Lockyer



What sort of a place shall heaven be? Heaven shall be a place of perfect rest and peace. They that dwell there have no more conflict with the world, the flesh, and the devil; their warfare is accomplished, and their fight is fought; at length they may lay aside the armor of God, at last they may say to the sword of the Spirit, "Rest and be still." They watch no longer, for they have no spiritual enemies to fear; they fast and mortify the flesh no longer, for they have no vile earthy body to keep under; they pray no more, for they have no evil to pray against. There the wicked must cease from troubling; there sin and temptation are forever shut out; the gates are better barred than those of Eden, and the devil shall enter in no more. O Christian brethren, rouse and take comfort; surely, this shall be indeed a blessed rest. There shall be no need of means of grace, for we shall have the end to which they are meant to lead; there shall be no need of sacraments, we shall have the substance they are appointed to keep in mind; there faith shall be swallowed up in sight, and hope in certainty, and prayer in praise, and sorrow in joy. Now is the school time, the season of the lesson and the rod, then will be the eternal holiday. Now we must endure hardness and press on faint yet pursuing, then we shall sit down at ease, for the Canaanite shall be expelled forever from the land. Now we are tossed upon a stormy sea, then we shall be safe in harbor. Now we have to plow and sow, there we shall reap the harvest; now we have the labor, but then the wages; now we have the battle, but then the victory and reward. Now we must bear the cross, but then we shall receive the crown. Now we are journeying through the wilderness, but then we shall be at home. O Christian brethren, well may the Bible tell you, "Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, for they rest from their labor". Surely, you must feel that witness is true.

"Classic Sermons on Heaven and Hell"; Sermon by John Charles Ryle; pgs. 37-38



So much about: pgs. my mother was uneventful and ordinary. There was no spectacular drama, no newspaper headline, and no high adventure. She lived an ordinary life and died an ordinary death.

But she did both well. She loved my father well, and she loved us kids well. She lived through the drab terrain of the ordinary with grace and gentleness. She accepted her slowly deteriorating condition with a noble faith. She received death as she had life and disability; with patience and courage. My mother understood that sanctity of the ordinary.

“Prayer, Finding the Heart’s true Home”; By Richard Foster: pg. 170



If there be hope for us, hope which is not a lie, then it must be hope not of our own creation, mortal, as we are, not the result of wishful thinking or human potential. It must be something outside of us and our finitude, some stunning intrusion, some act of God reversing our shuffle toward the grave and overcoming the final enemy, something which in power defeats death and gives life, some dawn not of our devising, something which shakes our death – dealing world to its foundations, some descent to us, some divine rolling back of the great stone under which we all labor, some light in the dark of death.

“As the first day of the week was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to see the tomb. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, for an angel of the Lord, descending from heaven, came and rolled back the stone...His appearance was like lightning, and his clothing white as snow...The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised...”

“The Library of Distinctive Sermons”; Quotation by Dr. William H. Willimon: pg. 18



***Death is nothing at all; I have only slipped
away into the next room.***

***I am I and you are you, whatever we were to
each other we are still.***

***Call me by my old familiar name; speak to me
in the easy way which we always used.***

***Put no difference in your tone; wear no forced
air of solemnity or sorrow.***

***Laugh as we always laughed at little jokes
together.***

Pray, smile, think of me, pray for me.

***Let my name be ever the household word that
it always was, let it be spoken without the
effort, without the trace of a shadow in it.***

***Life means all that it ever meant, it is the same
as it ever was; there is absolutely unbroken
continuity.***

***What is death but a negligible accident? Why
should I be out of mind because I am out
of sight?***

***I am but waiting for you, for an interval
somewhere very near, just around the
corner. All is well.***

***Nothing is past; nothing is lost. One brief
moment and all will be as before.***

***Henry Scott Holland,
1847-1918***



If it is really God behind all the masks of death, what happens when a person dies?

Exactly the opposite of what seems to happen. The eye does not grow dim but bright. Death does not approach; death recedes forever. Life does not ebb but flows over our old container, overcomes it, and kills it. It is not a defeat of life but an excess of life that kills us. Death seems to catch up with us from behind, from our past, from the aging process built into our material bodies. But it is life that catches up with us from ahead and kills this body of death. We think the opposite because we look from the past. From the past, we see what was, that is, the body of death and its process of aging and dying. God sees from ahead, from what to us is future. What to us will be, to Him is. From God's point of view – the true point of view – It is His eternal life in the form of our heavenly body, our spiritual body, meeting our body of death at the point of death that slays and conquers this body. Our own new body kills our old body. Our new body is the sword in God's hand by which He executes judgment upon our old body. And the ultimate meaning of this execution, the ultimate meaning of death, is love.

“Love Is Stronger Than Death”; By Peter Kreeft; pg. 109



Lord of all worlds, we bless your name for all those who have entered into their rest, and reached the Promised Land where you are seen face to face. Give us grace to follow in their footsteps, as they followed in the footsteps of your holy Son. Keep alive in us the memory of those dear to ourselves whom you have called to yourself; and grant that every remembrance which turns our hearts from things seen to things unseen may lead us always upwards to you, until we come to our eternal rest; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

F.J.A. Hort, 1828-92



It matters not whether we die young or old, naturally or tragically, unexpectedly or otherwise, if ours is the glorious hope that death is but the opening of a gate into a larger life. To all such, death has no terrors. It comes as a welcome friend, bidding us enter the eternal home of peace and bliss. Gerhardt has taught us to sing –

***“Let us in life, in death,
Thy steadfast truth declare,
And publish with our latest breath
Thy love and guardian care.”***

“All the Last Words of Saints and Sinners” by Herbert Lockyer; pg. 37



“But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1st Corinthians 15:57)

When I look back and read of the early Christians, I am charmed to find how they always felt about dying. They had such a sense of dying in Jesus, such a sense of the reality of the Heavenly Home, such a sense of the glory of the future state, that they could take their children, and put them, as it were, into the hands of God, and rejoice and sing hymns of graduations that they were about to go; and they could meet together over their dead as men meet to celebrate a great victory. This feeling is lost out of the Church; it is largely lost out of men’s apprehension; and it seems to me that it will be one of the beneficent features in the development of Christianity in our age, and in the future ages, to bring back again in the experience of men, the beauty of death, the triumph of death and the overhanging light and glory that ought to destroy that darkness which to us, for the most part, envelopes the door of the grave.

When we comprehend the fullness of what death will do for us, in all our outlook and in all our fore look, dying is triumphing. Not any bower of roses is so festooned in June. Not where the Jasmine and honeysuckle twine, and lovers sit, is there so fair a sight, so sweet a prospect, as where a soul in its early years is flying away, out of life and out of time, through the gate of death – the rosy gate of death, the royal gate of death, the golden gate of death, the pearly gate of death.

Dying, what is it? “To shut out the black night and join the fireside of your Father’s Home.”

Robert E. Selle: “Traveling Toward Sunrise” by

Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 302.



We give back to you, O God, those whom you gave to us. You did not lose them when you gave them to us, and we do not lose them by their return to you. Your dear Son has taught us that life is eternal and love cannot die, so death is only a horizon, and a horizon is only the limit of our sight. Open our eyes to see more clearly and draw us close to you that we may know that we are nearer to our loved ones, who are with you. You have told us that you are preparing a place for us; prepare us, that where you are we may be always, O dear Lord of life and death.

William Penn,



IS THERE A HEAVEN?

THE NEW TESTAMENT IS COMPLETELY POSITIVE UPON THE POINT.

We do not just go into the earth and rot. Our real selves, which survive the decay of our bodies, submit to judgment and receive their reward.

Yet a careful examination of what the Bible does say about heaven makes three things clear. It is a sphere of growth, work, and great happiness.

Heaven is not static. God means to perfect all who come and he has all eternity in which to do it.

Nor is heaven a place of endless Church services with the choir doing most of the work! Jesus said, "My Father works even until now, and I work." When John caught a glimpse of heaven in a vision, he said of those he saw there, "They serve him day and night.

As for the happiness of heaven – language fails again. The Bible says quite plainly that in heaven there is no evil, no sorrow, and no pain. What it must be to those who love God deeply to be forever in his presence none can know till they are there. To quote the Bible again, it is "above what we can ask or think".

"Questions People Ask About Religion"; by William Sangster: pgs. . 130-131



JOHN BROOKS (1825), Governor of Massachusetts, affirmed on his deathbed;

“I see nothing terrible in death. I’m looking to the future; I have no fears. I know in whom I have believed. I look back upon my past life with humility. I am sensible of many imperfections that cleave to me. I now rest my soul on the mercy of my Creator, through the only Mediator, His Son, and our Lord. Oh, what a ground of hope there is in that saying of Paul that God is in Christ reconciling the guilty world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.”

“All the Last Words of Saints and Sinners”; By Herbert Lockyer; pg. 96)



"¹ For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. ² Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, ³ because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. ⁴ For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come. ⁶ Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ⁷ For we live by faith, not by sight. ⁸ We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. (2nd Corinthians 5:1-10)

Paul regards the body as merely a tent, a temporary dwelling place, in which we sojourn till the day comes when it is dissolved and we enter into the real abode of our souls.

He is not looking for a Nirvana with the peace of extinction; he is not looking for absorption in the divine; he is not looking for the freedom of a disembodied spirit; he is waiting for the day when God will give him a new body, a spiritual body, in which he will still be able, even in the heavenly places, to serve and to adore God.

It is Paul's conviction that even here and now the Christian can enjoy the foretaste of the life everlasting. It is given to the Christian to be a citizen of two worlds. He has one foot in time and one in eternity. His body is on earth but his heart is in heaven. And the result is, not that he despises this world, but that even this world is clad with the sheen of glory, which is the reflection of the greater glory that shall be.

"The Daily Study Bible – Letters to the Corinthians" by William Barclay: pgs. 227-229)



Christians are even here on earth, residents of a heavenly kingdom, and since this kingdom is eternal, the astounding conclusion is that we can have eternal life in the present.

Consider the profound implications of the idea of eternity right now. It means that we should treat other people as immortal souls and not as perishable bodies. It means that what good we build here on earth becomes part of God's eternal kingdom. It means that heaven is now a dimension of everyday existence, and we can enjoy even in this life a foretaste of the life to come.

"Life after Death, the Evidence"; By Dinesh D'Souza; pg. 234)



Christian, look up and take comfort, Jesus has prepared a place for you, and they that follow Him shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of His hands. Look forward to that glorious abode He has provided; look forward in faith, for it is yours. O Christian brethren, think what a glorious meeting that shall be. There we shall see the saints of old, of whom we have so often read; there we shall see those holy ministers whose faith and patience we have admired; there we shall see one another around the throne of our common Savior, and be parted and separated no more. There we shall labor and toil no more, for the days of mourning shall be ended.

“Classic Sermons on Heaven and Hell”; Sermon by John Charles Ryle; pg. 45)



If this life, with all its difficulties and problems, has been so wonderfully good in the loving kindness of God, how surpassingly good it must be yonder in the sunshine of eternity! 'Eye has not seen,' declares Paul, 'nor ear heard, nor heart of man conceived what God has prepared.'

And you who may have had to say goodbye to someone you loved the best, will you listen to the trumpet-notes of your own faith? 'Christ is risen. He has abolished death. He has led captivity captive. As in Adam all die, so in Christ shall all be made alive.' This is no myth. The Greeks had a fable of a man who in old age was given back his youth. But there is nothing mythical here. For this is true. 'I have glorified My name': God did that indeed, when He first brought your loved one to your side. But listen when your heart is quiet, and you will hear the voice go on, like trumpets sounding the reveille of the resurrection – 'And I will glorify it again. I will give you the ecstasy of reunion, where there is no parting again forever.'

I am persuaded you can trust a God like that. I know that you can trust Him even with the dear ones whom death has snatched away.

And when your own hour comes, that hour of which you have sometimes wondered 'How shall I do in the swellings of Jordan?' I shall tell you how you will do. When the waves are washing your soul into glory, you will hear voices shout the praises of Jesus: and then suddenly, the incredible miracle – you will be 'like Him'. Dare to imagine it - yourself, myself, like Jesus: for we shall see Him as He is.

'I have glorified my name, and will glorify it again.' Therefore – expect great things from God!

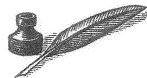
"River of Life"; By James S. Stewart; pg. 141 

Where God is, there is the heaven of the righteous; but when God is revealed everywhere, as we may suppose He is to the glorified, then in every part of the universe the righteous find their heaven.

Jesus designated heaven "My Father's House". This is suggestive of the great family reunion there of all the children of God. Very naturally, we think of those with whom we have lived upon earth as the friends with whom we hope to dwell hereafter, freed from all our present imperfections, and perfected in person, in character, and in love. But this gives a very limited idea of the opportunities for fellowship which heaven will afford. Not only shall we "sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven", but we shall have opportunity for converse with the noble and the true of every land and of every age.

Such ideas lift our thoughts beyond the common and narrow conception of a limited, local heaven, and give wider scope for the employments and enjoyments of the blessed. The service of God upon earth is not confined to acts of worship, but includes duties of every kind performed under the influence of filial love. Surely, in heaven, our employments will be far more varied, yet they will all be as much channels of joy to ourselves as offerings of praise to our Lord. As heirs of God, we come into the enjoyment of our inheritance, not by the deceased of our Father, but by our own coming of age. Hence, all the resources of Deity, however they may engage themselves in the future history of the new-created universe, will lie open for our enjoyment. All things will be ours; for God Himself in His infinite love and boundless wealth will be our portion forever. In His presence is fullness of joy, and at His right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

"A Popular Exposition of Methodist Theology" by Charles O. Eldridge: pgs. 189-190



*"I dreamed that I was growing old
(It may be it was not a dream),
I shivered in the frosty cold
And trembled in the summer beam;
It cost me many a bitter sigh,
Until I knew, it was not I.*

*The house my Maker for me made
Received His likeness in its form;
His wisdom all its parts displayed,
His beauty clothed its chambers warm;
It is not so fair as years go by;
What matter – for it is not I.*

*The lamps that light its room's burn low,
Its music sounds more dull of late,
And one – it may be friend or foe,
Knocks loudly often at its gate;
I tremble then – I scarce know why,
My house he claims, it is not I.*

*I am indeed a dweller there,
A winter and a summer guest;
Its rust and its decay I share,
But cannot look therein to rest.
I'm sure to leave it by and by –
'Tis but my house – It is not I.*

*I sometimes think, when lying down.
For the last time I lock the door,
And leave the home so long my own,
That I shall find it yet once more
So changed and fair I scarce shall know
The house I lived in Long Ago.*

Unknown Source and Author sent to me



In the cloud of grief over Bob's death, I began to see the meaning of Easter in a new light. As a five-year-old on Easter Sunday, I had learned the harsh lesson of irreversibility. Ironically, now as an adult I saw that Easter actually offered an awesome promise of reversibility. Nothing – no act of childhood cruelty, no experience of shame or remorse, and, no, not even death – was final. Even that could be reversed.

On Friday, Jesus' closest friends had let the relentless crush of history snuff out all their dreams. Two days later, when the crazy rumors about Jesus' missing body shot through Jerusalem, they couldn't dare to believe. They were too conditioned to the irreversible. Only personal appearances by Jesus convinced them that something new, new, had broken out on earth. When that sank in, those same men who had slunk away in fear at Calvary were soon preaching to large crowds in the streets of Jerusalem.

At Bob McQuilkin's funeral, I rephrased Rollo May's question in the terms of our own grief. What would it mean for us if Bob rose again? We were sitting in a chapel, numbered by three days of grief and sadness, the weight of death bearing down upon us. What would it be like to walk outside to the parking lot and there, to our utter astonishment, find Bob? Bob! With his bounding walk, his crooked grin, and clear gray eyes.

That image gave me a hint of what Jesus' disciples felt on the first Easter. They, too, had grieved for three days. But on Sunday, they caught a glimpse of something else, a startling clue to the riddle of the universe. Easter hits a new note, a note of hope and faith that what God did once in a graveyard in Jerusalem, he can and will repeat on a grand scale, for the world. For Bob, for us. Against all odds, the irreversible can be reversed.

The German theologian Jürgen Moltmann expresses in a single sentence the great span from Good Friday to Easter: It is, in fact, a summary of human history, past, present, and future: "God weeps with us so that we may someday laugh with him."

"Epiphanies", edited by Eugene Peterson and Emile Griffin; above article excerpted from a chapter by Philip Yancey: pgs. . 144-145)



There must be, indeed, the change of progress; it is the permanence not of death but of life; and so the changes of decay, of loss, of bereavement, of the unreturning past, these are gone with the last great change, which ends the perishing and opens the eternal. There shall be no wavering of faith, no weaning of hope, no chill of love. Faith shall see, and yet go on into the unseen; hope shall enjoy, and yet look forward; love shall be perfect, and yet have increase. Here, change at every step leaves some lost good behind it; there, change shall take all its good things forward into fuller possession, and thus become a growing permanence. Many a heart has said with David, "O that I had wings like a dove! For then would I fly away and be at rest"; and has found it no more in the solitude than in the city; but the hand that is put out at the window of this ark of refuge will ensure to it peace always, by all means. "There remaineth a rest to the people of God." We can rely on nothing else but His promise for the fulfillment of it. Sometimes it looks so strange, so unearthly, so utterly away from all the laws of nature and life as we see them here, that it seems incredible.

"Classic Sermons on Heaven and Hell"; Sermon by John Ker: pgs. 59-60)



In one of his letters, Vincent van Gogh described a painting he'd seen depicting John Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress. A sandy path leads over the hills to a mountain, on top of which is the Heavenly City. On the road is a pilgrim who wants to go to the city. But he's tired and turns to a woman standing beside the road and asks:

"Does the road go uphill all the way?"

"Yes, to the very end."

"And will the journey take all day long?"

"Yes, from morn till night, my friend."

"Truly," van Gogh concluded, "it is not a picture, but an inspiration." For uphill though the way may often wind, and hard though the road may sometimes be, what lies ahead at the journey's end is home. This is the homecoming to which all restless hearts are invited. "There shall we rest and see, see and love, love and praise," Augustine wrote in The City of God. "This is what we shall be in the end without end. For what other end do we propose to ourselves than to attain to the kingdom of which there is no end?"

"Long Journey Home"; By Os Guinness; pg. 215)



I must die! Yes, but the old enemy shall now be my friend. He will not be my master, but my servant. He shall just be the porter, to open the door into my Father's house, into the home of unspeakable blessedness and glory. Death shall not hurt me!

I have seen a little child fall asleep while out in the streets of the city, and the kind nurse has taken charge of the sleeper, and when the little one awaked she was at home, and she opened her eyes upon her mother's face.

So shall it be with all who are alive in Christ, and who have risen from a spiritual grave. They shall just fall into a brief sweet sleep, and gentle death shall usher them into the glory of the endless day.

"My Daily Meditation"; By John Henry Jowett; pg. 79



REFLECTIONS ON HEAVEN

“The LORD is in His holy temple, the LORD’S throne is in heaven; His eyes behold, His eyelids test the sons of men.”

PSALM 11:4

If God has a way, then that is the only way. Every little thing in which you would have your own way has a mission for your redemption, and He will treat you as a disobedient child until you take your Father’s way for yours.

There will be this difference, however, between the rich man who loves his riches and the poor man who hates his poverty. When they die, the heart of the one will be still crowded with things and their pleasures, while the heart of the other will be relieved of their lack. The one has had his good things, the other his evil things. But the rich man who held his things lightly nor let them nestle in his heart, who was a channel and no cistern, who was ever and always forsaking his money – starts, in the new world, side by side with the man who accepted, not hated, his poverty. Each will say, ‘I am free!’

The only air of the soul, in which it can breathe and live, is the present God and the spirits of the just – that is our heaven, our home. Cleansed of greed, jealousy, vanity, pride, possession, and all the thousand forms of evil self, we will be God’s children on the hills and in the fields of that heaven, no one desiring to be better than another.

“The Best of George MacDonald”; pg. 129



When Victor Hugo was past eighty years of age, he gave expression to his religious faith in these sublime sentences: "I feel in myself the future life. I am like a forest, which has been more than once cut down. The new shoots are livelier than ever. I am rising toward the sky. The sunshine is on my head. The earth gives me its generous sap, but Heaven lights me with its unknown worlds.

"You say the soul is nothing but the resultant of the bodily powers. Why then is my soul more luminous when my bodily powers begin to fail? Winter is on my head, but eternal spring is in my heart. I breathe at this hour the fragrance of the lilacs, the violets, and the roses as at twenty years. The nearer I approach the end, the plainer I hear around me the immortal symphonies of the worlds, which invite me. It is marvelous, yet simple."

Our hearts pant for that illustrious sunrise.

"Traveling Toward Sunrise"; By Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 199.



Malcolm Muggeridge, one of the most brilliant thinkers of the 20th Century, was an internationally respected journalist, and a keen and long-time observer of the international conditions of our war-torn world. He became a Christian believer, later in his life, and he shared many thoughtful insights regarding his personal experience with the Christian Faith, after he personally accepted Christ as his living Redeemer. Following is an expression of his trust in God in the face of his own impending physical death!

“There are certain things we can never know, and the exact circumstances of dying, and what happens afterwards, are among them. I have an absolute conviction, without any qualification whatsoever, that this life that we live in time and space for three-score years is not the whole story, that it is only part of a larger story. Therefore, death cannot be for others, or for oneself, an end, any more than birth is a beginning. Death is part of a larger pattern; it fits into a larger, eternal scale, not simply a time scale. This is something I know. Whether the ego, or what we call the personality, remains intact, or remains at all, whether the separate individuality as we know it remains are questions to which I don’t know the answers. No one knows, and no one ever will know. I think of my own death as something which will transform my way of living into another mode of living rather than as an end; and one thinks of others whom one has loved and who have died as equally participating in that other existence, in that larger dimension. To me this is completely satisfying. I do not want to know any more than this. I’m perfectly content with it. I can honestly say that I have never been afraid of death, and I am less afraid of it now than ever. I just look forward to it as something that will happen.

I think the most important sentence in the whole Christian religion, devotionally speaking, is Thy will be done. This is the essential sentence to be able to say, especially in relation to death.

“Seeing Through the Eye” by Malcolm Muggeridge on Faith”: pgs. 211-212



SIR ISAAC PITMAN 1813-1897), phonographic and inventor of shorthand, said:

“To those who ask how Isaac Pitman passed away, say, ‘Peacefully, and with no more concern than passing from one room to another to take up some further employment.’”

“All the Last Words of Saints and Sinners”; By Herbert Lockyer; pg. 114



THE SOUL IN DEATH

“What kinds of existence shall I then enter upon, when my spirit has launched out of the body? How shall I feel myself...when the organs of hearing are moldering into dust, in what manner shall I hear? When my brain is of no farther use, what means of thinking shall I have?” What shall I be and do after my death? What will the intermediate state between death and the final resurrection be like, when my spirit is out of my body? Here Wesley engages in broad theological and exegetical conjectures concerning the immortal soul at the time of death.

As a very old man, he poignantly described himself already as “strangely-connected with a little portion of earth, but this only for a while. In a short time I am to quit this tenement of clay, and remove into another state,” which the living knows not and the dead cannot tell. “How strange, how incomprehensible, are the means whereby I shall then take knowledge even of the material world!”

Admittedly, there is much of the invisible world of which we can “know nothing and indeed we need to know nothing.” Most of our ideas and impressions remain conjectural, even with the most acute reasoning and widest data, lacking the promises of divine disclosure.

It is at least clear that we will go from one existence to another very different one. From Scripture we learn that the spirits of the righteous are to be blessed by dwelling with God face to face, while those of the wicked remain infinitely distanced from the eternal blessedness of God.

To those who ask: “Is heaven a state or a place?” the fitting response is:

“There is no opposition between these two...It is the place wherein God more immediately dwells with those saints who are in a glorified state,” the essential feature of which is “to see God, to know God, to love God”. We shall then know both His nature, and His works of creation, of providence, and of redemption. Even in paradise, in the intermediate state between death and the resurrection, we shall learn more concerning these in an hour than we could in an age during our stay in the body.”

“John Wesley’s Christianity”; written and compiled by Thomas Oden: pgs. . 348-349



“The voice of weeping shall be no more heard.” Isaiah 65:19

-The glorified weep no more, for outward causes of grief are gone. There are no broken friendships, nor blighted prospects in heaven. Poverty, famine, peril, persecution, and slander, are unknown there. No pain distresses, no thought of death or bereavement saddens. They weep no more, for they are perfectly sanctified. No evil heart of fault before His throne, and are fully conformed to His image. Well may they cease to mourn who have ceased to sin. They weep no more, because all fear of change is past. They know that they are eternally secure. Sin is shut out, and they are shut in. They dwell within a city which shall never be stormed; they bask in sun which shall never set; they drink of a river which shall never dry; they pluck fruit from a tree which shall never wither. Countless cycles may revolve, but eternity shall not be exhausted, and while eternity endures, their immortality and blessedness shall co-exist with it. They are forever with the Lord. They weep no more, because every desire is full filled. They cannot wish for anything which they have not in possession. Eye and ear, heart and hand, judgment, imagination, hope, desire, will, all the faculties, are completely satisfied; and imperfect as our present ideas are of the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, yet we know enough, by the revelation of the Spirit, that the saints above are supremely blessed. The joy of Christ, which is an infinite fullness of delight, is in them. They bathe themselves in the bottomless, shore less sea of infinite beatitude. That same joyful rest remains for us. It may not be far distant, ere long the weeping willow shall be exchanged for the palm-branch of victory, and sorrow’s dewdrops will be transformed into the pearls of everlasting bliss. “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

“Morning By Morning” by Charles Spurgeon; pg. 219



THE WINNER'S CIRCLE

“The Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free.” Ephesians 6:8, NIV

For all we don't know about the next life, this much is certain. The day Christ comes will be a day of reward. Those who went unknown on earth will be known in heaven. Those who never heard the cheers of men will hear the cheers of angels. Those who missed the blessing of a father will hear the blessing of their heavenly Father. The small will be great. The forgotten will be remembered. The unnoticed” by will be crowned and the faithful will be honored.

The winner's circle isn't reserved for a handful of the elite, but for a heaven full of God's children who “will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him.” (James 1:12, NIV)

“Grace for the Moment” by Max Lucado; pg. 702



Now is our only time to act, to decide. Hence it becomes important to “be very careful, then how you live – not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity” (Eph. 5:15; cf. Col. 4:5)

Time flows. Each moment is a potentially delicious gift. None can be replaced or retracted, once gone. No moment lasts. One’s loving, believing, and one’s very being as a person is chosen ever anew with each moment.

Suppose every moral decision were forever subject to endless revision. Would not all-moral seriousness thereby be infinitely postponeable? If there were no death, it seems difficult to conclude that there could be much significance to historical life, since life’s significance as decision hinges on its limitation in time. If so, oddly enough, death is what makes life meaningful, for this life is morally serious only if it ends. The equation is precise: Those who take life seriously take death seriously. Those who take death seriously take life seriously. Where death is avoided, life is avoided. Only one who has accepted the reality of death is prepared to accept life. (John 12:24; Cor. 5:14, 15)

God gives us only this fleeting time upon earth to make decisions, to shape our own responsive existence, to hear and respond to the divine address, to live for or against the good in each moment (Josh 24:15). When we die, the time for deciding is past (Gen. 27:2-10). The burden of freedom is lifted; the wealth of freedom spent.

Nature does not permit life without death. Only if a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies does it produce many seeds. (John 12:24)

Death ends the condition of pilgrimage through the world and inaugurates the consummation, excluding further temporal choices. “Night is coming, when no one can work” (John 9:4; cf. Matt. 26:42; 25:13). Human life is in this way analogous to the falling of a tree: “in the place where it falls, there will it lie” (Eccles. 11:3). Death means unequivocal limitation. No one can “obtain after death that which he has neglected to secure here”. The view is generally rejected that those who, having wavered between belief and unbelief, die in sin will be allowed to make or reverse a final decision after death.

Life puts every person to the test. Life itself is the examination. Finally, life absolutely requires one to face one’s finitude. From beginning to end, we are called to acknowledge our lives as creatures under limitation. It is a test that lasts not an hour but a lifetime. Death is the last event in the probation that constitutes life.

“Life in the Spirit – Systematic Theology: Volume Three”

By Thomas C. Oden: pgs. 378-379

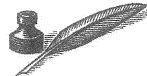


Nothing that defiles shall enter heaven. Nothing that is unclean, unholy, impure, unchaste, shall ever cast its black shadow athwart that world of love above. Heaven then is to be a holy place.

A busy place heaven is to be, without any weariness. Here we are wearied. Oh, the pressure of life's battle is such, the work to be done is such, the call is such, that the brain gets tired, the head bows with weariness, the limbs drag with burdens, and the spirit cries out its pain because of exhaustion. There shall be none of that in God's house above.

Oh, the children that shall be in that cloudless land! All of the blessed little fellows, who die before they can discern between right and wrong, before they can discriminate, before they can pass morally and personally on the question of the call of God to repentance and faith - all of them dying this side that line of personal accountability, everyone, shall pass through the gates into the city of God.

"Classic Sermons on Heaven and Hell" by Sermon by George W. Trutt: pgs. 75-77



EARTHLY AND HEAVENLY BODIES

“For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive.” I Corinthians 15:22

This body of ours is the means of revelation to us, the camera in which God’s eternal shows are set forth. By the body, we come into contact with nature, with our fellow men, with all their revelations of God to us. Through the body, we receive all the lessons of passion, suffering, love, beauty, and science. Through the body, we are trained outward from ourselves and driven inward into our deepest selves to find God.

We cannot yet have learned all we are meant to learn through the body. How much of the teaching even of this world can the most diligent and most favored man have exhausted before he is called to leave it! Is all that remains to be lost?

We need not only a body to convey revelation to us, but also a body to reveal to us to others. The thoughts, feelings, and imaginations that arise in us must have their garments of revelation whereby the unseen world within us will be manifested to our brothers and sisters around us; otherwise, each is left in human loneliness. Now, if this be one of the uses my body served on earth, the new body must be the same body, glorified as we are glorified, with all that was distinctive of each from his fellows more visible than ever before. The accidental, nonessential unrevealing, and incomplete will have vanished. That which made the body what it was in the eyes of those who loved us will be tenfold there. Will not this be the resurrection of the body? Of the same body though not of the same dead matter? Every eye will see the beloved. Every heart will cry, “My own again – more mine because it’s more himself than ever I beheld him!”

“The Best of George MacDonald”: pgs. 116-117



And after death, what cometh? What wonder-world will open upon our astonished sight? What scene of glory will be unfolded to our view? No traveler has ever returned to tell. But we know enough of the heavenly land to make us welcome our summons thither with joy and gladness. The journey of death may be dark, but we may go forth on it fearlessly, knowing that God is with us as we walk through the gloomy valley, and therefore we need fear no evil. We shall be departing from all we have known and loved here, but we shall be going to our Father's house – to our Father's home, where Jesus is – to that royal "city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God." This shall be our last removal, to dwell forever with Him we love, in the midst of His people, in the presence of God. CHRISTIAN, MEDITATE MUCH ON HEAVEN, it will help thee to press on, and to forget the toil of the way. This vale of tears is but the pathway to the better country: this world of woe is but the stepping-stone to a world of bliss.

"Morning by Morning" by Charles H. Spurgeon, (1834-1892); pg. 35



Now if you believe Jesus, if God cares for the individual as Jesus said He did, if the very hairs of your head are all numbered and the paths of your feet all guided, if round your life there is the besetting pressure of the everlasting mercy, do you think a love so infinite and sublime is going to be defeated at the last by an incident like death? If the great Father has loved His children enough to go into the far country after them, to climb the terrible slopes of Calvary for them, to send the urgency and passion of His Holy Spirit to revive and rescue them, to cause all the bells of heaven to ring for the salvation of one of them coming home at last out of darkness into light; if God so loved the world – do you imagine that He will consent to have His love balked and thwarted and robbed by death at the end of the day? “Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades.” God’s love cannot finally be frustrated. If it means breaking the bands of death to satisfy that love, then break those bands He will. For when God loves once, He loves forever. It is impossible to overemphasize the importance of this argument for the life eternal: for it is Christ’s argument.

“The Strong Name” by James S. Stewart; pg. 236



Surely if He be the Father, and heaven be His house, the relation of the redeemed to one another must have in it more than all the sweet familiarity and unrestrained frankness, which subsists in the families of earth. A solitary heaven would be but half a heaven, and would ill correspond with the hopes that inevitably spring from the representation of it as “my Father’s house”.

There will be a great many occupants of the mansions in heaven that Christian men here on earth will be very much surprised to see there, and thousands will find their entrance there that never found their entrance into any communities of so-called Christians here on earth.

Heaven is a place, full of all sweet security and home like repose, where God is made known in every heart and to every consciousness as a loving Father, and of which all the inhabitants are knit together in the frankest fraternal intercourse, conscious of the Father’s love, and rejoicing in the abundant provisions of His royal House.

“Classic Sermons on Heaven and Hell; Sermon by Alexander Maclaren: pgs. 87-89



“FOR HERE WE HAVE NO CONTINUING CITY, BUT WE SEEK ONE TO COME.” (Heb. 13:14)

The words often on Jesus’ lips in his last days express vividly the idea, “Going to the Father”. We too, who are Christ’s people, have vision of something beyond the difficulties and disappointments of this life. We are journeying toward fulfillment, completion, expansion of life. We, too, are “going to the Father”. Much is dim concerning our home country, but two things are clear. It is home, ‘The Father’s House.’ It is the nearer presence of the Lord. We are all wayfarers, but the believer knows it and accepts. He is a traveler, not a settler.

***The little birds trust God, they go singing
From northern woods where autumn winds have blown,
With joyous faith their trackless pathway winging
To summer lands of song, afar, unknown.***

***Let us go singing, then, and not go sighing
Since we are sure, our times are in His hand,
Why should we weep, and fear, and call it dying?
‘Tis only flitting to a summer land.***

“Traveling Toward Sunrise”; by Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 308



We will not only survive death, but be raised from it. We are to be given new bodies like his resurrection body, with new and undreamed-of powers. For he is called both the 'first fruits' of the harvest and 'the firstborn from the dead'. Both metaphors give the same assurance. He was the first to rise; all his people will follow. We will have a body like his. 'Just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man (Adam) so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven (Christ)?' I Corinthians 15:49

It is enough for us to know that on the last day and through eternity, we shall be both with Christ and like Christ; for the fuller revelation of what we are going to be we are content to wait.

There is no need for us to speculate about the precise nature of heaven. We are assured on the authority of Jesus Christ that it is the house and home of his Father and ours (there are twenty-two references to the Father in John 14), that his home is a prepared place containing many rooms or resting places, and that he himself will be there. What more do we need to know? To be certain that where he is, there we shall be also should be enough to satisfy our curiosity and allay our fears.

I have always derived much comfort from the statement of Revelation 7:9 that the company of the redeemed in heaven will be 'a great multitude which no man could number'. I do not profess to know how this can be, since Christians have always seemed to be a rather small minority. But Scripture states it for our comfort. Although no biblical Christian can be a universalist (believing that all mankind will ultimately be saved), since Scripture teaches the awful reality and eternity of hell, yet a biblical Christian can - even must - assert that the redeemed will somehow be an international throng so immense as to be countless. For God's promise is going to be fulfilled, Abraham's seed is going to be as innumerable as the dust of the earth, and the stars of the sky, and the sand on the seashore.

"Authentic Christianity"; by John Stott: pgs. 401-404



The truth of the matter is death is not going to touch me personally at all. It is not going to touch the real "me". For this reason, I am going to be exactly the same man the first minute after death as I was the last minute before death. It would work no great moral change in me to pass from one side of the Potomac River to the other, nor would it work any great change for me to pass from one side of the narrow river called Death to the other.

In spite of this fact, however, there is a tremendously great tendency to believe that death will work a moral change, that you can lie down one moment self-centered, sin-conquered, and godless – and by the mere act of dying, wake up the next moment holy, sinless, and Christlike. It is absolutely false. If Christ does not save you in the here and now, do not expect death to accomplish what He was unable to accomplish. If the blood of Jesus Christ cannot cleanse you from all sin, do not be so mad as to expect that cleansing at the hands of the undertaker, the shroud, and the coffin. Believe me that as death finds you, so you will be the instant after when you open your eyes in the world unseen.

"Classic Sermons – On Heaven and Hell", Sermon by Clovis Chappell: pgs. 101-102



ISAAC WATTS (1674-1748), was the English theologian and hymn-writer. Known as "The Evangelical Poet", it was Watts who gave the Church one of its most precious Calvary hymns, "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross." His version of Psalm 90, "O God, and Our Help in Ages Past" is perhaps the finest hymn in the English language. How triumphant was his last hour as he died in the Lord! Listen to his dying testimony:

"It is a great mercy that I have no matter of fear or dread of death. I could, if God please, lay my head back and die without terror this afternoon"

WHICH HE DID!

All the Last Words of Saints and Sinner"; by Herbert Lockyer; pg. 119



GOD GOES WITH US

"I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go." Genesis 28:15 NIV

When God calls us into the deep valley of death, he will be with us. Dare we think that he would abandon us in the moments of death? Would the shepherd require his sheep to journey to the highlands alone? Of course not. Would God require his child to journey to eternity alone? Absolutely not! He is with you!

What God said to Moses, he says to you: "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." (Exodus 33:14; NIV)

What God said to Jacob, he says to you: "I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go." (Genesis 28:15; NIV)

What God said to Joshua, he says to you: "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you". (Joshua 1:5; NIV)

"Grace for the Moment"; by Max Lucado; pg. 567



Y GUTHRIE says after her baby daughter died she began to understand why so many people found such comfort in knowing their loved one was in heaven. Out of grief came a yearning for heaven. "I never had this yearning before, but I do now," she says. "A piece of me is there. I now see in a much fuller way that this life is just a shadow of our real life-of eternal life in the presence of God."

The truth is it often takes the death of a loved one to turn our thoughts to the brevity of this life and the promises of the next. Many of us have a good life here, and even if we don't have much, we generally think and live as if this life is all, there is. We may believe in the promises of eternal life, but they seem very far off.

Nancy challenges us to consider Eugene Peterson's translation of 2nd Corinthians 5:5 in The Message: "We've been given a glimpse of the real thing, our true home, and our resurrection bodies! The Spirit of God whets our appetite by giving us a taste of what's ahead. He puts a little of heaven in our hearts so that we'll never settle for less."

"The One Year Book of Encouragement"; by Harold Myra; p g. 226



“THERE TALKED WITH JESUS TWO MEN...MOSES AND ELIJAH.” Luke 9:30.

How consoling is the truth that our loved ones who departed in Christ are not mantled in a dreamless sleep but like Moses and Elijah are in full possession of their faculties with their gracious Lord who is “the God of the living”. The bodies of the godly dead sleep but await a glorious resurrection. “I believe in the resurrection of the body.” But the Christian dead themselves have been raised already and sit together with Christ. None can awaken what is awake or bring to life what never ceased to live. The appearance then of Moses and Elijah on the mount assures our hearts that those who leave us and whose bodies are left to lie like fallen trees, like the Lord they are with, are alive forevermore.

“Seasons of the Lord”; Volume II; pg. 32; Herbert Lockyer



“FOR EVERY HOUSE IS BUILDED BY SOME MAN; BUT HE THAT BUILT ALL THINGS IS GOD. (Hebrews 3:4)

This world is but a quarry where the living stones of the Heavenly Jerusalem are cut and molded.

What is anything when you think of eternity, except a means to get there-so laugh at everything and go on in His Name.

***What matters it to us who are immortal
Which side of the grave we stand on, when we know?
That what the world calls death is but the portal
Leading to life again? ‘Tis but to go
Across the gurgling river in the dark
Hanging on to God; and but a moment so
Till we are over, and we disembark
And either life a fresh. ‘Tis basely wrong
We should so meanly under strike the mark
As measures life by years; and all long
Busy ourselves arranging little schemes
That death will dash to pieces, when we might
Be building, far above those earthly dreams,
Houses that stand forever in God’s sight.***

He who would pass the latter part of his days with honor and decency must when he is young, consider that he shall one day be old; and remember when he is old that he once was young.

“Traveling Toward Sunrise” by Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 354



NO MORE STRUGGLES

Read Revelation 21:1-4

“God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.” Revelation 21:4

Fay Weldon went through what she thought was a near-death experience 2006 when an allergic reaction stopped her heart. She retold her experience to Elizabeth Grice of the London Daily Telegraph. She said that a “terrible creature” tried to pull her through pearly gates, while doctors tried to pull her back. Later, she said, “If that was dying, I don’t want to do it again.” It’s “just more of the same. More struggle.”

Often the process of dying is a struggle. But death itself need not be feared by the believer in Christ – for it will bring us to heaven. In Revelation, John gives a wonderful description of what eternity with God will be like (21:1-4). He sees the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven. The city of Jerusalem was a physical sign of the people of God and was described as the place where God dwells (Ps. 76:2). The New Jerusalem, on the other hand, will not be made by human hands. It will be a place where God lives with His people eternally, and it will be a place of “no more” – no more pain, sorrow, and sickness.

We don’t know very much about eternity, but we do know that for the Christian, whatever our emotional and physical struggles are now, they will cease then. Life with God will be better by far.

***Think of a land of no sorrow,
Think of a land of no fears,
Think of no death and no sickness,
Think of a land of no tears. – Anon.***

“Our Daily Bread” For January 25, 2011; By Marvin Williams



OUR ULTIMATE DILEMMA

“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies.” John 11:25; NIV

Her words were full of despair. “If you had been here...” She stares into the Master’s face with confused eyes. She’d been strong long enough now it hurt too badly. Lazarus was dead. Her brother was gone. And the one man who could have made a different didn’t. He hadn’t even made it for the burial. Something about death makes us accuse God of betrayal. “If God were here there would be no death!” We claim.

***You see, if God is God anywhere, he has to be God in the face of death. Pop psychology can deal with depression. Pep talks deal with pessimism. Prosperity can handle hunger. But only God can deal with our ultimate dilemma –death. And only the God of the Bible has dared to stand on the canyon’s edge and offer an answer. He has to be God in the face of death. If not, he is not God anywhere.
God Came Near***

“Grace for the Moment”; By Max Lucado; pg. 649



E. M. Bounds was not only a physician but also minister and editor. He died in 1856, leaving the world this farewell message.

“What is victory over death? Is it not the victory over the dread of death? Is it not the victory of patience under the sufferings, which precede death? Is it not the victory of resignation in the prospect of death? Is it not the victory of faith, which looks beyond death, and trusts all to Christ?”

“All the Last Words of Saints and Sinners”; By Herbert Lockyer; pg. 123

Many people dread death and are distressed that they do not have “dying grace”. Of course, they will never have the grace for death when they are in good health. Why should they have it while in the midst of life’s duties, with death still far away? Living grace is what is needed for life’s work and calling, and then dying grace when it is time to die. J. R. M.

“Streams in the Desert”; by L. B. Cowman; pg. 20



Missionary Jim Elliot made heaven the focus of his life. "He is no fool who loses what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose," he wrote in his journal. This philosophy released him to serve Christ even in the face of death as he lay bleeding in the Curaray River that whines through the jungles of Ecuador. Though for Jim being fully devoted to Christ here meant loss, it clearly was gain on the ledger sheet of eternity. He was home. To die is gain. And not only gain for him but also gain for a tribe that would ultimately come to know Christ as well.

Living for Christ is really not possible until we understand and embrace the fact that dying is gain. And that is not possible until we firmly believe that heaven is real. When we affirm that truth in the depths of our souls, then we are finally free to live for Christ, even if that requires earth-side loss.

Isn't that what Paul had in mind when he deemed all the gain of his life insignificant compared to living for Christ? After he looked at all his supposed accomplishments, he concluded,

I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ – the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith (Philippians 3:8-9; NIV).

When heaven is the transcendent target of our living, then we indeed have the best of both worlds; Christ here and gain there. We are assured of Christ's presence and protection here and ultimately the guarantee of paradise there, where He is the substance of our eternal gain.

This may be why C. S. Lewis profoundly noted in Mere Christianity, "Aim at heaven and you'll get earth thrown in. Aim at earth and you'll get neither."⁶

"Eternity –Reclaiming A Passion For What Endures"; by Joseph M. Stowell: pgs. . 79-80



In the glory of heaven, the blessed continue joyfully to fulfill God's will in relation to other men and to all creation. Already they reign with Christ; with him, "they shall reign forever and ever."⁶⁰³

By his death and resurrection, Jesus Christ has "opened" heaven to us. The life of the blessed consists in the full and perfect possession of the fruits of the redemption accomplished by Christ. He makes partners in his heavenly glorification those who have believed in him and remained faithful to his will. Heaven is the blessed community of all who are perfectly incorporated into Christ.

This mystery of blessed communion with God and all who are in Christ is beyond all understanding and description. Scripture speaks of it in images: life, light, peace, wedding feast, wine of the kingdom, the Father's house, the heavenly Jerusalem, paradise; "no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him."

"Catechism of the Catholic Church"; pg. 268



Believe this done; and the veil is thrown aside which separates you from the glories of heaven – the way lies clear and open before you; and light, pure and satisfying light, gives the highest evidence and splendor to the great doctrine of life and immortality. The grand mystery is resolved. The barrier, which kept the sinner at a distance from God, is leveled and put away. That barrier was sin; and Christ, by the mighty instruments of His sacrifice and His Spirit, has over thrown it. But a victory over sin is a victory over death. Where sin hath no longer any dominion, death hath no longer any claim; and that mighty Being who spoiled principalities and powers hath abolished death, because He conquered sin. True, it still reigns in these mortal bodies; and till the new system of things be established, it will scatter its desolation over the surface of the world. But the new system is preparing. A place is fitting up in Heaven, for those to whom our Saviour hath given the assurance, that, in His Father's house there are many mansions; and on earth, the Spirit is now working in the hearts of the destined occupiers, and making them meet for the inheritance. These vile bodies must be put off; and others put on, over which death shall have no power. They will persist in bloom and in vigor to eternity. Mighty change in the constitution of the species – mighty change in the material system around us – mighty change in the souls of men, as well as in the bodies, which they animate. The bodies we now wear shall molder into dust – the earth we now tread upon shall be burnt up – the heavens we now gaze at shall pass away as a scroll – But we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness; and the beings who live in it shall never die.

“20 Centuries of Great Preaching” Volume 3; Excerpt from Sermon

by Thomas Chalmers; pg. 278



Those who read Holy Scripture in a reflective spirit found this experience in Paul, translated into the profession of Christian hope: "I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us" (Rom 8:18). The center of gravity of existence has shifted as a result of this certainty: now it lies at the morning of life, which means that it takes away the oppressiveness and the pressure of the moment and dissolves the tears of evening by the power of a grace that lasts forever. This is precisely what Easter faith is designed to give us: the ability to look across from the evening to the morning, from the part of the whole, and thus to journey toward the joy of the redeemed that springs from that morning of the third day, which first heard the message: Christ is risen!

"Seek That Which Is Above"; By Joseph Ratzinger - Pope Benedict XVI: pgs. . 95-96



CURAENS was a German physician who was upheld and sustained by the hope of a glorious resurrection:

“My breast burns at the sight of eternal life, the beginning of which I do really feel within me. I desire to be dissolved. I groan for that dwelling above which Thou hast revealed to me. I see the Heavens now open. Thou, Jesus Christ, art my Resurrection and my life.”

“All the Last Words of Saints and Sinners”; By Herbert Lockyer; pg. 123



“...Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...”(Heb. 12:1, 2).

The last mile of the road is perhaps the hardest bit to travel. When we reach the final lap, we are apt to be weary and spent. It is not that we are discouraged; not that, even though the way at times have been difficult. It is only that we are tired and the evening has come and we long for rest.

We cannot be expected to strain forward to the end of things with the same throb of excitement and suspense that we felt when we were at the road's beginning. We cannot experience the young urge that we knew at the start of the race, when it was morning, and we were newly awakened. But though we cannot feel the old delightful tumult of pulse and brain, we can still cling to the thread of melody that has been our marching song. We can still sing very softly as our laggard feet carry us toward the place called Home.

Home! It is the last stanza of the road song. It is the meeting with beauty - not awful, appalling beauty, but the beauty of familiar scenes glorified, and dear, smiling faces we have lost awhile. It is the fulfillment of the road's promise, and the justification of the road's agony.

Home! It is the last stanza of the song and the end of the road. And - paradoxically, superbly - and it is the beginning of a new song and the first step upon a road that has no ending.

Margaret Elizabeth Sangster

“Traveling Toward Sunrise; pg. 231; by Mrs. Charles Cowman



WHO CAN FATHOM ETERNITY? GOD HAS PLANTED ETERNITY IN THE HEARTS OF MEN. Ecclesiastes 3:10; TLB

It doesn't take a wise person to know that people long for more than earth. When we see pain, we yearn. When we see hunger, we question why: Senseless deaths. Endless tears, needless loss.

We have our moments. The newborn on our breast, the bride on our arm, the sunshine on our back. But even those moments are simply slivers of light breaking through heaven's window. God flirts with us. He tantalizes us. He romances us. Those moments are appetizers for the dish that is to come.

"No one has ever imagined what God has prepared for those who love him." (1 Cor. 2:9)

What a breathtaking verse! Do you see what it says? Heaven is beyond our imagination...At our most creative moment, at our deepest thoughts, at our highest level, we still cannot fathom eternity.

When God Whispers Your Name. "Grace for the Moment"; by Max Lucado; pg. 532



Many have puzzled themselves as to whether they will know their friends in heaven. Well, now, if the bodies are to rise from the dead I see no reason why we should not know them. I think I should know some of my brethren, even by their spirits, for I know their character so well, having talked with them of the things of Jesus, and being well acquainted with the most prominent parts of their character. But I shall see their bodies too. I always thought that a quietus to the question, which the wife of old John Ryland asked: "Do you think," she said, "you will know me in heaven?" "Why," said he, "I know you here; and do you think I shall be a bigger fool in heaven than I am on earth?" The question is beyond dispute. We shall live in heaven with bodies, and that decides the matter. We shall know each other in heaven; you may take that for a positive fact, and not mere fancy.

"Spurgeon's Sermons": by Charles Spurgeon; vols. 1-2; pg. 272



“...I GO TO PREPARE A PLACE FOR YOU.” (John 14:2).

An old man who was very ill, wrote the following of Heaven: “I am interested in Heaven because I have held a clear title to a bit of property there for over fifty-five years. I did not buy it. It was given to me without money and without price. But the donor purchased it for me at a tremendous sacrifice. I am not holding it for speculation since the title is not transferable. It is not a vacant lot. For more than half a century I have been sending materials out of which the greatest architect and builder of the universe has been building a home for me which will never need to be repaired because it will suit me perfectly, individually, and will never grow old. Termites can never undermine its foundations, for they rest upon the Rock of Ages. Fire cannot destroy it. Floods cannot wash it away. No locks nor bolts will ever be placed upon its doors, for no vicious person can ever enter that land where my dwelling stands now almost completed and almost ready for me to enter in and abide in peace eternally without fear of being ejected.

“There is a valley of deep shadows between the places where I live and that to which I shall journey in a very short time. I cannot reach my home in that City of Gold without passing through this deep valley of shadows, but I am not afraid, because the best Friend I ever had went through the same valley long ago and drove away all of its gloom. He has stuck by me through thick and thin ever since we first became acquainted fifty-five years ago and I hold His promise in printed form, never to forsake nor leave me alone. He will be with me as I walk through the valley of shadows and I shall not lose my way when He is with me.”

‘Traveling Toward Sunrise’; by Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 237



William Ceiller was the eminent British physician and medical lecturer who said as he died:

"I wish I had the power of writing; I would describe how pleasant it is to die."

"All the Last Words of Saints and Sinners"; by Herbert Lockyer; pg. 123



“The voice of weeping shall be no more heard.” Isaiah 65:19

-The glorified weep no more, for outward causes of grief are gone. There are no broken friendships, nor blighted prospects in heaven. Poverty, famine, peril, persecution, and slander, are unknown there. No pain distresses, no thought of death or bereavement saddens. They weep no more, for they are perfectly sanctified. No “evil heart of fault before His throne, and are fully conformed to His image. Well may they cease to mourn who have ceased to sin. They weep no more, because all fear of change is past. They know that they are eternally secure. Sin is shut out, and they are shut in. They dwell within a city which shall never be stormed; they bask in sun which shall never set; they drink of a river which shall never dry; they pluck fruit from a tree which shall never wither. Countless cycles may revolve, but eternity shall not be exhausted, and while eternity endures, their immortality and blessedness shall co-exist with it. They are forever with the Lord. They weep no more, because every desire is full filled. They cannot wish for anything which they have not in possession. Eye and ear, heart and hand, judgment, imagination, hope, desire, will, all the faculties, are completely satisfied; and imperfect as our present ideas are of the things which God hath prepared for them that love him, yet we know enough, by the revelation of the Spirit, that the saints above are supremely blessed. The joy of Christ, which is an infinite fullness of delight, is in them. They bathe themselves in the bottomless, shore less sea of infinite beatitude. That same joyful rest remains for us. It may not be far distant, ere long the weeping willow shall be exchanged for the palm-branch of victory, and sorrow’s dewdrops will be transformed into the peals of everlasting bliss. “Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

“Morning by Morning” by Charles Spurgeon; pg. 219



This is what the Saviour has done with death. He has plucked it of its sting. He has taken a full survey of the corruption, and met it in every one quarter where its malignity operates. It was sin, which constituted the virulence in the disease, and he hath extracted it. He hath put it away. He hath expiated the sentence; and the believer, rejoicing in the assurance that all is clear with God, serves Him without fear in righteousness and in holiness all the days of his life. The sentence is no longer in force, against us who believe. The Saviour took the sentence upon Himself. He bore our iniquity. He became sin for us, though He knew no sin that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. The sentence is no longer in force against us. The Saviour has cancelled it; and he has done more than this. He has not only cancelled the guilt of sin, he has extinguished its power. He reigns in the heart of the believer. He sweeps it of all its corruptions. He takes it such as it is – He makes it such as it should be. He brings the whole man under a thorough process of sanctification – so that while he lives he adds one degree of grace unto another – when he dies he rejoices in hope of the coming glory – when he stands at the bar of judgment, he is presented holy and unreprouable in the sight of God and of His Saviour. In the whole of this treatment, I see the skill and intelligence and superior management of a physician who is up to the disease; and knows where the main force of its malignity lies – who has a thorough insight into the principle of the mischief, and has reached forward an appropriate remedy to confront it – who, to abolish death, has directed the strength of His attack against sin which is its origin – who has averted the condemnation of sin, by an expiatory sacrifice – and who is destroying its power and its existence, by the operation of that mighty Spirit, whereby He can break down the corruption of the human heart and subject unto all righteousness.

***“20 Centuries of Great Preaching” – Vol. 3; Excerpts from
Sermon by Thomas Chalmers: pgs. 277, 278***



AUGUSTUS MONTAGUE TOPLADY (1710-1778), will ever be famous as the author of one of the most evangelical hymns of the Eighteenth Century, "Rock of Ages", which was first published in 1776. During the final illness, Toplady was greatly supported by the consolations of the Gospel:

"The consolations of God, to so unworthy a wretch are so abundant; that He leaves me nothing to pray for but their continuance."

Near his last, awaking from a sleep, he said:

"Oh, what delights! Who can fathom the joy of the third heaven? The sky is clear, there is no cloud; come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!"

He died saying: "No mortal man can live after the glories which God has manifested to my soul."

"All the Last Words of Saints and Sinners" by Herbert Lockyer; pg. 121



BUT IF WE HOPE FOR THAT WE SEE NOT, THEN DO WE WITH PATIENCE WAIT FOR IT. (Romans 8:25).

Sometimes when the horizon is all cloud-banked and the lightnings are leaping and the dismal thunder growls, I say, "Never mind, soon the storm will be over and I shall see God's city". Sometimes when every joy seems to die and every staff breaks under my head, I say, "Never mind, a few more sunsets and I shall see God's city, the city that hath foundations, whose maker and builder is God".

It will be a wonderful place. No one ever sheds a tear there, no one is sick, the hands never shake, the feet never drag, the eyelid never droops, for they are healthy forever in that city. They do not need stars at night because they have no night; and they do not need a sun by day, because they have no days, but the smile on the face of God is the Eternal, never dimmed light in which the glorified walk and exult in the city of God.

I am bound for the beautiful City!

***Lord Jesus Thou didst still the angry sea,
This trembling hand thou canst, oh, still for me.
I know Thou wilt, if I believe in Thee,
Someday make still this trembling hand for me.***

"Traveling Toward Sunrise" by Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 292



The Forerunner is for us entered, passed through the heavens, and entered into the holiest of all. We are too closely knit to Him, if we love Him and trust Him, to make it possible that we shall be where He is not, or that He shall be where we are not. Where He has gone we shall go – in Heaven, blessed be His Name! He will still be the leader of our progress and the captain at the head of our march. For He crowns all His other work by this, that having broken the prison house of our sins, and opened for us the way to God, and been the leader and the captain of our march through all the pilgrimage of life, and the opener of the gate of the grace, for our joyful resurrection, and the opener of the gate of Heaven for our triumphal entrance, He will still, as the Lamb that is in the midst of the Throne, go before us, and lead us into green pastures and by the still waters. This shall be the description of the growing blessedness and power of the saints' life above, "These are they which follow the Lamb withers ever He goeth" (Rev. 14:4).

"Music for the Soul" by Alexander Maclaren; pg. 126



Edith Louisa Cavell (1865-1915), was the British nurse who was martyred by the Germans on a charge of harboring British refugees. Miss Cavell loved all mankind, even her enemies. Her religious upbringing and personal experience of God enabled her to face the firing squad triumphantly. About to die, she said:

“Standing, as I do, in view of God and eternity...I realize that patriotism is not enough. I must have no hatred or bitterness against anyone.”

“All the Last Words of Saints and Sinners” by Herbert Lockyer; pg. 124



The shuddering fear of death is a very real fact in many a life. Some are in bondage all their earthly lifetime, through fear of death. Maeterlinck confesses in his autobiography: "I am a frightened child in the presence of death." It is not to be wondered at that the thought of death casts its oppressive shadows about us, because death is an experience utterly strange to every one of us. "It is a bourne whence no traveler returns." "The black camel kneels at every gate." "With equal pace, impartial fate knocks at the palace and the cottage gate." It is not surprising that numbers of people have a strange fascination for prying into the secrets of death. This gruesome curiosity sometimes leads its possessor into strange quests and still stranger claims. What shall be said of these uncanny efforts to pry into the secrets of the dead? Such efforts are both profitless and presumptuous. Jesus has told us all that we need to know about death. He knows all about the grave, for he has explored its every chamber, and he has met this Waterloo of death and won. He is not now in the grave. He is alive, he is the Living One who is now bringing to bear the resources of his wisdom, mercy, power, and love upon our needy world, and his will is bound to prevail. We are told that "Ideas rule the world." Very well, compare the ideas proclaimed by Jesus, with all others, and at once, we see how preeminent his ideas are. The hands on his clock never turn backward. "For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet." Someday, thank God! War will be under his feet forever. And so will be all forms of intemperance, and selfishness, and sin. And so will be death itself, because it is divinely decreed that "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? ...But thanks be to God who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

***"20 Centuries of Great Preaching" – Vol. 8; Excerpt from a
Sermon by George W. Truett, pg. 162***



The following are excerpts from the first sermon that A.J. Gossip (1873-1954) preached after his wife's dramatically sudden death.

Further, one becomes certain about immortality. You think that you believe in that. But wait till you have lowered your dearest into an open grave, and you will know what believing it means. I have always gazed up at Paul in staggered admiration when he burst out at the grave's mouth into his scornful challenge, his exultant ridicule of it, "O death, where is thy sting". O grave, where is thy victory?" But now it does not seem to me such a tremendous feat: for I have felt that very same. True, I can tell him where death's sting lies. Ah! It is the constant missing of what used to be always here; the bitter grudging every second of the dear body to the senseless earth, the terrible insecurity, for one is never safe-anything, nothing, and the old overwhelming pain comes rushing back. Yet when the other day I took up a magazine, it was with amazement, I discovered they are still chattering about whether we people are immortal or not. I am past that. I know. "I believe in the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting."

"20 Centuries of Great Preaching", Sermon by A. J. Gossip: pgs. 236, 237



The old man is on his bed; the sun is going down, and he has no more light. "Throw up the windows, let me look for the last time into the open sky", says the old man. The sun has gone down; I cannot see the mountains yonder; they are all a mass of mist; my eyes are dim, and the world is dim too. Suddenly a light shoots across his face, and he cries, "O daughter! Daughter, here! I can see another sun rising. Did you not tell me that the sun went down just now? Lo, I see another; and where those hills used to be in the landscape, those hills that were lost in the darkness, daughter, I can see hills that seem like burning brass; and methinks upon that summit I can see a city bright as jasper. Yes, and I see a gate opening, and a spirit coming forth. What is that they say? O they sing! They sing! Is this death?" And here he has asked the question, he hath gone where he needs not to answer it, for death is all unknown. Yes, he has passed the gates of pearl; his feet are on the streets of gold; his head is bedecked with a crown of immortality; the palm – branch of eternal victory is in his hand. God hath accepted him in the beloved.

"Far from the world of grief and sin, With God eternally shut in," He is numbered with the saints in light, and the promise is fulfilled, "At evening time it shall be light".

"Spurgeon's Sermons" by Charles Spurgeon; vols. 3, 4: pgs. 287-288



WHAT HEAVEN HOLDS

There is joy in the presence of the angels of God when one sinner changes his heart and life. Luke 15:10

Why do Jesus and his angels rejoice over one repenting sinner? Can they see something we can't? Do they know something we don't absolutely? They know what heaven holds...

Heaven is populated by those who let God change them. Arguments will cease, for jealousy won't exist. Suspicions won't surface, for there will be no secrets. Every sin is gone. Every insecurity is forgotten. Every fear is past. Pure wheat no weeds. Pure gold no alloy. Pure love no lust. Pure hope no fear. No wonder the angels rejoice when one sinner repents; they know another work of art will soon grace the gallery of God. They know what heaven holds.

JUST LIKE JESUS!

("From Grace for the Moment" by Max Lucado; pg. 622)



I believe the Christian hope makes sense of our innate hunger for justice; the day is coming when all evil will be rectified and all injustice put right.

I believe it makes sense of human freedom; we are at liberty to use our God-given freedom as we wish, but we will be held accountable for what we have done.

I believe it makes sense of human nature: at the end, we will not be assessed by one who is alien to us, but by the embodiment of human nature as it was meant to be. Human nature, in the Christian view, is not destined to be scrapped. God has set the highest value on it – so much so that he came to share it. The Ideal has lived and loved as one of us. By that man, we can be saved, and by him, we will be judged. We are neither judged nor saved by someone who does not understand us, but by someone who has stood in our shoes. He will be there at the end of all things. That is another way of saying that self-sacrificial love is the most enduring entity in the universe.

I believe it makes sense of our quest for purpose. Many today wonder if life is going anywhere. Most Greeks saw time as a circle imprisoning the soul until death releases it into the undifferentiated Beyond. History is therefore meaningless, this world unimportant, the body insignificant. To the Hebrew and Christian mind, however, time is not a circle from which you escape at death, but a line: a line of past, present, and future, the line of God's redemption. The world is moving on, not to chaos but to Christ and his return, to the final manifestation of him whose first coming forever settled the world's destiny. That is what the doctrine of the Second Advent means. At the end of the road (and the road has an end – it is not a ring road), God steps in. The God who has already been along this road, and is even now in charge of its traffic, will one day rip aside the veil which hides him from our sight and show himself to be what by faith the Christian knows him to be – ever present. That is the Christian hope. It is anchored in the historic life and death of Jesus Christ. It is grounded in the fact of the resurrection, the ultimate assurance that God's will shall prevail on earth as it does in heaven. It is not demonstrable, this Christian hope, but it makes sense.

(Taken from "Adventure of Faith" by Michael Green; pgs. 382-383)



Oh, what a short-lived victory. In the most ironic twist of all history, what Satan meant for evil, God meant for good. Jesus' death on the cross bridged the gap between a perfect God and a fatally flawed humanity. On the day, we call Good Friday God defeated sin, routed death, triumphed over Satan, and got his family back. In that act of transformation, God took the worst deed of history and turned it into the greatest victory. No wonder the symbol never went away; no wonder Jesus commanded that we never forget.

Because of the cross, I have hope. It is through the Servant's wounds that we are healed, said Isaiah – not his miracles. If God can wrest such triumph out of apparent defeat, can draw strength from a moment of ultimate weakness, what might God do with the apparent failures and hardships of my own life?

Nothing - not even the murder of God's own Son – can end the relationship between God and human beings. In the alchemy of redemption, that most villainous crime becomes our healing strength.

The fatally wounded healer came back on Easter, the day that gives a sneak preview of how all history will look from the vantage point of eternity, when every scar, every hurt, every disappointment will be seen in a different light. Our faith begins where it might have seemed to end. Between the cross and the empty tomb hovers the promise of history: hope for the world, and hope for each one of us who lives in it.

The German theologian Jürgen Moltmann expresses in a single sentence the great span from Good Friday to Easter. It is, in fact, a summary of human history, past, present, and future: "God weeps with us so that we may someday laugh with him."

(Taken From "The Jesus I Never Knew: by Philip Yancey: pgs. 273, 274)



God, who is the just Judge, the Judge who rewards good and punishes evil, is none other than the God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Moses, and also of Christ, who is His Son. This God is above all, Love. Not just Mercy, but Love. Not only the Father of the prodigal son, but the Father who “gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (Cf. John 3:16).

Eschatological event was His redemptive Death and His Resurrection. This is the beginning of “a new heaven and a new earth” (cf. Rev. 21:1). For everyone, life beyond death is connected with the affirmation: “I believe in the resurrection of the body”, and then: “I believe in the forgiveness of sins and in life everlasting.” This is Christocentric eschatology.

***(Taken From “Crossing the Threshold of Hope” by Pope John Paul II –
Pope of Catholic Church: pgs. 184-185)***



Zuniger was a Professor of Medicine at Basel who, although renowned for his skill, was a simple-hearted believer who lived in the light of eternity. His last words were:

“I rejoice, yea, my spirit leaps within me for joy, that now the time at last is come when I shall see the glorious God face to face; whom I have by faith longed after, and after whom my soul has panted.”

(Taken From “All the Last Words of Saints and Sinners” by Herbert Lockyer; pg. 124)



When death arrays himself as the king of terrors, and with bony fingers grasps his javelin and shakes it at us, we point him to the vacant tomb of Jesus. For the victory of Jesus Christ over the last enemy is our triumph. His resurrection assures ours: "I am the resurrection and the life." When Satan challenges us, we will cheerfully accept, with the hint to Apollyon that he will find our substitute, his old Conqueror, on the field. Ah! It is the power of the living Jesus to identify Himself with every believer that carries terror and defeat to our foes.

(Taken From "Milestone Papers" pg. 150, by Daniel Steele)



What it all boils down to is: Do we believe that the significance of our being is exhausted by this experience of living? I say it cannot be. I am convinced that the evidence against this is overwhelming. Plenty of people have said that I say this because I have a big ego. I don't think it is only that, but even if it were, all right, then, we have been born into this world as little, tiny creatures with big egos, and the fact that we have big egos must in itself have some significance. But, if these people we love were gone forever, we wouldn't wish to love them any less, we wouldn't part from them in any different way, and we wouldn't think of them any differently. I believe that we must trust in God, which I do. I believe that in being here, we are fulfilling some purpose of his; whatever that purpose is, it is the best purpose that we can have. If that purpose involves meeting again after death, as we have known one another here, then we shall meet again; if it is not God's purpose, then we shan't. In eternity, we shall have no worries about it. I think that is all there is really to say about it. I have seen people dead in war. I think it's a dreadful thing that we in our wickedness should kill those who are young, those whose lives are not fulfilled, but the actual fact of death is not a terrifying thing at all.

"Seeing Through the Eye" by Malcolm Muggeridge on Faith": pgs. 213-214



So, beginning with simple faith in Him, partially receiving the beauty of His transforming Spirit, seeking here on earth by assimilation to the Master in some humble measure to adorn the doctrine and to glorify the Christ, we may hope that each blackness shall be all changed into brightness; our limitations done away with, our weakness lifted into rejoicing strength; and that we shall be like Him, seeing Him as He is, and glorified in Him, shall glorify Him before the universe.

“Music for the Soul” by Alexander Maclaren; pg. 224



Thou, O my God, art ever new, though Thou art the most ancient; – Thou alone art the food for eternity. I am to live forever, not for a time-and I have no power over my being; I cannot destroy myself, even though I were so wicked as to wish to do so. I must live on, with intellect and consciousness forever, in spite of myself. Without Thee, eternity would be another name for eternal misery. In Thee alone have I that which can stay me up forever: Thou alone art the food of my soul. Thou alone art inexhaustible, and ever offerest to me something new to know, something new to love. At the end of millions of years, I shall know Thee so little, that I shall seem to myself only beginning. At the end of millions of years, I shall find in “Thee the same”, or rather, greater sweetness than at first, and shall seem then only to be beginning to enjoy Thee: and so on for eternity I shall ever be a little child beginning to be taught the rudiments of Thy infinite Divine nature. For Thou art Thyself the seat and centre of all good, and the only substance in this universe of shadows, and the heaven in which blessed spirits live and rejoice.

“Meditations and Devotions” by Cardinal John Henry Newman: pgs... 100-101



Much as true believers admire the perfections of the Redeemer of mankind, and much as they wonder at his amazing condescension in becoming man, and dying for the sins of the world; all their present amazement and wonder will be as nothing when compared with what they shall feel when they come to see him in all his glory, the glory that he had with the Father before the world was. In reference to this we may apply those words of St. John: "Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (1 John, chap. iii. 2)

Adam Clarke's Commentary, vol. 6; pg. 564



NO WORRIES IN HEAVEN

God will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death, sadness, crying, or pain. Revelation 21:4

What have you done today to avoid death? Likely a lot, you've popped pills, pumped pecks, passed on the pie, and pursued the polyunsaturates... Why? Why the effort? Because you are worried about staying alive. That won't be a worry in heaven.

In fact, you won't be worrying at all. Some of you moms worry about your kids getting hurt. You won't worry in heaven. In heaven, we'll feel no pain. Some of you fellows worry about getting old. You won't in heaven. We'll all be ceaselessly strong...

We are not made of steel, we are made of dust. And this life is not crowned with life, it is crowned with death.

The next life, however, is different. Jesus urged the Christians in Smyrna to "be faithful, even if you have to die, and I will give you the crown of life". (Rev. 2:10)

"Grace for the Moment" by Max Lucado; pg. 714



Thou shalt know also that thy seed shall be great, and thine offspring as the grass of the earth. (Job 5:25)

When the sun goes below the horizon, it is not set; the heavens glow for a full hour after its departure. And when a great and good man “sets”, the sky of this world is luminous long after he is out of sight. Such a man cannot die out of this world. When he goes, he leaves behind him much of himself.

This should be at once the crown of all our hopes for the future, and the one great lesson taught us by the vicissitudes of life. The joys and sorrows, the journeying and the rest, the temporary repose and the frequent struggles; all these should make us sure that there is an end which will interpret them all, to which they all point, for which they all prepare.

***Winging my way
Into the sun-flecked dawn,
If I should not return,
Say not, I'm gone.***

***If what I lived for
Still lives on
In younger hearts,
It still is Dawn.***

Dr. B. H. Pearson

“Traveling Toward Sunrise” by Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 315



HARD TO IMAGINE

I am hard-pressed between the two having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. (Philippians 1:23)

Whenever my wife, Martie, and I get ready to go on vacation, we like to read about our destination, study the maps, and anticipate the joy of finally arriving at the place we've dreamed about for so long.

For those of us who know Jesus Christ, we have an incredible destination ahead of us - heaven. But I find it interesting that a lot of us don't seem to be very excited about getting there. Why is that? Maybe it's because we don't understand heaven. We talk about streets of gold and gates of pearl, but what is it really like? What is there to look forward to?

I think the most profound description of heaven is found in Paul's to "depart and be with Christ" is "far better" (Phil 1:23). It is what I told my 8-year-old grandson when he asked what heaven is like. I started by asking him, "What is the most exciting thing in your life?" He told me about his computer game and other fun things he likes to do, and then I told him that heaven is far better. He thought for a minute, and then said, "Papa, that's hard to imagine".

What is that you look forward to in life? What really excites you? Whatever it is, although it's hard to imagine, heaven will be far better! - Joe Stowell

***"To be in His presence! A glorious thought
So awesome I cannot conceive;
I'll bow down and worship the Lord on His throne
And add to the praise He'll receive. -***

***"The more you look forward to heaven, the less you'll desire on earth";
Our Daily Bread, April 2011***



MICHAELANGELO (1474-1564), the Italian artist and sculptor, was probably one of the greatest sculptors the world has ever known. His remarkable paintings in the Sistine Chapel at Rome made him justly famous. God-fearing, his brief will contain the paragraph:

"I commit my soul to God, my body to the earth, my possessions to my nearest relatives. I die in the faith of Jesus Christ and in the firm hope of a better life."

His last word was in the form of an exhortation to those at his bedside: "Through life remember the sufferings of Jesus."

"All the Last Words of Saints and Sinners" by Herbert Lockyer; pg. 125



***E'en for the dead I will not bind my soul to grief;
Death cannot long divide.
For is it not as though the rose that climbed my garden wall
Has blossomed on the other side?
Death does hide,
But not divide;***

***You are but Christ's other side!
You are with Christ and Christ with me;
In Christ united still are we.***

"Streams in the Desert" by L. B. Cowman; pg. 450



Heaven is the region where the spirits of just men made perfect live, thrive, and eternally expand their powers in the service and to the glory of Him from whom they have derived their being.

By these perpetual fountains, we are to understand endless sources of comfort and happiness, which Jesus Christ will open out of His own infinite plenitude to all glorified souls. These eternal living fountains will make an infinite variety in the enjoyments of the blessed. There will be no sameness, and consequently no cloying with the perpetual enjoyment of the same things; every moment will open a new source of pleasure, instruction, and improvement; they shall make an eternal progression into the fullness of God. And as God is infinite, so his attributes are infinite; and throughout infinity more and more of those attributes will be discovered; and the discovery of each will be a new fountain or source of pleasure and enjoyment.

“Christian Theology” by Adam Clarke; pg. 379



But still, what about life after death? When we live in communion with God, when we belong to God's own household, there is no longer any "before" or "after". Death is no longer the dividing line. Death has lost its power over those who belong to God, because God is the God of the living, not of the dead. Once we have tasted the joy and peace that come from being embraced by God's love, we know that all is well and will be well. "Don't be afraid," Jesus says, "I have overcome the power of death...come and dwell with me and know that where I am your God is".

When eternal life is our clear goal, it is not a distant goal. It is a goal that can be reached in the present moment. When our heart understands this divine truth, we are living the spiritual.

The great spiritual challenge is to discover, over time, that the limited, conditional, and temporal love we receive from parents, husbands, wives, children, teachers, colleagues, and friends is a reflection of the unlimited, unconditional, and everlasting love of God. Whenever we can make that huge leap of faith, we will know that death is no longer the end but the gateway to the fullness of the Divine Love.

--Here and Now--

"The Only Necessary Thing" by Henri J.M. Nouwen: pgs. 185-189



Popular Christian devotion has perhaps concentrated too much on the negative joys of heaven, that is, on the promises of the Revelation that there will be no more hunger or thirst, no more scorching heat or sunstroke, no more tears or pain, no more night, no more curse, no more death. Thank God for these absences. But thank God even more for their cause, namely the presence – the central, dominating presence – of the throne of God!

“Authentic Christianity” by John Stott; pg. 403



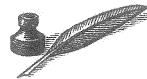
If your mind is independent, enough to create changes in your body and your brain, it seems reasonable enough to suppose that it can survive the dissolution of your body and your brain.

If there is life after death, it is presumably consciousness that survives, either all by itself or somehow reunited with a new kind of body.

But consciousness is not part of the body. Nor is consciousness “in” the body in the same way that nerves or neurons are. Consciousness merely comes with the body and operates through the body. The body serves as a kind of receiver and transmitter for consciousness, not its author or manufacturer.

Moreover, consciousness and free will are the defining features of the human soul, which requires awareness and choice in order to discriminate between right and wrong. The implication is that whatever happens to our bodies and brains after death, our souls live on.

“Life after Death, the Evidence” by Dinesh D’Souza: pgs... 131,132,133,136, 140



Some years ago, a news cartoonist, in his days of syndicated newspaper articles, drew a magnificent pyramidal picture of "Heaven". With this artist's conception of "Heaven" taken from the 21st chapter of The Revelation, plus an extensive description of our condition after death, he gave each man the hope that we should have approximately eight cubic feet of space in which to live in this city. This city, which measures six thousand miles around, would dwarf every known city in the world today and yet would provide for each of us only the portion of space allotted by our "deep freezers" in this modern age.

Let me give pause to your minds in relation to the actual facts of this chapter of the Bible, Revelation 4, verse 10, "And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me "THE GREAT CITY, THE HOLY JERUSALEM, DESCENDING OUT OF HEAVEN FROM GOD." I believe that every scrupulous Bible student will admit that this holy Jerusalem, as magnificent as it shall be, and as real as I do believe it is, shall be only a sample city prepared for those who love HIM.

By Merv Rosell; No. 236

"Shoe Leather Faith" - Book of Illustrations, Compiled by Garth and Merv Rosell



Faith is the settled, unwavering trust in the one true God whom “we have come to know in Jesus Christ.” When we see him face to face, we shall not abandon that trust, but deepen it. Hope is the settled unwavering confidence that this God will not leave us or forsake us, but will always have more in store for us than we could ask or think. I do not imagine for a minute that in the coming age we shall arrive at a point where we shall have experienced everything the new world has to offer, and will become bored (as is imagined by some scornful contemporary visions of “heaven”). In contrast, because I believe that the God we know in Jesus is the God of utterly generous, out flowing love, I believe that there will be no end to the new creation of this God, and that within the new age itself there will always be more to hope for, more to work for, more to celebrate.

“After You Believe” by N. T. Wright; pg. 203



QUESTION: DOES THE SOUL OF THE CHRISTIAN GO DIRECTLY TO HEAVEN?

Answer: To the penitent and believing thief, Jesus said: "Today thou shalt be with me in paradise". Paul says: "Having a desire to depart and be with Christ; for it is very far better". To be with Christ is my heaven. Again, Paul says: "Willing rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord." "If any man," says Christ, "serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be." This is a very comforting doctrine.

"The Original Steele's Answers" by Daniel Steele; pg. 50



For a life, any life, once united with God by faith, and thus joined to the immortality of God, is a life over which death has no power. This stands in Scripture with the immeasurable authority of Christ behind it. And you and I may well ask, what are all our unanswered questions compared with Christ's unanswerable certainty? We may well, with Martin Luther, turn the familiar lament, 'In the midst of life we are in death', into the glorious affirmation, 'In the midst of death we are in life'. In God we live eternally."

In other words, by union with Christ, our resurrection life has already begun; and our mortality is daily being overlaid by and transfigured into the eternal life of Christ. And this point forward to the day when at last we shall be like Him, seeing Him as He is, and rejoicing in His presence forever."

"River of Life" by James S. Stewart: pgs... 68, 69



In our day, at least in the West, nobody exemplifies the widespread angst, and especially the fear of death, more dramatically than the tragic-comedian Woody Allen. He regards death and dissolution with terror. It has become an obsession with him. True, he is still able to joke about it. "It's not that I'm afraid to die", he famously quips. "I just don't want to be there when it happens." He calls death "absolutely stupefying".

Jesus Christ, however, rescues his disciples from this horror. Consider one of his great "I am" sayings: "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." (John 11:25- 26) These verses contain a double promise of Jesus to his followers. The believer who lives will never die, because Christ is his life, and death will seem to him only a trivial episode. The believer, who dies, however, will live again, because Christ is his resurrection. Thus, Christ is both the life of those who live and the resurrection of those who die. Christ transforms both life and death.

It is said of Henry Venn, the eighteenth-century evangelical Anglican vicar, that when he was told he was dying, his joy at dying kept him alive another fortnight! Such a fearless, joyful attitude to the onset of death is possible only because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and his conquest of death.

"Through The Bible - Through the Year" by John Stott; pg. 283



DR. WILLIAM HUNTER, English painter, remarked: "If I had strength to hold a pen, I would write down how easy and pleasant a thing it is to die."

"All the Last Words of Saints and Sinners" by Herbert Lockyer; pg. 126



“We fade as a leaf. Thank God, if in such glory as this we make our exodus. For the leaf fades gloriously – and in its fading it reveals God and it will reappear in resurrection vigor and fairness next spring.”

“Traveling Toward Sunrise”, pg. 266, by Mrs. Charles Cowman



IN THE ARMS OF GOD

“Everyone who lives and believes in me will never die.” John 11:26

We don't like to say good-bye to those whom we love. Whether it be at a school or a cemetery, separation is tough. It is right for us to weep, but there is no need for us to despair. They had pain here. They have no pain there. They struggled here. They have no struggles there. You and I might wonder why God took them home. But they don't. They understand. They are, at this very moment, at peace in the presence of God...

When it is cold on earth, we can take comfort in knowing that our loved ones are in the warm arms of God. And when Christ comes, we will hold them, too.

When Christ Comes

“Grace for the Moment” by Max Lucado; pg. 560



“Life is to mean for you one long struggle. You are to do right with the same powers with which you might do wrong. Never a holy deed that might not, if you chose that it should be so, be unholy. Your will is to be trained and strengthened by choosing to be good where it is perfectly possible for you to be bad. This is to go on year after year, year after year, till it has done in you a work which this, and nothing except this, can do, and then, not until then, shall come another condition, which then, and not until then, shall be possible, in which struggle shall be over, and without a danger of wickedness you shall go on ripening in holiness in the unhindered sunshine of God forever. That is the harvest.”



“New Starts in Life” by Phillips Brooks: pgs... 34-35

(Note: “Every decision, of a moral quality, that we humans make each day, is either making us more fit for either a ‘good eternity’ or a ‘bad eternity’.” It is both a ‘beautiful’ thing and a ‘frightening’ thing for a creature to have the capacity to choose between heaven or hell as his/her eternal destiny! The fact of ‘Free Will’ is what best describes the unique feature of human beings! Heavenly creatures probably will have ‘Free Choice’, but NOT a choice between good and evil!” - editorial comment by Ron Christian)

Saints sometimes have some conflicts at the hour of death. The enemy thrusts at them some. Like the Savior, they may exclaim, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" but these are the exceptions. Usually a godly life closes with a happy death. Said John Knox, just before his departure, praise God for that heavenly sound." A little later, he said: "Now it is come", and breathed his last.

Said William Kendall as he was crossing over: "I have been swimming in the waters of death for two days, and they are like sweet incense all over me". And later he repeated:

***"Bright angels are from glory come,
They're round my bed; they're in my room,
They wait to waft my spirit home.
All is well."***

"Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his."

***By B. T. Roberts, "Living Truths - Vital Selections from the Writings of
B. T. Roberts", compiled by E. D. Riggs; No. 55***



Think of it: We will be with God forever! And because we will be with Him, we will be absolutely safe from all evil. Sorrow and suffering will never again touch us – never. One of the most moving passages in all the Bible is found in its next to last chapter:

“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.’ (Revelation 21:3-4)

Home is a place of peace and joy – and so is heaven. Home is a place of love and security - and so is heaven. Home is a place of welcome and rest – and so is heaven. The Bible says, “Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; they find rest as they lie in death”. (Isaiah 57:2) When we die in Christ, we are at home with Him forever.

As a footnote, sometimes people say to me, “Well, I’m not sure I want to go to heaven. It sounds so boring!” But we won’t be bored in heaven, for we will have all eternity to explore God’s riches. The Bible also says God will have work for us to do, for we will serve Him and reign with Him – but without the weariness of our work here. (Revelation 22:3, 5)

It also means our whole nature will be transformed. Someday we will be like Christ! Now we love imperfectly – but not then. Now our joy and peace are tempered by sorrow and turmoil – but not then. The Bible says, “Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when He appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.” (1 John 3:2) What a glorious promise!

“The Journey” by Rev. Billy Graham: pgs... 302-304



When we meditate upon this amazing love, and behold the all glorious Kinsman of the Church endowing her with all His ancient wealth, our souls may well faint for joy. Who is he that can endure such a weight of love? That partial sense of it, which the Holy Spirit is sometimes pleased to afford, is more than the soul can contain; how transporting must be a complete view of it! When the soul shall have understanding to discern all the Savior's gifts, wisdom wherewith to estimate them, and time in which to meditate upon them, such as the world to come will afford us, we shall then commune with Jesus in a nearer manner than at present. But who can imagine the sweetness of such fellowship? It must be one of the things which have not entered into the heart of man, but which God hath prepared for them that love Him. This will overwhelm us with love. By faith, we see, as in a glass darkly, the reflected image of His unbounded treasures, but when we shall actually see them heavenly things themselves, without our own physical eyes, how deep will be the stream of fellowship in which our soul shall bathe itself!

"Morning by Morning" by Charles H. Spurgeon; pg. 145



Henry Havelock, the eminent British General, in the last moments of his earthly pilgrimage said to his son: "Come, my son, and see how a Christian can die."

"All the Last Words of Saints and Sinners" by Herbert Lockyer; pg. 127



The person is a mysterious reality, which goes beyond existence at both ends, transcending both birth and death. Between these two, it remains always to some extent veiled by its earthly limitations. Death is but the end of the earthly adventure, and we know that no adventure lasts forever. It must die before it starts again beyond its limits. To accept death is to accept this law of transcendence of limits, to fix one's gaze on what lies beyond.

Jean Lescure remarks: 'The anxiety of death is not about going to sleep; it is rather about not waking up again.' On this point, the gospel is clear and categorical. Our resurrection is promised, and the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the pledge of it. St. Paul made no mistake about it when he exclaimed in the face of his contradictors: 'If Christ has not been raised then our preaching is useless and your believing it is useless'. (1 Cor. 15:14)

"Learn to Grow Old" by Paul Tournier: pgs... 233, 234



HOMESICK FOR HEAVEN

"Our homeland is in heaven." Philipians 3:20

This home we're in won't last forever. Birthdays remind us of that.

Not long ago I turned fifty; I'm closer to ninety than I am to infancy. All those things they say about aging are coming true. I'm patting myself less on the back and more under the chin. I have everything I had twenty years ago, except now it's all lower. The other day I tried to straighten out the wrinkles in my socks and found out I wasn't wearing any.

Aging, it's no fun. The way we try to avoid it, you'd think we could. We paint the body, preserve the body, and protect the body. And well we should. These bodies are God's gifts. We should be responsible. But we should also be realistic. This body must die so the new body can live. "Flesh and blood cannot have a part in the kingdom of God. Something that will ruin cannot have a part in something that never ruins". (I Cor. 15:50)

"Grace for the Moment"; by Max Lucado; pg. 75



What does it mean when the Apostle says, “to depart...to be with Christ...is far better”. (Philippians 1:23)? Surely he that thus spoke conceived that these two things were coetaneous, “the departing and the being with Him”. And surely, he who thus spoke could not have conceived that a millennium-long parenthesis of slumberous unconsciousness was to intervene between the moment of his decease and the moment of his fellowship with Jesus. How could a man prefer that dormant state to the state here, of working for and living with the Lord? Surely, being with Him must mean that we know where we are and who our companion is.

And what does that text mean, “Ye are come...to the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb. 12:22, 23), unless it means that one of these two classes of persons who are thus regarded as brought into living fellowship, each is aware of the other? Does perfecting of the spirit mean the smiting of the spirit into unconsciousness? Surely not, and surely in the face of such words as these we must recognize the fact that, however limited and imperfect may be the present connection with the disembodied dead, who sleep in Christ, with external things – they know themselves, they know their home and their companions, and they know the blessedness in which they are lapped.

“Music for the Soul” by Alexander Maclaren; pg. 10



“...There hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant.” (1 Kings 8:56)

***A late lark twitters from the quiet skies,
And from the west,
Where the sun, his day's work ended
Lingers as in content,
There falls on the old gray city
An influence luminous and serene,
A shining peace.***

***The smoke ascends
In a rosy-and-golden haze. The spires
Shine and are changed. In the valley
Shadows rise. The lark sings on. The sun,
Closing his benediction,
Sinks and the darkening air
Thrills with a sense of the triumphing night –
Night with her train of stars
And her great gift of sleep.***

***So be my passing!
My task accomplished and the long day done,
My wages taken and in my heart
Some late lark singing,
Let me be gathered to the quiet west
The sundown splendid and serene.***

My sword I give to him that shall succeed me in my pilgrimage; and my courage and skill to him that can get it; my marks and scars I carry with me to be a witness that I have fought his battles, Who now will be my Rewarder. John Bunyan.

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory forever and ever.” (Heb. 13:20, 21)

“Traveling Toward Sunrise” by Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 373



In one sense, death has already been destroyed. Surely, its sting is gone for those who know in their hearts that Jesus Christ is “the resurrection and the life”.

Some disagree, but I believe quite simply that I will not even lose consciousness when I die. The essential “me” will go on at once, uninhibited by my body, and my mind, into the presence of the One who has given me eternal life.

This is part of my joy in Christ. I believe it for myself and I am prepared to lose my loved ones, sustained by the same certainty that they too, will step at once into His presence. I am not arguing with you if you don’t believe this. But the Lord Himself reassures me that “whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die.” I believe that. And yet, whatever He does will be right. If I have a wrong conception of eternal life, then I have an inferior conception. He will handle it all perfectly. And one day dying will be all over. More than the sting of death will be gone. Death itself will be destroyed.

I am he that liveth, and was dead, and...am alive for evermore...We shall be like him.

“Share My Pleasant Stones”; by Eugenia Price; pg. 378



BISHOP PAUL N. ELLIS shared the following testimony when he was 89 years old.

Bishop Ellis officiated when I (Ron Christian) was ordained as Elder in the Free Methodist Church (Denomination), 1972, at Littleton, Colorado.

When I think of my own faith, I think first of Christ's words to his disciples and to the thief who died with him on the cross.

The Gospel of John, if I may paraphrase in my own words, says to me: "Don't be troubled as you face the future. You can't doubt the reality of the Eternal Creator. Trust me, his Son, who comes from Him as Savior and Lord. In heaven, there is limitless room, room for all. Don't you think I would have told you if it weren't true?"

The dying thief cried to Christ from his cross. "Remember me when you enter your kingdom!" And Christ assured him: "This day you will be with me in paradise".

There's much more in Christian teaching to convince us of everlasting life, but this is enough for me to live and die by. The light of life shines from the empty tomb. I trust Christ. I rest in the love of God.

In my youth, when life offered many promises, I chose to walk in the light that shone so brightly, upon those who went before. Today, as the shadows of evening fall, I hope to share the light that never fails with those who follow after. The light still shines brightly.

"When Evening Comes There Will Be Light"; by Paul N. Ellis; pg. 175



This is Eternal BLESSEDNESS: the term, which Christian theology uses to express the utmost bliss of which the created spirit is capable in the vision and enjoyment of God, and in the pure, undimmed reflection of His image. Perfectly reflecting the image of the Eternal Image of the Father, we shall have reached our truest and fullest personal consummation: eita to telos, the spirit of man finds it's rest in Him who is the principle and beginning of its life, being now the glorified realization of what Adam was in Paradise, with such a superadded union with the Son of God as Adam had not. Here is the final issue of the Redeemer's work of God in the soul of man; His own purity, the vision of God in Him, and perfect blessedness. Once more, this is but the consummation of what is begun on earth. In the spiritual vision of Himself, He enables us to purify our souls, even as He is pure, for we are changed into the same image, from glory to glory. And all who are thus transformed by grace shall be translated into the glory beyond. In our glorified bodies, our glorified spirits will see God, and in that vision enjoy the eternal benediction of the pure in heart: we shall know that absolute blessedness to bestow which was the final end of the whole work of the Redeemer on earth: God, having raised up His Son (Jesus), sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.

***TO GOD ONLY WISE, BE GLORY THROUGH ETERNITY JESUS CHRIST FOREVER.
AMEN. (Pope)***

"Profiles in Wesleyan Theology": pgs... 403, 404



ENTERING HIS PRESENCE

***“For to me, to live in Christ and to die is gain.”
Philippians 1:21, NIV***

Just as a parent needs to know that his or her child is safe at school, we long to know that our loved ones are safe in death. We long for the reassurance that the soul goes immediately to be with God. But dare we believe it? Can we believe it? According to the Bible, we can.

Scripture is surprisingly quiet about this phase of our lives. When speaking about the period between the death of the body and the resurrection of the body, the Bible doesn't shout; it just whispers. But at the confluence of these whispers, a firm voice is heard. This authoritative voice assures us that, at death, the Christian immediately enters into the presence of God and enjoys conscious fellowship with the Father and with those who have gone before.

When Christ Comes

“Grace for the Moment” by Max Lucado; pg. 58)



Surrounded by this spiritual life and yet seeing it only here and there through broken gaps of this enveloping mortality, what will it be for us to die? Only to cast this mortality away and stand face to face with the realities that has been close to us all the while. All that has mocked us with half glimpses, all that has flashed before our eyes and darkened again so suddenly that we have hardly dared to remember that we saw it, all that has haunted our hopes and clung to us in spite of the cold Sadducee contemptuousness of the world – all this real to us, the only reality, permanent and real forever. All spiritual companionship, all unknown spiritual protection that has been blessing us in the darkness opened suddenly into the light so that we see it all and enters on the new life that begins with death. Death, then, is the enlightener. It opens the eyes to see the things that are. It is not the carrying of the soul away to some island - planet or some unfound place beyond the sun. Whatever be its mystery of the place (and that we cannot know till we know something of what place means to the disembodied spirit), the essential thing concerning death must be that it opens the closed eyes, draws down the veil of blinding mortality and lets the man see spiritual things. This seems to me to change the question that we ask about dying, and make it so much deeper and truer. It is no longer where shall I go when I am dead? But, what shall I be? And so character and the power of higher vision and higher education instead of circumstances, condition, and locality become our study for this life and our ambition for the life to come.

“New Starts in Life”; by Phillips Brooks: pgs... 67-68



But it is also true that all men naturally fear death; even those that have the fullest persuasion and certainty of a future state dread it: genuine Christians, who know that, if the earthly house of their tabernacle were dissolved, they have a house not made with hands, a building framed of God, eternal in the heavens, only they fear it not. In the assurance they have of God's love, the fear of death is removed; and by the purification of their hearts through faith, the sting of death is extracted.

"Adam Clarke's Commentary"; vol. 6; pg. 700



***“There is a Stream which issues forth
From God’s eternal throne
And from the Lamb a living Stream,
Clear as the crystal stone.
The Stream doth water Paradise,
It makes the angels sing:
One cordial drop revives my heart;
Hence all my joys do spring.”***

John Mason, who wrote this verse two centuries ago, teaches what I have long believed to be true, that the bliss of heaven is of the same kind as the joy of love divine, shed abroad in the believer’s heart, only it is more abundant.

“The river of the water of life, clear as crystal proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb: is only a poetical description of the Comforter whom the glorified Jesus sends from the Father. The saints below and the saints above all fill their brimming goblets from the same Stream, the personal Paraclete. Compare John vii. 37-39, XV 26, and Rev. XXII 1.

“Milestone Papers”; pg. 230; by Daniel Steele



And deliver those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. (Heb. 2:15)

John Wesley said, "Brethren, farewell. The greatest thing is that God still lives. Brethren, farewell".

John Wesley stepped into his chariot and he rode on. That is the Christian way. When Moody was leaving this world for the other, he said to his wife, "Do you hear that singing?" then he said, "Earth is receding, Heaven is opening", and he was gone.

That is beautiful! That is the Christian way to go. That is the glory of the earth moment. Still we live foolishly our whole life afraid of death.

***As sings the mountain stream
Past rock and verdure wild.
So let me sing my way to Thee,
Thy pure and happy child.***

"Traveling Toward Sunrise"; by Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 316.



“For those who die in Christ, life is not taken captive by death, but rather buried and raised anew to glory. Death when naturally viewed appears as our “last enemy”. Viewed under grace it has lost its sting (I Cor. 15:26). The believer has “crossed over from death to life” (John 5:24). In death the life of faith changes from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3:18).

The terror of death is overcome by grace through faith active in love. Though death is a penalty for sin, death for Christian believers is transformed into a penalty whose sting is dissipated (I Cor. 15:56).

“If we die with him, we will also live with him” (2nd Tim. 2:11).

“Life in the Spirit – Systematic Theology: Vol. Three”; by Thomas C. Oden: pg. 384.



The Bible's candor about death enhances the value of life. The Bible's candor about death reminds us that life is a gift from God. Because life is limited in duration, it is of great value. Every day that we are given, each year of our life that passes, is a precious gift from our Creator. We should be able to say with the psalmist each morning.

***This is the day the Lord has made;
Let us rejoice and be glad in it (Psalm 118:24)***

The message of the Bible in regard to death is one of consolation. The Bible speaks with assurance that there is eternal life beyond the brief ellipsis of this life. Some of the most resonant and triumphant passages in the Bible have to do with the victory over death that is ours when we trust in Christ, passages such as Romans 8:38-39: "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us for the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

The Bible is filled with images of eternity that speak to the longings of our hearts. It describes a new heaven and a new earth, where "an eternal house...not built by human hands" awaits God's people (2 Cor. 5:1). In that new home, those who are faithful will be given a crown of life (Rev. 2:10). There will be no night there; and no tears of sorrow. Heaven will be place of reunion. There we will come face to face with Christ, with faithful friends, and with loved ones.

"The Library of Distinctive Sermons"; Quotation from Dr. Michael P. Holcomb: pgs...

114, 117 

Your soul has a curious shape because it is a hollow made to fit a particular swelling in the infinite contours of the Divine substance, or a key to unlock one of the doors in the house with many mansions. For it is not humanity in the abstract that is to be saved, but you – you, the individual reader, John Stubbs or Janet Smith. Blessed and fortunate creature, your eyes shall behold Him and not another's. All that you are, sins apart, is destined, if you will let God have His good way, to utter satisfaction. Your place in heaven will seem to be made for you and you alone, because you were made for it – made for it stitch by stitch as a glove is made for a hand.

“Make for Heaven” by C. S. Lewis: pgs... 21-23



One group that will have a grace-filled postmortem encounter with Christ consists of those who sought God during their earthly lives and loved him, though they had not heard of Jesus. Premessianic believers, accepted by God already on the basis of their response to the light they had received, will meet their Savior in fullness and clarity after death. Then they will be able at last to confess Jesus and put their trust in his righteousness. Job, for example will meet Jesus after death and receive salvation from his outstretched hand. Before dying, Job had responded to God; therefore, after death Job will seal his faith by responding to Jesus. He will hear the word and believe on Jesus as Lord and Savior.

The same would be true of those Jewish souls who believed before Christ came. They trusted in God on earth and died before knowing about Jesus. Their response to God on the basis of Premessianic revelation will be confirmed in the presence of Jesus after death. An informationally Premessianic faith response made in this life will be improved and fulfilled when the person enters into the presence of the triune God. Even those who have known Jesus on this side of death will have their knowledge of God improved on the other side, since their knowledge too is partial.

The exegetical evidence may not be plentiful, but the theological argument is strong that those who have been seeking God in this life will have their knowledge of God updated when they enter into his presence. They want to know God better, and God wants to know them better. A postmortem encounter applied to this class of human souls means the completing of a faith decision already made on the basis of Premessianic revelation and does not in any way diminish in importance the choices made in this life. It would in fact confirm those choices, since these are the ones who decided to move toward God in this life. Now they will meet the God they love in the fullness of his grace after death. For them a postmortem opportunity is firmly established.

“A Wideness in God’s Mercy”; by Clark H. Kinnock: pgs... 170-171



Our temporary homes may be palaces or hovels, but our eternal heavenly home will be bright and beautiful. How could it be any other way? The great Architect and Builder of the universe designed a permanent dwelling place for His children. Earth has its beauty, but man has spoiled so much of it. In heaven, there will be no need for environmentalists to work for better air and water quality, or to decry the destruction of our land for housing developments.

In heaven, there will be no more sorrowful separations. For many people, life on earth has lost its meaning because a dear one or close friends who were a vital part of life on earth are no longer here. In heaven, we will be together in Christ. We will see the mother or father, the children, brothers, and sisters who have preceded us. We will have a family reunion like no other!

“Facing Death and the Life After”; by Billy Graham: pgs... 246-247



“For now we see through a glass darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part; then shall I know even as also I am known.” (I Cor. 13:12)

Death is called the key that opens the palace of eternity. Tennyson, thinking of Hallam, his friend, who had been drowned at sea, calls him “That friend of mine who lives in God”. Drummond suggests that death is not so much “sunset” as “sunrise”; not so much “departure” as “arrival”. Dying Frances Willard exclaimed, “How beautiful it is to be with God!”

For the Christian, one declares, “To be death-called is to be God-called, to be God-called is to be Christ-found, and to be Christ-found is hope, home and heaven.”

Morn shall break and I will stand at daybreak in my Fatherland. The Western gates close to let the Eastern gates open.

***From the dust of the weary highway,
From the smart of sorrow’s rod,
Into the royal Presence,
They are bidden as guests of God.
The veil from their eyes is taken,
Sweet mysteries they are shown,
Their doubts and fears are over,
For they know as they are known.***

***For them there should be rejoicing
For them the festal array,
As for the bride in her beauty,
Whom love hath taken away;
Sweet hours of peaceful waiting
Till the path that we have trod,
Shall end at the Father’s gateway,
And we are the guests of God.***

In his dying hour Charles Kingsley was heard to whisper, “How beautiful God is.”

“Traveling Toward Sunrise”; by Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 277



CHANGED TO HIS LIKENESS

“By his power to rule all things, he will change our simple bodies and make them like his own glorious body.” Philippians 3:21

What do we know about our resurrected bodies? They will be unlike any we have ever imagined.

Will we look so different that we aren’t instantly recognized? Perhaps we may need nametags. Will we be walking through walls? Chances are we’ll be doing much more.

Will we still bear the scars from the pain of life? The marks of war. The disfigurements of disease. The wounds of violence. Will these remain on our bodies? That is a very good question. Jesus, at least for forty days, kept his. Will we keep ours? On this issue, we have only opinions, but my opinion is that we won’t. Peter tells us that “by his wounds you have been healed.” (1 Peter 2:24, NIV) In heaven’s accounting, only one wound is worthy to be remembered, and that is the wound of Jesus. Our wounds will be no more.

“Grace for the Moment”; by Max Lucado; pg. 506



“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷ For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸ So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” 2nd Corinthians 5

¹ “For we know that if the earthly tent we live in is destroyed, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands. ² Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, ³ because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked. ⁴ For while we are in this tent, we groan and are burdened, because we do not wish to be unclothed but to be clothed instead with our heavenly dwelling, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life. ⁵ Now the one who has fashioned us for this very purpose is God, who has given us the Spirit as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.

“Therefore we are always confident and know that as long as we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord. ⁷ For we live by faith, not by sight. ⁸ We are confident, I say, and would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹ So we make it our goal to please him, whether we are at home in the body or away from it. ¹⁰ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”

2nd Corinthians 4:16 – 5:10; NIV



“For we know that if our earthly tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, on house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. (2nd Corinthians 5:1)

The owner of the tenement, which I have occupied for many years, has given notice that he will furnish but little or nothing more for repairs. I am advised to be ready to move.

At first, this was not a very welcome notice. The surroundings here are in many respects very pleasant, and were it not for the evidence of decay; I should consider the house good enough. But even a light wind causes it to tremble and totter, and all the braces are not sufficient to make it secure. So, I am getting ready to move.

It is strange how quickly one’s interest is transferred to the prospective home. I have been consulting maps of the new country and reading descriptions of its inhabitants. One who visited it has returned and from him I learn that it is beautiful beyond description; language breaks down in attempting to tell of what he heard while there. He says that in order to make an investment there, he has suffered the loss of all things that he owned here, and even rejoices in what others would call making a sacrifice. Another, whose love to me has been proven by the greatest possible test, is now there. He has sent me several clusters of the most delicious fruits. After tasting them, all food here seems insipid.

Two or three times I have been down by the border of the river that forms the boundary, and have wished myself among the company of those who were singing praises to the King on the other side. Many of my friends have moved there. Before leaving, they spoke of my coming later. I have seen the smile upon their faces as they passed out of sight. Often I am asked to make some new investments her, but my answer in every case is, “I am getting ready to move”.

“Traveling Toward Sunrise” by Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 347



It will be a world without death, disease, or sorrow. There will be no more crying. There will be no more pain. There will be no death; and God will wipe away all tears from their eyes. This does not only mean that there will be no tears shed in that happy world, but that all the tears that were ever shed will be turned into joy, that they will be more than healed and there will be no single memory or shadow of pain or grief to gall the perfect felicity of eternal years. Oh, sorrowing one, be patient. Lift up your heart. Rejoice! "Weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning." (Psalm 30:5)

NO SIN

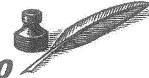
The other feature of the renovated earth will be that there will be no sin, and nothing that defiles will enter into the holy city and the happy life of the coming ages. Satan will never tempt again. There will be no more curse or cursed one. Never again will God have to cloud His face and perform the strange work of judgment which He so little loves, but the universe will settle down to everlasting love and uninterrupted joy. We will be established and will know that we will never fall again. Angels will be confirmed in their high and holy state and the very shadow of evil will at last be forgotten. Heaven will be so pure that evil will not be thought, remembered or conceived. The curse of time is to know both good and evil. In the innocence of those happy years, man will not know evil but only good. Oh, for that day to come when the crushing, defiling shadow of sin and doubt and fear will never fall again!

"The Christ in The Bible Commentary" - Book Four by A.B. Simpson: pgs... 522-523



Each of the redeemed shall forever know and praise some one aspect of the Divine beauty better than any other creature can. Why else were individuals created, but that God, loving all infinitely, should love each differently? And this difference, so far from impairing, floods with meaning the love of all blessed creatures for one another, the communion of the saints. If all experienced God in the same way and returned Him an identical worship, the song of the Church triumphant would have no symphony, it would be like an orchestra in which all the instruments played the same note. Aristotle has told us that a city is a unity of unlikes, and St. Paul that a body is a unity of different members. Heaven is a city, and a Body, because the blessed remain eternally different: a society, because each has something to tell all the others – fresh and ever fresh news of the ‘My God’ whom each finds in Him whom all praise ‘Our God’. For doubtless the continually successful, yet never complete, attempt by each soul to communicate in unique vision to all others (and that by means whereof earthy art and philosophy are but clumsy imitations) is also among the ends for which the individual was created.

“Made for Heaven” by C. S. Lewis: pgs. ... 28-30



Let me, however, remind the Christian, in order that there may be a flash of light in the thick darkness of this sermon that Death, to him, should never be a subject upon which he should loathe to meditate. To die! – To shake off my weakness and to be girded with omnipotence. To die! – To leave my pangs, and pains, and fears, and woe, my feeble heart, my unbelief, my trembling and my grief, and leap into the divine bosom. To die! What have I to lose by Death? The tumult of the people and the strife of tongues. A joyous loss indeed! To the believer Death is gain, unalloyed gain. Do we leave our friends by Death? We shall see better friends and more numerous up yonder, in the general assembly and Church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven. Do we leave our house and comforts? “There is a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.” Do we lose our life? Ah no, we gain a better far; for remember that we die to live, and then we live to die no more. Without any fraction of loss, death to the believer is a glorious gain. It is greatly wise, then, for a Christian to talk with his last hours, because those last hours are the beginning of his glory. He leaves off to sin and begins to be perfect; he ceases to suffer and begins to be happy; he renounces all his poverty and shame, and begins to be rich and honored. Comfort then; comfort then; ye sorrowing and suffering Christians. “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God.” Say unto them, “Your warfare is accomplished, your sin is pardoned, and you shall see your Lord’s face without a veil between”.

“Spurgeon’s Sermons” vol. 7-8 by Charles Spurgeon: pg. 133.



THE DEPARTURE DATE

***“Your life is like a mist. You can see it for a short time, but then it goes away.”
James 4:14***

You, as all God’s children, live one final breath from your own funeral.

Which, from God’s perspective, is nothing to grieve? He responds to these grave facts with this great news: “The day you die is better than the day you are born” (Eccles. 7:1; NIV). Now there is a twist. Heaven enjoys a maternity-ward reaction to funerals. Angels watch body burials the same way grandparents monitor delivery-room doors. “He’ll be coming through any minute!” They can’t wait to see the new arrival. While we’re driving hearses and wearing black, they’re hanging pink and blue streamers and passing out cigars. We don’t grieve when babies enter the world. The hosts of heaven don’t weep when we leave it.

Come Thirsty

“Grace for the Moment” by Max Lucado; pg. 531



Let us not imagine that the soul sleeps in insensibility. "Today shalt thou be with me in paradise", is the whisper of Christ to every dying saint. They "sleep in Jesus", but their souls are before the throne of God, praising Him day and night in His temple singing hallelujahs to Him who washed them from their sins in His blood. The body sleeps in its lonely bed of earth, beneath the coverlet of grass. But what is this sleep? The idea connected with sleep is "rest", and that is the thought, which the Spirit of God would convey to us. Sleep makes each night a Sabbath for the day. Sleep shuts fast the door of the soul, and bids all intruders tarry for a while, that the life within may enter its summer garden of ease. The toil-worn believer quietly sleeps, as does the weary child when it slumbers on its mother's breast. Oh! Happy they who die in the Lord; they rest from their labours, and their works do follow them, their quiet repose shall never be broken until God shall rouse them to give them their full reward. Guarded by angel watchers, curtained by eternal mysteries, they sleep on; the heritors of glory, till the fullness of time shall bring the fullness of redemption. What an awaking shall be theirs! They were laid in their last resting place, weary and worn, but such they shall not rise. They went to their rest with the furrowed brow, and the wasted features, but they wake up in beauty and glory. The shriveled seed, so destitute of form and comeliness, rises from the dust a beauteous flower. The winter of the grave gives way to the spring of redemption and the summer of glory. Blessed in death, since it, through the divine power, disrobes us of this workday garment, to clothe us with the wedding garment of incorruption. Blessed are those who "sleep in Jesus."

"Morning By Morning" by Charles H. Spurgeon: pgs... 168-169



The lives that run parallel with God's will last, and when everything that has been against that will, or negligent of it, is summed up, and comes to naught, and is abolished, these lives continue. The life that is in conformity with the will of God lasts in another sense, inasmuch as it persists through all changes, even the supreme change that is wrought by death, in the same direction, and is substantially the same. For the man that was doing God's will here, down among cotton bales, and ledgers, and retorts, and dictionaries, will do God's will yonder, amid the glories; and it will be the same life, with the same guiding principles, with the same root for its activities. So it will last forever.

If we grasp the throne of God, we shall be co-eternal with the throne that we grasp. We cannot die, nor our work pass and be utterly abolished, as long as He lives.

They that have here dwelt in Christ, persistently seeking to have His truth dwelling in them and wrought out by them, will pass into the permanence of the heavenly

home. "Music for the Soul" by Alexander Maclaren: pg. 74.



Note: The following is a brief excerpt from the personal journal of a Christian minister of the latter part of the 19th century and the early part of the 20th century. Earle served as an evangelist for 57 years, mainly in the United States. The following is a small portion of what he wrote, on the fifty-seventh anniversary of his ministry. God used this man to lead many thousands of persons to Christ, and to encourage hundreds of persons to enter "full-time ministries". As he nears the end of his long Christ-centered ministry, he anticipates the 'glory of heaven'!

"But the principal joy in this work is in reserve for the beyond, when the faithful evangelist has passed within the pearly gates. Then, oh, then, when the glories of that wondrous world have fully burst upon his enraptured vision; when his feet have really pressed its gold-paved streets and the bright, beautiful banks of its flowing river; when the music of the harps of gold and of angel voices have thrilled his soul; when he has really seen, and bowed himself before the Saviour; when he begins to realize the blessedness of such a home, who shall describe the joy of his heart, as, from that white-robed throng, there come many thousands, gathering around him, grasping him by the hand in gratitude and love, and leading him to the Redeemer, saying, 'Jesus, we have believed on Thee, and been led to this beautiful world, through this one whom Thou didst appoint to do the work of an evangelist on earth! Oh, the joy of such an hour!

"And as the endless ages roll on, and his expanding mind ranges in wider fields of knowledge, and comprehends more and more the glories and wonders of the 'inheritance of the saints,' that joy will be ever growing deeper and sweeter, as he meets from time to time those who were brought there through his labors."

"Living Illustrations from A.B. Earle": pgs... 119, 120



FACING THE FACTS

***How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them!
Psalm 139:17; NIV***

Aging is a universal condition. But the way we try to hide it, you would think it was a plague!

There are girdles, which compact the middle age spread for both sexes. There are hair transplants, wigs, toupees, and hairpieces. Dentures bring youth to the mouth, wrinkle cream brings youth to the face, and color in a bottle brings youth to the hair.

All to hide what everyone already knows—we're getting older...

Just when the truth about life sinks in, God's truth starts to surface. He takes us by the hand and dares us not to sweep the facts under the rug but to confront them with him at our side.

Aging? A necessary process to pass on to a better world. Death? Merely a brief passage, a tunnel. Self? Designed for a purpose, purchased by God himself. There, was that so bad?

"Grace for the Moment" by Max Lucado; pg. 729



It is good thing for men to face the fact that they will die. We exhibit our power, we parade our learning, and we display our wealth, but these seem to mean remarkably little after a short time. We are now having our little day as millions of our predecessors have had theirs, but within a hundred years we shall be gone from the scene and very few of us will be remembered by anyone. Man may learn in his ingenuity, to postpone death a bit and to ease its pains, but he cannot overcome it. Death is the great democrat who, in the end, levels all our pretensions. We cannot, therefore, do anything about death, but that is not our province. We can for a little while, do something about life. We can use our powers to help arrange some little area in such a way that they shall sit every man under his own vine and under his own fig tree; and none shall make them afraid.

Life, though brief, can be glorious. There are some who have lived it magnificently as they have tried to think God's thoughts after Him and to be to the Eternal Goodness what a man's own hand is to a man. Such people have been deeply devout, but their religion has not been something apart from basic human events like loving and dying. Their religion has been the way in which common experiences like loving and dying have been glorified by being placed in the framework of divine grace. This is our great tradition and it is such a pattern, which we must now restore.

"The Common Ventures of Life" by Elton Trueblood; pg. 124



“WHOSOEVER LIVETH AND BELIEVETH IN ME SHALL NEVER DIE...” (John 11:26)

Speaking from the pulpit a year after the commencement of the disease from which he ultimately died, D. W. B. Hinson said, “I remember a year ago when a man in this city said, “You have got to go to your death.” I walked out to where I live, five miles out of this city, and I looked across that mountain that I love, and I looked at the river in which I rejoice, and I looked at the stately trees that are always God’s own poetry to my soul. Then in the evening I looked up into the great sky where God was lighting His lamps, and I said, ‘I may not see you many more times, but mountain, I shall be alive when you are gone; and river, I shall be alive when you cease running toward the sea; and stars, I shall be alive when you have fallen from your sockets in the great down pulling of the Universe.’

Faith and hope must rise, plume their wings, and soar toward the sunrise clouds of gold.

“Traveling Toward Sunrise” by Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 287



A Lutheran pastor friend – the Reverend Bill Vaswig – and I once were discussing Galatians 2:19 and wondering what it means to be crucified with Christ. I mean, what are we actually talking about? Bill said, “Let’s pray the passage into each other”. I had wanted to keep the discussion at arm’s length, but I gulped and said, “All right, how do we do it?” “I don’t know exactly,” was Bill’s response, “but you go first!” So I went over to him, placed my hand on his head, and began to pray. I have no idea what I said beyond the hope that he would experience what it means to be crucified with Christ.

When I finished and sat down, Bill looked at me wide-eyed and whispered, “It happened!” “What happened?” I responded blankly. He proceeded to explain that as I began praying, he saw a vivid mental picture of his Church with a funeral service going on inside. He could see everything clearly: the coffin with the lid open, the chancel, the high arching beams, but he was seeing it all from inside the coffin. It was his funeral! As the people, filled with sorrow, filed past the coffin, he tried to tell them that everything was okay, that he was fine, and that what was happening was good. They could not hear him; all they could see was a corpse, and yet he was more alive than he had ever been.

“Prayer – Finding the Heart’s True Home” by Richard J. Foster; pg. 64



THE ULTIMATE TRIUMPH

“Unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains a single grain of wheat; but if it dies, it brings a good harvest. John 12:24; Phillips

We do all we can to live and not die. God, however, says we must die in order to live. When you sow a seed, it must die in the ground before it can grow. What we see as the ultimate tragedy, he sees as the ultimate triumph.

And when a Christian dies, it's not a time to despair, but a time to trust. Just as the seed is buried and the material wrapping decomposes, so our fleshly body will be buried and will decompose. But just as the buried seed sprouts new life, so our body will blossom into a new body.

The seed buried in the earth will blossom in heaven. Your soul and body will reunite, and you will be like Jesus.

“Grace for the Moment” by Max Lucado; pg. 536



“BETTER IS THE END OF A THING THAN THE BEGINNING THEREOF...”
(Ecclesiastices 7:8)

Farther on, you will find no thorns, but in every step you will tread out the fragrance of the sweetest flowers. Farther on you will meet with no foe; but kindred spirits with their great thoughts, wise and loving, will cheer you on the way. Farther on no dark cloud will throw its gloomy shadows over you; you shall have the brightest stars at night, and nought but sunshine in the day. Farther on , the prospect improves, the valleys are more rich and the mountains more grand; flowers of lovelier hue and sweeter fragrance are there; trees of statelier mound deck the landscape; and rivers and lakes more transparent and more majestic refresh and beautify the scene. Take courage, it is better farther on.

***I hear it singing, sweetly,
Softly in an undertone,
Singing as if God had taught it –
It is better farther on!***

***Night and day it sings the same song,
Sings it while I sit alone,
Sings it that the heart may hear it –
It is better farther on.***

“Traveling Toward Sunrise” by Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 320



IMAGINE SEEING GOD

“May the LORD bless you from Mount Zion, he who made heaven and earth.” Psalm 134:3

The Hebrew writer gives it a National Geographic piece in heaven. Listen to how he describes the mountaintop of Zion. He says when we reach the mountain we will have come to “the city of the living God...To thousands of angels gathered together with joy...To the meeting of God’s firstborn children whose names are written in heaven” (Heb. 12:22-23)

What a mountain! Won’t it be great to see the angels? To finally know what they look like and who they are?

Imagine the meeting of the firstborn. A gathering of all God’s children. No jealousy. No competition. No division...we will be perfect...sinless.

And imagine seeing God. Finally to gaze in the face of your Father. To feel the Father’s gaze upon you. Neither will ever cease.

When God Whispers Your Name

“Grace for the Moment” by Max Lucado; pg. 550



“...Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever.” (Rev. 1:5, 6)

Who are those that dwell in Heaven forever and ever? Sinners saved by grace! There is not a man or woman there who was not a sinner.

I stand upon the golden streets, I walk amid the brightness of the city; I hear a man singing, and I say to him, “And what were you on earth?” He answers, “I am the thief who died by the side of Christ. I said, ‘Lord remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom,’ and He said, ‘This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise,’ and I have been here ever since.”

I pass on and I say to another, “Who are you with the light upon your brow?” She answers: “I am the one who broke the alabaster box of ointment over the Saviour’s feet; I washed his feet with tears and wiped them with the hairs of my head; and now He has wiped all my tears and I am happy in His presence”.

And who are you so radiant with happiness? To which I receive the reply, “I am the man who had ten legions of devils; Jesus cast them out and healed me; and now I am praising Him forever.

Yes, these are the inhabitants of this glorious city. It may be that when we get to glory and stand amid the redeemed, worshipping, we shall hear one saying, pointing to Jesus, “Do you see those marks upon His blessed brow? Those scars? It was I who plaited the crown of thorns and pressed it on His brow.”

But why should not these sinners be in glory? The Blood of Christ availed as much for them as for you and me. I should not be surprised; such is the amazing love of God, at seeing any of these in glory.

They will come from all parts – from north, south, east, and west. The dark faces and the pale faces are alike now. We shall go in with uplifted foreheads, to wear the crown, with eager feet to tread those golden streets, with longing eyes to gaze upon the face of Christ, to worship God and the Lamb.

“Traveling Toward Sunrise”; by Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 324



IMAGINE

Read John 14:1-6. "Let not your heart be troubled." John 14:1

Our Church's young people did what they could to "construct heaven". It was time for the spring banquet, and the creative teens used lights, Styrofoam, and other materials to turn the auditorium into their best idea of heaven.

The theme of the banquet was "I Can Only Imagine", from the song by Mercy Me. Our daughter Melissa helped transform the Church. When I visited to see how the kids were doing, she was in the rafters hanging stars. The night of the banquet, my wife and I were able to hear one of Melissa's friends sing the theme song as we all thought about this faraway place called heaven.

Of course, we never could have imagined that Melissa would be entering the real heaven just 6 weeks later. The imaginary would become reality.

Jesus told us about heaven as a way of untroubling our hearts. He said, "Let not your heart be troubled; ...in My Father's house are many mansions...I go to prepare a place for you" (John 14:1-2).

Heaven is a prepared place for prepared hearts - place of unimaginable beauty, splendor, and majesty. It's where God is caring for our believing loved ones, and someday for us. Imagine heaven, and rejoice! - Dave Branon

**The Lord has promised to prepare
A place in heaven above-
A home where we will always be
With Him and those, we love. - Sper**

Jesus is preparing a place for us and preparing us for that place.

"Our Daily Bread" Devotional Booklet; October 2010



THE LARGER WATERS

1 Thessalonians 4: 13-18

Death is not an end; it is only a new beginning. Death is not the master of the house; he is only the porter at the King's lodge, appointed to open the gate, and let in the King's guests into the realms of eternal day. "And so shall we be ever with the Lord."

And so the range of three score years and ten is not the limit of our life. Our life is not a land-locked lake enclosed within the shorelines of seventy years. It is an arm of the sea, and where the shorelines seem to meet an old age they open out into the infinite. And so we must build for those larger waters. We must lay our life plans on the scale of the infinite, not as though we were only pilgrims of time, but as children of eternity! We are immortal! How, then, shall we live to-day in prospect of the eternal morrow?

By Max Lucado; pg. 536



I was called to see a young lady die that was all ready to go, and what a privilege it was to witness such a scene! She had disposed of the various articles that she called her own, and with clear, bright evidence that she was Christ's child, she waited the time of her departure.

As I entered the room, she looked up, her face radiant with the love of God, and said:

"If anyone had told me a month ago I would be as happy as this in death, I could not have believed it. I would not change places with a king."

As the supreme moment arrived (her father, a physician, bending over her), she asked: "How long before I can go?" "About three minutes, my daughter, and you will be gone", was the answer.

She extended her limbs, placed her hands across her breast, as she wished them to remain when cold and stiff; a heavenly smile covered her face, as if, like Stephen, she saw heaven open, and the bright ones waiting to welcome her. In this way, she passed away. We all could say, as never before:

"Ah, lovely appearance of death, No sight upon earth is so fair."

"Living Illustrations" by A. B. Earle; pg. 106



Here in the present human life we are permitted to know something of beauty, truth, and goodness, to read something of the ultimate plan and meaning of the universe, to see something of the splendor of the majesty of God. Yet the very best that we can see and know on earth is but a poor fraction of what must be waiting yonder to be revealed.

We can find a parable of this in modern science. There are whole ranges of colour, the scientist tells us, which our physical eyes cannot perceive. True, we can see all the colours of the rainbow, ranging from red at the one end of the spectrum to violet at the other. But now we are assured that this is only a comparatively small fraction of the colours which really exist; that beyond the red rays at one end of the spectrum there are the infra-red, beyond the violet at the other the ultra-violet, and out beyond these again whole unimaginable reaches of colour which we never see at all, because our eyes as at present constituted cannot get hold of them. In short, what we do see is only a tiny segment of the whole. If this is true of our physical eyes, is it not likely to be true of the inner eye of our soul? Here on earth we do apprehend something of the eternal spiritual realities; we do see, even if through a glass darkly, something of the marvel of the kingdom and the beauty of the King. But our present mortal spectrum - how poor a fraction of the whole! And beyond the best insights, we can ever hope to have in this dark, shadowed existence of time and sin and limitation, what reaches of glory must be waiting for us yonder in the morning! We are going to find the answers to all questions unanswered here. We are to see the dearest faces we have loved and lost. We are to gaze upon that one Face which has haunted the dreams of humanity since the day when God walked with men in Galilee, the Head that once was crowned with thorns and is crowned with glory now.

"The Strong Name" by James S. Stewart; pg. 249



“BUT NOW THEY DESIRE A BETTER COUNTRY...” (Hebrews 11:16)

Shortly before his death, the Rev. Robert J. Burdette wrote a personal letter to the editor of a paper in which he said; “I watch the sunset as I look out over the rim of the blue Pacific, and there is no mystery beyond the horizon line, because I know what there is over there. I have been here. I have journeyed in those lands. Over there where the sun is, just sinking is Japan. That star is rising over China. In that direction lie the Philippines. I know all that.

Well, there is another land that I look toward as I watch the sunset. I have never seen it. I have never seen anyone who has been there. But it has a more abiding reality than any of those lands, which I do know.

This land is beyond the sunset - this land of immortality, this fair and blessed country of the soul - why, this heaven of ours is the one thing in the world, which I know with absolute, unshaken, unchangeable certainty. This I know with a knowledge that is never shadowed by a passing cloud of doubt. I may not always be certain about this world; my geographical locations may sometimes become confused, but the other world - which I know.

And as the afternoon sun sinks lower, faith shines more clearly and hopes, lifting her voice in a higher key, sing the songs of fruition. My work is about ended, I think. The best of it I have done poorly; any of it I might have done better, but I have done it. And in the fairer land, with finer materials and a better working light, I will do better work.”

“Traveling Toward Sunrise” by Mrs. Charles Cowman; pg. 349



Jesus himself is the quiet resting place of those redeemed by his precious blood, and in him they are safe and sheltered forever, none and nothing can destroy him who is our shelter: "My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation." (Isaiah 32:18)

Paul called the body of the believer "the earthly house of this tabernacle" (2 Corinthians 5:1), which is the soul's brief and fragile house and which Jesus chooses as his peaceable home until the earthly house perishes. The grace, the body's long and gloomy habitation, was to Job "mine house; I have made my bed in the darkness". (Job 17:13). But this is by no means a peaceable habitation. Its silence is that of death.

There is, however, a sure dwelling place for the soul and the body of the child of God, namely, the blessed and perpetual resting place which Jesus called "My Father's house". No plague can come nigh this dwelling. Within it, there is room for the great multitude no one can number of the redeemed, for this peaceable habitation has many mansions. The reality of this eternal sanctuary of rest is confirmed by the affirmation of Jesus, "If it were not so, I would have told you." (John 14:2)

Having lived with the Father through the eternal past, Jesus knew all about its peace. John Bunyan described his longing for heaven thus: "Now, just as the gates were opened to let in the men, I looked in after them, and behold, the city shone like the sun, which, when I had seen, I wished myself among them". Praise God, someday - it may be sooner than we expect - we shall hear a voice for our eternal happiness say, "Come up hither!" Then shall we be at home with the lord.

"Seasons of the Lord -Silence and Remembrance", vol. IV; by Herbert Lockyer; pg. 14



“The Lamb is the light thereof.” (Revelation 21:23)

Quietly contemplate the Lamb as the light of heaven. Light in Scripture is the emblem of joy. The joy of the saints in heaven is comprised in this; Jesus chose us, loved us, bought us, cleansed us, robed us, kept us, and glorified us: we are here entirely through the Lord Jesus. Light is also the cause of beauty. Naught of beauty is left when – light is gone. Without light no radiance flashes from the sapphire, no peaceful ray proceedeth from the pearl; and thus all the beauty of the saints above comes from Jesus. As planets, they reflect the light of the Sun of Righteousness; they live as beams proceeding from the central orb. If He withdrew, they must die; if His glory were veiled, their glory must expire. Light is also the emblem of knowledge. In heaven, our knowledge will be perfect, but the Lord Jesus Himself will be the fountain of it. Dark providence, never understood before, will then be clearly seen, and all that puzzles us now will become plain to us in the light of the Lamb. Oh! What unfoldings there will be and what glorifying of the God of love! Light also means manifestation. Light manifests. In this world, it doth not yet appear what we shall be. God’s people are a hidden people, but when Christ receives His people into heaven, He will touch them with the wand of His own love, and change them into the image of His manifested glory. They were poor and wretched, but what a transformation! They were stained with sin, but one touch of His finger, and they are bright as the sun, and clear as crystal. Oh! What a manifestation! All this proceeds from the exalted Lamb. Whatever there may be of effulgent splendor, Jesus shall be the centre and soul of it all. Oh! To be present and to see Him in His own light, the King of kings, and Lord of lords!

“Morning By Morning” by Charles Spurgeon; pg. 201



Then came the first Easter Day and the stone was rolled away! That stone! Mark says it was 'exceeding heavy'. And now it is rolled away, for one Traveler returned. Death is an abysmal cavern no more, but a tunnel with a golden light at the farther end. It is no more a blind alley, but a thoroughfare; no more a cul-de-sac, but a highway. The mystery is a mystery no more. 'Tis Death is dead, not He.' 'And', says Paul, 'if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Jesus from the dead shall quicken also your mortal bodies by His spirit that dwelleth in you.'

"Westminster Sermons, Volume Two" by William Sangster: pg. 76.



But we have “expectations” beyond this life. We shall die soon; and then our “expectation is from Him”. Do we not expect that when we lie upon the bed of sickness He will send angels to carry us to His bosom? We believe that when the pulse is faint, and the heart heaves heavily, some angelic messenger shall stand and look with loving eyes upon us, and whisper, “Sister spirit, come away!” As we approach the heavenly gate, we expect to hear the welcome invitation, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.” We are expecting harps of gold and crowns of glory; we are hoping soon to be amongst the multitude of shining ones before the throne; we are looking forward and longing for the time when we shall be like our glorious Lord –for “We shall see Him as He is.” Then if these be thine “expectations,” O my soul, live for God; live with the desire and resolve to glorify Him from whom cometh all thy supplies, and of whose grace in thy election, redemption, and calling, it is that thou hast any “expectation” of coming glory.

“Morning By Morning” by Charles H. Spurgeon: pgs... 53-54



Death is not a cessation of conscious existence, but a transition from one stage of being to another. Here man consists of an immaterial spirit tenanted by a material body; and the two are so united as to form one living person. The spirit is the conscious self; the body is its earthly tabernacle, and its life depends upon the continued indwelling of the spirit. At death this union is dissolved.

We gather from our Lord's promise to the dying thief, and from Paul's desire to depart and to be with Christ, that this stage of existence (following physical death) is not one of profound sleep or unconsciousness. To the righteous, it is evidently one of great, though not of final, blessedness.

Not only shall we "sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven", but we shall have opportunity for converse with the noble and the true of every land and of every age.

The service of God upon earth is not confined to acts of worship, but includes duties of every kind performed under the influence of filial love. Surely, in heaven, our employments will be far more varied, yet they will all be as much channels of joy to ourselves as offerings of praise to our Lord.

All things will be ours; for God Himself in His infinite love and boundless wealth will be our portion forever. In His presence is fullness of joy, and at His right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

"A Popular Exposition of Methodist Theology" by Charles O. Eldridge: pgs... 184 185, 189, 190



O child of God, death hath lost its sting, because the devil's power over it is destroyed. Then cease to fear dying. Ask grace from God the Holy Ghost, that by an intimate knowledge and a firm belief of thy Redeemer's death, thou mayest be strengthened for that dread hour. Living near the cross of Calvary, thou mayest think of death with pleasure, and welcome it when it comes with intense delight. It is sweet to die in the Lord: it is a covenant blessing to sleep in Jesus. Death is no longer banishment, it is a return from exile, a going home to the many mansions where the loved ones already dwell. The distance between glorified spirits in heaven and militant saints on earth seems great; but it is not so. We are not far from home - a moment will bring us there. The sail is spread; the soul is launched upon the deep. How long will be its voyage? How many wearying winds must beat upon the sail ere it shall be reefed in the port of peace? How long shall that soul be tossed upon the waves before it comes to that sea which knows no storm? Listen to the answer, "Absent from the body, present with the Lord". Yon ship has just departed, but it is already at its haven. It did but spread its sail and it was there. Like that ship of old, upon the Lake of Galilee, a storm had tossed it, but Jesus said, "Peace, be still", and immediately it came to land. Think not that a long period intervenes between the instant of death and the eternity of glory. When the eyes close on earth, they open in heaven. The horses of fire are not an instant on the road. Then, O child of God, what is there for thee to fear in death, seeing that through the death of thy Lord its curse and sting are destroyed? And now it is but a Jacob's ladder whose foot is in the dark grave, but its top reaches to glory everlasting.

"Morning By Morning" by Charles Spurgeon: pgs... 104, 105



We don't know what's coming the next hour, day, or year. We might well be amazed at how different life will be from our expectations. It's the same with life after death. When you pray with authentic hope, Nouwen says, "no longer do you want to know what it will be like after you die, what heaven exactly will mean, how you will be eternal, or how the risen Lord will show himself. When you pray with hope, you turn yourself toward a God who will bring forth his promises; it is enough to know he is a faithful God."

"Encouragement"; pg. 219; by Harold Myra



Who would not wish and earnestly desire and fervently prepare to live in that land of which the prophets wrote. Edward Denny wrote: "I rejoice in the thought that every setting sun is bringing us nearer to a world where suns will never set; where we shall walk together in an atmosphere of light and glory; where all the desires, longings, and hopes of our hearts, will be fully met! How blessed to feel that we have such a hope!"

"Stones with Fair Colors"; by Gary Bowell; pg. 256



Sometimes I find myself musing in this way: Dear old body, for the past nine decades we've walked the dusty roads together, we've flown across continents, and you've been uncomplaining even when I've put impossible loads upon you. Thank you for your faithful service, and now you say you'll be faithful till death us do part. When that parting comes, I'll look back at you and salute you and thank you, and I'll say to you, "When I get my immortal body, I hope there will be a lot of you there incorporated." Thank you again, for everything.

I have often said that when the people stand around and say, "Well, Brother Stanley is gone", I want to be able to wink at them, and if I have enough strength, I would like to laugh and say, "Jesus is Lord." Because this will not be death. It will be a fuller life. I say this as a half joke, but I believe it will turn out to be reality. Because any person who is in Jesus is deathless, for he is under the principle and power of resurrection.

"The Divine Yes" by E. Stanley Jones: pgs. 144-150



This is why I believe our Lord describes our presence with him in heaven as knowing him, even as we are known (See 1st Corinthians 13:12). God knows us in our weaknesses; we will know him in his transcendent majesty. He has always known us for who we really are; yet he calls us his children and his friends. And finally, when all is said and done, he calls us home to be with him. We will be at home with God! That's my destiny (see Revelation 21:3).

The cemetery, new or old, is not our ultimate destination; it is merely a place in which to remember the symbols of a farewell. The person is not there; only the last memory is there. The respect shown in a cemetery comes not because it is home, but because it is where we bid believing loved ones a temporary good-bye. Jesus came from the Father and returned to the Father to prepare a place for you and for me. That's home. That is our eternal dwelling. We cherish the tender metaphor of home because there we will unpack our suitcases for the last time.

The destiny God has for us does away with these things that we deem so important now - shelters, tombs, and gravestones. In the end, our identities will be with God, and our personalities will be sublimely consummated to the purpose designed for each one of us. Our move from earth to heaven will serve as the thread that ties our memories together with reality and will enable us to see the temporal in the light of the eternal.

"Grand Weaver" by Ravi Zacharias: pgs. . 157, 159, 167



Fear not the mystery of death! – Jesus has died, and shown us that it is the gateway into another life, more fair and blessed than this - a life in which human words are understood, and human faces smile, and human affections linger still. The forty days of His resurrection life have solved many of the problems, and illumined most of the mystery. To die is to go at once to be with Him. No chasm, no interval, no weary delay in purgatory. Absent from the body, present with the Lord. One moment here in conditions of mortality; the next beyond the stars.

Fear not the loneliness of death! The soul in the dark valley becomes aware of another at its side, "Thou art with me". Death cannot separate us, even for a moment, from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. In the hour of death Jesus fulfills His own promise, "I will come again and take you unto Myself". And on the other side, we step into a vast circle of loving spirits, who welcome the newcomer with festal songs. (2nd Peter 1:11).

Death! How shall they die who have already died in Christ? That which others call death, we call sleep. We dread it no more than sleep. Our bodies lie down exhausted with the long working day, to awake in the fresh energy of the eternal morning; but in the meanwhile, the spirit is presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

"The Way into the Holiest" by F. B. Meyer: pgs. 39-40



The light ahead was growing stronger. Lucy saw that a great series of many-colored cliffs led up in front of them like a giant's staircase. And then she forgot everything else, because Aslan himself was coming, leaping down from cliff to cliff like a living cataract of power and beauty.

...Aslan turned to them and said: "You do not yet look as happy as I mean you to be."

Lucy said, "We're so afraid of being sent away, Aslan. And you have sent us back into our own world so often."

No fear of that," said Aslan. "Have you not guessed?"

Their hearts leaped and a wild hope rose within them.

"There was a real railway accident," said Aslan softly. "Your father and mother and all of you are -as you call it in the Shadow -Lands - dead. The term is over: the holidays have begun. The dream is ended: this is the morning."

And as He spoke, He no longer looked to them like a lion; but the things that began to happen after that were so great and beautiful that I cannot write them. And for us this is the end of all the stories, and we can most truly say that they all lived happily ever after. But for them it was only the beginning of the real story. All their life in this world and all their adventures in Narnia had only been the cover and the title page; now at last they were beginning Chapter One of the Great Story, which no one on earth has read: which goes on forever; in which every chapter is better than the one before."

Taken from Ending of "The Last Battle" (The final of the seven books of the "Chronicles of Narnia" – One of C. S. Lewis's greatest books).



“The city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it.” Revelations 21:23

***Yonder in the better world, the inhabitants are independent of all creatures' comforts. They have no need of raiment; their white robes never wear out, neither shall they ever be defiled. They need no medicine to heal diseases, “for the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick.” They need no sleep to recruit their frames – they rest not day nor night, but unweariedly praise Him in His temple. They need no social relationship to minister comfort, and whatever happiness they may derive from association with their fellows is not essential to their bliss, for their Lord's society is enough for their largest desires. They need no teachers there; they doubtless commune with one another concerning the things of God, but they do not require this by way of instruction; they shall all be taught of the Lord. Ours are the alms at the king's gate, but they feast at the table itself. Here we lean upon the friendly arm, but there they lean upon their Beloved and upon Him alone. Here we must have the help of our companions, but there they find all they want in Christ Jesus. Here we look to the meat, which perisheth, and to the raiment, which decays before the moth, but there they find everything in God. We use the bucket to fetch us water from the well, but there they drink from the fountainhead, and put their lips down to the living water. Here the angels bring us blessings, but we shall want no messengers from heaven then. They shall need no Gabriel's there to bring their love-
notes from God, for there they shall see Him face to face. Oh! What a blessed time shall that be when we shall have mounted above every second cause and shall rest upon the bare arm of God! What a glorious hour when God, and not His creatures; the Lord, and not His works, shall be our daily joy! Our souls shall then have attained the perfection of bliss.***

“Morning By Morning” by Charles H. Spurgeon: pgs. 206, 207



We are the children of God now, and if we are children now, we shall be grown up some time. Childhood leads to maturity. The infant becomes a man.

That is to say, he that here, in an infantile way, is stammering with his poor unskilled lips the name "Abba!" "Father!" will one day come to speak it fully. He that dimly trusts, he that partial loves, he that can lift up his heart in some more or less unworthy prayer and aspiration after god, in all these emotions and exercises, has the great proof in himself that such emotions, such relationship, can never be put an end to. The roots have gone down through the temporal, and have laid hold of the eternal! Anything seems to me to be more credible than that a man who can look up and say, "My Father!~" shall be crushed by what befalls the mere outside of him; anything seems to me to be more believable than to suppose that the nature which is capable of these elevating emotions and aspirations of confidence and hope, which can know god and yearn after Him, and can love Him, is going to be wiped out like a microscopic insect by the finger of Death.; the material has nothing to do with these feelings, and if I know myself, in however feeble and imperfect a degree, to be the son of god, I carry in the conviction the very pledge and seal of immortality. "That is a thought whose very sweetness yieldeth proof that it was born for immortality.' "We are the sons of God" (I John 3:2), therefore we shall always be so, in all worlds, and whatsoever ay become of this poor wrappage in which my soul dwells.

Music for the Soul" by Alexander Maclaren; pg. 365



WHEN WE ALL GET TO HEAVEN

By Eliza E. Hewitt

***Sing the Wondrous Love of Jesus;
Sing His Mercy And His Grace.
In The Mansions Bright and Blessed
He'll prepare for Us A Place.***

***While We Walk the Pilgrim Pathway
Clouds Will Overspread the Sky,
But When Traveling Days Are Over
Not A Shadow Not A Sigh.***

***Onward To the Prize before Us!
Soon His Beauty We'll Behold;
Soon the Pearly Gates Will Open;
We Shall Tread the Streets of Gold***

Chorus:

***When We All Get To Heaven,
What A Day Of Rejoicing That Will Be!
When We All See Jesus,
We'll Sing and Shout the Victory.***

Excerpts Taken From:
GLIMPSES OF GOD
THROUGH THE AGES
“A Collection of Personal
Expressions
Of Faith
From the Bible to the Present.”

BY
ESTHER CARLS DODGEN

SECTION III



WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE
(1564-1616)

Generally acknowledged as not only England's, but also the world's greatest poet and playwright of all time. He had the quality of universality, "not of an age, but for all time."
(Ben Johnson)

LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

I, William Shakespeare, of Stratford-upon-Avon, in the county of Warrick, gentleman in perfect health and memory, God be praised, do make and ordain this my last will and testament in manner and form following that is to say, first, I commend my soul into the hand of God, my Creator, hoping and assuredly believing, through the only merits of Jesus Christ, my Saviour to be made partaker of life everlasting, and my body to the earth whereof it is made.



JOHN BULWER
(1606-1656)

An American physician who devoted much attention to the discovery of methods for communicating knowledge to those who cannot hear or speak.

WHERE THE RAINBOW NEVER FADES

I cannot believe that earth is man's abiding-place. It can't be that our life is cast up by the ocean of eternity to float a moment upon its waves, and then sink into nothingness, else why is it that the glorious aspirations which leap like angels form the temple of our heart are forever wandering about unsatisfied? Why is it that the rainbow and clouds come over with a beauty that is not of earth, and then, pass off, and leave us to muse upon their favored loveliness? Why is it that the stars, which hold their festival around the midnight throne, are set above the grasp of our limited faculties, forever mocking us with their unapproachable glory? And finally, why is it that bright forms of human beauty are presented to our view, and then taken from us, leaving the thousand streams of our affection to glow back in Alpine torrents upon our heart? We are born for a higher destiny than that of Earth; there is a realm where the rainbow never fades, where the stars will be spread before us like islands that slumbers on the ocean; and where the beings that pass before us like shadows will stay in our presence forever.



*** DAVID BRAINERD ***
(1718-1747)

Missionary who overcame many years of doubt. He was converted on July 12, 1739. His short life of twenty-nine years was brought on by hardship and exposure in bringing the gospel to the American Indians. He claimed the promise in John 7: *"Have faith in me and you will have life-giving waters flowing from deep inside you."* His story moved his generation - Henry Martyn, William Cary, Jonathan Edwards, Adoniram Judson, and John Wesley - toward missions. Oswald J. Smith was so influenced by his life that he named his youngest son after him.

His dying words: I am almost in eternity. I long to be there. My work is done. The watcher is with me; why tarry the wheels of the chariot?



JOHN TODD
(1800-1873)

American minister who was six years old when both parents died. He went to live with a kindly aunt until he left to study the ministry. Later when his aunt became seriously ill and feared she would die, she wrote her nephew with questions about death. This was his reply.

AT THE END OF THE ROAD

It is now thirty-five years since I, as a little boy of six, was left quite alone in the world. You sent me word that you would give me a home and be a kind mother to me. I will never forget the day when I made the long journey of ten miles to your home in North Killingworth. I can still remember my disappointment when instead of coming for me yourself, you sent Caesar to fetch me.

I will remember my tears and anxiety as, perched high on your horse and clinging tight to Caesar, I rode off to my new home. Night fell before we finished the journey, and, as it grew dark, I became lonely and afraid. "Do you think she'll go to bed before we get there?" I asked Caesar anxiously. "Oh, no," he said reassuringly. "She'll stay up for you. When we get out of this here woods, you'll see her candle shinin' in the window."

Presently we did ride out into the clearing, and there, sure enough, was your candle. I remember you were waiting at the door, that you put your arms close about me and that you lifted me - a tired and bewildered little boy - down from the horse. You had a fire burning on the hearth, a hot supper waiting on the stove. After supper you took me to my room, heard me say my prayers and then sat beside me till I fell asleep.

You probably realize why I am recalling all of this to your memory. Someday soon God will send for you to take you to a new home. Don't fear the summons, the strange journey or the dark messenger of death. God can be trusted to do as much for you as you were kind enough to do for me so many years ago. At the end of the road you will find love and a welcome awaiting, and you will be safe in God's care. I shall watch you and pray for you till you are out of sight and then wait for the day when I shall make the journey myself and find my Savior and you waiting at the end of the road to greet me.



JOHN HENRY NEWMAN
(1801-1890)

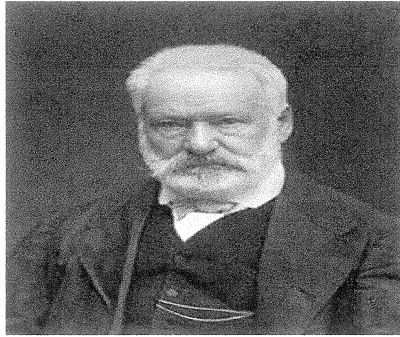
American Catholic scholar noted for his sincerity and devotion in his religious writings. At the age of fifteen he felt a strong call to religion. His conversion made him change from the study of law to divinity. He wrote the hymn, "Lead, Kindly Light" after weeks of ill health and anguish.

LIKE COMING INTO PORT. I have been in perfect peace and contentment; I never had one doubt I was not conscious to myself, on my conversion, of any change, intellectual or moral, wrought in my mind. I was not conscious of firmer faith in the fundamental truths of revelation, or of more self-command; I had not more fervor; but it was like coming into port after a rough sea; and my happiness on that score remains to this day without interruption.

A PART IN A GREAT WORK: God has created me to do Him some definite service; He has commit my mission...I have a part in a great work; I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall be an angel of peace, a preacher of commandments and serve Him in my calling. Therefore I will trust Him. Whatever, wherever I am, I can never be thrown away. If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve Him; in perplexity, my perplexity may serve Him; if I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve Him. God's loving (sometimes mysterious) sovereign ways in my personal life (God is trustworthy). My sickness, or perplexity, or sorrow may be necessary causes of some great end, which is quite beyond us. He does nothing in vain; He may prolong my life, He may shorten it; He knows what He is about. He may take away my friends, He may throw me among strangers, and He may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sigh, hide the future from me - still He knows what He is about. (Meditations and Devotions)

INCOMPREHENSIBLE

O my God...I adore Thee because Thou art so mysterious, so incomprehensible. Unless thou wert incomprehensible, thou wouldst not be God. For how can the Infinite be other than incomprehensible to me?



VICTOR HUGO
(1802-1885)

French literary genius, who, when fifteen was honorably mentioned by the French Academy. He is known for his novels, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and *Les Miserables*.

THE SOUND OF IMMORTAL SYMPHONIES

The nearer my approach to the end, the plainer is the sound of immortal symphonies of worlds which invite me. It is wonderful, yet simple. It is a fairy tale; it is a history.

I feel in myself the future life I am like a forest cut down; the new shoots are stronger and livelier than ever. I am rising, I know toward the sky. The sunshine is on my head. The earth gives me its generous say, but heaven lifts me with the reflection of unknown worlds...For half a century I have been translating my thoughts into prose and verse; history, philosophy, romance, tradition, satire, ode, and song; all of them have I tried, but feel that I haven't given utterance to the thousandth part of what lies within me. When I go to the grave I can say as others have said, "My day's work is done." But I cannot say, "My life is done." My day's work will recommence the next morning. The tomb is not a blind alley; it is a thoroughfare. It closes upon the twilight, but opens upon the dawn.



HARRIET BEECHER STOWE
(1811(2)-1896)

American poet, essayist and author of Uncle Tom's Cabin which became a phenomenal best-seller. Within a matter of months, the book was translated and sold in some twenty languages. For many months, it took three power presses running twenty-four hours a day, a hundred bookbinders and three paper mills to keep up with the demand. Her powerful stories taken from first-hand knowledge, encouraged readers to share the guilt of a nation that condoned slavery.

WITHIN SIGHT OF THE RIVER OF DEATH

I have thought much lately of the possibility of my leaving you all and going home. I am come to that stage of my pilgrimage that is within sight of the River of Death, and I feel that now I must have all in readiness day and night for the messenger of the King. I have had sometimes in my sleep strange perceptions of a vivid spiritual life. Sometimes in my sleep strange perceptions of a vivid spiritual title near to and with Christ, and multitudes of holy ones, and the joy of near to and with Christ, and multitudes of holy ones, and the joy of it is like no other joy – it cannot be told in the languages of the world. What I have then I know with absolute certainty, yet it is so unlike and above anything we conceive of in this world that it is difficult to put into words. The inconceivable loveliness of Christ! It seems that about him there is a sphere where the enthusiasm of love is the calm habit of the soul, that without words, without the necessity of demonstrations of affect heart beats to heart, soul answers soul, we respond to the infinite Love, and we feel his answer to us, and there is not need of words...This was but a glimpse, but it has left a strange sweetness in my mind.



FANNY CROSBY
(1820-1915)

Writer of more than 9,000 hymns, beginning at age thirty-four. She became blind at six weeks of age by a doctor's tragic mistake. Often in her hymns she referred to sight as seeing the light of God's salvation, as in "Blessed Assurance," when she explained, "Visions of repute now burst on my sight."

I SHALL SEE HIM FACE TO FACE

There is one hymn I have written which has never been published. I call it my soul's poem. Sometimes where I am troubled, I repeat it to myself, for it brings comfort to my heart: "Someday the silver cord will break, and I no more as now shall sing: but O the joy when I shall wake within the palace of the King! And I shall see Him face to face, and tell the story - saved by grace!"

(Spoken at a Bible conference when D.L. Moody asked her to give a personal testimony)



FEODOR MIKHAYLOVICH DOSTOEVSKY
(1821-1881)

A Russian novelist who was condemned to death for revolutionary activities. He was reprieved at the last moment and did four years of forced labor in Siberia with only a Bible as reading material. This led to his conversion. In *The Brothers Karamazov*, described by some as the greatest Christian novel ever written, he expresses faith in the ultimate triumph of spiritual values and of Christianity. The author states, "Much on earth is hidden from us, but to make up for that we have been given a precious mystic sense of our living bond with the heavenly world."

THE GREAT MYSTERY

It is the great mystery of human life that old grief gradually passes into quiet tender joy. The mid serenity of age takes the place of the riotous blood of youth. I bless the rising sun each day, and, as before, my heart sings to meet it, but now I love even more its setting, its long slanting rays and the soft, tender, gentle memories that come with them, the dear images from the whole of my long, happy life, and over all the Divine Truth, softening, as reconciling, forgiving! My life is ending I know that well, but every day that is left me I feel how my earthly life is in touch with a new infinite unknown, but approaching life, the nearness of which sets my soul quivering with rapture, my mind glowing and my heart weeping with joy.

MRS. JOHN MASON TURNER
(Publ. 1886)

She was a Pastor's wife. This excerpt is taken from "*The Congregationalist*" a prominent Church paper in the 1880's.

LIFE TRIUMPHANT

Not only do those who suffer a great bereavement need the consolations of the assurance of immortality. In my own life, in the hard daily duty, the truth symbolized by Easter floods my way with light. Life triumphant in the entire universe – this is the larger faith that banished my sense of the shortness and vanity of life.



HANNAH WHITALL SMITH
(1832-1911)

American Quaker whose well-known devotional classic, *The Christian's Secret of a Happy Life*, has sold millions of copies. Her writings deal directly with the day-by-day struggles of ordinary people, encouraging them to a more consecrated life-style. Her personal discovery of God came after a process of searching that began with what she called "the aching void in my heart."

IT IS DELIGHTFUL GROWING OLD

We are in 1903 and I am nearly seventy-one years old. I always thought I should love to grow old, and I find it is even more delightful than I thought. It is so delicious to be done with things, and to feel so delicious to be done with things, and to feel no need any longer to concern myself much about earthly affairs. I seem on the verge of a most delightful journey to a place of unknown joys and pleasures, and things here seem of so little importance compared to things there, that they have lost most of their interest for me.

I cannot describe the sort of done-with-the-world feeling I have. It is not that I feel as if I was going to die at all, but simply that the world seems to me nothing but a passageway to the real life beyond; and passageways are very unimportant places. It is of very little account what sort of thing they contain, or how they are furnished. One just hurries through them to get to the place beyond.

My wants seem to be gradually narrowing down, my personal want, I mean, and I often think I could be quite content in the Poorhouse! I don't know whether this is piety or old age, or a little of each mixed together, but honestly the world and our life in it does seem of too little account to be worth making the least fuss over, when one has such a magnificent prospect close at hand ahead of one, and I am tremendously content to let one activity after another go, and to await quietly and happily the opening of the door at the end of the passage way, that will let me in to my real abiding place. So you may think of me as happy and contented, surrounded with unnumbered blessings, and delighted to be seventy-one years old.

A NEW FAINT GLIMPSES OF GLORY

Everything is safe when an unselfish love is guiding and controlling and therefore my old heart is at rest, and I can lay down my arms with a happy confidence that, since God is in His heaven, all must necessarily be right with His world. And I can peacefully wait to understand what seems mysterious now, until the glorious day of revelation to which every hour brings me nearer.

Therefore with an easy mind I can look forward to death, and the prospect of leaving this life and entering into the larger and grander life beyond is pure bliss to me. It is like having a new country, full of unknown marvels, to explore; and the knowledge that no one and nothing can hinder my going there is a secret spring of joy at the bottom of my heart.

I am like the butterfly just preparing to slip out of its old cocoon; panting for the life outside, but with no experience to tell it what kind of life that outside life will be. But I believe with all my heart that the apostle told the truth when he declared that, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." (I Cor. 2:9) And what better prospect could the soul have!

Then will be fulfilled the prayer of our Lord, "Father, I will that they, also, whom thou hast give me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." (John 17:24). That glory is not the glory dazzling light but it is the glory of unselfish love. I have had a few faint glimpses of this glory now and here, and it has been enough to ravish my heart. But there I shall see him as He is, in all the glory of an infinite unselfishness which no heart of man has even been able to conceive. I await that moment with joy.

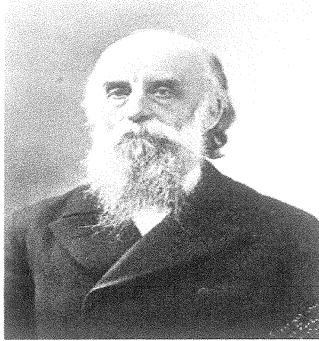
HANNAH WHITALL SMITH

**GEORGE CONGREVE
(1835-1918)**

Member of the Anglican Society of St. John the Evangelist.

THE NEXT STAGE OF OUR JOURNEY

I find growing old something quite new and a surprise...I feel it is a sort of undressing of the soul for the next and better stage of our journey. I am sure of the purpose of God for us, an increasing purpose from good to better, that I determine not to notice even in my thoughts (if I can help it) the inconveniences and absurdities, mortifications that come with the years. We are not at home in them, only pushing on through them on the way home.



LYMAN ABBOTT
(1835-1922)

Henry Ward Beecher's successor as pastor of the Plymouth Congregational Church in Brooklyn, editor, and author.

A GRADUATION

I neither know nor wish to know what the future has for me. I would not, if I could, stand at the open window and peer into the unknown beyond. I am sure that we whose mercies are new every epoch of my morning and fresh every evening, who brings into every epoch of my life a new surprise, and makes in every experience a new disclosure of His love, who sweetens gladness with gratitude, and sorrow with comfort, who gives the lark for the morning and the nightingale for the twilight, who makes every year better than the year preceding, and every new experience an experience of His marvelous skill in gift-giving, has formed some future of glad surprise which I would not forecast if I could.



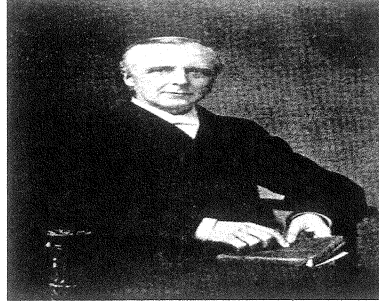
J. R. MILLER
(1840-1912)

AMERICAN DEVOTIONAL WRITER.

GLIMPSES THE INFINITE SWEEP OF LIFE BEYOND

Once I went up the winding staircase of Bunker Hill monument. Its great walls shut in the view on all sides. I could see only the bit of dusty floor at my feet and the cheerless walls that surrounded me but as I climbed up the staircase were windows here and there, and through these I looked out and caught glimpses of very beautiful world outside, - green fields, rich gardens picturesque landscapes, streams flashing like silver in the sunshine, the sea yonder, and far away; on the other hand, the shadowy forms of great mountains. How little, how dark and gloomy, seemed the close, narrow limits of the staircase as I looked out upon the illimitable view that stretched from the windows!

This earthly life, hemmed in as it is by its limitations and its narrows horizons, is like that tower - a little patch of dusty floor, with cheerless walls around it. But while we climb heavily and wearily up its steep, dark stairway there lies outside the thick walls a glorious world, reaching away into eternity, filled with the rarest things of God's love. And through the windows of revelation we get glimpses of the infinite sweep and stretch of life beyond this hampered broken, fragmentary existence of earth.



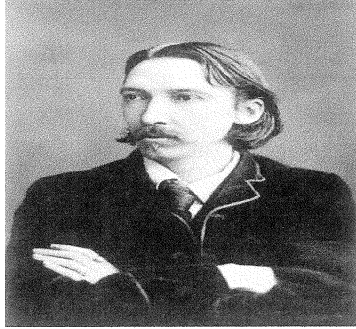
FREDERICK B MEYER
(1847-1929)

English Baptist preacher of more than sixty years and author of over seventy books in English, twenty in Swedish and many pamphlets, translated into many languages. He was converted at age six. His theme was, "If we link ourselves to the eternal power of God, nothing will be impossible to us." He called himself, "Just God's errand boy."

WE SHALL MEET IN THE MORNING

I have just heard to my surprise, that I have only a few days to live. It may be before this reaches you, I shall have entered the palace. Don't trouble yourself to write. We shall meet in the morning. With much love, Yours Affectionately.

In his 80's, writing to a friend

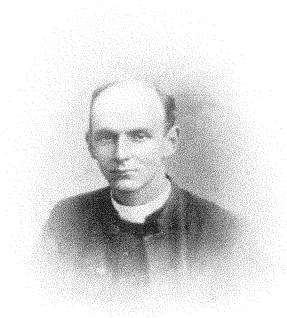


ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON
(1850-1894)

Scottish poet and novelist. He believed that “No man can achieve success in life until he writes in the journal of his life the words, ‘Enter God.’”

GOD AND I

**The stars shall last for a million years,
A million years and a day,
But God and I will live and love
When the stars have passed away.**



FORBES ROBINSON
(1867-1904)

English University Anglican Chaplain and Theological Lecturer.

THE NEXT PIECE OF ROAD

I delight in the feelings that I am in eternity, that I can serve God now fully and effectively, that the next piece of road will come in sight when I am ready to walk in it.

(Letters to His Friends)



HENRY VAN DYKE
(1852-1933)

American Presbyterian minister and poet.

IT IS LIFE

Heaven is like the woman sinner from the streets who bathed the feet of Jesus in her tears, and wiped them with her hair. I do not want to know more than that. It is peace, joy, victory, triumph – it is life. It is love; it is tireless work – faithful and unselfish service going on forever.



EDWIN MARKHAM
(1852-1940)

American poet. When asked which of his poems he valued the highest he answered, "How can you choose between your own children?" He did say that his four lines called, "Outwitted" might have lasting qualities because love lasts. "He drew a circle that shut me out/Heretic, rebel, a thing to flout. But Love and I had the wit to win:/We drew a circle that took him in!"

LIFE ITSELF IS INCREDIBLE

That we should survive death is not to me incredible. The thing that is incredible is life itself.

Why should there be any life at all? Why should this world of stars have ever come into existence? Why should you be here and why I here? Why should we be here in this sun-illuminated universe? Why should there be green beneath our feet: How did all this happen?

This wonder that we know this is the incredible thing. What power projected it all into existence? This challenges my faith, excites my astonishment, and lifts me to the ineffable. Some power has called us here out of the unknown. We did not come here of our own wills. Some Higher Power has evolved it all. And the Power that has caused this revelation of wonder and mystery can easily have prepared for us another surprise beyond the shadows of death. I believe that this stupendous Power we call God has created a world beyond this world, a world of spirit for the spirit of man.



WILLIAM JENNINGS BRYAN
(1860-1925)

Crusader, public servant, member of Congress who had devoted godly Christian parents. Bryan was an eloquent Christian spokesman who combined conservative evangelicalism with progressive politics. He became famous for being the lawyer who took the creationist position in the famous Scopes Monkey Trial.

LIKE A ROYAL GUEST

If the Father deigns to touch with divine power the cold and pulseless heart of the buried acorn and to make it burst from its prison walls, will He leave neglected in the earth the...man made in the image of his Creator? If matter, mute and inanimate, though changed by the forces of nature into a multitude of forms can never die, will the spirit of man suffer annihilation when it has paid a brief visit like a royal guest to this tenement of clay? No, I am as sure that there is another life as I am that I live today!



WILLIAM A QUAYLE
(1860-1925)

American Methodist Episcopal Clergyman and bishop.

LIFE IS GOOD

All's well with my soul, if not with my body. It is beautiful to have God and the Church and Christian friends and a loving home. Life is God all the way through, and I think the crossings to Life Eternal will be good.

(Writing to a friend from his sick bed.)



**RODNEY (GIPSY) SMITH
(1860-1947)**

Independent evangelist, whose mother died when he was a young boy, He remembered her last words, "I have a Father in the Promised Land; my God calls me, I must go to meet him..." After visiting John Bunyan's house in Bedford he said, "I stood and wept and longed to find the same Jesus that made Bunyan what he was".

MY GREAT DESIRE IS TO LIVE FOR CHRIST

I am only a gypsy boy. I do not know what you know about many things, but I know Jesus. Know that He has saved me. I cannot read as you do; I do not live in a house as you do; I live in a tent. But I have got a great house up yonder, and someday I am going to live in it. My great desire is to live for Christ.

(He went forward at age 16 in a Methodist Church and someone whispered, "Oh, it's only a gypsy boy." William Booth later recognized him at one of his meetings and asked him to sing a solo. He did and after the solo he spoke the above words. He then set about teaching himself to read from the Bible and began preaching. Thus began 70 years of evangelist work.)

N. MC GEE WATERS
(1866-1916)

American congregational minister, lecturer, and after-dinner speaker.

THE SPIRIT RETURNS TO GOD WHO GAVE IT

The other day some lilacs came to us from a southern friend. They were placed in a vase in my bedroom. That night I was awakened by their rich, honey-like fragrance. My memory awoke, too, and then there was no more sleep for me. I thought of the lilac tree that grew by my window in my father's house, and I began to turn over the pages of memory like the pages of a book. On every page there was a picture, and beautiful they were to me. I was out in the fields again picking violets in the springtime with my little flaxen-haired sister. Together we made playhouses on the dark edge of the woods and carpeted them with moss. I saw my first sweetheart with her freckled face and red hair. I stood before the teachers I loved. I went fishing. I felt the plunge in the cold water of the old swimming hole. I bagged my first game, and was so excited that I threw down my gun and ran home to exhibit it. I lived over the sweetly sad day when I left home for college. I stood up to speak on commencement day. I wept again over defeats that hurt, and I shouted anew over victories that were earned. I went over all my life. It was like reading a tale, and I said it is all mine. I am the boy in the story. And then I said, "Am I?" There is not a hair in my head that was on the head of the boy. Not an ounce of blood, or bone, or flesh, not a single muscle or nerve, not a single particle of matter in that boy's body is in my body today. If the body is I, I am not the same fellow. The body of the boy is dead and buried in the vaults of Nature. My body has been buried once every seven years. If a body is life I have had several lives.

I know I am I. I have kept my identity though my body has been dying all the time. I have actual demonstration that the death of the body does not harm the soul. Indeed the soul was grown stronger all the time. Indeed the dying of the body is necessary for the development and largest good of the soul. If all the death we know about deals with the soul, why should we not say of the death we do not know all about, "Dust returns to the earth from which it came, but the spirit returns to God, who gave it"? I believe then in the immortality of the soul.



RAISSA MARITAIN
(1883-1960)

A French Jew who converted to Catholicism. The following excerpts are taken from Raissa's Journal, 1974.

A SPIRITUAL DESTINY

Faced with death, shall I be afraid? Ought I to be afraid? It seems to me, no. Well or ill, I have done what I could to keep on the track of my destiny. My eternal future is in the hands of God. I abandon myself to my heavenly Father. I shall go to Christ that will be deliverance. I have a peaceful feeling about it. The Lord knows what I have suffered.



CHARLES E. FULLER
(1887-1968)

American revivalist who brought the Gospel too many through the Old Fashioned Gospel Hour.

I AM NOT AFRAID

Next Sunday you are to talk about Heaven. I am interested in that land, because I have held a clear title to a bit of property here for over fifty-five years. I did not buy. It was given to me without money and without price. But the Donor purchased it for me at tremendous sacrifice. I am not holding it for speculation since the title is not transferable. It is not a vacant lot.

For more than half a century I have been sending material out of which the greatest Architect and Builder of the universe has been building a home for me which will never need to be remodeled nor repaired because it will suit me perfectly, individually, and will never grow old.

There is a valley of deep shadow between the places where I live in California and that to which I shall journey in a very short time. I cannot reach my home in that City of God without passing through this dark valley of shadows. But I am not afraid because the best Friend I ever had went through the same valley long, long ago and drove away all its gloom. He has stuck by me through thick and thin, since we first became acquainted fifty-five years ago, and I hold His promise in printed form, never to forsake me or leave me alone. He will be with me as I walk through the valley of shadows, and I shall not lose my way when He is with me.

(Taken from a letter that Fuller received from an ailing, old man who sent it after hearing that the next sermon would be on "Heaven.")



C. S. LEWIS
(1898-1963)

Brilliant British scholar, writer, and poet of religious themes. He was born in Ireland and taught at Oxford and Cambridge. He became a believer after a long period of internal questioning and intellectual struggle. It was in 1931 that he was “surprised by joy.” Lewis owns description of his conversion to Christianity and also the title of his autobiography. All his life he had experienced moments of joy for what they were – pointers or signposts to the perfect joy that awaited him in the presence of God.

YOU ARE THE ANSWER

I know now, Lord, why you utter no answer.
You are yourself the answer.
Before your face questions die away.

THE MOST PROBABLE EXPLANATION

If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world. If none of my earthly pleasures satisfy it that does not prove that the universe is a fraud. Probably earthly pleasures were never meant to satisfy it, but only to arouse it, to suggest the real thing. If that is so, I must take care, on the one hand, never to despise, or be unthankful for, the earthly beings, and on the other, never to mistake them for something else of which they are only a kind of copy, or echo, or mirage. I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find till after death; I must never let it get snowed under or turned aside; I must make it the main object of life to press on to that other country and to help others to do the same.

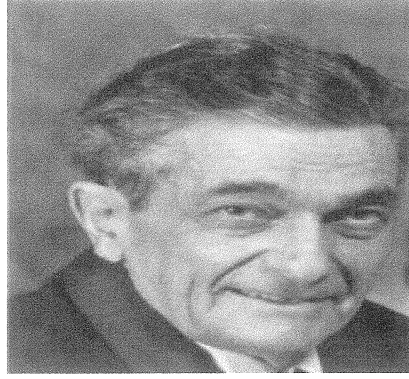


PAUL ELMER MORE
(1864-1937)

Editor, critic, and scholar. Pages from an oxford Diary, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1937, Chapter XXVIII and XXXIII.

FACE TO FACE

As for me, the writing on the face of the earth is too clear to leave place for hesitation. I can read nothing but this: a will and intelligence working out a design, a striving to accomplish some purpose through slowly yielding difficulties, a God...Only of this I am assured that some time and in some way, spirit to spirit, face to face, I shall meet the great Lord of life, and falling before Him, tell my gratitude for all He has done, and implore pardon for all that I have left undone.



JAMES GUTHRIE
(1874-1952)

THOUGHTS OF GROWING OLDER

They say I am growing old because my hair is silvered, and there are crow's feet on my forehead, and my step is not as firm and classic as before. But they are mistaken. That is not me. The knees are weak, but the knees are not me. The brow is wrinkled, but the brow is not me. This is the house I live in, but I am young – younger than ever I was before.



SAMUEL MOOR SHOEMAKER
(1893-1963)

IT'S BEEN A GREAT RUN

As I sit in the study on a beautiful, cool August afternoon, I look back with many thanks. It has been a great run. I wouldn't have missed it for anything. Much could and should have been better, and I have by no means done what I should have done with all that I have been given. But the overall experience of being alive has been a thrilling experience. I believe that death is a doorway to more of it...But with Christ's atonement and Him gone on before, I have neither doubt nor fear whether I am left here a brief time or long one I believe that I shall see Him and Know Him...It is His forgiveness and grace that give confidence and not merits of our own. But again I say "it's been a great run".

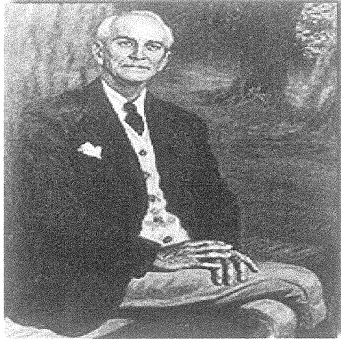
(Witten shortly before his death in 1963)

UNKNOWN AUTHOR

RESURRECTION

If it be all for naught, or nothingness
At last, why does God make the world so fair?
Why spill this golden splendor out across
The western hills, and light the silver lamp
Of eve? Why give me eyes to see, and soul
To love so strong and deep? Then, with a pang
This brightness stabs me through, and wakes within
Rebellious voice to cry against all death?
Why set this hunger for eternity
To gnaw my heartstrings through, if death ends all?
If Christ rose not again.

(Written by a soldier, killed in World War I. Poem found after his death)



ARCHIBALD RUTLEDGE
(1883-1993)

Versatile and prolific American writer and poet who was chosen Poet Laureate of South Carolina in 1934. More than sixty of his poems have been set to music.

AS INFALLIBLE AS THE RISING SUN

Sunrise suggests to me not only the power of God grandly to continue what He has begun but it also conveys the reassurance of the Creator's love returning to us daily, bringing joy and forgiveness; and to many reflective heart it intimates that no night is final; for, since with God all things are possible, his almighty love has, I contently believe, prepared for us a radiant future beyond the sundown of death.

And if I meditate but momentarily upon what He has done, and upon what He does do, confidence in immortality is natural, reasonable, and to my way of believing, to be counted upon as infallible as the sunrise. (Peace in the Heart)

SUSTAINED BY EVERLATING ARMS

And when the time comes for our migration hence to a land unknown, through a misty darkness, He will not desert us. In the rainy night, in that cavernous and monstrous dark, the frailest abide secure. In that flight amid other spheres than ours I believe we shall know what it means to be sustained by Everlasting Arms.

“Children of Swamp and Wood”, A Nature Story.

CLARA M. MATHESON
(1943 -)

American teacher and writer. The following excerpts are taken from unpublished journal.

IN THE FACE OF DEATH

The pursuit of success, of avoiding failure will seem of little importance in the face of death. What counts then is serenity and values that lie beyond success and failure. Death is a reality, but I do not need to fear it because Christ has conquered death through His resurrection. Since I am united with Him in faith, I know that death is only a doorway through which I will pass to eternal life with Him. I have caught a glimpse of God's working in my life and know I am a part of His great plan running through all eternity. This life on earth is just a speck on the glass of time, compared to the life within, eternal.

THE NEXT SYMPHONY

As the years pass, I become more tolerant and accepting of what God brings my way. I find a new peace and beauty as I grow older and begin to see more clearly what life is all about. The end of my earthly life's symphony represents a triumphant finale to what has preceded it, but, oh, the next symphony, what glory awaits me there!



SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE
(1772-1834)

English poet, critic, and philosopher, who was greatly influenced by George Fox and Jakob Boehm. He struggled with his faith, but by the end of his life he was expressing his Christian beliefs: "God's child in Christ adopted, - Christ my all: In Christ I live! In Christ I draw the breath of the true life!"

THE EVE OF MY DEPARTURE

I have known what the enjoyments and advantages of this life are, and what are the more refined pleasures which learning and intellectual power can bestow; and with all the experience that more than three-score years can give, I now, on the eve of my departure declare to you, that health is great blessing, competence obtained by honorable industry is a great blessing, and a great blessing it is to have kind, faithful and loving friends and relatives, but that the greatest blessing, as it is the most ennobling of all privileges, is to be indeed a Christian.

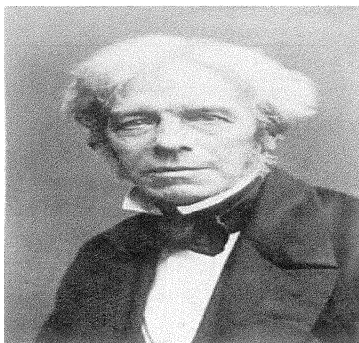


RUFUS M. JONES
(1863-1948)

American Quaker philosopher and writer who studied and wrote about the inner life and indwelling presence of God. He experienced a deep inner relationship with God and was moved by an increase desire to share the inner life with his fellow men, regardless of their denominational allegiance. He did this mainly through his many books. *The Death Of A Young Son Opens His Heart To God's Love*

When my sorrow was at its most acute I was walking along a great city highway, when suddenly I saw a little child come out of a great gate, which swung to and fastened behind her. She wanted to to her home behind the gate, but it would not open. She pounded in vain with her little fist. She rattled the gate. Then she wailed as though her heart would break. The cry brought the mother. She caught the child in her arms and kissed away the tears. 'Didn't you know I would come? It's all right now.' All of a sudden I saw with my spirit that there was love behind my shut gate...I know now, as I look back across the years, that nothing has carried me up into the life of God, or done more to open out the infinite meaning of love, than the fact that love can span this break of separation, can pass beyond the visible and hold right on across the chasm. The mystic union has not broken and knows no end. Lowell (his son who died) had here only eleven years of happy, joyous life. The victory that comes through the long years of struggle in a world full of hard choices could not be his. He was not to have the chance, 'with toil of heart and knees and hands, through the long gorge to the far light, to form his character to do his life work; but who knows what chances there are for transplanted human worth to bloom, to profit in God's other garden and: As certainly as God lives there is more to follow after this brief span of preparation ends...Yes, "where there is so much love, there must be more."

(*The Luminous Trail*, New York: The Macmillan Co., 147, p. 165. Here Jones is writing many years later after losing his beloved 11 year old son. He tells of sailing from America to England in July, 1903, leaving his son Lowell in America. Lowell, ill from diphtheria, seemed to be recovering when he left. A relapse occurred, paralysis set in, and death came. News of this sorrow came by cable when his ship landed at Liverpool).



MICHAEL FARADAY
(1791-1867)

English chemist who proposed field theory, discovered the generator and the transformer, and made electricity useful. He was a man of Christian faith. Love and humility governed his life.

I AM RESTING ON CERTAINTIES

Speculations! I know nothing about speculations. I am resting on certainties. 'I know that my Redeemer liveth,' and because He lives, I shall live also.

When he was dying, some journalist asked him as to his speculations for a life after death.



ALICE HEGAN RICE
(1870-1942)

Author of children's books and other books, including *My Pillow Book*, a little book of devotion, with comments and quotations chronicled during a lifetime by one seeking to grow in the spiritual life.

DAILY JOY IN FELLOWSHIP WITH HIM

I believe in a personal God, because my finite mind cannot conceive of Him in any other way, and because I have experienced a communion with Him, gaining strength in weakness, comfort in sorrow, and daily joy in fellowship with Him...I hold that Jesus Christ is the highest manifestation of God's intention for man, the supreme example of what He wishes us to be. Love is the Eternal Verity, and any real love we have given or received in this world, will not pass out of our lives in the world to come.

(*My Pillow Book*, 1937)

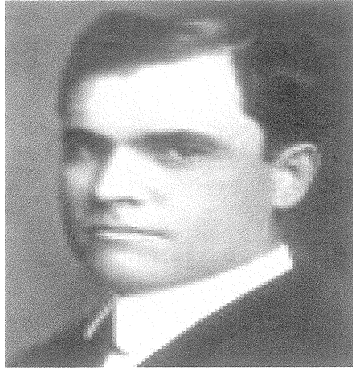


FRANCIS J. MC CONNELL
(1871-1953)

An American Methodist pastor and bishop.

A MATTER OF INEVITABILITY

I believe in immortality because I believe in the God of Christ. That such a God would call men into existence, mock them with a few draughts of life, and then let them perish is incredible to me. The doctrine of God as Father means nothing to me without the possibility for the immortality of the sons of God. Once accept the Christ ideal of God, and immortality seems to me to follow as a matter of moral inevitability.



JOSEPH FORT NEWTON
(1878-1959)

American clergyman.

FAITH AFFIRMS THAT LIFE HAS VALUE

Why do I believe in personal immortality? Because God is God, a man is man and life is what it is. Once we see what it is that gives dignity, worth, and meaning to life, argument for immortality is not needed. Until we do see it, argument is useless. Faith affirms that life has value. Religion is the realization of the value of life. Faith in life has value. Religion is the realization of the value of life. Faith in immortality is faith in the conservation of the highest values of life. Since these values are personal values, faith in personal immortality is inevitable.



HELEN KELLER
(1880-1968)

American writer and speaker who was blind, deaf, and mute after a serious illness at nineteen months of age. She has inspired millions with her devotion to God.

I DIDN'T KNOW HIS NAME, BUT I KNEW HIM

I knew Him! I knew Him! I didn't know His name, but I knew Him! I am so glad you told me His name, for He has often spoken to me.

(Helen, age 10 replied after she was told the story of God's revelation of love in Jesus Christ for the first time)

THE LAMP OF FAITH

For three things I thank God every day of my life – that He has vouchsafed my knowledge of His works, deep thanks that He has set in my weakness the lamp of faith, deep, deepest thanks that I have another life to look forward to – a life joyous with light and flowers and heavenly song. Anticipating Heaven!

**W. COSBY BELL
(1881-1933)**

American seminary professor. Bell, who was lying after a sudden illness of only a few hours, sent this final valedictory to his seminary students.

JUST AN INCIDENT THAT MEANS NOTHING

Tell the boys that I've grown surer of God every year of my life, and I've never been so sure as I am right now. Why, it's all so! It's a fact – it's a dead certainty. I'm so glad to find that I haven't the least shadow of shrinking or uncertainty. I've been preaching and teaching these things all my life, and I'm so interested to find that all we've been believing and hoping is so. I've always thought so, and now that I'm right up against it, I know...Tell them I say 'goodbye' – they've been a joy to me. I've had more than any man that ever lived, and life owes me nothing. I've had love in its highest form and I've got it forever...I can see now that death is just the smallest thing, just an incident – that it means nothing. There is no real break, and life, all that really counts in life, goes on



WERNHER VON BRAUN
(1912-1977)

German-born American rocket scientist who dreamed of developing rockets from an early age. He designed the first ballistic missile and led the team which put the first American satellite into orbit.

NOTHING DISAPPEARS WITHOUT A TRACE

Many people seem to feel that science has somehow made “religious ideas” untimely or old-fashioned. But I think science has a real surprise for the skeptics. Science, for instance, tells us that nothing in nature, not even in the tiniest particle, can disappear without a trace. Nature does not know extinction. All it knows is transformation. Now if God applies this fundamental principle of indestructibility to the most minute and insignificant parts of his universe, does it not make sense to assume that He applies it also to the human soul? I think it does. And everything science has taught me and continues to teach me strengthens my belief in the continuity of our spiritual existence after death. Nothing disappears without a trace.

(Reader’s Digest, June 1960, cited in Ravenhill, *Tried and Transfigured*, 86)



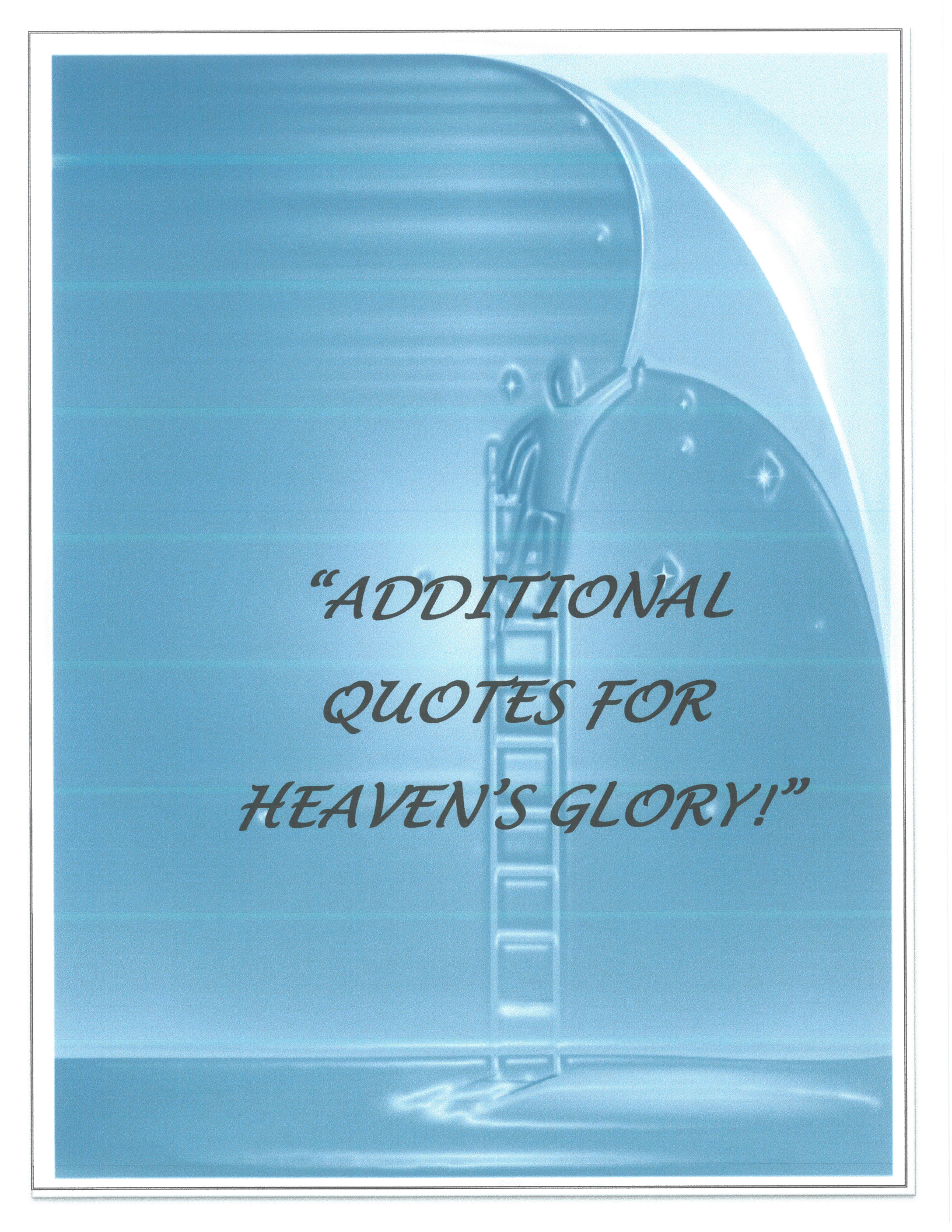
ROBERT L. HERRMANN
(1912 -2008)

A PART OF GOD'S MASTER PLAN

An American professor of mathematics and Biochemist. A person who has no comprehension that God is at work in the world has urgency about living as long as he can – sometimes even a panicky desperation. I don't share that frenzy, because I understand that this life is not all that there is. Instead of the “un-faith” of some of my research colleagues, I have an eternal expectation – a heavenly home that I expect to inhabit for a far longer period than my earthly lifetime. We read that in God's house are many mansions and Jesus said He was going to prepare a place for us there...

I know I am a part of God's master plan. I am not here by chance or by accident, but by prescription. And my death will be a part of the same plan of a loving God who is ready to promote me to a better world.

(Scientists Who Believe by M. Moody)



*“ADDITIONAL
QUOTES FOR
HEAVEN’S GLORY!”*

Those who expose themselves to Christ by surrender and obedience know Him to be alive - He lives within them. The historical has become the experimental. This fact of the living Christ is the best-corroborated fact in history; for in every clime, in every age, among all people the experience is the same: Christ - alive, redeeming, joy-producing, love-creating - moves straight into the hearts of people everywhere as a present Fact. We not merely remember Jesus; we realize Him.

Heaven for us is thus no longer future; it is here and now. Therefore it will be hereafter, for we take heaven with us, in us as we go. There is no feverish setting the house in order as we go. We await heaven, because we have heaven.

Will we know each other in the immortal world? The answer is Will we be less intelligent than we are now? Know each other? We shall know each other perfectly, love each other deeply, and enjoy each wholly. Now the barriers of a decaying flesh separate us; then we can love without those barriers. While there will be no flesh, there will be form - an immortal body. Your love for your loved one is immortal, and will be immortally embodied in everlasting fellowship.

(Taken from "The Way" by E. Stanley Jones; pg. 301)

GRANDPA SNUCKED OUT

READ: Psalm 16

*"My heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope." -
Psalm 16:9*

My cousin Ken fought a courageous 4 - year battle with cancer. In his final days, his wife, three children, and several grandchildren were in and out of his room, spending time with him and sharing special goodbyes. When everyone was out of the room for a moment, he slipped into eternity. After the family realized that he was gone, one young granddaughter sweetly remarked, "Grandpa snucked out." One moment the Lord was with Ken here on earth; the next moment Ken's spirit was with the Lord in heaven.

Psalm 16 was a favorite psalm of Ken's that he had requested to be read at his memorial service. He agreed with the psalmist David who said that there was no treasure more valuable than a personal relationship with God (Vss. 2, 5) With the Lord as his refuge; David also knew that the grave does not rob believers of life. He said, "You will not leave my soul in Sheol (the grave)" (vs. 10). Neither Ken nor anyone else who knows Jesus as Savior will be abandoned in death.

Because of Jesus' own death and resurrection, we too will rise one day (Acts 2:25-28; I Cor. 15:20-22). And we will find that "at (God's) right hand are pleasures forevermore." (Ps. 16:11) - Anne Cetus

*"In the Beloved" accepted am I,
Risen, ascended, and seated on high;
Saved from all sin through His infinite grace,
I am accorded in heaven a place. - Martin*

*'God is our treasure now, ad being with Him
in heaven will bring pleasures forever.'*

(Taken From "One Daily Bread"; February 2013)

The wisdom of centuries, put magnificently by Robert Browning in "Epilogue to Asolando" is Make all the strokes you can while you are here and leave the event in the hand of God. We do not need to worry about how justice will be done to us, because that is not our responsibility. Our responsibility is to work while it is yet day and trust that, if the night comes, God is the Lord of the night as truly as of the day. The ultimate wisdom lies in being able to say,

*I only know I cannot drift,
Beyond His love and care.*

But Browning and Whittier are only echoing the wisdom of the Psalmist. "The Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psalm 27:1) The British poet, the American poet and the Hebrew poet belong to the same company and it is a goodly company. We are not likely in our day, in spite of our technological advance, to learn anything more profound than what these poets have already said.

The important thing is not merely to know what wise men have said, but really to feel it. The combination of work in the present and trust in God's grace for the future must become a settled habit of mind. It will help us to recognize that there are limits to knowledge.

Then we can pray humbly with Johnson:

And while it shall please thee to continue me in this world where much is to be done and little to be known, teach me by Thy Holy Spirit to withdraw my mind from unprofitable and dangerous enquires, from difficulties vainly curious, and doubts impossible to be solved. Let me rejoice in the light which thou hast imparted, let time serve Thee with active zeal, and humble confidence, and wait with patient expectation for the time in which the soul which Thou receives, shall be satisfied with knowledge.

There may be persons, who look upon such a prayer from the pen of the literary giant of another age as mere pious writing, but there are others, and they are among the most sensitive men, who find in them the very water of life. Suffice it to say, that any person who can, with intellectual honesty, pray such a prayer and mean it, has already reached the place where the problem of his own death has ceased to be a problem. He has learned how to live and he has also learned how to die.

(Taken From "The Common Ventures of Life"; by Elton Trueblood: pgs. 107, 108)

Such then is our risen Saviour in Himself and towards us: - conceived by the Holy Ghost' holy from the womb; dying, but abhorring corruption; rising again the third day by His own inherent life; exalt ed as the Son of God and Son of man, to raise us after Him; and filling us incomprehensibly with his immortal nature; till we become like Him; filling us with a spiritual life which may expel the poison of the tree of knowledge, and restore us to God. How wonderful a work of grace!

But we, who trust that so far we are doing God's will, inasmuch as we are keeping to those ordinances and rules which His Son has left us, we may humbly rejoice in this day with a joy the world cannot take away, any more than it can understand. Truly, in this time of rebuke and blasphemy, we cannot but be sober and subdued in our rejoicing; yet our peace and joy may be deeper and fuller even for that very seriousness. For nothing can harm those who bear Christ within them. Trial or temptation, time of tribulation, time of wealth, pain, bereavement, anxiety, sorrow, the insults of the enemy, the loss of worldly goods, nothing can "separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." This the Apostle told us long since; but we, in this age of the world, over and above his word, have the experience of many centuries for our comfort. We have his own history to show us how Christ within us is stronger than the world around us, and will prevail.

(Taken From "Parochial and Plain Sermons; by John Henry Newman: pgs.321, 322)

HOPES OF HEAVEN

Now even when you come to people inside the Church, the people whom I have been trying to serve and help for over twenty years, you often come across wishful thinking instead of genuine hope. People will say, for instance, "I certainly hope I get to Heaven," and I haven't any doubt that they wish that they will. But when you talk to them you find that very often they have never taken the trouble to find out what the New Testament has to say about the terms on which a human being can share the tremendous life of God, which is what Heaven is. Not only have they not bothered to study the New Testament for themselves, but they have built up in their minds an idea that, if you avoid certain conspicuous sins, and on the whole do rather more good than harm in the world, then somehow or other you will get to Heaven.

You will certainly not find any endorsement of this point of view in any part of the New Testament, and yet how common it is! Those who hold it need desperately to exchange a wishful thought for a solid and dependable hope. And that's easy enough to do. Read, for example, the inspired words of St. John's Gospel and you will see quite plainly what I mean.

(Taken From "Good News", by J. B. Phillips: pgs.101, 102)

Of this at least I am certain, that no one has ever died who was not destined to die sometime. Now the end of life puts the longest life on a par with the shortest...And of what consequence is it what kind of death puts an end to life, since he who has died once is not forced to go through the same ordeal a second time? They, then, who are destined to die, need not be careful to inquire what death they are to die, but into what place death will usher them.

*(Taken From "The Christian Reader", Stanley Irving Stuber, Editor and Compiler;
Quotation by Saint Augustine of Early Church)*

In the calm mid-night thoughts, what are these leaves and flowers and smoke and shadows of earthly things, about which we poor fools and children disquiet ourselves in vain? Alas, what is all the scuffling of this world for? What are all the contentions and wars for the world about, generally, but for greater dishes and bowls of porridge? All these are but sublunaries, temporaries, and trivia's. Eternity, O Eternity! Is Our Business.

(Taken From "The Christian Reader", Stanley Irving Stuber, Editor and Compiler; Quotation by Roger Williams; pg. 268)

The continuance of Life through death is the natural assumption of humanity, conscious in itself of something which the apparently wholly physical phenomenon of Death seems not to touch. Man believes in continued existence because the burden of proof seems to him to be upon the other side and no one has proved that death ends all.

(Taken From "The Christian Reader", Stanley Irving Stuber, Editor and Compiler; Quotation by Phillips Brooks; pg. 438)

Not only do we know God through Jesus Christ, but we only know ourselves through Jesus Christ; we only know life and death through Jesus Christ. Without Him, we cannot know the meaning of our life or our death of God or of ourselves.

It takes no great elevations of the soul to realize that in this life there is no true and solid satisfaction, that all our pleasures are mere vanity, that our afflictions are infinite, and finally death which threatens us at every moment must in a few years inevitably face us with the inescapable and appalling alternative of being annihilated or miserable throughout eternity. There is nothing more real or more terrible than that. We can be as brave as we like about it, that is the end awaiting even the world's best. Let us consider these things, and let us say whether it is not beyond doubt that the only good thing in this life is the hope of another life, that we are only happy as we come nearer to the other life!

(Taken From "The Living Testament", compiled by M. Basil Pennington and Alan Jones and Mark Booth; Quotation by Blaise Pascal: pgs. . 238-239)

And both Scripture and conscience tell us we are answerable for what we do, and that God is a righteous Judge; and above all, our Saviour, as our visible Lord God, takes the place of the world as the Only-begotten of the Father, having shown Himself openly, that we may not say that God is hidden. And thus a man is drawn forward by all manner of powerful influence to turn from things temporal to things eternal, to deny himself, to take up his cross and follow Christ. For there are Christ's awful threats and warnings to take him serious, His precepts to attract and elevate him, His promises to cheer Him, His gracious deeds and sufferings to humble him to the dust, and to bind his heart once and for ever in gratitude to Him who is so surpassing in mercy. All these things act upon him; and, as truly as St. Matthew rose from the receipt of custom when Christ called, heedless what bystanders would say of him, so they who, through grace obey the secret voice of God, move onward contrary to the world's way, and careless what mankind may say of them, as understanding that they have souls, which is the one thing they have to care about.

(Taken From "Parochial and Plain Sermons" by John Henry Newman; pg. 18)

"Then I saw in my dream that the shining men bid them all at the gate, the which when they did, some from above looked over the gate; to wit, Enoch, Moses and Elijah, to whom it was said, "These pilgrims are come from the City of Destruction, for the love that they bear to the king of this place". And then the pilgrims gave in unto them each man his certificate, which they had received in the beginning; those therefore were carried into the king, who, when He had read them, said, "Where are the men?" to whom it was answered, "They are standing without the gate." The king then commanded to open the gate; "That the righteous nation", said he, "that keeps truth may enter in."

Now I saw in my dream that these two men went in at the gate; and lo, as they entered they were transfigured, and they had raiment put on that shone like gold. There were also some that met them with harps and crowns, and gave them to them the harp to praise withal, and the crowns in token of honour. Then I heard in my dream that all the bells in the city rang again for joy; and that it was said unto them, "Enter ye into the joy of your Lord." I also heard the men themselves that they sang with a loud voice, saying, "Blessing, honour, glory and power, be to Him that sits upon the throne, and to the Lamb forever and ever."

Now just as the gates were opened to let in the men, I looked in after them; and behold, the city shone like the sun, the streets also were paved with gold, and in them walked many men with crowns on their heads, palms in their hands, and golden harps to sing praises withal.

(Taken From "The Living Testament", compiled by M. Basil Pennington and Alan Jones and Mark Booth; Quotation from 'Pilgrim's Progress' by John Bunyan: pgs. . 303, 304)

Happy are those in whom Jesus shall forever reign, for they shall reign at the same time with Him; and His kingdom shall have no end. O how glorious is that kingdom in which kings are gathered to praise and glorify Him who above all others is King of kings and Lord of lords; in the glorious beholding of whom the righteous "shall shine forth in the kingdom of their Father". (Matthew 131:43) O! if the blessed Jesus would deign to remember me, a sinner when He shall come into His Kingdom! O if He, on that day when He shall deliver up the kingdom to God His Father, if He would visit me with His salvation, that I may see the felicity of His chosen ones, and rejoice in the joy of His people, that I too may praise Him with His inheritance! (Psalms 206: 4-5) But come, Lord Jesus, even now, take away the offences of Your kingdom, that is, my soul; so that You mayest reign in it, as it is Your right to do. For avarice has come and claimed a throne in me; boastfulness seeks to rule over me; pride desires to be my lord; luxury says, I will reign; ambition, detraction, envy and anger strive within me, whose shall I be? As for me, I resist them as far as I am able, and struggle against them to the best of my power. I call upon Jesus my Lord; defend myself for Him, because I feel that His is the right over me. I hold to Him as my Lord and my God, and I say: "I have no king but Jesus. Come then, O Lord, scatter them in Your strength, and rule over me, for You are my Lord and my God, who is the salvation of Jacob."

(Taken From "The Living Testament", compiled by M. Basil Pennington and Alan Jones and Mark Booth; Quotation by Bernard of Clairvank; pg. 115)

"Very quickly there will be an end of thee here; look what will become of thee in another world. Today the man is here; tomorrow he hath disappeared. And when he is out of sight, quickly also is he out of mind.

Happy is he that always hath the hour of his death before his eyes and daily prepareth himself to die.

O how wise and happy is he that now laboureth to be such a one in his life as he wisheth to be found at the hour of death! A perfect contempt of the world, a fervent desire to go forward in all virtue, the love of discipline, the painfulness of repentance, the readiness of obedience, the denying of ourselves, and bearing any affliction whatever for the love of Christ, will give us great confidence that we shall die happily.

O beloved, from what great danger mightiest thou deliver thyself, from what great fear, free thyself, if thou wouldst ever be fearful and mindful of death! Labour now so to live that at the hour of death thou mayest rather rejoice than fear. Learn now to die to the world that thou mayest then be prepared to live with Christ. Learn now to disdain all things that thou mayest then freely go to Christ. Chastise thy body now by repentance that thou mayest then have assured confidence.

Suppose thou hast hitherto lived always in honours and delights, what would all this avail thee if thou wert to die at this instant? All therefore is vanity, except to love God and serve Him only. For he that loveth God with all his heart is neither afraid of death, nor of punishment, nor of judgment, nor of Hell; for perfect love gives secure access to God. But he that takes delight in sin, what marvel is it if he be afraid, both of death and judgment?

Be watchful and diligent in the service of God; and often think to thyself why thou camest here, and why thou hast left the world. Was it not that thou mightiest live for God, and become a spiritual man? Be fervent then in going forward for shortly thou shalt receive the reward of thy labours; there shall not be then any more fear or sorrow in thy coasts. Labour but now a little, and thou shalt find great rest, yea, perpetual joy to thy soul. If thou continue faithful and fervent in doing good, there is no doubt that God will be faithful and liberal in rewarding thee.

(Taken From "The Living Testament": Compilers are M. Basil Pennington, Alan Jones, Mark Booth; Quotations from 'How to Imitate Christ' by Thomas A. Kempis: pgs., 158, 159, 160)

Many of the saints die in joy and rapture. But not all! For some, it is a long valley of shadow indeed, and no glory gilds their onward march. The battle of faith goes on till the warrior passes out of sight.

Not all the saints have visions and secret certainties. Or, if those certainties and realizations come, they come but seldom and only then as the fruit of the fight of faith. It is this that makes their faithfulness the more heroic and trusting.

Let Catherine Booth speak again for them all. Her long agony was drawing to an end when she said one day to Commissioner Booth Clibborn:

“One of the hardest lesson I have had to learn in my career, and one that I think I have been learning more effectually the last few years, is to discern between faith and realization. They are entirely distinct, the one for the other, and if I have had to conquer all through life by naked faith, bringing afterwards, perhaps, very blessed realization, I can only expect that it shall be the same now.

All our enemies have to be conquered by faith, not by realization, and is it not so with the last enemy - death? Therefore, ought I not to be willing, if it be God's will, even to go down into the dark valley without any realization, simply knowing that I am His and He is mine, and thus repeat in the last great struggle my life-lesson? Yes, if it please the Lord to deal with me thus, I am quite willing. I can accept it, and however blessed it would be to see His face, if He deprives me of that sight I am willing it should be so. How can I conquer by faith fully, unless I go on to the end without realization, simply trusting in His eternal covenant? And if His precious, blessed face does become visible to me, as to the martyr on the road who shouted out, “I see Him”, then I shall be grateful, and you will know that faith has overcome; but if He does not appear it is all the same’.

Did He appear to her? Almost her last message to the Army was: “The waters are rising but so am I. I am not going under but over. Don't be concerned about you're dying; only go on living well, and the dying will be all right. She saw something wonderful at the very last. Gazing intently on what they supposed to be some transporting vision, she said, with an illuminated face, ‘I see...!’ The sentence was unfinished, but faith had triumphed and ‘silence heightened heaven’.

(Taken From “Pure In Heart” by William E. Sangster: pgs. . 156-157)

St. Augustine, early 'Church Father', gave the following insightful description of life in the 'City of God' (Heaven): "In that blessed city no one, in any lower place, shall envy his superior; for no one will ever wish to be that to which he has not been appointed. Together with his reward, each shall have the gift of great contentment, so as to desire no more than he has got. There we shall rest and see, there we shall see and love, and there we shall all love and praise in the City of God."

(Quoted In 'Whispers of His Power' by Amy Carmichael: pgs. 141-142)

Job 19: 26, 27: In my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.

I shall see God for myself, and not another - not a stranger is the AV margin. I shall not have to learn to know and love Him, for it will be the God who has led me all my life long - and not another.

No stranger face will meet us on the day we die. We shall be awakened by the vision of His face - only His.

A little girl was slowly dying in her home in India. A Christian doctor who was called to see her told her of our Lord Jesus. After a little while she began to understand and love Him. One day she said: 'I don't know anyone in heaven. I shall feel very shy there.'

'But you know our Lord Jesus,' said the doctor, 'you won't be shy of Him.' She was comforted. Soon after that she saw Him - not another, not a stranger, but the Lord who loved her and gave Himself for her.

(Taken From "Whispers OF His Power" by Amy Carmichael: pgs. . 100-101)

Notes well-known theologian Jerry Walls: "Indeed, we can find examples of theologians from earlier generations who though Protestants may have been too hasty in discarding the doctrine (of Purgatory). Writing several decades ago, the noted Scottish theologian P.T. Forsyth expressed the hope that many people who may not be fully converted in this life could have their mortal eyes further opened after death and be thoroughly converted in the long run. "We threw away too much when we threw purgatory clean out of doors. We threw out the baby with the dirty water of its bath. There are more conversions on the other side than on this, if the crisis of a death opens the eyes as I have said." Forsyth is another instance of those who see purgatory as a helpful way to conceptualize the hope that salvation may ultimately embrace more persons than it appears to us in this life.

More recently, the German theologian Jürgen Moltmann has written sympathetically about purgatory in a similar vein. Moltmann notes that the basic idea of purgatory is suggested in the famous beatitude that promises, "The pure in heart shall see God." The doctrine of purgatory allows a person's history with God to continue until the purity of heart necessary to see God is achieved. This is a specific aspect of the more general truth that God will continue until completion of the good work he has begun in our lives. Moltmann is hopeful that his promise applies not only to the fortunate of this world, but also to those whose lives were cut short by tragedy or were otherwise stunted or maimed by adverse circumstances. He rejects the notion of purgatory as a place of punishment or a place to perform penitential acts, but affirms the idea of an intermediate state in which God can advance his purpose for our lives. "So I conceive" he writes, "of that 'intermediate state' as a wide space for living, in which the life that was spoiled and cut short here can develop freely. I imagine it as the time of a new life, in which God's history with a human being can come to its flowering and consummation."

(Taken from "Purgatory, the Logic of Total Transformation"; By Jerry L. Walls, pgs. 52-53)

Someone said that the 'biggest word in the English language' is IF. The following illustration vividly demonstrates the truth of this assertion. Freeborn Garretson, an American-born, itinerant Methodist preacher who traversed the Atlantic seaboard on horseback, kept a journal that contains the following record of his heavenly vision, dated July 30, 1780. "Sunday 30, Brother Cromwell and family accompanied me. At seven o'clock, we had a love feast; about two hundred of brethren were present, and our Saviour was in the midst. Afterwards I preached in the Dutch church. About thirty of our friends accompanied me about eight miles to another Dutch church, where I preached to many with freedom. Many went with me three miles further to Mr. Vaun's, where we had a watch night. The labors of this day were wearisome to the body, but I was strong in faith, and willing to give my little all to God. The next day a crowded audience assembled at the same place; some time before, and whilst the people were gathering, my mind was uncommonly exercised: but I found great freedom whilst enforcing, 'Think it not strange concerning the fiery trial, which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you.' The cloud was dispersed, and I felt myself uncommonly sweet and comfortable. This dear family drinks deeply into the blessed Spirit. I went to bed very happy: but my night visions were uncommonly strange: I thought I was taken dangerously ill, and expected shortly to be in eternity.

I doubt not, but I felt just as dying persons do. I appeared to be surrounded with thousands of evils, who were all striving to take from me my confidence, and for a time it seemed almost gone. I began an examination from my first awakenings - then my conversion - my call to preach - the motives, which induced me to enter this great work, my intention, and life from the beginning. In the time of this examination, every fear was dismissed, and every fiend vanished; and a band of holy angels succeeded with the most melodious music that I ever heard. I then began to ascend, accompanied by this heavenly host; and thought every moment the body would drop off, and my spirit take its flight. Meter ascending a vast height, I was over-shadowed with a cloud as white as a sheet; and in that cloud I saw a person the most beautiful that my eyes had beheld. I wanted to be dislodged from this tabernacle, and take my everlasting flight. That glorious person, brighter than the sun in its meridian brilliance, spake to me as follows, 'if you Continue Faithful to The End, this shall be your place; but you cannot come now; return, and Be Faithful: there is more work for you to do.'

Immediately I awoke, and my spirit was so elevated with a sense of eternal things, that I thought I should sleep no more that night. Great and glorious discoveries have been made to me, both sleeping and waking; but all the Promises of heaven and eternal glory, Have Been Conditional. In scriptures we have a little, but significant word, If - If You Are Faithful until Death, you shall have a crown of life. I would advise all the children of God, to be very careful and watchful, and continue in well-doing until death."

(Quoted in 'Discover the Secrets of Heaven' -A Guideposts Book: pgs. . 24, 25)

For sixty-two years and five months I had my beloved wife, and now, in my ninety-second year, I am left alone. But I turn to the ever-present Jesus as I walk around my room, and say, "Lord Jesus, I am alone. Yet I am not alone, for You are with me and are my Friend. Now, Lord, please comfort me, strengthen me, and give to Your poor servant everything that You see I need."

We should never be satisfied until we have come to the place where we know the Lord Jesus in this way - until we have discovered He is our eternal Friend - continually, under all circumstances, and constantly ready to prove Himself as our Friend. George Mueller (well-known Christian Leader).

*E'en for the dead I will not bind my soul to grief;
Death cannot long divide.
For is it not as though the rose that climbed my garden wall
Has blossomed on the other side?
Death does hide,
But not divide;*

*You are but Christ's other side!
You are with Christ and Christ with me;
In Christ united still are we.*

(Taken From "Streams in the Desert", by L.B. Cowman; pgs. . 449-450

There would seem to be two reasons for the superiority of death over all other human themes. The first of these is that death is a greater leap in the dark than any other; we go to a bourne from which no traveler returns; we know and can know very little of what is on the other side of this chasm which we cross. The second reason for the superiority of death as a moving human theme is its universality. This universality constitutes a marked difference between death and the other supremely revealing experiences of human life in that it is genuinely universal, while the others are nearly so. Not all persons fall in love and marry, not all achieve parenthood, and not all find satisfactory creative work, but every son of earth knows that he will die and, what is more to the point, he knows that his beloved will die. He looks at his child and he knows how little it would take to destroy this happiness. A germ in a drop of water might be sufficient.

It is not the recognition of a man's own death which moves him most deeply, but rather his consideration of the death of others. When our time comes, we may be entirely unconscious of our own demise, since many die in sleep, but we are highly conscious of the death of those whom we love and also of millions of others such as those who die in wartime. Though we become partially hardened to the experience of mortality it is always deeply moving to the sensitive person and we never quite make our peace with it.

(Taken From "The Common Ventures of Life"; by Elton Trueblood; pg. 105)

"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." (Romans 8:18)

A remarkable event occurred recently at a wedding in England. The Bridegroom, a very wealthy young man of high social standing, had been blinded by an accident at the age of ten. In spite of his blindness, he had graduated from the university with honors and had now won the heart of his beautiful bride, although he had never looked upon her face. Shortly before his marriage he underwent a new round of treatments by specialists, and the result was ready to be revealed on the day of the wedding.

The big day arrived, with all the guests and their presents. In attendance were cabinet ministers, generals, bishops, and learned men and women. The groom dressed for the wedding but with his eyes still covered by bandages rode to the Church with his father. His famous ophthalmologist met them in the vestry of the Church.

The bride entered the Church on the arm of her white-haired father. She was so moved, she could hardly speak. Would the man she loved finally see her face - a face others admired but he knew only through the touch of his delicate fingertips?

As she neared the altar, while the soft strains of the wedding march floated through the Church, she saw an unusual group. There before her stood the groom, his father, and the doctor. The doctor was in the process of cutting away the last bandage.

Once the bandage was removed, the groom took a step forward, yet with the trembling uncertainty of someone who is not completely awake. A beam of rose-colored light from a pane in the window above the altar fell across his face, but he did not seem to see it.

Could he see anything? Yes! Recovering in an instant his steadiness and demeanor, and with a dignity and joy never before seen on his face, he stepped forward to meet his bride. They looked into each other's eyes, and it seemed as if his gaze would never wander from her face.

"At last!" she said; "At Last," he echoed solemnly, bowing his head. It was a scene with great dramatic power, as well as one of great joy. Yet as beautiful as this story is, it is but a mere suggestion of what will actually take place in heaven when Christians, who have been walking through this world of trial and sorrow, "shall see (HIM) face to face." (I Corinthians 13:12)

*Just longing, dear Lord, for you,
Jesus, beloved and true;
Yearning and wondering when
You'll be coming back again,
Under all I say and do,
Just longing, dear lord, for you.*

*Some glad day, all watching past,
You will come for me at last;
Then I'll see you, hear your voice,
Be with you, with you rejoice;
How the sweet hope thrills me through,
Sets me longing, dear Lord, for You.*

(Taken From "Streams in the Desert" by L. B. Cowman; pgs. . 130-131)

It is a good thing for men to face the fact that they will die. We exhibit our power, we parade our learning, and we display our wealth, but these seem to mean remarkably little after a short time. We are now having our little day as millions of our predecessors have had theirs, but within a hundred years we shall be gone from the scene and very few of us will be remembered by anyone. Man may learn, in his ingenuity, to postpone death a bit and to ease its pain, but he cannot overcome it. Death is the great democrat who, in the end, levels all our pretensions. We cannot, therefore, do anything about death, but that is not our province. We can, for a little while, do something about life. We can use our powers to help arrange some little area in such a way that they shall sit every man under his own vine and under his own fig tree; and none shall make them afraid.

Life, though brief, can be glorious. There are some who have lived it magnificently as they have tried to think God's thoughts after Him and to be to the Eternal Goodness what a man's own hand is to a man. Such people have been deeply devout, but their religion has not been something apart from basic human events like loving and dying. Their religion has been the way in which common experiences like loving and dying have been glorified by being placed in the framework of divine grace. This is our great tradition and it is such a pattern which we must now restore.

(Taken From "The Common Ventures of Life": by Elton Trueblood; pg. 124)

Was all to die with our bodies, there might be some presence for those different sorts of happiness, that are now so much talked of; but since our all begins at the death of our bodies; since all men are to be immortal, either in misery or happiness, in a world entirely different from this; since they are all hastening hence at all uncertainties, as fast as death can cut them down; some in sickness, some in health, some sleeping, some walking, some at mid-night, others at cock-crowing, and all at hours that they know not of; is it not certain that no man can exceed another in joy and happiness, but so far as he exceeds him in those virtues which fit him for a happy death?

(Taken From "The Christian Reader", Stanley Irving Stuber, Editor and Compiler; Quotation by William Law; pg. 314)

WHAT IS HEAVEN LIKE?

Heaven will be beautiful. It is beautiful beyond description or imagination! Heaven could not help but be so, because it is the Father's house, and He is the God of beauty.

Look at the world around us. God made it! Wherever we look we are surrounded by amazing beauty. And the same hand that made trees and fields and flowers, seas and hills, clouds and sky, made a home for us called heaven.

It is a place so beautiful they when the apostle John caught a glimpse of it, the only thing to which he could liken it was a young woman on her wedding day. He said heaven was like "a bride dressed for her husband." (Revelations 21:2, NIV)

Heaven will be happy. Think of a place where there will be no sin, no sorrow, no quarrels, no misunderstandings, no hurt feelings, no pain, no sickness, no suffering, no night, and no death. God's house will have nothing in it to hinder happiness. (Revelations 21:4)

(Taken From "The Key to Personal Peace" by Billy Graham: pgs. . 55-56)

*Do you feel your heart discouraged as you pass along the way?
Does there seem to be more darkness than there is of sunny days?
It is hard to learn the lesson as we pass beneath the rod,
That the sunshine and the darkness serve alike the will of God.
But to me there comes a promise, like the promise of the bow,
That however deep the waters they shall never overflow.
When the flesh is worn and weary and the spirit is depressed,
When temptation comes upon you like a storm on ocean's breast,
There's a haven ever ready for the tempest-driven bird.
There is shelter for the tempted in the promise of the Word;
For the standard of the spirit shall be raised against the foe,
And however deep the waters they shall never overflow.*

*When sorrow comes upon you that no other shoulder can share,
And the burden seems too heavy for human heart to bear,
There is One, whose grace can comfort if you'll give Him an abode,
There's a 'Burden-Bearer' ready if you'll trust Him with your load;
For the precious promise reaches to the depth of human woe,
That however deep the waters they shall never overflow.
When the sands of life are ebbing and I hear the waters roar,
I'll reach out my hand for Jesus, in His bosom I will abide;
It will only be a moment till I reach the other side,
It is then the fullest meaning of the promise I shall know,
When thou passeth through the waters they shall never overflow.*

(Author Unknown)

TO REMEMBER ME

At a certain moment a doctor will determine that my brain has ceased to function and that, for all intents and purposes, my life has stopped.

When that happens, do not attempt to instill artificial life into my body by the use of a machine. And don't call this my 'deathbed.' Call it my 'bed of life,' and let my body be taken from it to help others lead fuller lives.

Give my sight to a man who has never seen a sunrise, a baby's face or love in the eyes of a woman. Give my heart to a person whose own heart has caused nothing but endless days of pain. Give my blood to the teenager who has been pulled from the wreckage of his car, so that he might live to see his grandchildren play. Give my kidneys to one who depends on a machine to exist from week to week. Take my bones, every muscle, every fiber and nerve in my body and find a way to make a crippled child walk.

Explore every corner of my brain. Take my cells, if necessary, and let them grow so that someday a speechless boy will shout at the crack of a bat and a deaf girl will hear the sound of rain against her windows.

Burn what is left of me and scatter the ashes to the winds to help the flowers grow. If you must bury something, let it be my faults, my weaknesses and all prejudice against my fellow man.

Give my soul to God.

If by chance you wish to remember me, do it with a kind deed or word to someone who needs you. If you do all I have asked, I will live forever.

(Author Unknown)

I want a man on the one hand to confess his immortality with his lips, and on the other, to live as if he tried to understand his own words, and then he is in the way of salvation; he is in the way towards heaven, even though he has not yet fully emancipated himself from the fetters of this world. Indeed none of us (of course) are entirely loosened from this world. We all use words in speaking of our duties, higher and fuller than we really understand. No one entirely realizes what is meant by his having a soul; even the best of men is but in a state of progress towards the simple truth; and the most weak and ignorant of those who seek after it cannot but be in progress. And therefore, no one need be alarmed at hearing that he has much to do before he arrives at a right view of his own condition in God's sight, i.e., at faith; for we all have much to do, and the great point is, are we willing to do it?

(Taken From "Parochial and Plain Sermons" by John Henry Newman; pg. 20)

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three, because the sun's light failed. The curtain of the sanctuary was split down the middle. And Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, 'into Your hands I entrust my spirit.'" Saying this, He breathed His last. Luke 23:44-46.

Here are seven words you should reserve for your dying: "Into Your hands I Entrust My Spirit."

In your years of walking with Jesus, many of your steps must be taken in the dark, in times of great uncertainty. But the last step we experience is a step we need not fear to take. The last step will always be in the light. The dying time is the time for spending these seven words: "Into Your hands I entrust my spirit."

Perhaps you are young. Perhaps Jesus' final words do not seem to you to be anything you will need for many decades. Let this be your counsel; find an older friend and draw close to him. Make sure this older friend is a Christian. Then watch him live out his final years. If God should make it possible, watch this older believer change worlds.

You will see a grand confidence in him as he spends these final words. Best of all, you will see that only by watching people die is it often possible to find out what they really believe. Only from the end of life can we test those philosophies we said we believed during our younger years. Those who die well have lived well. Those who can say with peace and utter resolve: "Into Your hands I entrust my spirit," are those whose dying proves they lived well.

Only one confident end awaits all of us who are flesh. It is to be able to use Jesus' words legitimately, "Gather, into Your hands." Those who can use these words understand why Jesus died. They have ascertained the confidence Jesus placed in his heavenly Father - the certainty he sensed when he closed his eyes for the final time.

This is the greatest part of the gospel. It is to publish Jesus' dying words as the hope of every heart. It is to give the final cross cry to every person.

Sooner or later, all must close their eyes for the last time. If in such a moment they possess the final words of the cross, they will be able to say clearly, "Earth is receding but heaven is approaching. This is my long-anticipated moment of oneness with the Father! Into your hands I entrust my spirit."

PRAYER: Lord, I treasure your famous, final words. Help me to keep them handy when it is my turn to use them.

**DYING WAS ONCE THOUGHT TO BE THE END OF EVERYTHING BUT
THAT WAS BEFORE JESUS DIED!**

(Taken From "The Christ of Easter" by Calvin Miller) ('9 Days until Easter')

Such a solemn resignation of yourself into the hands of God every evening, and parting with all the world, as if you were never to see it anymore, and all this in the silence and darkness of the night, is a practice that will soon have excellent effects upon your spirit.

For this time of the night is exceeding proper for such prayers and meditations; and the likeness which sleep and darkness have to death, will contribute very much to make your thoughts about it the more deep and affecting.

(Taken From "The Christian Reader", Stanley Irving Stuber, Editor and Compiler; Quotation by William Law; pg. 328)

Dwight L. Moody (usually considered the greatest evangelist of the 19th century) preached to approximately 100 million persons during his lifetime! Thousands were converted through his evangelistic sermons. He was faithful to God's unique call in his life! He was faithful to God's unique call in his life! He was very sensitive to the 'voice of God', and also to the 'cries of oppressed sinners'. Moody was never formally 'ordained' to the ministry, and he was not always 'friendly' to the English language when he preached, but, nevertheless, God had a 'monopoly' on his life, and as a result God harvested countless souls for His Eternal Kingdom through Moody's yielded heart and hands and mouth! He ministered "out of the overflow" of his own life - a life of love and compassion and strong Biblical convictions. Moody was most unique as a humble servant of God, and as a "herald of righteousness and truth and boldness." He always "spoke that truth in love", a message that diligently combined a concern for both God's justice and God's mercy! As long as the history of Christianity will be read, the ministry of Dwight L. Moody will be acknowledged as one of the greatest evangelists of all times!

The last words of Moody testify to a life well lived for his God, and to a life whose expectations of final spiritual victory would be gloriously fulfilled: "This is my triumph; this is my coronation day! I have been looking forward to it for years. Earth is receding; heaven is approaching; God is calling me."

Moody - a man who was a "double winner" - a winner on earth and a winner in eternity! A "God intoxicated man" - a "man after God's own heart"! A man who faithfully travelled the "rough road of earth", who is now a "heavenly citizen" forever!" Hallelujah!

When Temple Gairdner was dying, and in great weakness and pain, people who visited him were conscious of an amazing joy. Half in Heaven already, he seemed to linger on earth to show them in what bliss a Christian can die, and when, at last, he fell asleep on his wife's shoulder (never to wake here again) and his boy knew himself to be fatherless, the lad could only say, looking on his father's face radiant in death: 'Your joy no man taketh from you.'

All that is true of all the saints and true for evermore. Their joy no man taketh from them.

(Taken From "The Pure In Heart" by William Sangster; pg. 115)

Is there any hope for life after death? Without Jesus' resurrection there would be no hope for the future, after physical death. Jesus said, "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live." (John 11:25) Belief in the resurrection of Jesus gives the foundation of hope in the subsequent resurrection of the body of true believers.

To help you anticipate your future resurrection life, think of life's stages. "The unborn child is up under his mother's heart, well taken care of, well fed, and happy. He likes it there. Suppose then, that someone could come to the baby and tell him, "You are going to be born. You're not going to stay here." And he would learn that by being born, he would leave this warm secure place. That would not be being born to him, but that would be dying for him. Dying is the end. And the baby would say, 'I don't want to be born. I don't want to die. I like it here, I'm warm. I feel love all around me. I'm happy and content. Just leave me alone. I don't want to leave this nice place.' "But there comes a day when he is born, or looking at it from his angle, when he dies out of that place, and is born into our world."

"What happens to him"! He feels soft, tender, loving hands gently holding him. He looks up into a wondrous face, that is full of love, and it is shining down at him. Then as he grows, he has the glorious experiences of childhood, and young manhood, and the future is before him. He feels strong and it is good to be alive. He marries and raises children. He becomes middle aged. He is creative and happy, and life is good. The world is good. And the years begin to add up. His hair becomes white, and his form a bit feeble. He knows he has to die, to leave all this and go into another place. But he protests: 'I don't want to die. I like it here. I love to feel that warmth of the sun on my face, the softness of the rain, the sting of snow. I love to see great mountains, shouldering out the sky. I love to watch the ocean washing upon soft shores of sand. I love to be with my family, and my friends. Life is good; I don't want to leave here.' "But one day he does die, to this world."

"Do you mean to tell me that all of a sudden God changes? Isn't it reasonable to believe that the first thing he will feel is the touch of great loving hands? That he will look up into a face that is infinitely loving? He will look around him, and his breath will be taken away by the beauties that he sees. All tears will be wiped from his eyes. And he will say, 'Why was I so afraid of this thing called death, when as I now see, it is life!'"

"And the Christian will live forever!" (Quoted by Robert Andrews on the 'Light and Life Hour'; April 22, 1973)

"God, if on earth I see your smiling face in the beautiful sunset, and feel your love in the cool breeze of the early morning, what your presence will be like in heaven!"

AFFIRMATION FOR THE DAY: "For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21, NIV)

Powerful of strength
Refreshing of a servant
Life changing of truth of love
of honesty of peace
Stunning sincere of a king
of grace
authentic
Law dropping of life
Surprising of compassion
Shocking Interrupting of a hero
of hope
Words
of Jesus