

the palace of his kingly majesty, as the temple of his holiness—the world where angels ever unstained by sin, and saints redeemed, behold his countenance unveiled, are admitted to his most intimate fellowship, and blessed with the brightest manifestations of his excellence, and the richest fruitions of his love. In the volume of inspiration, accordingly, we see all nature laid under tribute for imagery the most splendid whereby to represent to us its supernal grandeur. Even, however, with all the assistance thus afforded, faint and inadequate as compared with the sublime reality must be the most vivid and exalted ideas of it which we can form now. Here, emphatically, in respect of heaven and its glory, we see as “through a glass darkly;” here we but “know in part.”

But though such be the obscurity and limitation of our present views, yet as the disciples of Jesus, the people of God, it is ours to cherish the hope—the good hope through grace—that hereafter, in relation to that respecting which we now see as through a glass darkly, and but know in part, we shall attain to a clearer vision and a fuller knowledge. It is ours to cherish the hope that in the celestial world, where-soever in the spacious universe it may be, we shall have our future and everlasting home, and all its glory be revealed to our direct and unobstructed gaze. And, having this high hope, earth and its peculiar objects may well cease to have the pre-eminence in our hearts; we may well like superior alike to its allurements and its trials; and in a life swayed and hallowed by all pure and heavenly influences, manifest our interest in the world where that hope so great and so divine shall have its eternal fulfilment.

But we are to conceive of heaven—not only as a distinct place—but,

2nd, As a place of saintly society. There, with the faithful patriarchs of

ancient times—with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob—will be conjoined the faithful privileged to live amid the splendour of that Gospel-day whose surpassing brightness they saw from afar, and in the expectation of whose coming they rejoiced—there will be associated in one hallowed company the redeemed of mankind from the beginning of the world to the final consummation.

With reference to this celestial company, the first thing to be noticed is *its greatness*. “Lord, are there few that be saved?” was a question addressed to Jesus on a certain occasion, as “he went through the cities and villages teaching and journeying toward Jerusalem.” In reply, he exhorted his hearers to “strive to enter in at the strait gate,” for that “many would seek to enter in and would not be able.” At the same time, however, it was intimated, in language parallel with that in our text, that there were those who should “come from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, and sit down in the kingdom of God.” Nor was it to be comparatively but a few who should thus come heavenward; but, as the text apprises us, *many*—forming, as we elsewhere learn, “a great multitude which no man could number.”

Closely connected with the greatness of the celestial company is the next point we have to notice respecting it, namely, *the various origin of the persons composing it*. It will comprise individuals from the east and from the west—from the rising of the sun to where he hath his going down—from every region of the habitable globe—from every country and every clime—an innumerable multitude “of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues.”

Under the Gospel such restrictive peculiarities as those by virtue of which the blessings of Judaism were mainly confined to a particular territory and a select people,