

The Christian Sun.

A Religious and Miscellaneous Newspaper, devoted to Religion Morality Literature, General Intelligence, and the support of the Principles of the Christian Church

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"THE LORD GOD IS A SUN AND SHIELD."

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COMMUNICATIONS.

For the Christian Sun.

(Continued.)

IV. HEAVEN IS FREE FROM ALL PHYSICAL EVIL.

Its inhabitants are not exposed to any of the evils to which the denizens of earth are. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne, shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." "And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away." "And there shall be no more curse."

Our world is exposed to innumerable physical evils. The angry storm and the destructive tempest sweep over it, spreading destruction and death, the volcanoes belch forth their burning rivers of melted lava, and sweep villages and cities from the face of the earth; and earthquakes lay waste whole countries, and sweep thousands down to death. Heaven is free from all those terrible evils. It is free from death. Its inhabitants shall never die. What a blessed thought! Here all must die. There is no discharge in this war. Death floats upon the breeze. The mild zephyrs of summer and the bleak winds of winter are loaded with the agents of death. None are safe from the fatal shafts of the dark angel of the grave. The aged sire, the venerable matron, the smiling youth, and the lovely infant must die. Here we are called to the couch of the dying father and the beloved mother. For the last time we must take the parting hand of that beloved father that has so often administered to our wants, and of that mother that has so often wiped the falling tear from our eyes. Our brothers and sisters, with whom we have so often mingled around the cheerful hearth of our father's happy home, must die. In heaven, thank God! there is no death.

No chilling winds, or poisonous breath,
Can reach that healthful shore;
Sickness and sorrow, pain and death,
Are felt and feared no more.

There we never shall be called to weep around the couch of our dying friends. All shall bloom in unwaning youth, and unfading beauty. Mother, have you followed a lovely child to the silent tomb? Does the thought of the loved little one rend your soul with sorrow? O lift up your head. Wipe away your tears, and weep not as those who have no hope. Yonder is a land that God has prepared for the pure, the holy and the good. There death is an eternal stranger. There that loved one, now converted to an angel of light, shall live to die no more. It is clothed in robes of beauty, and garments of immortality. Christ has wiped away the last tear from his eye, and it is now engaged in plucking amaranthine joys from bowers of bliss.

O, dry thy tearful eyes,
And say, "Thy will be done"—
Far, far beyond the skies,
Waits thee thy cherub one!
Know thou a holy tie is given,
To bind more close thy heart to heav'n.

V. HEAVEN IS FREE FROM ALL MORAL EVIL.

It is free from all wicked society. "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, nor maketh a lie; but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revellers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God." "Who was it that John saw in heaven? Let the Elder answer—"These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple." There were none among all that mighty multitude but those who had washed away their sins in the atoning blood of Christ, and had put on the robes of righteousness.

One of the most fruitful sources of our misery and unhappiness, is the wickedness of the society in which we have to live. How often is the peace and happiness of the family destroyed, and the family shrouded in gloom, by the wickedness of one member. Look yonder at that interesting family circle! The parents are devoted Christians, and surrounded by an interesting band of lovely children. Peace and happiness shed their genial rays around the cheerful hearth. What a lovely picture! Look again! How changed the scene! The husband and parent has become a drunkard. The warm affections and glowing sympathies of his soul are burnt up by the fires of alcohol. He is a brute. Their happiness has fled, and the dark cloud of sorrow has settled upon the once happy circle. There are no such scenes in heaven. There are no drunkards there. There the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest. There the disconsolate wife will find everlasting peace, and the worse than fatherless children shall weep no more. The last tear shall be wiped from their eyes by the hand of their Savior, and they shall mingle their heaven-inspired voices with the angels of God in singing the sweet songs of heaven.

In heaven there is the best of society. There are all those illustrious characters of whom we read in the Bible, whose history we love to study, and whose excellency and virtue we are wont to admire. There are all the children of God. Mother, there is that lovely daughter that you followed in sorrow to the tomb. Father, there is that beloved son that was cut down in early life by the hand of death. There are all those pious loved ones with whom we used to mingle in the scenes and associations of earth. There are all the holy angels—"and all the angels stood round about the throne." There we shall be the companions of angels." They shall be our intimate associates. "Ye are come," says Paul, with the anticipatory spirit of prophecy, "unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the

living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels." The angels are the highest, and the noblest among all created intelligences of the universe. They fill the highest rank in the scale of being. They have lived in the presence of the eternal Throne surrounded by all the matchless glories of heaven, for countless ages. O then what a blessing to be admitted into their society, and mingle in their sublime employments. Animated by this glorious prospect the Christian may sing—

In such a society as this,
My weary soul shall rest;
The man who dwells where Jesus is,
Must be as dwellers blest.

In heaven the Christian will no longer be exposed to temptation and danger. There are no enemies there.—There is nothing to cool the ardor of this devotion, or draw his devotion away from God. He is placed by the confluence of moral causes, in eternal exemption from all danger of sinning, including deliverance from all possibility of evil. "There is, there no aching head or brow of care, and the harps of Zion no longer wail, in melancholy dirges, the sorrows of a bruised or broken heart! Inquietude shall no longer bleed the vitals, or despair give fearful tension to the maddening brain. Never, again, shall the tear of penitence tremble in the eye of the mourner, nor prayer of misery woo the throne of God and humbly motion heaven for relief." "When 'the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to the celestial Zion with songs; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrowing and sighing shall flee away." Heaven is the residence of happiness. The redeemed walk its golden streets in eternal freedom from all evil. Everything which it contains is clothed in beauty, and robed in grandeur to the eye. All its sounds fall in harmony upon the ear, and its sublime scenes kindle rapture in the soul: rapture which admits no mixture, and knows no termination. "I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, 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. And all the angels stood around the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshiped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving and honor, and power, and might, be unto our God forever and ever."

There's a land far away from this storm-beaten shore,
Where troubles and trials, and tears are no more;
There sunshine and beauty, eternally rest,
And music resounds from the harps of the blest.

'Tis a land where no sinfulness e'er can intrude,
'Tis a land which our God has prepared for the good;
And there the sad spirit released from all strife,
May drink and be glad at the fountain of life.

And there the sweet thoughts which arise in the soul,
May be cherished and nurtured beyond all control;
No shadows can rest on the splendor so bright,
For Jesus our Savior is the glorious light.

O turn, quickly turn ye that know not the road,
And steer thy frail bark to that blissful abode;
Thy Savior is there, on that heavenly strand,
To welcome thee home to the beautiful land.

DISCOURSE II.

THE ENTRANCE OF THE SPIRIT INTO HEAVEN, AND THE STATE OF THE REDEEMED THERE.

And he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river, was there the tree of life, which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. And there shall be no more curse; but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him. And they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads. And there shall be no night there; and they need not candles, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light; and they shall reign forever and ever.—Rev. xxii, 1-5.

The good and innocent-minded—the children of God everywhere when they think of heaven, think of it as a home—the home of the pure and the virtuous, their eternal home. When they look forward to the time of their death, they think and speak of it as the time when they hope to be taken home, even their heavenly Father's house. When a man of Christian meekness, patience, faith and love, closes his earthly career, his friends and neighbors say the good man has gone home. Home! What a heavenly meaning and heavenly music there is in this little word! Meaning which the universal human mind perceives—music which the universal human heart feels. Home is the hallowed spot to which the heart's fondest affections always cling—the centre of our dearest remembrances, our strongest attachments, our sweetest joys, our brightest hopes. Everything dearest to the heart of a good man, every thing most serene and peaceful in life, as well as every thing pleasant, and even tolerable in death, clusters around the word home. The soldier in the camp, the sailor on the sea, the traveller in foreign climes turns with thrilling interest to the home of his youth; and O! how does his eye kneel, and his heart throbb at the mention of this precious word!

Among all the deep and strong yearnings of a good man's heart, there are none more deep and strong than his yearnings for a peaceful home. And to say of a man that he has no home, is to represent him as a wanderer and exile upon earth.

Now God must and will provide for the gratification of all the deep desires which His own boundless love has implanted in the soul. And this universal desire of every regenerate human heart, for a quiet happy home, is so deeply rooted in our

mental and spiritual constitution, that we may be sure it will not perish with the body. Especially when we reflect that this desire becomes stronger and stronger in us, the nearer we approach to the heavenly state, we have abundant reason for believing that it will exist in heaven also, and be even stronger there than here.

God has provided a home for the Christian—a home that will meet all the desires of the human heart, where all the tenderest, the best feelings, and the warmest and deepest sympathies of the soul shall be fully developed. Heaven is the home that God has prepared for His virtuous children. It was to prepare man for, and bring him to this home that Christ left His throne in glory, and came into this world. In solemn prayer to His Father Christ said, "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me; for Thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world." Heaven was formed, and furnished to be the everlasting home of the redeemed. "In my Father's house are many mansions," said Christ, "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."

To complete the heavenly world, to adorn it with everything that is beautiful and grand, to store it with His choicest blessings, to fill it with proper inhabitants, that He might reign over it in all the matchless displays of His perfection forever, is exhibited in the Scriptures as the end God had in view in all His antecedent dispensations. Hence, Christ is represented as saying unto the righteous in the day of judgment: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

I. DO THE SAINTS, AT DEATH, PASS IMMEDIATELY INTO HEAVEN?

This is a question of deep interest to the Christian, and one on which all have often meditated. Yonder, in a quiet room, shaded by the mellow twilight of sorrow and mourning, lies a dying Christian. There stands the lovely wife weeping as though her heart would break. There are those loved little ones looking with deep anxiety upon the wan features of the dying father. The last word has been spoken, the farewell taken, and now they are watching with thrilling interest for the last struggle. With an angelic smile playing upon his countenance he calmly sinks into the arms of death. Where has the spirit fled? To what land has it gone? Where has it taken up its abode? These are interesting questions, and a subject on which we love to dwell.

In the early ages of the world it was thought that when men died their spirits went to a dark, gloomy, dreary under world. The great entrance to this land of spirits was supposed to be in the extreme West. At a later day we find the doctrine of transmigration of souls. It was believed that when men die their souls enter into another body. Sometimes into a human body, others into bodies of animals, and sometimes even plants and trees.

There is one class of Christian philosophers that believe in an intermediate state between earth and heaven where the spirit remains until the resurrection of the body. In this place, it is supposed that the spirit enjoys as much happiness as it is capable of, while in a disembodied state; but its happiness will be increased by being reunited with the body.

Others believe that when the body dies the soul perishes with it, and remains unconscious and inactive till the resurrection of the body. This is a cold, dark, and gloomy theory.

It is the opinion of some that the spirits of the dead linger about the graves of their bodies until the resurrection. This was the opinion of many of the ancient philosophers, Jews and primitive Christians. In the year 813 a Christian council forbade the kindling of a light in the burying ground, lest the spirits of the saints should be disturbed.

The doctrine of the Bible is, that when the spirits of the just leave the body they ascend immediately to heaven.

One gentle sigh thy futer breaks;

We scarce can say, "They are gone!"

Before the willing spirit takes

Her mansion near thy throne.

Our Savior said to the thief on the cross, "To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise." Where and what is paradise? This question may be answered by turning to those passages of Scripture where the word is used, and its sense cannot be mistaken. Paul says, I knew a man in Christ about fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I know such a man, (whether in the body or out of the body, I cannot tell; God knoweth;) how that he was up into paradise." This is an important passage, and clearly determines what is meant by paradise as mentioned in the Scriptures. The Jews enumerated three heavens the first was the region of the air, where the birds fly, which are therefore called "the fowls of heaven." Job xxxv, 11. The second is that part of space in which are fixed the heavenly luminaries. This Moses was instructed to call "the firmament or expanse of heaven. Gen. 1: 18. The third heaven is the home of God and the holy angels. The throne of universal empire. In the above language this is called the paradise of God. In Rev. ii, 7, 22, 2, we are informed that the tree of life stands in the midst of the paradise of God, and by the side of the river of life that flows from the throne of God and the Lamb. From this it is obvious that paradise or the third heaven is the place where God, Jesus Christ, and the holy angels dwell. Where the penitent thief was with Christ. It is obvious from this that when men die their spirits ascend immediately to heaven.

Paul settles the question in the following language: "Whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord; we are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and be present with the Lord." Here we learn that while absent from the body the spirit of the good man is present with Christ. Now where is Christ? Let Peter answer: "gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God." Now, if Christ is in heaven, and the disembodied spirit of the just are with him, it follows necessarily that when the body of the righteous man dies the deathless spirit ascends to heaven.

When Stephen was about sinking into the arms of death, he prayed, "saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." It is obvious from this that he believed that when the body dies the spirit of the virtuous and holy ascends to the Lord Jesus Christ.

In the letter to the Phillippians we find the following striking language: "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor; yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." It is evident from this passage that Paul expected when he left this world to go to Christ. Was he mistaken on this point? None dare take the position.

Paul said, "I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Here we learn that the whole family of Christ is in but two places—heaven and earth; but according to the theory of an intermediate state, some of them must be in a third place.

What a pleasing thought to the mind of the Christian that as soon as the soul is dismissed from the body it is admitted into the happy home of the blest. What a blessed thought to the mind of the mourner, when he follows the lifeless form of a loved one to the silent tomb, that the spirit has left this world of sorrow and gone home to heaven! It is a fountain of joy.

What an interesting moment to the spirit is the hour of death! What sublime and indescribable scenes unfold themselves to the untrapped spirit! The world fades from its view and heaven with all its ineffable glory opens before it.

O change! O wondrous change!

Burst are the prison bars?

This moment there—so low

In mortal prayer—and now

Beyond the stars!

O change! stupendous change!

Here lies the senseless clod;

The soul from bondage breaks,

The new immortal walks—

Walks with God!

II. HEAVEN IS A STATE OF PERFECTION.

This is an imperfect state. This is only the infancy—the childhood—of our being.

This is the bud of being, the dim dawn,
The twilight of our day, the vestibule,
Life's theatre as yet is shut, and death,
Strong death, alone can heave the massy bar,
This gross impediment of clay remove,
And make such an embryo of existence free.

Man possesses a body adapted to the world in which he now lives; but it is not fully adapted to the full development of the vast and godlike powers of the immortal mind. It is, to some degree, a clog to the mind; but in heaven the good man shall possess a body fully adapted to the nature and powers of the soul. It will not be a clog to its onward march in the path of endless progression. "As we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly."

Heaven is a state of moral perfection. By this I do not mean that the inhabitants of heaven can never become any better; but I mean that their state is such that they are no longer exposed to temptation, or liable to sin. There may be a growth in goodness even in heaven. The ardor of devotion will become stronger, the affections will grow warmer, the sympathies will be deepened and enlarged as the unnumbered ages of eternity roll away. The virtuous in heaven will eternally become more and more like God.

Heaven is also a state of intellectual perfection. By this I do not mean that there can be no accession made to the powers of the mind, or that its inhabitants can never learn anything more; but I mean that the intellectual powers of man will never be subject to decay or weariness, and that he will not be liable to err or wander astray from truth. Here we look at things "through a glass darkly," and are liable to err; but in heaven we shall look at them "face to face" in the clear sun light of eternity.

There we will be able more perfectly to discharge the duties that we owe to God, to ourselves, and to the universe around than we can here. Here we are surrounded by unholy influences, and are to some degree under the dominion of incorrect habits; and in consequence of this we are not always able to come to the full measure of our duty to God and man. There are many things mingled with all our exercises that are incorrect; but in heaven the Christian is free from all that is evil. There he is able to perform his duty perfectly.

Heaven is a state of perfect enjoyment. Here all our joys and pleasures are mingled with sorrow. Every rose has its thorn, and every sweet is bitter. Our strength wastes away before the destroying hand of disease, our brightest hopes fade away and go out in midnight darkness, our dearest and best friends sicken and die, the storm and the tempest howl around us; but in heaven there are none of those things. There the cup of our joy is unmingled with sorrow.

(To be Continued.)

The following brief but beautiful passage occurs in a late article in Frazer's Magazine: "Education does not commence with the alphabet. It begins with a mother's looks—with a father's nod of approbation, or a sign of the hand, or a brother's noble act of forbearance—with handfuls of flowers in green and daisy meadows—with bird's nests admired but not touched—with creeping ants, and almost imperceptible emmets—with humming bees and glass beehives—with pleasant walks in shady lanes—with thoughts directed in sweet and kindly tones, and words to nature, to acts of benevolence, to deeds of virtue and to the senso of all good, to God himself.

Alex. Humboldt has written a letter, in which he advocates the construction of an oceanic canal without locks, across the Isthmus of Darien having reference to points on the Gulf of San Miguel and Cupica.