

Visions of Heaven & Hell

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

Chapter 1

Planning Suicide

When wicked persons have gone on in a course of sin, and find they have reason to fear the just judgment of God for their sins, they begin at first to wish that there were no God to punish them; then by degrees they persuade themselves that there is none, and then they set themselves to study for arguments to back their opinion. It was with one of this sort of men that I had the unhappiness to be acquainted, who would be continually impressing me that there was neither God nor devil, heaven nor hell.

It was not without horror and trembling that I first heard this and therefore I usually left him when he began upon these topics; but his speaking of them to me so often, at last prevailed with me to consider what grounds he had for what he said. And from this time I found my mind perplexed with so much trouble and darkness that I could hardly bear up under it, for I knew not how to make out, to my own satisfaction, those truths which before appeared to me self-evident. I could not think there was no God but with the greatest horror, yet I called in questions the truth of His being. I would not have parted with my hope of heaven had I been made heir of all the world, yet I questioned whether there was any such place or state. I began to doubt whether there was any hell, and yet at the same time thought I found the flames of it flashing in my face. Thus was my mind tossed with apparent contradictions, and I found myself confused.

In this perplexed condition I went to my false friend to see what comfort he would give to me. He indeed laughed at my fears, pretended to pity my weakness, and seemed to hug himself in the freedom and liberty which he enjoyed. He told me he was never bothered by the frightful anticipations of a future state, or an after-reckoning; that nature was the great mistress of the universe, and that therefore he followed her dictates; that all the care he took was to live here, and hoped that when his dust should be next impregnated, it might be into some delightful species of beings which would likewise, in a great measure, be owing to the place of his burial.

These talks of his putting me still on further doubts, I became so uneasy that my life was a burden to me. I dreaded to be left to the belief of those cursed notions, and yet they continually ran in my mind. I wished a thousand times I had never heard them, and yet they were ever before me. What, said I to myself, is all my hopes of heaven nothing but a vain chimera! Have I served God for nothing? Or rather have I fancied on, when there is no such being? It is impossible to tell the agonies I felt, upon my giving way to such thoughts as these, which still with greater force assaulted me, until at last I was hurried to the utmost pitch of desperation. Why should I linger thus, thought I, between despair and hope? Is it not better, said I to myself, to put a period to this wretched life, and to try the truth of thing?

Upon this I took a resolution to destroy myself, and in order thereunto, went out one morning to a near-by wood, where I intended to act this bloody tragedy. But methought I heard a secret whisper saying, "O Epenetus, plunge not thyself in

everlasting misery to gratify thy soul's worst enemy. That fatal stroke thou art about to give, seals up thine own damnation. For if there be a God, as surely there is, how can you hope for mercy from Him when you thus willfully destroy His image?"

Whence this secret whisper came I knew not, but do believe it was from God; for I am sure it came with so much power it made me fling away the instrument with which I had designed to offer violence to my own life, and showed me in a moment the wickedness thereof. The horror of this awful intention set all my joints a-trembling, that I could hardly stand. I could not but acknowledge my deliverance to be the work of some invisible and spiritual Power, that came so seasonably to my rescue, and gratitude obliged me to return Him thanks. So I kneeled down upon the ground and said, "O Thou invisible, eternal Power which though unseen by men, beholdest all his actions, and who hast now withheld me from defacing Thine image, I give Thee humble thanks. Yes, O Thou sovereign Being of all beings, I give Thee thanks that I am still alive, and able to acknowledge there is such a being. Oh, let the Sun of Glory shine upon me and chase away the blackness of my soul, that I may never more question Thy being or omnipotence, which I have had this moment so great experience of".

Then, rising from my knees, I went and sat me down upon a bank, my mind being greatly taken up with the adoring thoughts of that Eternal Goodness that had saved me from the dreadful gulf of everlasting ruin when I was just going to plunge myself into it. And now methought I could not but wonder that I should be such a fool as to call in question the being of a Deity which every creature was witness of, and which a man's own conscience could not but dictate to him.

Now while my thoughts were taken up thus, as I sat upon the bank, I was suddenly surrounded with a glorious light, the exceeding brightness whereof was such as I had never seen any thing like it before. This both surprised and amazed me, and while I was wondering whence it came, I saw coming toward me a glorious appearance, like the person of a man, but circled round about with beams of inexpressible light and glory, which streamed from him all the way he came. His countenance was very awful and yet mixed with such an air of sweetness as rendered it extremely pleasing, and gave me some secret hope that he came not to me as an enemy. And yet I knew not how to bear his bright appearance; and endeavoring to stand upon my feet I soon found I had no more strength in me, and so fell flat down upon my face. But by the kind assistance of his arm, I was soon set upon my feet again, and new strength was put into me. Then I addressed myself to the bright form before me, saying "O my shining deliverer, who hast strengthened my feeble body and restored me to new life, how shall I acknowledge my thankfulness, and in what manner shall I adore thee?"

To which he replied, both with an air of majesty and mildness, "Pay thy adorations to the Author of thy being, and not to me who am thy fellow-creature. I am sent by Him whose very being thou hast so lately denied, to stop thee from falling into that eternal ruin whereinto thou wert going to throw thyself."

This touched my heart with such a sense of my own unworthiness that my soul even melted within, and I could not forbear crying out, "Oh, how utterly unworthy I am of all this grace and mercy!"

To this the heavenly messenger replied, "The divine Majesty does not consult, in showing mercy, thine unworthiness, but His own unbounded goodness and vast love. He saw with how much malice the grand enemy of souls desired thy ruin, and let him go on with hopes of overcoming thee, but still upheld thee by His secret power; through which, when Satan thought himself most sure, the snare is broken, and thou art escaped."

These words made me break forth in rapture:

Oh, who the depths of this great love can tell,
To save a tempted sinking soul from hell!
Oh, glory, glory to my Saviour's name,
I'll now through all eternity proclaim!
Who, when I on the brink of ruin lay,
Saved me from him who would my soul betray:
And now I know, though I no God would own,
The Lord is God, yea, He is God alone!

Chapter II

Beyond the Sun and Stars

Well," said this heavenly visitor with a pleasing countenance, "that you may never doubt any more of the reality of eternal things, the end of my coming to you is to convince you of the truth of them; not by faith only, but by sight also. For I will show you such things as were never yet beheld by mortal eye; and to that end your eyes shall be strengthened and made fit to behold immaterial objects."

At these surprising words of the angel I was much astonished, and doubted how I should be able to bear it. I said to him, "O my lord, who is sufficient to bear such a sight?"

To which he replied, "The joy of the Lord shall be your strength." And when he had said thus, he took hold of me and said, "Fear not; for I am sent to show thee things thou hast not seen." And before I was aware I found myself far above the earth, which seemed to me a very small point in comparison with that region of lights into which I was translated.

Then I said to my bright conductor, "Oh, let it not offend my lord if I ask a question or two of thee."

To this he answered, "Speak on. It is my work to inform thee of such things which thou shalt inquire of me. For I am a ministering spirit, sent forth to minister to thee and to those that shall be heirs of salvation."

I then said, "I would fain be informed what that dark spot, so far below me, is, which has grown less and less as I have mounted higher and higher, and appears much darker since I have come into this region of light."

"That little spot," answered my conductor, "that now looks so dark and contemptible, is that world of which you were so lately an inhabitant. Here you may see how little all that world appears, for a small part of which, so many do continually labor, and lay out all their strength and time to purchase it. This is that spot of earth that is subdivided into so many kingdoms, to purchase one of which so many horrid villainies, so many bloody and unnatural murders, have been committed. Yea, this is that spot of earth, to obtain one small part whereof so many men have run the hazard of losing, nay, have actually lost, their previous and immortal souls; so precious that the Prince of Peace has told us that though one man could gain the whole, it could not countervail so great a loss. And the great reason of their folly is, because they do not look to things above. For as you ascended nearer to this region, the world appeared still less and more contemptible; and so it will do to all who can, by faith, once get their hearts above it. For could the sons of men below but see the world just as it is, they would not covet it as they now do. But they, alas, are in a state of darkness; and which is worse, they love to walk therein. For though the Prince of Light came down among them, and plainly showed them the true Light of Life, yet they go on in darkness and will not bring themselves into the light, because their deeds are evil."

I asked him further, "What were those multitudes of black and horrid forms that hover in the air above the world? which I indeed should have been much afraid of, but that I saw, as you passed by, they fled; perhaps as not being able to abide the brightness with which you are arrayed."

To this he answered me, "They were the fallen and apostate spirits, which for their pride and their rebellion were cast down from heaven and wander in the air by the decree of the Almighty, being bound in chains of darkness, and kept unto the judgment of the great day. And from thence they are permitted to descend into the world, both for the trial of the elect, and for the condemnation of the wicked. And though you now see they have black and horrid forms, yet were they once the sons of Light, and were arrayed in robes of glorious brightness, like what you see me wear, the loss of which, though it was the effect of their own willful sin, fills them with rage and malice against the ever blessed God, whose power and majesty they fear and hate."

"But tell me," said I, "O my happy conductor, have they no hopes of being reconciled to God again, after some term of time, or at least some of them?"

"No, not at all. They are lost forever. They were the first that sinned, and had no tempter; and they were all at once cast down from heaven. Besides, the Son of God, the blessed Messiah by whom alone salvation can be had, took not upon Him the angelic nature, but left the apostate angels all to perish, and took upon Himself only the seed of Abraham. And for this reason they have so much malice against the sons of men, whom it is a torment to them to see made heirs of heaven while they are doomed to hell."

By this time we were got above the sun; whose vast and glorious body, so much greater than the earth, moved round the great expanse wherein it was placed with such a mighty swiftness that to relate it would appear incredible. But my conductor told me this mighty immense hanging globe of fire was one of the great works of God. It always keeps its constant course, and never has the least irregularity in its diurnal, or its annual motion; and so exceeding glorious is its body that had not my eyes been greatly strengthened I could not have beheld it. Nor were those mighty globes of fire we call the fixed stars, less wonderful; whose vast and extreme height, so many leagues above the sun, makes them appear like candles in our sight. And yet they hang within their spheres without any support, in a pure sea of ether. Nothing but His word that first created them could keep them in their station.

"These words are enough," said I to my conductor, "to convince any one of the great power of their much more adorable Creator, and of the blackness of that infidelity which can call in question the being of a Deity, who has given the whole world so many bright evidences of His power and glory, that were not men like beasts, still looking downwards, they could not but acknowledge His great power and wisdom."

"You speak what is true," replied he. "But you shall see far greater things than these. These are all but the scaffolds and outworks to that glorious building wherein the blessed above inhabit, 'that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens,' a view of which (as far as you are capable to comprehend it) shall now be given you."

What I had been told by my conductor I found good in a few moments, for I was presently transferred into the glorious mansions of the blessed, and saw such things as

it is impossible to represent, and heard that ravishing melodious harmony that I can never utter. Well, therefore, might the beloved apostle John tell us in his epistle, "Now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be." Whoever has not seen that glory can speak out very imperfectly of it and they that have cannot tell the thousandth part of what it is. And therefore the great apostle of the Gentiles, who tells us he had been caught up into paradise, where he had heard unspeakable words which is not possible for a man to utter, gives us no other account of it, but that "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things that God has laid up for those that love him." But I will give you the best account I can of what I saw and heard of the blessed discourses I had with some of the blessed, as near as I can remember.

Chapter III

Elijah Explains

When I was first brought near this glorious palace I saw innumerable hosts of bright attendants, who welcomed me into that blissful seat of happiness, having in all their countenances an air of perfect joy and of the highest satisfaction. And there I saw that perfect and unapproachable light, that assimilates all things into its own nature, for even the souls of the glorified saints are transparent. Neither are they enlightened by the sun; but all that light, that flows with so much transparent brightness throughout those heavenly mansions, is nothing else but emanations of the Divine Glory; in comparison of which the light of the sun is but darkness. And all the luster of the most sparkling diamonds, the fire of carbuncles, sapphires and rubies, and the orient brightness of the richest pearl, are but dead coals in comparison to its glory; and therefore called The Throne of the glory of God, wherein the radiant luster of the divine Majesty is revealed in the most illustrious manner."

Deity, exalted on the high throne of His glory, receiving the adoration of myriads of angels and saints, singing forth eternal hallelujahs and praises to Him, was too bright an object for mortality to view. Well may He therefore be called the God of Glory, for by His glorious presence He makes heaven what it is; there being rivers of pleasures, perpetually springing from the divine Presence, and radiating cheerfulness, joy, and splendor to all the blessed inhabitants of heaven, the place of His happy residence, and seat of His eternal empire. For my own part, my eye was so far too weak to bear the least beautiful ray shot from that everlasting Spring of light and glory which sat upon the throne, that I was forced to cry to my conductor, "The sight of so much glory is too great for frail mortality to bear, yet is it so refreshing and delightful that I fain would behold it, though I die."

"No, no," said my conductor, "death enters not within this blessed place. Here life and immortality reside; nor sin nor sorrow here have ought to do. For it is the glory of this happy place to be forever freed from all that is evil; and without that freedom, our blessedness even here would be imperfect. But come along with me and I will bring thee to one that is in the body, as thou art; with him converse awhile, and then I will reconduct thee back again."

"O rather," said I with some eagerness, "let me stay here; for here is no need of building tabernacles. The heavenly mansions are here ready fitted."

To which my shining messenger replied, "Here in a while thou shalt be fixed forever; but the divine will first must be obeyed."

Swift as a thought he presently conveyed me through thousands of those bright and winged spirits, and then presented me to that illustrious saint, the great Elijah, who had lived in the world below so many hundred ages past and gone; and yet methought I knew him at first sight.

"Here's one," said my conductor to Elijah, "who by the commission from the Imperial Throne has been permitted to survey these realms of light; and I have brought him hither, to learn from thee wherein its glory and its happiness consists."

"That," said the prophet, "I shall gladly do, for it is our meat and drink in these blessed regions to do the will of God and the Lamb, to sing His praises, and serve Him with the humblest adoration, saying, 'Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sits upon the throne; and to the Lamb for ever and ever; for he has redeemed us to God by his blood, out of every kindred and tongue, and people and nation, and made us unto our God, kings and priests: Even so, Amen.'" And I likewise added my "Amen" to that of the holy prophet.

The prophet then inquired of me on what account this great permission and privilege was given to me. (By which I understand the saints in heaven are ignorant of what is done on earth; how then can prayers be directed to them?) I then rehearsed what I have already set down, at which the holy prophet broke forth into this exclamation, "Glory for ever be given to Him that sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, for His unbounded goodness, and great condescension to the weakness of a poor doubting sinner." After which he said, "Now give attention to what I shall speak. What you have seen and heard already I am sure you never can relate so as to make it understood, for it is beyond what eye hath seen or ear hath heard, or what the heart of man is able to conceive. I mean of those not yet translated to this glorious state, nor freed from their earthly bodies. Nor is my being in the body here any objection to what I now say; for though it has not been subject to the common lot of mortals, death, yet has it suffered such a change as has been in some sense equal thereto; for it is made both spiritual and impassible, and is now no more capable of any further suffering than those blessed angels are that compass round the throne. And yet in this full state of happiness I cannot utter all that I enjoy, nor do I know what shall be yet enjoyed, for here our happiness is always new.

I then requested of the blessed prophet to explain himself, because I understood not how happiness could be complete, and yet admit of new additions; for in the world below we generally think that what is full is completely finished. "I humbly hope," said I, "what I shall say may not be taken as the effect of vain curiosity, but that my understanding may be cultivated, which yet retains but dark ideas of these heavenly things."

"To satisfy your doubting soul and to confirm your wavering faith is the chief reason of your being brought hither, through the permission of the great Three One; and therefore I would have you still, as any doubt arises in your breast, to make it known. But as to that which you object, that happiness cannot be complete, and yet admit of new additions, I must tell you that when the soul and body both are happy, as mine now are, I count it a complete state of happiness, for through all the innumerable ages of eternity, it is the soul and body joined together in the blessed resurrection state that shall be the continued subject of this happiness. But in respect of the blessed object of it, which is the ever-adorable and blessed God, in whose blissful vision this happiness consists, it is for ever new. For the divine perfections being infinite, nothing less than eternity can be sufficient to display their glory, which makes our happiness eternally

admit of new additions; and by a necessary consequence our knowledge of it shall be eternally progressive too.

"And therefore it was not without reason that the great apostle of the Gentiles (who, in the days of his mortality, was once admitted hither as you are) affirmed, 'Eye hath not seen, nor hath ear heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive what God hath prepared for them that love him.' And yet the eye hath seen many admirable things in nature; it hath seen mountains of crystal, and rocks of diamonds, it has seen mines of gold, and coasts of pearl and spicy islands; and yet the eye that hath seen so many wonders in the world below, could never pry into the glories of this triumphant state. And though the ear of man hath heard many delightful and harmonious sounds, even all that art and nature could supply him with, yet has he never heard the heavenly melody which here both saints and angels make before the throne. The heart of man is of so fine and curious a composure, that it can almost conceive any thing that either is, or was, or ever shall be in the world below; yea, what shall never be. Man can conceive that every stone on earth shall be turned into the most orient pearls, and every blade of grass into the brightest and most shining jewels. He can conceive that every particle of dust shall be turned into silver, and the whole earth into a mass of pure refined gold. He can conceive the air to be turned into a crystal, and every star advanced into a sun; and every sun a thousand times more large and glorious than what he now beholds it. And yet this is infinitely short of what the high eternal Majesty hath prepared for all His faithful followers."

Chapter IV

The Happiness of Heaven

But that you may have," continued the prophet, "the best idea of our happiness, I here will briefly represent unto you (for ages spent in this delightful theme would scarce suffice to tell it you at large) what it is those blessed souls, who, through the glorious purchase of our bright Redeemer, are brought hither, are here delivered from. And for your better understanding it, I shall endeavor to conform my words to your capacity, by comparing things that are here above to what you know below, although your eyes have told you how infinitely heavenly things transcend whatever can be found on earth. And in the second place, I shall represent (as far as your capacity will bear it) what is that happiness the blessed here enjoy.

"First then, the souls of all the blessed are freed forever from whatever it is that can make them miserable; the chief of which you are not ignorant, is sin. It is only that which brings the creature into misery. The blessed God, at first made all things happy; all like Himself, who is supremely so; and had not sin defaced the beauty of heaven's workmanship, angels nor men had never known what is meant by misery. It was sin threw the apostate angels down into hell and spoiled the beauty of the lower world. It was sin defaced God's image in man's soul, and made the lord of the creation a slave to his own lust; and by so doing, plunges himself into an ocean of eternal misery, from whence there is no redemption. It is an invaluable mercy that in this happy place all the inhabitants are freed, forever freed, from sin, through the blood of our redeeming Jesus. Below, the best and holiest souls groan underneath the burden of corruption. Sin cleaves to all they do, and leads them captive oftentimes against their wills. 'Who shall deliver me?' has been the cry of many of God's faithful servants, who at the same time have been dear to Jesus. Sin is the heavy clog of saints themselves, while they are embodied in corrupted flesh; and therefore when they lay their bodies down, their souls are like a bird loosed from its cage, and with an heavenly vigor mount up to this blessed region. But here their warfare is at an end, and 'death is swallowed up in victory.' Here their bright souls, that were below deformed and stained by sin, are by the ever-blessed Jesus presented to the eternal Father 'without spot or wrinkle.'

"But here each blessed soul is likewise freed from sin, so are they likewise from all occasions of it; which is a great addition to our happiness. Adam himself in paradise, though he was in his first creation perfectly innocent and free from sin, yet was he not freed from temptations to it. Satan got into paradise to tempt him, and he fatally yielded to his temptations. He ate of the forbidden fruit, and fell; and by his fall all human nature was corrupted. Sin, like a gangrene, has eaten into the human nature, and corrupted all mankind.

"But here each blessed soul is likewise freed from this. No devil here can tempt them, nor no corruption enter. Nothing but what is pure and holy can find admission here. No sly suggestions from that apostate spirit can molest us here. That roaring lion, who is still traversing the earth and seeking whom he may devour is, with respect to us

in this blessed region, bound fast in everlasting chains. Nor shall the world be any more a tempter to those blessed souls who have through faith and patience overcome its wiles and arrived safely here. As strong as its temptations and allurements are to saints themselves, we that are here possessed of heavenly mansions, look with contempt on all earthly enjoyments. We here are got above the world, and all that it can tempt us with; and through the blood of our triumphing Jesus, have got the victory over it. There is nothing here that can disturb our peace, but an eternal calm crowns all our happiness, being freed from sin and all temptations to it. "Thirdly, we here are freed from the effects of sin, and that is punishment; which those that are confined to the dark regions of eternal misery are ever groaning under, as that which they cannot bear, and yet as that which they must ever suffer. It was sin that ushered death into the world below.

"There are the things we are in this blessed state delivered from: and yet these make up the least part of the happiness of heaven. Our joys are positive, as well as negative, and what those are, I now proceed to show you.

"We here enjoy the sight of God, the blessed spring and eternal source of all our happiness. But what this is, I can no more declare than can finite creatures comprehend infinity; only we find that it continually fills our souls with joy unspeakable and full of glory; and with a love so flaming that nothing but the blessed Author of it can satisfy; nor eternity itself can end. It is that which makes us live, and love, and sing, and praise for ever; and which transforms our souls into His blessed likeness. The saints below, while they are traveling towards this blessed country are in their pilgrimage supported by His everlasting arms, by which they are enabled to go from grace to grace. But we that are safe landed on the haven of eternal happiness, are 'changed from glory to glory even by the Spirit of the Lord.' But to bring things nearer to your understanding--by the beholding of God's face we have a real enjoyment of His love, and His blessed smiles make glad our souls and in His favor is life.' And then by this blessed vision of God, we come to know Him above whatever any did below; for it is a sight of Him that opens our understanding, and 'gives us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' Here we all enjoy Him face to face. Below the saints enjoy God in a measure, but here we enjoy Him without measure. There they have some sips of His goodness, but here we have large draughts thereof, and swim in the boundless ocean of happiness. Below, the saints' communion with God is many times broken off, but here we have an uninterrupted enjoyment of God, without intermission. Here we enjoy the perfection of all grace. Below love is mixed with fear, and fear hath torment; but here love is perfect, and perfect love casts out fear. Here we love the blessed God more than ourselves, and one another like ourselves. We here are all the children of one Father, and all our brethren are alike dear unto us. Our knowledge in the world below was very imperfect, but here we see God as He is, and so come to know Him as we are known. Our joy also is here in its perfection."

"Here we have our capacities enlarged, according to the greatness of the objects we have to contemplate. While we were in the world below, no light could shine into our minds but through the windows of our senses, and therefore it was that the blessed God was pleased to condescend to our capacities, and to adapt the expressions of His Majesty to the narrowness of our imaginations. But here, the revelation of the Deity is

much more glorious, and our minds are clarified from all those earthly images that flow through the gross channels of the senses. Below, our purest conceptions of God were very imperfect. But here the gold is separated from the dross, and our conceptions are more proper and becoming the simplicity and purity of God. Below the objects of glory were humbled to the perceptions of sense; but here the sensible faculties are raised and refined, and made the subjects of glory.

"Now therefore since the divine light shines with direct beams, and the thick curtains of flesh are spiritualized and transparent, the soul enjoys the clearest visions of God. We now see what we before believed of the glorious nature of the ever blessed God, His decrees and counsels, His providence and dispensations. We here clearly see that from eternity God was sole existing, but not solitary, that the Godhead is neither confused in unity, nor divided in number; and that there is a priority of order, but no superiority among the sacred persons of the ineffable Trinity, but that they are equally possessed of the same divine excellencies and the same divine empire, and they are equally the object of the same divine adoration. Those ways of God, that below seemed unsearchable, and that we thought unlawful to inquire into, we here perceive to be the product of divine wisdom, with so much clearness that truth itself is not more evident.

"These things," added the prophet in a different tone, "are some of those that constitute our happiness. Yet all these things are only what relate unto our souls. But still the happiness of the inhabitants of this blessed region is not complete until their bodies are raised and reunited to their souls. In which, through the divine munificence, myself and the blessed Enoch do enjoy a more peculiar preference, being translated hither in the body, as types of both the anti-and the post-diluvian world, of the resurrection of the ever adorable Son of God, and of all the saints through Him. Now because none but the great Messiah has been actually raised from the dead, He being the first-fruits thereof (for as for Enoch and myself our bodies have not known death, though they have received a change equivalent thereto), it is therefore most difficult to declare what the resurrection state shall be, it being discernible in its perfection only from His glorious body, to which neither that of Enoch's nor mine are comparable in respect to the glory thereof, though both are spiritual bodies, of which I will now show you the distinct properties.

1. "The bodies of the blessed here, at the resurrection, shall be (as mine is now) spiritual bodies; and by your not only seeing, but touching me (at which word the holy prophet was pleased to give me his hand) you may be the better able to know what I mean by spiritual body. That is, a body rarefied from all gross alloys of corruption, and made a pure and refined body, and yet a substantial one, not composed of wind and air as mortals below are apt too grossly to imagine."

Here I entreated the holy prophet to bear with me, if I informed him that I always understood spiritual as opposed to material, and consequently that a spiritual body must be immaterial, and so not capable of being felt as I found his was.

To this the prophet replied that their bodies were spiritual, not only as they were purified from all corruption, but as they were sustained by the enjoyment of God, without any material refreshments as meat, drink, sleep and raiment, which were the support of

our bodies below. "Have you not read," said the prophet, "that the blessed Jesus, after His resurrection, appeared in His body to His disciples when they were met together in a chamber and the doors shut about them? And yet He called to Thomas to come and reach forth his hand and thrust it into His side, which shows it as plainly to be substantial. The vision of our blessed Lord is here what both our souls and bodies live upon and are supported by forever.

2. "Our bodies in the resurrection shall be immortal, and incapable of dying. Below their bodies are all mortal, dying and perishing, and subject to be crumbled into dust every moment. But here our bodies will be incorruptible and freed from death for ever, for our corruption here shall put on incorruption and our mortality be swallowed up of life."

Here I desired the prophet to bear with me a little, while I gave him an account of my own notions in this matter.

"Say on, for I am ready to remove your doubt," he said. "I have learned," said I, "in the Holy Scriptures that immortality is an attribute that belongs to God only, and not to men, especially to the bodies of men which every day's experience tells us are mortal. Therefore Paul tells Timothy that God only hath immortality."

"When I say that bodies of the blessed here are immortal, I intend it of bodies in their raised state, that then they are subject unto death no more. Man in his corruptible state is mortal and subject unto death. And there is nothing more evident to all that dwell in the world below. Even the bodies of all those glorified souls that are here are at this time kept under the power of death. But at the resurrection state, when they shall be raised up again, they shall then be immortal. And as to what you urge from the Scripture, that the blessed God has only immortality, it is very true. He is most eminently and essentially so; there is no creature, either angel or man, that can in that strict sense be said to be so. We are immortal through His grace and favor; but God is immortal in His essence, and has been so from all eternity, and in that sense may well be said only to have immortality. And therefore, it will not be amiss for you to observe that whatever the blessed God is, He is eminently and essentially so. In which respect it is likewise said of Him that He only is holy, and there is none good but God, none righteous, nor none merciful but He, to whom be blessing, and glory, and honor, and praise, forever and forevermore."

Chapter V

We Shall Know Each Other

I remarked, "I saw among the many blessed souls I passed by as my bright messenger brought me to you, some that appeared to shine with greater brightness than the others. Are there among the blessed different degrees of glory?"

"The happiness and glory which all the blessed here enjoy is the result of their communion with and love to the ever blessed God whose beautiful vision is the eternal spring from whence it flows. The more we see, the more we love; and love assimilates our souls into the nature of the blessed object of it; and thence results our glory. This makes a difference in the degrees of glory. Nor is there any murmuring in one to see another's glory much greater than his own. The ever blessed God is an unbounded ocean of light and life, and joy and happiness, still filling every vessel that is put therein, till it can hold no more. And though the vessels are of several sizes, while each is filled there is none that can complain. My answer therefore to your question is that those who have the most enlarged faculties do love God most, and are thereby assimilated most into His likeness, which is the highest glory heaven can give. Nor let this seem strange to you, for even among God's flaming angels there are diversities of order and different degrees of glory. And perhaps these were some of those you saw as you came hither."

While I was thus talking with the prophet a shining form drew near. It was one of the redeemed. He told me he had left his body below, resting in hope until the resurrection; and that though he was still a substance yet it was an immaterial one, not to be touched by mortal.

He said, "We here behold a sight worth dying for--the blessed Lamb of God, the glorious Saviour. Here we see Him in the regal state that belongs to Him by virtue of His kingly office, on account of which He is styled King of kings and Lord of lords. But all the glorious greatness of our blessed Redeemer does not make His kindness less familiar, but only more obliging. It makes heaven more than heaven to me to find Him reigning here, who suffered so much for me in the world below. And our Redeemer's happiness which is so great and so ineffable, brings an increase to ours, according to the ardency of our love to Him. Here he invites each faithful servant to no less a blessing than to enter into his Master's joy."

"Here we see not only our elder Brother, Christ, but also our friends and relations. Thus though Elijah lived in the world below long before your time, you no sooner saw him than you knew him. And so you will know Adam also when you see him. Here we communicate the purest pleasure to each other, an unfeigned ardent love uniting all our pure society. Here every one is perfectly amiable and perfectly enamored with each other. And oh, how happy is this state of love! How it doth ravish me to see my fellow saints shining with an immortal loveliness! And where there is love like this, all needs must be delight. And how can it be otherwise, since in this blessed society there is a

continual receiving and returning of love and joy, and their conversation and intercourse is ravishing.

"But besides all the happiness that comes to us by the knowledge of our friends and relations, and that which comes from communion we have here with God and with each other, it is to me a mighty happiness to understand all those deep and obscure mysteries of religion which the profoundest rabbis of the world below could not fully understand. Here we discern a perfect harmony between those texts that in the world below seemed most at variance. And here we are especially transported with wonder and gratitude at discoveries of the divine goodness towards each one of us in particular. O Epenetus! I have seen towards myself not only the necessity and justice, but even the mercifulness of those very afflictions that I once (when upon earth) imputed to His severity. And I am now fully convinced no stroke I met with in the world below (and I met with many, as well as great afflictions) either came sooner or fell heavier or stood longer than was needful. And I am sure my hopes were never disappointed, but to secure my title to better things than what I hoped for. "But I remember, Epenetus, you are still in the body, and may be tired with hearing what I could be forever telling, so vast is the happiness that I possess, and so great the pleasure in telling it. I shall now add only one other thing concerning our happiness: that the last multitude of blessed souls who are partakers of this joy and glory, does detract nothing from each private share. For this ocean of happiness is so bottomless that the innumerable company of all the saints and angels never can exhaust it. Nor is this strange, for in the world below each nation does alike enjoy the benefit of light. Nor is there any that can complain they enjoy it less because another enjoys it also. But all enjoy its benefit as fully as if none else enjoyed it but themselves. Indeed there is this difference between the Sun of Righteousness and that sun which shines upon the world below: that whereas the world's sun eclipses all the planets (his attendants), the Sun of Righteousness will by His presence impart splendor to His saints. If a multitude of persons drink of the same river none of them is able to exhaust it. And yet each of them has the full liberty of drinking as much as he can. So whoever enjoys God enjoys Him wholly, or at least enjoys Him in relation to his capacity.

"Thus Epenetus, I have given you a brief account of our celestial Canaan. It is not the thousandth part of that which might be said, yet it is enough to let you see it is a land flowing with milk and honey. And it may well serve to whet your longing for a more experimental knowledge of it. For none can fully know the happiness we here enjoy until they come to be partakers of it.

In this happy place worldly relations cease. Nor is there male and female here, but all are like the angels. For souls cannot be distinguished into sexes, and therefore all relations are here swallowed up in God."

He had no sooner spoken, than taking me by the hand, far swifter than an arrow from a bow, we passed by several shining forms clothed in robes of immortality, who seemed to wonder at me as I passed them. He said, to me, "Farewell, my Epenetus, your guardian angel will be with you straight, and reconduct you to the world below."

I drew near the shining form of a redeemed one that stood before me, who appeared extremely glorious, compassed round with rays of dazzling luster. I hardly could behold her for the exceeding brightness of her face.

She said to me, "For what I am, to Him that is on the throne be all the praise and glory. The robe of glory which you see me wear is only the reflection of His own bright beams!"

"You speak like one who feels the mighty joys you are possessed of."

She replied, "You should not think this strange. The mighty wonders of divine love and grace will be the subject of our song forever. Here all human relations cease and are all swallowed up in God who is alone the great Father of all this heavenly family. Since I have put off the body, I have with that too put off all relations in the flesh. Nor here have I any relations else. We are all children of one Father here, and servants of one Master, whose blessed service is our perfect freedom. And as for those I left behind me in the world below, I have committed them to God. I shall be glad to see them all heirs of this blessed inheritance. But if they should close in with the grand enemy of souls, and refuse the grace offered them, and thereby perish in their unbelief, God will be glorified in His justice, and in His glory I shall still rejoice."

Then I desired to know whether the blessed understood what was going on in the world below, and whether they had any concern therein.

To this she replied, "As to the affairs of particular persons, we are not concerned with them and are ignorant of them. The being present in all places is an attribute peculiar to God alone, to whose sight every creature is manifest, though the prosperity of adversity of the church below in their militant state is represented to us by the angels, who are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those that shall be heirs of salvation. And from what we learn by them we are excited to renew our praises to Him that sits upon the throne."

Chapter VI

Conducted to Hell

She had no sooner spoke but she departed, and the bright form that brought me from the world below into this place of happiness, was present. "I have," said the angel, "a commission to reconduct you to the world below; not only to the earth from whence I took you, but to the regions of the prince of darkness, that you may there see the reward of sin, and what incensed Justice has prepared as the just judgment of their rebellion who would exalt themselves above the throne of the Most High. But do not therefore be afraid, for as I have a commission to take you thither, so have I likewise to bring you back again, and leave you in the world from whence I took you."

To leave heaven for earth was extremely distasteful and would have rendered me unhappy but that I knew the divine will was such. But to leave heaven for hell was that which turned my very heart within me. However, when I knew that it was the divine good pleasure that I should be returned from thence to earth again, and there put off mortality, and then be reconducted up to heaven. I was a little comforted, and found within myself an entire resignation to the will of God. Therefore I said with some assurance to my bright conductor, "That which the blessed God has ordered I shall be always willing to obey, of whose great mercy I have already had so very large experience, that even in hell itself I will not fear, may I but have His presence with me there."

To this my shining guardian answered me, "Wherever the blessed God grants His presence, there is heaven, and while we are in hell He will be with us."

Then bowing low before the Almighty's throne, swifter than thought my guardian angel carried me more than ten thousand leagues below the imperial heavens, where, when I saw those mighty globes of fires, those ever burning lamps of the ethereal heavens, I thus bespoke my bright conductor that I had heard when I was upon earth that each one of these fixed stars were worlds, and I believed they might be, because, though here they are of such a mighty magnitude, they seem to us on earth just such small things as what the earth seems here. "But I would willingly be informed from you what truth there is therein."

To this my shining guardian answered me, "To Him who is almighty there is nothing impossible; nor can there be a bound set to infinity. The ever blessed God took six days time to make the world below, but could as well have made it in one moment if He had so determined. It was the putting forth of His almighty power that did effect it; and what that power can do there is none can tell but He that does possess it. But from His power, to argue it is His will, is no good logic in the school of heaven. He does whatever He pleases, both in heaven above and in the earth below; and what He pleases to reveal to us, we know; and what He has not so revealed, are secrets locked up in His own eternal counsel, which is a bold and presumptuous curiosity for any creature to inquire into. There is no doubt but He can make as many worlds as there

are stars in heaven, if it pleases Him; but that He has done so He has not yet revealed, nor is it therefore our duty to inquire."

By this time we were come down to the lowest regions of the air where I saw multitudes of horrid forms and dismal dark appearances fly from the shining presence of my bright conductor.

"These sure," said I, "are some of the vanguard of hell, so black and so affrighting are their forms."

"These are," said my conductor, "some of the apostate spirits that wander up and down in the air and on the earth like roaring lions, seeking whom they may devour. And though they are led hence you will see them quickly in their own dark territories, for we are now upon the borders of the infernal pit.

I quickly found the words of my conductor very true; for we were soon surrounded with a darkness much more black than night, which was attended with a stink more suffocating far than that of burning brimstone; my ears were likewise filled with the horrid yellings of the damned spirits, that all the most discordant notes on earth were, in comparison of this, melodious music.

"Now," said my guardian angel, "you are on the verge of hell, but do not fear the power of the destroyer, for my commission from the Imperial Throne secures you from all dangers. Here you may hear from devils and damned souls the cursed causes of their endless ruin. And what you have a mind to ask, inquire, and they shall answer you. The devils cannot hurt you, though they would, for they are bound by Him that has commissioned me, of which themselves are sensible, which makes them rage and fret and roar and bite their hated chains, but all in vain."

We now were come within hell's territories, placed in the caverns of the infernal deep; there, where earth's center reconciles all things, where all effects do in their causes sleep. There, in a sulphurous lake of liquid fire found with the adamantine chain of heaven's fixed decree, sat Lucifer upon a burning throne, his horrid eyes sparkling with hellish fury, as full of rage as his strong pains could make him. Those wandering fiends, that as we came from heaven fled before us, had (I perceived) given notice of our coming, which put all hell in an uproar, and thus made Lucifer to vent his horrid blasphemies against the blessed God, which he delivered with an air of arrogance and pride.

"What would the Thunderer have?" said he. "He has my heaven already, whose radiant scepter this bold hand should bear. And for those never fading fields of light, my fair inheritance, confines me here in this dark house of death, sorrow, and woe! What would He have hell from me too that He insults me here? Ah! could I but obtain another day to try it in, I would make heaven shake and His bright throne to totter. Nor would I fear the utmost of His power, though He had fiercer flames than these to throw me in. Though then I lost the day, the fault was not mine! No winged spirit in heaven's arched roof bid fairer for the victory than I did. But, ah!" he continued with a changed voice, "that day is lost, and I am doomed, for ever doomed to these dark territories! But it is at least some comfort to me still that mankind's sorrow waits upon my woe. And since I cannot on the Thunderer, I will wreak the utmost of my rage on them."

I was amazed to hear his impious speech, and could not forbear saying to my conductor, "How justly are his blasphemies rewarded!"

"What you have heard from this apostate spirit is both his sin and punishment; for every blasphemy he belches against heaven, makes hell the hotter to him."

We then passed on further, among dismal scenes of unmixed sorrow, and saw two wretched souls tormented by a fiend who without ceasing plunged them in liquid fire and burning brimstone, while they at the same time accused and cursed each other. One of them said to his tormented fellow sufferer, "O cursed by your face, that ever I set eyes upon you! My misery is due to you; I may thank you for this, for it was your persuasions brought me hither; you enticed me, you it was who ensnared me thus. It was your covetousness and cheating and your oppression and grinding of the poor that brought me hither. If you had but set me a good example as you did an ill one, I might have been in heaven, and there have been as happy as I am now miserable. But, O wretch that I was! my following your steps has made me in this wretched state and ruined me forever; O that I never had seen your face, or you had never been born to do my soul that wrong that you have done."

The other wretch replied, "And may I not as well blame you? For do you not remember how at such a time and place you did entice me and drew me out and asked me if I would not go along with you, when I was about my other business, about my lawful calling? But you called me away, and therefore are as much in fault as I. Though I was covetous, yet you were proud, and if you learned of me your covetousness, I am sure I learned of you my pride and drunkenness; and though you learned of me to cheat, yet you taught me to lust, to lie, and scoff at goodness. Thus, though I stumbled you in some things, you stumbled me as much in others; and therefore if you blame me, I can blame you as much. And if I have to answer for some of your most filthy actions, you have still to answer for some of mine. I wish you never had come hither; the very looks of you do wound my soul, by bringing sin afresh into my mind. It was with you, with you it was I sinned. Oh grief unto my soul! And since I could not shun your company there, O that I could have been without it here!

From this sad dialogue I soon perceived that those who are companions upon earth in sin shall be so too in hell in punishment. And though on earth they love each other's company, they will not care for it in hell. This, I believe was the true reason why Dives seemed so charitable to his brethren, that they might not come into this place of torment; it was love unto himself and not to them that was his motive; because had they come thither, his torments would have thereby been increased.

Chapter VII

Tortures of Hell

But there were yet more tragic scenes of sorrow, for leaving these two cursed wretches accusing each other for being authors of each other's misery, we passed on further, beholding several woeful spectacles; and among others, one who still had flaming sulfur forced down her throat by a tormenting spirit; which he did with that horrid cruelty and insolence I could not but say to him, "Why should you so delight in the tormenting of that cursed wretch as to be thus perpetually pouring that flaming, infernal liquor down her throat?"

"This is no more but a just retribution", replied the fiend. "This woman in her life time was such a sordid wretch that though she had gold enough, could never be satisfied, and therefore now I pour it down her throat. She cared not who she ruined and undid, so she could get their gold. And when she had amassed together a greater treasure than ever she could spend, her love of money would not let her spend so much of it as to supply herself with what the common necessities of life required; for she then went often with an empty stomach, though her bags were full, or else she filled it at another's charge. And as for her apparel, it either never grew old or it was always so supplied with patches that at last it was hard to say which piece was an original. She kept no house because she would not be taxed; nor keep her treasure in her hands for fear she should be robbed; nor let it out on bonds and mortgages for fear of being cheated; although she ever cheated all she could, and was herself so great a cheat she cheated her own body of its food and her own soul of mercy. Since gold then was her god on earth, is it not just that she should have her belly full in hell?"

When her tormentor had done speaking, I asked her whether what he said were true or not? To this she answered me, "No; to my grief it is not." "How! to your grief?" said I. "Yes, to my grief," said she. "Because were that which my tormentor tells you true, I should be better satisfied. He tells you that it is gold that he pours down my throat; but he is a lying devil and speaks falsely. Were it but gold I never should complain. But he abuses me, and in the stead of gold he only gives the horrid, stinking sulfur. Had I my gold I should be happy still, which I so truly value that if I had it here I scarce would bribe heaven with it to be removed thence."

I could not forbear telling my conductor I was amazed to hear a wretch in hell itself so to do at upon her riches and that, too, while in the tormentor's hands.

"This may," said he, "convince you it is sin that is the greatest of all evils; and where love of that prevails that therefore it is the greatest of all punishments to be abandoned to the love of sin. The love of gold (to which this cursed creature is given up) is a more fatal punishment than that which the apostate spirits here inflict upon her."

"Oh!" said I, "could but wicked men on earth, for one small moment lay their ears to this mouth of Tophet and hear those horrid shrieks of damned souls, they could not be in love with sin again."

"Eternal Truth has told us otherwise, for those who will not fear His ministers, nor have regard to what His Word contains, will not be warned though one should come from hell."

We had not come much farther before we saw a wretched soul lie on a bed of burning steel, almost choked with brimstone; who cried out as one under a dreadful anguish, with a note of desperation; which made me desire of my conductor to stay a while that I might listen more attentively to what he said; and thereupon I heard him speak as follows:

"Ah, miserable wretch! Undone for ever, for ever! Oh, these killing words for ever! Will not a thousand thousand years suffice to bear that pain which if I could avoid it I would not bear one moment for a thousand thousand worlds? No, no, my misery never will have an end; after the thousand thousand years it will be for ever still. Oh, hapless, helpless, hopeless state indeed! It is this forever is the hell of hell! O cursed wretch! Cursed to all eternity! How willfully have I undone myself! Oh, what stupendous folly am I guilty of to choose sin's short and momentary pleasure at the dear rate of everlasting pain! How oft have I been told it would be so! How often pressed to leave those paths of sin that would be sure to bring me to the chambers of eternal death! But I, like the deaf adder, lent no ear unto those charmers though they charmed so wisely. They told me often that my short-lived pleasures would quickly issue in eternal pain; and now too sad experience tells me so, it tells me so indeed, but it is too late to help it for my eternal state is fixed for ever. Why had I reason given me? Why was I made with an immortal soul and yet should take so little care of it? Oh, how my own neglect stings me to death, and yet I know I cannot, I must not die! But live a dying life, worse than ten thousand deaths; and yet I might once have helped all this, and would not! Oh, that is the gnawing worm that never dies! I might once have been happy, salvation once was offered me and I refused it. Ah, had it been but once, yet to refuse it had been a folly not to be forgiven, but it was offered me a thousand times, and yet (wretch that I was) I still as often refused it. O cursed sin, that with deluding pleasures bewitches mankind to eternal ruin! God often called, but I as often refused; He stretched His hand out, but I would not mind it. How often have I set at nought His counsel! How often have I refused His reproof! But now the scene is changed, the case is altered; for now He laughs at my calamity, and mocks at the destruction which is come upon me. He would have helped me once, but then I would not, and therefore those eternal miseries I am condemned to undergo are but the just reward of my own doing."

I could not hear this doleful lamentation without reflecting on the wondrous grace the ever blessed God had shown to me; eternal praises to His holy name! For my heart told me that I had deserved as much as that sad wretch to be the object of eternal wrath; and it is His grace alone has made us differ! O how unsearchable His counsels be! And who can fathom His divine decree?

After these reflections I addressed myself to the doleful complainer, and told him I had heard his woeful lamentation, by which I perceived his misery was great, and his loss irreparable; and told him I would willingly be informed of it more particularly, which might possibly be some lessening of his sufferings.

"No, not at all; my pains are such as can admit of no relief, no not for one small moment. But by the question you have asked I do perceive you are a stranger here; and may you ever be so. Ah! had I but the least hopes still remaining, how would I kneel and cry and pray for ever to be redeemed from hence! But ah! it is all in vain, I am lost forever. Though that you may beware of coming hither, I will tell you what the damned suffer here."

Chapter VIII

A Lost Soul Speaks

Our miseries in this infernal dungeon are of two sorts; what we have lost, and what we undergo. And these I will name under their several heads. First then for what we have lost.

"1. In this sad dark abode of misery and sorrow, we have lost the presence of the ever blessed God. And this is that which makes this dungeon hell. Though we had lost a thousand worlds, it would not be so much as this one loss. Could but the least glimpse of His favor enter here, we might be happy; but we have lost it to our everlasting woe.

"2. Here we have likewise lost the company of saints and angels, and in their room have nothing but tormenting devils.

"3. Here we have lost heaven, too, the seat of blessedness. There is a deep gulf betwixt us and heaven, so that we are shut out from thence forever. Those everlasting gates that let the blessed into happiness are now for ever shut against us here.

"4. To make our wretchedness far yet more wretched, we have lost the hope of ever being in a better state, which renders our condition truly hopeless. He that upon earth is the most miserable, has yet hope left as a reserve. And therefore, it is a common proverb there that were it not for hope the heart would break. Well may our hearts break then since we are here both without hope and help. This is what we have lost; which, but to think on, is enough to tear and rend and gnaw upon our miserable souls forever. Yet, oh, that this were all! But we have sense of pain as well as loss. And having showed you what we have lost, I am now to show you what we undergo.

"1. And first, we undergo variety of torments; we are tormented here a thousand, nay ten thousand several ways. They that are most afflicted upon earth have seldom any more than one distemper at a time. But should they have the plague, the gout, the stone and fever at a time, how miserable would they think themselves? Yet all those are but like the biting of a flea to those intolerable, pungent pains that we endure. Here we have all the loathed variety of hell to grapple with. Here is fire that is unquenchable to burn us with; a lake of burning brimstone ever choking us; eternal chains to tie us; here is utter darkness to affright us, and a worm of conscience that gnaws upon us everlastingly. And any one of these is worse to bear than all the torments mankind ever felt on earth.

"2. But as our torments here are various so are they universal too; afflicting each part of the body, and tormenting all the powers of the soul, which renders what we suffer most unsufferable. In those distempers you men are seized with on earth, though some parts are afflicted, other parts are free. Although your body may be out of order, your head may yet be well; and though your head be ill your vitals may be free; or though your vitals be affected, your arms and legs may still be clear. But here it is otherwise; each member of the soul and body is at once tormented. "The eye is here tormented

with the sight of devils who do appear in all the horrid shapes and black appearances that sin can give them. The ear is continually tormented with the loud yellings and continual outcries of the damned. The nostrils smothered with sulphurous flames; the tongue with burning blisters; and the whole body rolled in flames of liquid fire. And all the powers and faculties of our souls are here tormented. The imagination, with the thoughts of present pain; the memory lost with reflecting on what a heaven we have lost, and of those opportunities we had of being saved. Our minds are here tormented with considering how vainly we have spent our previous time, and how we have abused it. Our understanding is tormented in the thoughts of our past pleasures, present pains, and future sorrows, which are to last for ever. And our consciences are tormented with a continual gnawing worm.

"3. Another thing that makes our misery awful is the extremity of our torments. The fire that burns us is so violent that all the water in the sea can never quench it. The pains we suffer here are so extreme that it is impossible they should be known by any one but those that feel them.

"4. Another part of our misery is the ceaselessness of our torments. As various, as universal, and as extremely violent as they are, they are continual, too. Nor have we the least rest from them. If there were any relaxation, it might be some allay. But this makes our condition so deplorable that there is no easing of our torments, but what we suffer now we must for ever suffer.

"5. The society or company we have here is another element in our misery. Tormenting devils and tormented souls are all our company; and dreadful shrieks and howlings, under the fierceness of our pain, and fearful oaths, is all our conversation. And here the torments of our fellow sufferers are so far from lessening our misery that they increase our pain.

"6. The place in which we suffer is another thing that increases our sufferings. It is the abstract of all misery, a prison, a dungeon, a bottomless pit, a lake of fire and brimstone, a furnace of fire that burns to eternity, the blackness of darkness for ever; and lastly, hell itself. And such a wretched place as this must needs increase our wretchedness.

"7. The cruelty of our tormentors is another thing that adds to our torments. Our tormentors are devils in whom there is no pity; but being tormented themselves, do yet take pleasure in tormenting us.

"8. All those particulars that I have reckoned up are very grievous; but that which makes them much more grievous is that they shall ever be so; and all our most intolerable sufferings shall last to all eternity. 'Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire,' is that which is perpetually sounding in my ears. Oh, that I could reverse that fatal sentence! Oh, that there was but a bare possibility of doing it! Thus have I showed you the miserable case that we are in, and shall be in forever."

Chapter IX

Further Conversation With The Lost

This wretched soul had scarcely made an end of what he was saying before he was afresh tormented by a hellish fury, who bid him cease complaining, for it was in vain. "Besides," said he, "do you know you have deserved it all? How often were you told of this before, but would not then believe it? You laughed at them that told you of a hell; nay you were so presumptuous to dare Almighty justice to destroy you! How often have you called on God to damn you. And do you complain that you are answered according to your wishes? What an unreasonable thing is this that you should call so often for damnation, and yet be so uneasy under it? You own yourself, you had salvation offered you, and you refused it; with what face then can you complain of being damned? I have more reason to complain than you, for you have had a long time of repentance given you; but I was turned to hell as soon as I had sinned. You had salvation offered you, and pardon and forgiveness often tendered you; but I never had any mercy offered me; but was consigned as soon as I had sinned to everlasting punishment. If I had had the offer of salvation I never would have slighted it as you have done. And it had been better for you that you had never had the offer of it either; for then damnation had been easier to you. Who do you think should pity you that would be damned in spite of heaven itself?

This made the wretch cry out, "Oh, do not thus continue to torment me; I know that my destruction is of myself. Oh, that I could forget it! The thoughts of that is here my greatest plague. I would be damned, and therefore justly am so."

Then turning to the fiend that tortured him he said, "But it was through thy temptations, cursed devil. It was thou that tempted me to all the sins I have been guilty of; and dost thou now upbraid me? You say you never had a Saviour offered you; but you should call to mind you never had a tempter neither, as I have had continually of thee."

To this the devil scornfully replied, "I own it was my business to decoy you hither; and you have often been told so by your preachers. They told you plain enough we sought your ruin, and went about continually like roaring lions, seeking whom we could devour; and I was oft afraid you would believe them, as several did, to our great disappointment. But you were willing to do what we would have you; and since you have done our work it is but reasonable that we should pay you wages." And then the fiend tormented him afresh, which caused him to roar out so horribly I could no longer stay to hear him, and so passed away.

"How dismal," said I then to my conductor, "is the condition of these damned souls! They are the devil's slaves while upon earth, and he upbraids and then torments them for it when they come to hell."

"Their malice against all the race of Adam," said my conductor, "is exceeding great. And because many souls are ignorant of their devices, they easily prevail upon

them to their eternal ruin. And how they treat them here, for listening to their temptations, you have seen already and will see more of it quickly."

Passing a little further we saw a multitude of damned souls together, gnashing their teeth with extreme rage and pain, while the tormenting fiends with hellish fury poured liquid fire and brimstone continually upon them: they, in the meantime, cursing God themselves and those about them, in blaspheming after a tremendous manner. I could not forbear asking of one fiend that so tormented them who they were that he used so cruelly?

Said he, "They are those that very well deserve it. These are those cursed wretches that would teach others the right road to heaven, while yet themselves were so in love with hell that they came hither. These are those souls that have been the great factors of hell upon the earth, and therefore do deserve a particular regard in hell. We use our utmost diligence to give every one their utmost share of torments, but will be sure to take care these shall not want; for these have not only their own sins to answer for, but all those too whom they have led astray both by their doctrine and example."

"Since they have been such great factors for hell, as you say, methinks gratitude should oblige you to use them a little more kindly."

To this the impudent fiend answered me in a scoffing manner, "They that expect gratitude among devils will find themselves mistaken; gratitude is a virtue; but we hate all virtue and profess an immortal enmity against it. Besides we hate all mankind, and were it in our power not one of them should be happy. It is true we do not tell them so upon earth, because there it is our business; to flatter and delude them; but when we have them here where they are fast enough (for from hell there is no redemption) we soon convince them of their folly in believing us."

From the discourse I had heard of this and other of the devils, I could not but reflect that it is infinite and unspeakable grace by which any poor sinners are brought to heaven, considering how many snares and baits are laid by the enemy of souls to entrap them by the way; and therefore it is a work well worthy of the blessed Son of God to save His people from their sins, and to deliver them from the wrath to come. But it is an unaccountable folly and madness in men to refuse the offers of His grace, and to close in with the destroyer.

Going farther on, I heard a wretch complaining in a heartbreaking strain against those men that had betrayed him hither.

"I was told," said he, "by those that I depended on and thought could have informed me right, that if I said but 'Lord, have mercy on me,' when I came to die it would be enough to save me. But oh, how wretchedly I find myself mistaken, to my eternal sorrow! Alas, I called for mercy on my deathbed, but found it was too late. This cursed devil here that told me just before that I was safe enough, then told me it was too late; and hell must be my portion."

"You see I told you true at last," said the devil, "and then you would not believe me. A very pretty business! is it not, think you? You spend your days in the pursuit of sin, and wallow in your filthiness, and you would go to heaven when you die! Would any but a madman think that would ever do? No; he that in good earnest does intend to go to heaven when he dies must walk in the ways of holiness and virtue while he lives.

You say some of your lewd companions told you that saying, 'Lord, have mercy on me,' when you came to die would be enough. A very fine excuse! You might have known, if you'd have given yourself but leisure to have read the Bible that 'Without holiness there is none shall see the Lord.' Therefore this is the sum of the matter, you were willing to live in your sins as long as you could, you did not leave them at last because you did not like them, but because you could follow them no longer. And this you know to be true. And could you have the impudence to think to go to heaven with the love of sin in your heart? No, no, no such matter. You have been warned often enough that you should take heed of being deceived, for God would not be mocked, but such as you sowed you should also reap. So that you have no reason to complain of any thing but your own folly, which you now see too late."

"This lecture of the devil was a very cutting one to the poor tormented wretch," said I to my conductor, "and contains the true case of many now on earth as well as those in hell. But oh, what a far different judgment do they make in this sad state from what they did on earth?"

"The reason of this is," replied my guardian angel, "because they will not allow themselves to think what the effect of sin will be, nor what an evil it is, while upon earth. It is inconsideration that is the ruin of so many thousands, who think not what they are doing nor whither they are going till it is too late to help it."

Chapter X

An Atheist in Hell

We had not gone much farther before we heard another tormenting himself and increasing his own misery by thinking of the happiness of blessed souls.

We were diverted from giving any further ear unto these stinging self-reflections of this poor lost creature by seeing a vast number of tormenting fiends lashing incessantly a numerous company of wretched souls with knotted whips of ever burning steel; while they roared out with cries so very piercing and so lamentable I thought it might have melted even cruelty itself into some pity, which made me say to one of the tormentors, "Oh, stay your hand, and do not use such cruelty as this to them who are your fellow creatures, and whom perhaps you have yourselves betrayed to all this misery."

"No," answered the tormentor very smoothly, "though we are bad enough, no devil ever was as bad as they, nor guilty of such crimes as they have been. For we all know there is a God, although we hate Him; but these are such as never could be brought to own (till they came hither) that there was such a Being."

"Then these," said I, "are atheists. A wretched sort of men indeed; and who had once like to have ruined me, had not eternal grace prevented it."

I had no sooner spoke, but one of the tormented wretches cried out with a sad mournful accent, "Sure, I should know that voice. It must be Epenetus."

I was amazed to hear my name mentioned by one of the infernal crew; and therefore being desirous to know who it was, I answered, "Yes, I am Epenetus; but who are you in that sad lost condition that knows me?"

To this the lost unknown replied, "I was once well acquainted with you upon earth and had almost persuaded you to be of my opinion. I am the author of that celebrated book so well known by the title of 'Leviathan.'"

"What! the great Hobbs?" said I. "Are you come hither? Your voice is so much changed I did not know it."

"Alas," replied he, "I am that unhappy man indeed. But am so far from being great that I am one of the most wretched persons in all these sooty territories. Nor is it any wonder that my voice is changed; for I am now changed in my principles, though changed too late to do me any good. For now I know there is a God. But oh! I wish there were not, for I am sure He will have no mercy on me. Nor is there any reason that He should. I do confess I was His foe on earth, and now He is mine in hell. It is that wretched confidence I had in my own wisdom that has thus betrayed me."

"Your case is miserable, and yet you needs must own you suffer justly. For how industrious were you to persuade others, and so involve them in the same damnation. None has more reason to know this than I, who had almost been taken in the snare and perished forever."

"It is that," said he, "that stings me to the heart, to think how many perish by my means. I was afraid when first I heard your voice that you had likewise been consigned to punishment. Not that I can wish any person happy, for it is my plague to think that

any are so while I am miserable; but because every soul that is brought hither through my seduction while I was on earth, doubles my pains in hell."

"But tell me, for I fain would be informed, and you can do it. Did you indeed believe when upon earth, there was no God? Could you imagine that the world could make itself? And that the creatures were the causes of their own production? Had you no secret whispers in your soul that told you it was another made you and not you yourself? And had you never any doubts about this matter? I have often heard it said that though there are many who profess there is no God, there is not one that thinks so; and it would be strange there should, because there is none but carry in their bosom a witness for that God whom they deny. Now you can tell whether it is so or no; and you have now no reason to conceal your sentiments."

"Nor will I, Epenetus," answered he, "although the thoughts thereof sting me afresh. I did at first believe there was a God, but falling afterwards to vicious courses, which rendered me open to His wrath, I had some secret wishes there was none. For it is impossible to think there is a God, and not withal to think Him just and righteous, and consequently that He is obliged to punish the transgressors of His law. And being, I was conscious to myself obnoxious to His justice, it made me hate Him, and wish that there was no such being. But still pursuing the same vicious courses, and finding justice did not overtake me, I then began to hope there was no God; and from those hopes began to frame in my own breast ideas suitable to what I hoped. And having thus in my own thoughts framed a new system of the world's origin, excluding thence the being of a Deity, I found myself so fond of these new notions that I at last prevailed upon myself to give them credit, and then endeavored to fasten the belief of them on others. But before I came to such a height as this, I do acknowledge that I found several checks in my own conscience for what I did, and all along was now and then troubled with some strange uneasy thoughts, as if I should not find all right at last; which I endeavored to put off, as much as in me lay. And now I find those checking thoughts that might have been of service to me then, are here the things that most of all torment me. And I must own the love of sin hardened my heart against my Maker, and made me hate Him first, and then deny His being.

Sin, that I hugged so close within my bosom, has been the cursed cause of all this woe; the serpent that has stung my soul to death. For now I find, in spite of my vain philosophy, there is a GOD. I find too now that God will not be mocked, although it was my daily practice in the world to mock at heaven and ridicule whatever things are sacred, which were the means I used to spread abroad my cursed notions, and which I always found very successful. For those I could but get to ridicule the sacred oracles I always looked upon to be in a fair way to become my disciples. But now the thoughts thereof are more tormenting to me than all the torments I sustain by whips of burning steel."

Chapter XI

Fire and Darkness

I would ask another question. I heard yourself and others cry out of burning steel and fire and flames; and yet I cannot discern it. Where there is fire there must be some degree of light; and yet for ought appears to me you are still in utter darkness.

"O that I could but say I felt no fire! How easy would my torments be to that which I now find them! But alas, the fire that we endure ten thousand times exceeds all culinary fire in fierceness; and is of quite a different nature from it. There is no light at all attends it, as does upon such fire as burns upon earth. But notwithstanding all the fire in hell, we are in utter darkness. But then the fire you burn on earth is of a preying and devouring nature; for whatsoever it takes hold of it consumes to ashes; and when it meets with no more fuel it goes out. But here it is not so; for though it burns with that tremendous fierceness, which none but those that feel it know, yet does it not consume, nor never will. We shall ever be burning, yet not burned. It is a tormenting, but not a consuming fire. Here the fire seizes upon our souls and puts them into pain so tormenting as cannot be expressed. It was my ignorance of this, when upon earth that made me ridicule the notion of immaterial substances being burned by fire; which here, to my own cost, I find too true.

And then another difference betwixt the fire that burns us here and that which burns on earth, is this, that you can kindle that whenever you please and quench it when you will. But here it is otherwise; this fire is like to a stream of brimstone and it burns for ever. And this is what I have to answer to the last sad question that you asked me."

"Sad indeed," said I. "See what Almighty Power can inflict on those that violate His righteous law." I was making some further observations on what I heard, when the relentless fiend who was before tormenting them thus interrupted me.

"You see by Him what sort of men they were when in the world; and do not you think that they deserve the punishment they undergo?"

To which I answered, "Doubtless it is the just reward of sin which now they suffer, and which hereafter you shall suffer too; for you, as well as they, have sinned against the ever blessed God, and for your sin shall suffer the just vengeance of eternal fire. Nor is it in the least any excuse to say you never doubted the being of a God; for though you knew there was a God, yet you rebelled against Him, and therefore shall be justly punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power."

To this the fiend replied, "It is true we know we shall be punished as thou hast said; but if it be a reason why mankind should have pity showed them, because they fell through the temptations of the devil, it is the same case with me and all the rest of the inferior spirits for we were tempted by the Bright Sun of the Morning to take part with him. And therefore, though this aggravates the crime of Lucifer, it should extenuate that of inferior spirits."

To this my bright conductor, who had not spoken to them since my coming thither, thus replied with a stern, angry countenance, "O thou apostate, wicked, lying spirit! Canst thou affirm those things and see me here? Dost thou not know it was thy proud heart made thee take part with Lucifer against the blessed God who had created thee a glorious creature? But priding of thyself in thy own beauty thou wouldst have been above thy blessed Creator, and so wert ready to take part with Lucifer, and justly art with him cast down to hell; and thy former comeliness and beauty changed to that horrid monstrous form in which thou now appearest, as the just punishment of thy rebellious pride."

To this the apostate spirit only said, "Why dost thou thus invade our territories, and come here to torment us before our time?" And when he had said this, slunk away, as if he durst not stay to have an answer. The fiend being gone I said to my conductor, something I have already heard about the fall of the apostate angels, but have a great desire to be informed in the particulars thereof more fully.

To this my guardian angel answered me, "When thou shalt once have put off thy mortality and be translated to the blessed abode there thou shalt know such things as now thou canst not apprehend. And therefore in thy present state desire not to be wise above what is written. It is enough to know the angels sinned, and for their sin were cast down to hell. But how pure spirits should have a thought arise in their hearts against the eternal Purity that first created them is what thou are not capable of comprehending now."

"I have observed," said I, "that all of them complain most of the torment that arises from their own sense of guilt, which justifies the justice of the punishment. This gloomy prison is the best glass to behold sin in its most proper colors; for were there not the greatest malignity in sin, it would not be rewarded with so extreme a punishment."

"Your inference is very natural; but there is yet a better glass than this to see the just demerits due to sin; and that is by contemplation to behold the blessed Son of God upon the cross. There we may see the dire effects of sin. There we may see its true malignity. For all the sufferings of the damned here are but the sufferings of creatures still; but on the cross you see a suffering God."

"Surely," said I, "justice and mercy did never so triumph and kiss each other as in that fatal hour. For justice here was fully satisfied in the just punishment of sin; and mercy triumphed and was pleased because hereby salvation for poor sinners was effected. And oh, eternal praises to His holy name for ever, that His grace has made me willing to accept of this salvation, and thereby to become an heir of glory; for I remember some of those lost wretches here have in their bitter lamentations urged that when salvation has been offered them, they refused it. It was therefore grace alone that helped me to accept it."

My shining guardian told me hereupon that he must now conduct me to the earth again, and leave me there to wait with faith and patience till my expected happy change should come. "Come then," said he, "and let us leave these realms of woe and horror to the possession of their black inhabitants."

And in a very little space of time I found myself on earth again, and in that very place where I designed to have committed that black sin of being my own murderer,

overcome by the temptations of the devil, who had persuaded me there was no God. But what way it was that I came thither, I am not at all able to determine. As soon as I was by the bank that I before had sat on, the bright appearance by whom I had been all along conducted, said to me, "Now, Epenetus, you know where you are, and I must stay no longer with you now; I have another ministration to attend. Praise Him that sits upon the throne for ever, who has all power in heaven, earth, and hell for all the wonders of His love and grace, that He has shown you in so short a space."

As I was going to reply to him, my bright conductor disappeared, and I was left alone. And having for some time considered of the amazing visions I had seen, and of the wondrous things that I had heard, I scarce believed I was again on earth; nor did I know what time it was I had been absent. I kneeled down and prayed that I might never lose a lively sense of all those wondrous things that had been shown me, and then rose up again, blessing and praising God for all His goodness.

Being returned unto my house, my family were much surprised to see my countenance strangely changed, and looked upon me as if they scarce had known me. I asked them what the meaning was of their unusual admiration. They answered that it was the change in my face that caused it. "In what respect," said I, "is it that I am altered so?"

They told me, "Yesterday your looks were so extremely clouded and cast down you seemed the very image of despair; but now your face appears abundantly more beautiful, and carries all the marks of perfect joy and satisfaction in it."

"If you had seen," said I, "what I have seen today you would not wonder at the change you see." Then going into my closet I took my pen and ink and there wrote down what I had heard and seen, declaring the whole vision from first to last. All which I hope may have the same effect on those that read them as they had on me in writing them.

The End