

VISIONS OF HEAVEN AND HELL

BY

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PREFACE

John Bunyan was a 17th century English preacher who spent twelve years in prison for his Christian faith and wrote over 40 books. His best known writing is Pilgrim's Progress, one of the most famous and popular books in all of world history.

John Bunyan wrote the following account when he was a young man, of how an angel was sent by the Lord to take him to see heaven and hell. It is a true story, not an allegory or fictional book. While all visions must be judged by the Bible, these seem very scriptural and were used by the Lord to help transform young John into a mighty man of God.

May this simplified account of his visions also help to transform you!

The Editor (Pastor Norman Holmes)

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CHAPTER 1: PLANNING SUICIDE

When evil persons have gone in a life of sin, and find that they have reason to fear the just judgment of God, they begin at first to wish there were no God to punish them. Then little by little they persuade themselves that there is no God, and look for arguments to back their opinion. I had the unhappiness to know someone like this, who would always be telling me there was neither God nor devil, and no heaven or hell.

It was with fear and trembling that I first heard him speak about these topics, but he spoke of them so often that I felt I must consider what he said. From this time I found my mind so confused that I could not remember the truths about God which had appeared so clear to me before. I could not think there was no God but with the greatest horror, yet I questioned the truth of His being. I would not have parted with my hope of heaven for all the riches of the world, yet now I was not sure whether there was any such place.

In my confusion I went to my false friend to see what comfort he could give me. He only laughed at my fears and pretended to pity my weakness. His talks only made me more confused, until life became a burden to me. It is impossible to tell you the agonies I felt, until I was pushed to the edge of desperation. I thought, “Why should I linger between despair and hope? Would it not be better to end my life and find out what is the truth?” So I decided to kill myself.

One morning I went out into a nearby woods, where I had planned to kill myself. But before I tried to use the knife I heard a secret whisper say, “Do not fall into everlasting misery to gratify the enemy of your soul. The fatal stroke you are about to give yourself will seal your own damnation. For if there is a God, as surely as there is, how can you hope for mercy from Him if you wilfully destroy yourself who were made in His image?”

Where this secret whisper came from, I do not know, but I believe it came from God; for it came with so much power it made me throw away my knife, and it showed me the great evil of suicide. The horror of what I had almost done made me shake so much that I could hardly stand. I recognized my deliverance to have come from the Lord, and in gratitude I returned thanks.

I knelt down on the ground and worshipped Him, asking that He would take away the blackness in my soul so that I would never again question His being or great power which I had just experienced.

Suddenly I was surrounded with a glorious light, brighter than anything I had ever seen before. I saw coming toward me a glorious person like a man, but circled with beams of light and glory which shined from him as he came nearer. I tried to stand up, but had no strength left in me, so I fell flat on my face. As he lifted me up and I was given new strength, I said to him, “O my shining deliverer, how shall I acknowledge my thankfulness, and in what manner should I adore you?”

With majesty and mildness he replied, “Pay your adorations to God, and not to me who am your fellow-creature. I am sent from Him Whose being you have so lately

denied, to stop you from falling into eternal ruin.” This touched my heart with such a sense of my own unworthiness that I could only cry out, “Oh, how utterly unworthy I am of all this grace and mercy!” To this the heavenly messenger replied, “When God decided to show mercy He did not consult your unworthiness, but His own unbounded goodness and vast love. He saw how the grand enemy of souls desired your ruin, but He upheld you by His secret power. Through this, when Satan thought that you were destroyed, the snare was broken and you have escaped.” These words made me break forth into song, and I praised my Saviour and declared that He is God alone.

CHAPTER 2: BEYOND THE SUN AND STARS

The heavenly messenger then said, "That you may never doubt the reality of eternal things, I have come to show you the truth of them: not by faith only but also by sight. I will show you things never yet seen by mortal eye, and to that end your eyes shall be strengthened and made able to behold heavenly things."

At these words of the angel I was very surprised, and doubted I would be able to bear it. I said to him, "Who is able to bear such a sight?" To this he replied, "The joy of the Lord shall be your strength." When he had said this, he took hold of me and said, "Fear not, for I am sent to show the things you have not seen." Then before I was aware I found myself far above the earth, which seemed now to be very small. Then I said to my bright conductor, "Please let it not offend you if I ask a question or two." To this he replied, "Speak on. It is my work to inform you of what you ask. For I am a ministering spirit, sent forth to minister to you and to those that will inherit salvation."

Then I said, "Please inform me about that dark spot below, which has grown smaller and smaller as we have mounted higher, and which appears much darker since I have come into this region of light." My conductor replied, "That little spot that now looks so dark and despised is the world which you have lived on. To obtain one small part of that spot of earth so many men have risked and lost their immortal souls; which are so precious that the Prince of Peace has told us that though a man could gain the whole world, it would not equal so great a loss. As you have ascended higher towards heaven, the world has appeared still smaller and more insignificant; and it will appear the same to all who can by faith get their hearts above it. If the sons of men below could but see the world as it is, they would not covet it as they do now, but alas, they are in a state of darkness. And what is worse, they love to walk in this darkness. For although the prince of Light came down among them and showed them the true light of life, yet they go on in darkness and will not bring themselves to the light, because their deeds are evil." Then I asked him, "What are those multitudes of black and horrible forms that hover in the air above the world? I would have been much afraid of them, but I saw that as you passed by, they fled; perhaps not being able to abide your brightness."

To this he answered me, "They are the fallen angels which for their pride and rebellion were cast down from heaven. They wander in the air by decree of the Almighty, being bound in chains of darkness and kept unto the judgment of the great day. They are permitted to descend into the world, both for the trial of the elect, and for the condemnation of the wicked. And although you see that they now have black and horrible forms, yet they were once the sons of Light. They once were clothed in robes of glorious brightness, like what you see me wear. But the loss of this, although it was the result of their own wilful sin, fills them with anger and hatred against the ever blessed God Whose power and majesty they fear and hate."

"Tell me," I said, "O blessed 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 gained, did not take upon

Himself the angelic nature. He left the apostate angels all to perish, and took upon Himself only the seed of Abraham. For this reason they have so much hatred against the sons of men, because it is a torment for them to see men made the heirs of heaven while they are doomed to hell.”

By this time we were above the sun. My conductor told me this mighty globe of fire was one of the great works of God. Yet all the stars were not less wonderful; whose great distance away makes them appear like candles in our sight. They hang in their appointed places without any support. Nothing but His word that first created them could keep them in their station.

“These words are enough,” I said to my conductor, “To convince anyone of the great power of their Creator, and to show the evil of that unbelief which questions the being of the God who has given so many evidences of His power and glory. If men were not like beasts still looking downwards, they could not help but acknowledge His great power and wisdom.”

“You speak what is true,” he replied. “But you will see far greater things than these. These are but the scaffolds and outworks to that glorious place that the blessed above inhabit. A view of it shall now be given to you, as far as you are able to comprehend it.”

In a few moments I found what my conductor had told me was true. For I found myself transferred into heaven, where I saw things that are impossible to describe, and heard beautiful songs that I could never sing. Whoever has not seen that glory can speak but very imperfectly of it, and they that have seen it can not tell the thousandth part of what it is. Therefore the great apostle of the Gentiles, who tells us that he had been caught up into paradise where he had heard unspeakable words which are not possible for a man to utter, wrote that ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man to conceive the things that God has prepared for those that love him.’ I will give you the best account I can of what I saw and heard, as near as I can remember.

CHAPTER 3: ELIJAH EXPLAINS

When I was first brought near this glorious place I saw innumerable hosts of bright attendants, who welcomed me into this blessed place of happiness. And there I saw that perfect and unapproachable light, that changes all things into its own nature, for even the souls of the glorified saints are transparent. They are not illumined by the sun; but all that light, that flows with such transparent brightness throughout these heavenly mansions, is nothing else but the shining forth of the Divine glory.

Compared to this glory, the light of the sun is but darkness, and the fire of the most sparkling jewels are but dead coals. Therefore it is called The Throne of the Glory of God, where the radiance of the divine Majesty is revealed in the most illustrious manner. God was too bright for me to look upon as He was exalted on the high throne of His glory, while multitudes of angels and saints sang forth eternal hallelujahs and praises to Him. Well may He be called the God of Glory, for by His presence He makes heaven what it is. Rivers of pleasure continually spring forth from the divine Presence, and radiate cheerfulness, joy, and splendour to all the blessed inhabitants of heaven, the seat of His eternal empire.

For my own part, I was too weak to bear the least ray of glory that shot from that everlasting Spring of Light which sat upon the throne. I was forced to cry out to my conductor, "The sight of so much glory is too great for me to bear, yet it is so refreshing and delightful that I would desire to look, though I die."

"No, no," said my conductor, "death can not enter this blessed place, nor sin nor sorrow can abide. 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. Come along with me and I will bring you to one who is in the body, as you are. Talk with him for a while before I take you back again."

"O rather," I eagerly said, "let me stay here. There is no need of building tabernacles, for the heavenly mansions are already prepared." My shining messenger replied to this, "Here in a while you shall forever be, but the divine will must first be obeyed."

Swift as thought he conveyed me past thousands of angels, and presented me to that great saint, the prophet Elijah. Though he had lived in the world many hundreds of years ago, I knew him at first sight. "Here is one," said my conductor to Elijah, "who by the commission of the Imperial Throne has been permitted to visit these realms of light, and I have brought him to you, to learn from you."

"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 honour, 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 has 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 asked me why 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; so

how can prayers be directed to them?) I then told him the events I have already written here, at which the holy prophet broke forth in praise, “Glory forever 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 and doubting sinner.” After this he said, “Now give attention to what I shall speak. What you have already seen and heard I am sure you can not make fully understood to those not yet translated to this glorious place, who have not yet been freed from their earthly bodies. Nor is my being here in the body any objection to what I say; for although it has not been subject to death, yet it has been equally changed. It has been made spiritual, and is no longer able to suffer. Yet in this full state of happiness I can not utter all that I enjoy, nor do I know what shall yet be enjoyed, for here our happiness is always new.”

I then asked the blessed prophet to explain himself. I did not understand how happiness could be complete, and yet still be added to. The following was his reply:

“When the soul and body are both happy, as mine now are, I count it a complete state of happiness. For throughout all the coming ages of eternity, it is the soul and body joined together in the blessed resurrection state that shall receive this happiness. But concerning the object of our happiness, which is the ever-adorable and blessed God, our vision of Him is forever new. For as the divine perfections are infinite, nothing less than eternity can be sufficient to display their glory. This makes our happiness eternally added to, as well as our knowledge of Him to be eternally progressive also.”

“Therefore the apostle Paul said, ‘Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor can it enter into the heart of man to conceive what God has prepared for those who love him.’ Yet the human eye has seen many admirable things in nature. It has seen mountains of crystal, and rocks of diamonds, it has seen mines of gold, and coasts of pearls. Nevertheless, the eye that has seen so many wonders in the world below could never pry into the glories of this triumphant place. And though the ear of man has heard many delightful and harmonious sounds, even all that man and nature could supply him with, yet he has never heard the heavenly melody which both saints and angels make before the throne. The heart of man is so fine and imaginative that it can conceive almost anything that is, or was, or ever shall be in the world below, and even what shall never be. Man can conceive that every stone on earth shall be turned into pearls, and every blade of grass into the brightest of shining jewels. He can conceive that the whole earth be turned into a mass of pure gold, and the air turned into crystal. He can conceive every star to become as bright as the sun, and the sun to be a thousand times larger and brighter. But all this is infinitely short of what the eternal Majesty has prepared for all His faithful followers.”

CHAPTER 4: THE HAPPINESS OF HEAVEN

The prophet continued, “I will briefly tell you about our happiness here, for ages spent on this delightful theme would only begin to explain it. That you may have the best understanding, I will first explain about what the redeemed souls have been delivered from, and secondly about the happiness that they enjoy here.”

“Firstly, the souls of all the blessed are forever freed from everything that can make them miserable, which above all is sin. It was sin that brought misery into creation. The blessed God at first made all things happy, like Himself. Had not sin defaced the beauty of His workmanship, angels and men would have never known what is meant by misery. It was sin that threw the apostate angels down into hell, and spoiled the beauty of the lower world. It was sin that defaced God’s image in man’s soul, and made the ones who were to be the lords of creation into slaves of their own lust. It is sin which can also plunge them into an ocean of eternal misery from which is no redemption. It is an invaluable mercy that in this happy place all the saints are forever freed from sin through the blood of our Redeemer. In the earth below, the best and holiest of souls groan under the burden of corruption. Sin tries to cling to all that they do, and often leads them captive against their will. ‘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 weight upon the saints while they live in their corrupted flesh.”

“Therefore when they lay their bodies down, their souls are like a bird loosed from its cage, and with a heavenly joy they rise up to heaven. But here their warfare is at an end, and ‘death is swallowed up in victory.’ Below their souls were deformed and stained by sin, but here their bright souls by the ever-blessed Jesus are presented to the Father ‘without spot or wrinkle.’”

“Not only are the saints here free from sin, but also from any temptation to sin. When Adam was in paradise, though he was innocent and free from sin, yet he was not free from temptation. Satan got into paradise and Adam fatally yielded to his temptations. Like a disease, sin has eaten into the human nature and corrupted all mankind.”

“Here each soul is freed from this. Nothing but what is pure and holy can find admission here. That roaring lion who roams back and forth throughout the earth seeking whom he may devour, in respect to the saints in heaven, is bound fast in everlasting chains. The temptations of the world shall never again allure those who through faith and patience have overcome it and safely arrived here. In heaven we look with contempt on all earthly enjoyments. There is nothing here that can disturb our peace, but an eternal calm crowns all our happiness.”

“Since we are freed from all sin and its effects, we are also rescued from punishment. After death, hell confines the sinner to eternal misery. Yet the blessed are delivered from all these things.”

“However, these things are but the least part of the happiness of heaven. Our joys are positive, more than just the negative that we have been redeemed from. What these are I shall try to show you.”

“Here we enjoy the sight of God, the blessed spring and eternal source of all our happiness. But what this is, I can no more fully explain than can finite creatures comprehend infinity. Yet the sight of God 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, love, sing, and praise forever while it also transforms us into His blessed likeness. Beholding God’s face, we enjoy His love. His blessed smiles make glad our souls, and in His favour we rejoice continually, ‘for in His favour is life.’ And by this blessed vision of God, we come to know Him far above how any had known Him in the world below. For the sight of Him opens our understandings, 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 drink largely and swim in the boundless ocean of happiness. Below the saints have their communion with God broken off many times, but here it is uninterrupted. Below love is mixed with fear, and fear has torment; but here love is perfect, and perfect love casts out fear. In heaven we love God more than ourselves, and one another like ourselves. Here we enjoy the perfection of all grace.”

“In heaven our understanding and knowledge is enlarged according to the greatness of what we can observe and think. In the world below light could only shine into our minds through the windows of our senses, so God had to condescend to our limited capacities when revealing His Majesty. Our purest ideas of God were very imperfect, but here the gold is separated from the dross and we can conceive the simplicity and purity of God. We understand about His decrees and counsels, His providence and dispensations. We clearly see here that from eternity God was sole existing, but not solitary, that the Godhead is neither confused in unity, nor divided in number. We see that there is a priority of order but no superiority among the persons of the Trinity, but that they equally have the same excellence and power, and equally are adored. Those ways of God that in the world below seemed unsearchable and beyond our comprehension, we understand so clearly here by His divine wisdom that the truth could not be made more simple.”

“These are some of the things that make our souls happy. However, the happiness of the saints in heaven will not be complete until their bodies are resurrected and united with their souls. I will therefore show you what the resurrection body shall be like:”

“First, the resurrection bodies of the blessed will be spiritual bodies, like mine. You may better understand this not only by seeing but by touch.” After saying this, the holy prophet was pleased to give me his hand. “They will be bodies that are purified from all corruption, yet will have substance. They will not be like wind or air, as people on earth sometimes foolishly imagine.”

Then I said to him that I always understood spiritual as the opposite of material, so I thought that a spiritual body must be immaterial, and not capable of being touched or felt as I found his hand was.

To this the prophet replied that their bodies were spiritual, not only because they were purified from all corruption, but as they were sustained by the enjoyment of God without needing food, drink, or sleep. Beholding the Lord is what supports both their

souls and their bodies, and is what they live upon forever. “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 had substance. Our bodies in the resurrection shall be immortal, and incapable of dying. Below their bodies are all mortal, perishing, and subject to crumbling into dust at any time. But here our bodies will be incorruptible and freed from death forever, for our corruption here shall put on incorruption, and our mortality will 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 ideas about these matter.

“Speak, for I am ready to remove your doubt,” he said. “I have learned,” I said, “in the holy Scriptures that immortality belongs to God only, and not to men. Daily experience tells us that bodies of men are mortal, and die. Therefore Paul told Timothy that God only has immortality.”

“When I say that the bodies of the blessed here are immortal, I am speaking about the bodies in their resurrected state, that then they are subject to death no more. Man in his corruptible state is mortal and subject to 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 in heaven are at this time still kept under the power of death. At the resurrection day, when they shall be raised up again, they shall then be immortal. And as to what you say from the Scripture, that the blessed God has only immortality, it is very true. He is most essentially so in His own being and nature; there is no angel or man that can, in that strict sense, be said to be so. We are immortal through His grace and favour; but God is immortal in His essence and has been so from all eternity. In that sense He may well be said only to have immortality. Whatever the blessed God is, He is essentially so in His own being. It can likewise be said that He only is holy, and there is none good but God, none righteous, nor none merciful but He.”

CHAPTER 5: WE SHALL KNOW EACH OTHER

I remarked, "As I was brought here, I saw among the saints 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. The more we see Him, the more we love Him; and love changes our souls into His nature, and from this 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 capacity do love God most, and are thereby changed most into His likeness. This 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."

While I was 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 His kingly office, on account of which He is called King of kings and Lord of lords. But all the glorious greatness of our blessed Redeemer does not make His kindness seem distant, but only more precious. 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 great happiness increases our own, as He invites each faithful servant to enter into his Master's joy."

"Here we see not only our elder Brother, Christ, but also our friends and relatives. Although Elijah lived in the world below long before your time, you no sooner saw him than you knew him. And so you will also know Adam when you see him. Here we communicate the purest pleasure to each other, a sincere ardent love uniting our society. And oh, how happy is that state of love! Where there is love like this, all are filled with delight. How can it be otherwise, since in this blessed society there is a continual receiving and returning of love and joy."

"But besides all the happiness that comes to us by our communion with God and with each other, it is to me a mighty happiness to understand all the deep mysteries of religion which the wisest in the world below could not fully understand. Here we discern a perfect harmony between those scripture texts that in the world below seemed to oppose each other. And here we are especially filled with wonder and gratitude at discovering the divine goodness towards each one of us in particular. In respect to my former life on earth, I have seen the mercifulness of those very afflictions that I once (when upon earth) thought to show His anger. I am now fully convinced that no affliction that I met with in the world below (and I met with many) either came sooner or fell heavier or continued longer than was needful. My hopes

were not disappointed, but God used all things to prepare me for a better eternal reward than what I had hoped for.”

“But I remember that you are still in the body, and may be tired with hearing what I could forever tell, so great is the happiness that I possess. I shall only add one other thing about our happiness: though a vast multitude of blessed souls partakes of this joy and glory, this does not make less of what each receives. 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 everyone equally enjoys the benefit of light. There is no one that can complain that they enjoy it less, because another enjoys it also. All enjoy the benefit of light as fully as if no one else enjoyed it but themselves. If a multitude of persons drink of the same river none of them is able to exhaust it, even though each of them has the liberty of drinking as much as he can. So whoever enjoys God enjoys Him as much as he can contain, according to his capacity.”

“Thus I have given you a brief account of our heavenly 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. In this happy place worldly relations cease. Nor is there male and female here, but all are like the angels. For souls can not be distinguished into sexes, and therefore all relations are here swallowed up in God.”

He had no sooner spoken than he took me by the hand. Then, far swifter than an arrow from a bow, we passed by several shining forms clothed in robes of immortality, who looked at me as I passed them. He said, to me, “Farewell, my friend, your guardian angel will shortly come and bring you back to the world below.”

I drew near the shining form of a redeemed one that stood before me, who appeared extremely glorious, encircled with rays of dazzling lustre. 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 appear to be one who feels the mighty joys that you speak 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 swallowed up in God Who is alone the great Father of all this heavenly family. As for the members of the family that I left behind 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 join 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 saints in heaven understood and were concerned for what was happening in the world below. To this she replied, “As to the affairs of particular persons, we are not concerned with them and are ignorant of them. Only God is present in all places and sees all things. But the struggles and the victories of the church below is told to us by the angels, who are ministering spirits sent forth to minister to those that shall be heirs of salvation. From what they report we are excited to renew our praises to Him that sits upon the throne.”

CHAPTER 6: CONDUCTED TO HELL

Then the bright messenger who had brought me to heaven returned. “I have,” said the angel, “a commission to return you to the earth from where I took you, after first visiting the regions of the prince of darkness. There you will see the reward of sin, and what Justice has prepared as the judgment of those who would exalt themselves above the throne of the Most High.”

To leave heaven for earth was extremely disappointing. But to leave heaven for hell turned my very heart within me! However, when I knew that it was God’s good pleasure, I was a little comforted. So I said to my bright conductor, “That which God has ordered I shall always be willing to obey. Even in hell I will not be afraid if I may have His presence with me there.” To this my shining guardian replied, “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 on a speedy journey down through the heavens. When I saw the stars I told my conductor that I had heard on earth that each one of these stars had their own worlds. “But I would ask you to tell me the truth of this matter.”

To this my shining guardian answered, “To Him Who is Almighty there is nothing impossible. But from knowing that it is in His power to do this, to argue that it is His will, is no good logic in the school of heaven. We know what He pleases to reveal to us, and what He has not revealed are secrets locked up in His own eternal counsel. For anyone to inquire into these secrets would be but bold and presumptuous curiosity. There is no doubt that He can make as many worlds as He wants, but He has not yet revealed it to us, and it is not our duty to inquire.”

By this time we had come down to the lowest regions of the air. There I saw multitudes of horrible forms and dismal dark appearances which fled from the shining presence of my bright conductor. I said, “These surely are some of the vanguard of hell, so black and so frightening are their forms.”

My conductor replied, “Now we are upon the borders of hell, and these are some of the apostate spirits that wander around like roaring lions.” Soon we were surrounded with a darkness much more black than night, and with a stink far more suffocating than that of burning sulphur. My ears were likewise filled with the horrible yelling of the damned spirits, which in comparison with, would make the most discordant notes on earth sound like beautiful music.

“Now,” said my guardian angel, “you are on the edge of hell, but do not fear the power of the destroyer. My commission from the Imperial Throne secures you from all danger. Here you may hear from devils and damned souls the cursed causes of their endless ruin. What you ask them about, they will answer. The devils can not hurt you, though they would want to, for they are bound by Him that has commissioned me.”

We then came within hell’s territories, placed in the caverns of the infernal deep in the centre of the earth. There, in a sulphurous lake of liquid fire, sat Lucifer upon a

burning throne. His horrid eyes sparkled with hellish fury, as full of rage as his strong anger could make him. I saw that the demons that had fled from us as we approached from heaven had given notice of our coming. This had put all hell in an uproar, and made Lucifer release horrid blasphemies against the blessed God with an air of arrogance and pride.

“What would the Thunderer have?” said he. “He has my heaven already, whose radiant sceptre this bold hand should bear. Instead of those never fading fields of light, He confines me here in this dark house of death, sorrow, and woe! What, would He take hell away from me too, that He insults me here? Ah! Could I but obtain another day to try it, 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.”

“Although I lost the battle that day, the fault was not mine! No winged spirit in heaven strove better for the victory than I did. But, ah!” he continued with a changed voice, “that day is lost, and I am forever doomed to these dark territories! But it is still at least some comfort to me that mankind’s sorrow waits upon me. And since I can not fight against the Thunderer, I will make the utmost of my anger to fall on them.”

I was amazed to hear his ungodly speech, and felt compelled to say 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 to see more sorrowful scenes. I saw two wretched souls being tormented by a demon. He was continually plunging them in liquid fire and burning brimstone, while at the same time they accused and cursed each other. One of them said to his tormented fellow sufferer, “O cursed be 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 that brought me here. You enticed me, it was you who ensnared me into this. It was your covetousness, cheating, and oppression of the poor that brought me here. If you had been as good an example as you had been a bad one, I might now be in heaven. O what a fool I was! When I followed your steps you ruined me forever. O that I never had seen your face, or that you had never been born!”

The other wretch replied, “And may I not as well blame you? Don’t you remember how at such a time and place you enticed me to go along with you? I was minding my own business when you called me away, so you are as guilty as I. Though I was covetous, you were proud. Though you learned how to cheat from me, yet you taught me to lust, to lie, to get drunk and to scoff at goodness. So although I stumbled you in some things, you stumbled me as much in others. Therefore if you blame me, I can blame you as much. I wish you never had come here, the very sight of you wounds my soul, by bringing sin afresh into my mind. It was with you, with you that I sinned. O grief to my soul! Since I could not avoid your companionship on earth, O that I could be without it here!”

From this sad conversation I learned that those who are companions in sin upon earth shall also be punished together in hell. I believe that this was the true reason why the

rich man seemed so charitable to his brethren (Luke 16:27-28). The reason he did not want them to join him in hell was because they would have increased his torments.

CHAPTER 7: THE TORTURES OF HELL

There were yet more tragic scenes of sorrow that we saw as we left these two cursed wretches accusing each other. One woman had flaming sulphur continually forced down her throat by a tormenting spirit. He did this with such horrible cruelty and insolence that I said to him, "Why should you so delight in tormenting that cursed wretch, and be pouring that flaming, infernal liquid down her throat?"

"This is a more than just reward," replied the demon. "This woman in her life time was such a greedy wretch that though she had plenty of gold, she could never be satisfied. Therefore I now pour it down her throat. She cared not who she ruined as long as she could get their gold. And when she had gathered together a greater treasure than she could ever spend, her love of money would not let her spend enough of it to supply herself with her basic living needs. She often went with an empty stomach, though her money bags were full. She kept no house because she would not be taxed, and would not keep her treasure in her hands for fear she should be robbed. She would not put her money in bonds and mortgages for fear of being cheated; although she always cheated everyone that she could. She was so great a cheat that she cheated her own body of its food, and her own soul of mercy. Since gold was her god on earth, is it not a just reward that she should have her belly full of it in hell?"

When her tormentor had done speaking, I asked her whether this was all true. To this she answered me, "No; to my grief it is not." "Why is this not true," I said, "and why are you grieved that it is not true?" "Because if what my tormentor told you is true," she said, "I would be satisfied. He tells you that he pours gold down my throat; but he is a lying devil and speaks falsely. If it was gold I would never complain. But he mocks me, and instead of gold he only gives me this horrid, stinking sulphur. If I had my gold I would be happy still, for I value it so much that if I had it, I would not part with it even if an entrance to heaven could be bought."

I told my angelic conductor that I was amazed to hear a wretch in hell itself so greedy for riches while forever being tormented. "This," he said, "may convince you that it is sin which is the greatest of all evils. Whenever the love of sin controls a soul, it is the greatest of all punishments for them to be abandoned to that evil love. The love of gold which this cursed soul is consumed by, is a more fatal punishment than what the demons can inflict upon her here."

"O!" said I, "if only wicked men on earth could for one moment hear the horrid shrieks of those 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 gone much farther before we saw a wretched soul lying on a bed of burning steel, almost choked with brimstone. He cried out with such dreadful anguish and desperation, that I asked my conductor to wait. I heard him speak as follows:

"Ah, miserable wretch! Undone forever, forever! Oh, this killing word, 'forever!' Will not a million years be long enough to bear that pain, which if I could avoid it, I would not endure for even one moment for the sake of being offered one million worlds? No, no my misery never will have an end; after millions of years it will still

be for ever. Oh, what a helpless and hopeless condition I am in! It is this 'forever' that is the hell of hell! O cursed wretch! Cursed to all eternity! How wilfully have I undone myself! Oh, what stupendous folly am I guilty of, to choose sin's short and momentary pleasure at the dear price of everlasting pain! How often I was told it would be so! How often I was encouraged to leave those paths of sin that brought me to the chambers of eternal death! But I, like a dumb animal, would not listen to those pleadings. Now it is too late to change it, for my eternal state is fixed for ever. Why was I made a person, that I would choose this fate?"

"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 can not die! I live a dying life, worse than ten thousand deaths; and yet I once could have changed all this, but did not! Oh, that is the gnawing worm that never dies! I might once have been happy, salvation was offered to me and I refused it. Had salvation been offered to me only once, it would have been an unforgivable folly to refuse it. But salvation 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 leads 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 ignored His counsel! How often have I refused His reproof! But now the scene is changed, the case is altered. Now He laughs at my calamity, and mocks at the destruction which is come upon me. He would have helped me once, but I would not accept His help. Therefore those eternal miseries I am condemned to undergo are but the just reward of my own doing."

"I could not hear this sorrowful lamentation without thinking about the wonderful grace that God had shown to me, eternal praises to His holy name! For my heart told me that I had deserved eternal judgment as much as that sad wretch, but that God's grace alone had made us different. O how unsearchable are His counsels! Who can fathom His divine decree? After these thoughts I spoke to the sorrowful complainer, and told him I had heard his woeful complaints. I saw that his misery was great, and his loss irreparable, and told him I would willingly hear more about it if this might possibly help lessen his sufferings."

"No, not at all; my pains can not be relieved even for one small moment. But by your question I understand that you are a stranger here; and may you ever be a stranger! Ah, had I but the least hope still remaining, how I would kneel and cry and pray for ever to be redeemed from this hell! But it is all in vain, I am lost forever. But so that you will be warned about ending up here, I will tell you what the damned suffer."

CHAPTER 8: A LOST SOUL SPEAKS

“Our miseries in this infernal dungeon are of two kinds: what we have lost, and what we suffer. I will first speak about what we have lost.”

1. “In this sad dark place of misery and sorrow, we have lost the presence of the ever blessed God. This is what makes this dungeon hell. Though we had lost a thousand worlds, it would not be as important as this one greatest loss. Could we but see the least glimpse of His favour here, we might be happy; but have lost it to our everlasting woe.”

2. “Here we have also lost the company of saints and angels, and instead have nothing but tormenting devils.”

3. “Here we have lost heaven, too, the centre of blessedness. There is a deep gulf between us and heaven, so that we are shut out from it forever. Those everlasting gates that let the redeemed into heaven are now for ever shut against us.”

4. “To make our wretchedness far worse, we have lost the hope of ever obtaining a better condition. This makes us truly hopeless. Well may our hearts now break, since we are both without hope and help. This is what we have lost; and if we think of these things, it is enough to tear and gnaw upon our miserable souls forever. Yet, oh, that this were all that our torments were!”

“But we are also tormented by suffering and pain, as I will try to explain to you now.”

1. “First, we undergo a variety of torments. We are tormented here a thousand, no, ten thousand different ways. Those that suffer upon the earth seldom have more than one affliction at a time. But if they had ulcers, gallstones, headaches, and fever all at the same time, would they not think they were very miserable? Yet all those together are but like the biting of a flea compared to those intolerable, sharp pains that we endure. Here we have all the sufferings of hell. Here is an unquenchable fire which burns us; a lake of burning brimstone that ever chokes us; and eternal chains that bind us. Here there is utter darkness to frighten us, and a worm of conscience that gnaws upon us everlastingly. Any one of these is worse to bear than all the torments that mankind ever felt on earth!”

2. “But our torments here are not only various, but are also complete. They afflict every part of the body, and torment all the powers of the soul. This makes what we suffer the worst of tortures. In those sicknesses which men have on earth, though some members of their bodies will suffer, yet other parts will have no pain. Here it is different; every member of the soul and body suffers at the same time.”

“Our eyes are tormented here with the sight of devils who appear in all the horrible shapes and black appearances that sin can give them. Our ears are continually tormented with the loud continual yelling of the damned. Our nostrils are smothered with sulphurous flames; our tongues with burning blisters; and the whole body is rolled in flames of liquid fire. All the powers and faculties of our souls are also tormented here. The imagination suffers with the thoughts of our present pain and the memory of the heaven we have lost. Our minds are tormented as we remember how

foolishly we spent our precious time on earth. Our understanding is tormented with the thoughts of our past pleasures, present pains, and future sorrows, which are to last forever. And our consciences are tormented with a continual gnawing worm.”

3. “Another thing that makes our misery so awful is the sharpness 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 for anyone to know them except the damned.”

4. “Another part of our misery is the ceaselessness of our torments. As various, as complete, and as extremely violent as they are, they are also continual. We have no rest from them. If there were any relaxation, it might be some relief. But there is no easing of our torments, and what we suffer now we must suffer forever.”

5. “The society or company we have here is another part of our misery. Tormenting devils and tormented souls are all our company. Dreadful shrieks, howlings, and fearful cursing are our continual conversation because of the fierceness of our pain.”

6. “The place we are in also increases our sufferings. It is the completion of all misery, a prison, a dungeon, a bottomless pit, a lake of brimstone, a furnace of fire that burns to eternity, the blackness of darkness for ever; and lastly, hell itself. Such a wretched place as this can only increase our wretchedness.”

7. “The cruelty of our tormentors is another thing that adds to our sufferings. Our tormentors are devils in whom there is no pity. While they are tormented themselves, they still take pleasure in tormenting us.”

8. “All those sufferings that I have recounted are very grievous. But that which makes them the most grievous is that they shall always be forever. All of our intolerable sufferings shall last to all eternity!”

“‘Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire,’ is what continually sounds in my ears. Oh, that I could reverse that fatal sentence! Oh, if there was but a bare possibility of salvation! This is the miserable situation we are in, and shall be in forever.”

CHAPTER 9: FURTHER CONVERSATIONS

This wretched soul had scarcely finished what he was saying when he was tormented again by a hellish demon, who told him to stop complaining.

The demon said, “don’t you know you have deserved it all? How often were you told of this before, but would not believe it? You laughed at those who warned you about hell. You were even so presumptuous as to dare Almighty justice to destroy you! How often you called on God to damn you. Do you complain that you are answered according to your wishes? What an unreasonable thing! You know that you had salvation offered you, and you refused it. How can you now complain of being damned? I have more reason to complain, for you had a long time in which repentance was offered you; but I was cast into hell as soon as I had sinned. If I had been offered salvation, I would never have rejected it as you did. Who do you think should pity you now, with all that heaven had offered to you?”

This made the wretch cry out, “Oh, do not continue to torment me; I know that I chose destruction. Oh, that I could forget it! These thoughts are my greatest torture. I chose to be damned, and therefore justly am so.”

Then turning to the demon that tortured him he said, “But I also came here through your temptations, you cursed devil. You were the one that had tempted me to do all of my sins; and now you would reproach me? You say you never had a Saviour offered to you; but you should also remember that you never had a tempter such as you have always been to me.”

To this the devil scornfully replied, “It was my business to lead you here! You had often been warned of this by your preacher. You were plainly told that we sought your ruin, and go about continually like roaring lions, seeking whom we could devour. I was often afraid you that would believe them, as several other souls did, to our great disappointment. But you were willing to do what we wanted; and since you have done our work it is but reasonable that we should pay you wages.”

Then the fiend tormented him again and caused him to roar out so horribly that I could no longer stay to hear him, so I passed on.

“How dismal,” I then said to my conductor, “is the condition of these damned souls! They are the devils slaves while upon earth, and he reproaches and then torments them for it when they come to hell.” “The devils hate all the race of Adam,” said my conductor. “And because many souls are ignorant of their devices, they easily succeed to bring them to eternal ruin. You will see more how the demons treat the damned here.”

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. In the meantime, they were cursing God and those about them, and were blaspheming in a tremendous manner. I could not help but ask of one demon that so tormented them, who were these souls that he tormented so cruelly?

Said he, "These wretches well deserve their punishment. They tried to teach others the right road to heaven, while they were so in love with hell that they came here. These are those souls that have been our great helpers upon the earth, and therefore they deserve our special attention in hell. We use our full diligence to give every one their utmost share of torments, for they not only have their own sins to answer for, but also all the sins of those whom they led astray both by their doctrine and example."

"Since they have been such great helpers for you, I would think that in gratitude you would treat them a little more kindly."

To this the impudent friend 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. 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 deceive them. But when we have them here where they can not escape, we soon convince them of their foolishness in serving us."

From this I could only think about what infinite grace it is that any poor sinners are brought to heaven, considering how many traps are laid by the enemy to ensnare them by the way. Therefore it is a ministry 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 also folly and madness in men to refuse the offers of His grace, and to choose to side with the destroyer.

Going farther on, I heard a wretch complaining in a heartbreaking strain against those men that had betrayed him and brought him here. "I was told," said he, "by those that I depended on, and that I thought could inform me correctly, that if I said 'Lord, have mercy on me,' when I came to die, it would be enough to save me. But oh, now I find myself mistaken, to my eternal sorrow! Alas, I called for mercy on my deathbed, but found it was too late. Before that time, this cursed devil here told me that I was safe. Then on my deathbed, he told me it was too late. Hell must forever be my portion."

"You see, I did tell you the truth at last," said the devil, "and then you would not believe me. A very fitting end, don't you think? You spend your days enjoying sin, and wallow in your filthiness, and you want to go to heaven when you die! Would anyone but a madman think that would be just? No; he that sincerely wants to go to heaven when he dies, must walk in the ways of holiness and virtue while he is alive. 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! If you had read the Bible you would have known that 'Without holiness, no one shall see the Lord.' Therefore, if you were willing to live in your sins as long as you could, you did not finally leave them because you did not like them, but because you could follow them no longer. And this you know to be true. How could you be so stupid to think you could go to heaven with the love of sin in your heart? No, no, no. You were warned often enough that you should take heed of being deceived, for God is not mocked, but what you sow you reap. You have no reason to complain of anything 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," I said to my conductor, "and shows the true situation of many now on earth as well as those

in hell. But oh, what a far different judgment do they make in this sad place from what they did on earth.”

“The reason for this,” replied my guardian angel, “is that they will not allow themselves to think what the effect of sin will be while on earth. Carelessness ruins many souls who do not think about what they are doing, nor where they are going, until it is too late to help it.”

CHAPTER 10: AN ATHEIST IN HELL

We had not gone much farther before I saw a vast number of tormenting demons. They were continually lashing a large company of wretched souls with knotted whips of ever burning steel. The tormented were roaring out with such loud cries that I thought it might have melted even cruelty itself into some pity. This made me say to one of the tormentors, "Oh, stop your whipping, and do not use such cruelty on those who are your fellow creatures, and whom you probably helped lead to all this misery."

"No," answered the tormentor very smoothly. "Though we are bad enough, no devil was as bad as them, nor were we guilty of such crimes as they were. We all know there is a God, although we hate Him; but these souls would never admit (until they came here) that there was such a Being."

"Then these," I said, "were atheists. They are wretched men, and tried to ruin me had not eternal grace prevented it." I had no sooner spoken, but one of the tormented wretches cried out mournfully, "Surely I know that voice. It must be John." I was amazed to hear my name mentioned; and therefore I answered, "Yes, I am John; but who are you?" To this he replied, "I once knew you well upon the earth, and had almost persuaded you to be of my opinion. I am the author of that celebrated book entitled 'Leviathan.'" "What! The great Hobbs?" said I. "Are you come here?"

"Alas," replied he, "I am that unhappy man indeed. But I am so far from being great that I am one of the most wretched persons in all these dirty territories. 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 was that proud confidence I had in my own wisdom that has so betrayed me."

"Your case is miserable, and yet you admit that you suffer justly. For how industrious were you to persuade others and try to bring them to the same damnation. No one can know this better than I, as I was almost taken in your snare to perish forever."

"It is that," said he, "that stings me to the heart, to think how many will perish by my influence. I was afraid when I first heard your voice that you had also been cast into hell. Not that I wish any person happy, for it is my torment to think that anyone is happy while I am so miserable. But I did not want you to be cast into hell, because every soul that is brought here through my deceptions, increases my pains in hell."

"But tell me," I said, "for I want to know the truth. Did you indeed believe there was no God when you lived upon earth?"

"At first I believed there was a God," he answered, "but as I turned to sins which would lead me to His judgment, I hoped there was no God. For it is impossible to think there is a just God, and not also remember that He will punish those who disobey Him. But as I continued in my sins, and found that justice did not swiftly come, I then began to hope there was no God. From those hopes I began to frame ideas in my own mind that could justify what I hoped. My ideas framed a new system of the world's origin which excluded from it the existence of God. At last I found

myself so fond of these new theories that I decided to believe them and convince others that they were true. But before this, I did find several checks in my own conscience. I felt that I could be wrong, but I ignored these warnings. Now I find that those checking thoughts that might have helped me then, are here the things that most of all torment me. I must confess that the love of sin hardened my heart against my Maker, and made me hate Him first, and then deny His being. Sin, that I so proudly embraced, has been the cursed cause of all this woe; it is the serpent that has stung my soul to death. For now I find, in spite of my vain philosophy, there is a God. I have also found that God will not be mocked, although it was my daily practice in the world to mock at heaven and all that is sacred, for this was the means that I found very successful to spread abroad my cursed ideas. For anyone that I could get to ridicule the truths of God, I looked upon as becoming one of my disciples. But now these thoughts are more tormenting to me than the sufferings I endure from these whips of burning steel.”

“Sad indeed,” I said. “See what Almighty Power can inflict on those that violate His righteous law.” I was making some further comments when the relentless fiend who had been tormenting them then interrupted me. “Now you see what sort of men they were in the world. Do you not think they deserve their punishment now?”

To which I answered, “Doubtless it is the just reward of sin which they suffer, and which you will suffer also. For you, as well as they, have sinned against the ever blessed God, and for your sin you shall suffer the just vengeance of eternal fire. Nor is it any excuse to say you never doubted the being of a God; for though you knew there was God, yet you rebelled against Him. Therefore you shall be justly punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord.”

To this the fiend replied, “It is true we know we shall be punished, as you say. But if you say that 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 rebel with him. And therefore, though this multiplies the crime of Lucifer, it should lessen that of the inferior spirits.”

To this my bright conductor replied with an angry countenance. “O you apostate, wicked, lying spirit! Can you say those things and see me here? You know it was your proud heart that made you rebel with Lucifer against the blessed God who had created you with glory! But since you proudly exalted yourself above your blessed Creator, and joined with Lucifer, you are justly cast down to hell. Your former beauty has changed to your present horrible form as the just punishment of your rebellious pride.”

To this the apostate spirit replied, “Why do you invade our territories, and come here to torment us before our time?” And when he had said this, he slipped away as if he did not want to have an answer. After he was gone I said to my guardian angel that I had already heard about the fall of the apostate angels, but wanted to know more about what happened. To this my guide answered me, “When you have finished your earthly life and return to heaven, you shall learn many things that you are not yet ready to understand. In your present state do not desire to learn more than what is written in the Scriptures. It is enough to know the angels sinned, and for their sin were

cast down to hell. But how pure spirits could have a thought arise in their hearts against the eternal Purity that first created them is what you are not yet capable of understanding.”

“I have observed,” said I, “that those in hell complain most about the torment from their own sense of guilt, which confirms the justice of their punishment. This gloomy prison is the best place to rightly understand sin; for were it not so evil, it would not be rewarded with such extreme punishment.”

“What you say is very natural; but there is yet a better place to see the just reward due to sin. That place can be seen when you behold the blessed Son of God upon the cross. There we may see the terrible effects of sin. There we may see all of its true evil. For all the sufferings of the damned here are but the sufferings of created beings; but on the cross you see a suffering God.”

“Surely,” said I, “did justice and mercy triumph and kiss each other in that fatal hour. For justice was fully satisfied at the cross in the just punishment of sin; and mercy triumphed and was pleased there because salvation for poor sinners was completed. Oh, eternal praises to His holy name for ever, that His grace has made me willing to accept this salvation, and become an heir of glory! For I remember that some of those lost wretches here have lamented that when salvation had been offered to them, they had refused it. It was therefore grace alone that helped me to accept it.”

At this point my shining guardian told me that he must bring me back to the earth again, and leave me there until it was time for me to enter my heavenly reward. “Come,” he said, “let us leave this place of sorrow and horror to the possession of their black inhabitants.”

In a very little space of time I found myself on earth again. I was left at the very place where the angel had met me, when I had been thinking about committing suicide through the temptations of the devil who had tried to persuade me that there was no God. How I returned there, I do not know. But as soon as I was back there, the bright angel who had been my conductor said, “John, I must go now. I have another ministry to complete. Praise Him that sits upon the throne for ever, who has all power in heaven, earth, and hell. Praise Him for all the wonders of His love and grace that He has shown you in so short a time.”

As I was going to reply, the shining angel disappeared and I was left alone. I spent some time considering the amazing things I had seen and heard, and then knelt down and prayed. When I rose up I began blessing and praising God for all His goodness.

When I returned back to my house, my family was very surprised to see how my countenance had so greatly changed. They looked at me as if they scarcely knew me. I asked them what they were staring at. They answered that it was the change in my face that caused it. I said, “How am I so greatly changed?”

They told me, “Yesterday you looked so depressed that you seemed the very image of despair. But now, your face appears radiantly beautiful, and seems full of perfect joy and satisfaction.”

“If you had seen,” I said, “what I have seen today, you would not be surprised at the change in me.” Then I went into my room, took my pen and ink, and wrote down everything that I had heard and seen. And I hope that those who read this will be moved in their hearts just as I have been as I wrote everything down.