

There are, however, some professing Christians both in the Church and among the denominations outside of the Church who think otherwise. They hold that departed souls do not reach heaven until the day of resurrection and final judgment; that such departed souls are indeed "in joy and felicity" in an intermediate place called Paradise, but not yet in the world of glory which we usually call Heaven. Some Christians again leave this whole matter as an open question. But surely this ought to be a question of the greatest interest to every one who loves the Saviour. The sincere desire and earnest desire of every such lover of our Lord would be, at death, "to depart and to be with Christ." St. Paul tells us in the text that he had that desire—"a desire," he says, "to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better;" that is, far better than to be in this world, which he knew as a world of sin, and sorrow, and toil, and poverty, and persecution. It is true that St. Paul expresses such a desire, but some desires are not granted. But was it only a matter of desire, and not also a matter of belief or faith, that when he departed from the body he should then be with Christ? Here is what he says in his 2nd Epistle to the Corinthians, the fifth chapter. After speaking of the human body as a tabernacle or tent to be dissolved, and contrasting it with what he calls a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens—a house which he tells us have from God, thus reminding us of Heaven, to which Christ has ascended; he then expresses not a mere desire, but a firm faith or belief in this matter, saying at verse 4: "We are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord, (for we walk by faith, not by sight); we are confident, I say, willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." Now these words express not a mere willingness or desire to leave the body or earthly tabernacle, but also a belief, even a confidence, that when he and his fellow Christians did leave the body at death it would only be a departure to be with Christ, and to be "with Him" in a very different manner than we are with Him in this world. Death would be the departure of their souls to be present with Christ, and then they would no longer walk by faith but by sight. That is, they should see Jesus as He is; His prayer for them being fully answered—"Father, I will that they whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold my glory which Thou hast given me," (St. John xvii. 24).

Such was the confidence or faith of St. Paul, and such also was the faith of the martyr St. Stephen, when his murderers were stoning him to death, as we read of in the Acts of the Apostles viii: "He looked up steadfastly into Heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; and He calling upon God, said, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Was that glorious vision to be dimmed by death? Was the martyr's cheering sight to be again changed into blind faith? When Jesus was thus seen in glory, standing as though ready to receive unto Himself, according to promise, His faithful martyr, shall the martyr's earnest prayer be rejected or unanswered? Will Jesus not receive to Himself as He had promised to do, the loving spirit longing to be with Him and near Him, and to enjoy forever the promised glory and felicity in which the Lord Himself was now beheld? Who can even imagine from such a record that the soul of the martyr was not and is not yet received into the glorious and immediate presence of Christ, but is even yet in some intermediate place called Paradise, a place which is not Heaven, a place in which to wait until the day of resurrection and judgment before seeing Jesus as He is in His glory? Such an interpretation of this passage of Holy Scripture does violence to its evident meaning, and has never been held by the Christian Church.

Take another passage bearing on the same subject. It is that in St. Luke's Gospel, the 23rd chapter. One of the malefactors crucified with Jesus said unto Him, "Lord, remember me when Thou comest unto Thy kingdom." And Jesus said unto him, verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." What meaning might the dying malefactor give to the word Paradise? Doubtless he would understand it as the Jews generally did. But what meaning did our Saviour attach to the word? That is a more important question; for the Jews of old, as they do yet, entertain dark and erroneous views of the state of departed souls; but our blessed Saviour came to bring life and immortality to light, and this He did by what He taught and by His miracles, of raising the dead to life, and finally by His own death, resurrection and ascension into Heaven. Whatever, therefore, He as the Divine Teacher tells us of the future state, either by His own personal instruction or by the instruction of His apostles or evangelists, inspired by His Spirit, we must receive as the word of truth from the God of truth, and infinitely to be preferred to all the opinions or imaginings of men whether Jew or Gentile. As to

what meaning the ancient Jews attached to the word paradise, I may here quote two or three sentences from a work written by a modern Jewish Rabbi, well versed in the ancient Rabbinical writings. He says the Jews believe that there is a paradise which they call Gan Eden, signifying the Garden of Eden, and that such souls as are in that happy state enjoy the beautiful vision. Paradise and Heaven must signify one and the same thing, for thus says one of these ancient writers: "When Rabbi Perachjab approached the door of paradise, the entrance to Heaven was opened to him (Sohar 71, 1);" and speaking of a collection of ancient Jewish writings called the Talmud, and which contains undoubtedly the common ideas of the Jewish nation concerning paradise in the days of Christ, and even before that time, our author says: "The descriptions of the next world are left vague; yet with regard to paradise the idea of something inconceivably glorious is conveyed at every step." The passage "eye hath not seen nor hath ear heard" is applied to its unspeakable bliss. "The righteous will there sit with crowns on their heads glorying in the splendor of the Divine Majesty." The Talmud does not picture the life in Heaven as only a quiet contemplative life, but also as a progressive existence, saying, "The pious have no rest, that is, they remain not quiet in a certain degree, not in this world nor in the next, (Barachoth, 64, a); (Freshman's Jews and Israelites).

Mixed with these popular notions of paradise we find at least many absurd or at least unscriptural opinions concerning the state of souls after death, and which we need not now refer to. But what has now been cited from these ancient authors may suffice to show that the Jews regarded paradise and Heaven as one and the same place, and the Jewish idea of paradise was simply the Christian idea of Heaven; for there in paradise was the beautiful or beatific vision of God, seen in the splendor of the Divine Majesty, and there are the souls of the righteous crowned with glory and in unspeakable bliss. And when we turn to the New Testament for the truth concerning paradise, it simply confirms the general ideas which the ancient Jews entertained concerning it. The word occurs only three times, namely, when our Saviour, as already mentioned, promised it to the dying malefactor; then in 2 Cor. xv. 4, where St. Paul tells us that "He was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words which it is not lawful for man to utter." In the verse before that he speaks of being "caught up to the third heaven," which we have already seen is but another mode of expressing the same high and holy place called paradise. He seems to have had two different visions, whether in the body or out of the body he could not tell, but in describing the sacred place which he saw in vision, he varies its name, as was common with the Jews calling it in the one case the third heaven and in the other paradise. But in neither of these two passages of the New Testament have we any proof that Heaven and paradise are the names of the one place. Let us see what is said in the Book of Revelation, the second chapter and 7th verse: "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the paradise of God." Now if we would know something more of this paradise, and as to whether it means Heaven, let us turn to the 22nd chapter of this Book of Revelation; at the first verse we thus read: "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the Throne of God and of 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 his 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 on their foreheads. And there shall be no more night there; and they need no candle, nor light of the sun; for God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever." Now, although there are several things in this description which may not be understood literally; yet taken altogether they have been received by Christians generally as descriptive of Heaven. Provided this be the true meaning of the passage, then Heaven is the very place called, in chapter 2nd, "the paradise of God;" for here "in the midst of it" is "the tree of life," indicating paradise restored and man's lost immortality restored with it. Moreover, here is the throne of God and the Lamb not seen by faith or through a glass darkly; but the faith is changed into sight; "they see His face," and as Christ promised, they are "with Him where He is and behold His glory." All this is paradise! Surely then paradise is Heaven, and Heaven is paradise.

But there is another passage in this Book of Revelation which is thought by some to be against the idea that the souls even of the martyrs have not yet

reached Heaven. It is a passage in the 6th chapter, where St. John says, "I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the Word of God and for the testimony which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? And white robes were given unto every one of them: and it was said unto them that they should rest for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren that should be killed, should be fulfilled." Now, if the various interpreters of the Book of Revelation were agreed about the meaning of this passage we might be better able to see its bearing on the subject before us, namely, the hereafter of the souls of the righteous between death and the day of judgment. But unfortunately interpreters are not agreed. One commentator suggests or affirms that St. John had a vision of the altar of burnt offering, and that these souls of the martyrs were seen as sacrifices slain beside the altar. Another says St. John had a vision of the altar of incense in the holy place of the temple at Jerusalem, and that their being seen clothed in the white there, and prostrate at the base of the altar, indicates symbolically the high honor and felicity in being near to God in His holy temple in Heaven. One commentator says that "the little season" during which these martyred souls were to rest was the period of time from the middle of the third century until the beginning of the fourth—a period of fierce persecution of the Church—"the age" indeed, "of martyrs." But how this should be a season of rest to the souls under the altar does not appear. Let us learn, however, these few truths from this passage, namely, that though the bodies of the martyrs were slain or killed, their souls were not killed; for here they are represented as under or at the foot of the altar of God, and lifting up their voice in crying for vengeance on the persecutors of the Church. And we may learn also that their being arrayed in white robes is a proof of their being of the same noble army of martyrs mentioned in the 7th chapter of this Book, and who are described as "they who have come 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; and He that sitteth upon the throne shall dwell among them. 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 lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." These, in fact, are "the noble army of martyrs," whom we celebrate every time we sing the *Te Deum*, and whom we regard as uniting with the apostles and prophets and angels mentioned in this Book in worshipping and serving God the Father everlasting and Christ the King of glory. And where does this Book represent this united worship as being given to God? Where else but in Heaven? If so, then the souls of the apostles, the prophets, the martyrs, and all who have departed in the true faith are now in Heaven and not in any intermediate place waiting to reach the vision of Christ where He is seen in His glory.

(To be Continued).

## Home & Foreign Church News.

From our own Correspondents.

### DOMINION.

#### MONTREAL.

WHITE CROSS AND EVANGELISTIC WORK AT THE REFUGE.—The Rev. Dr. Norton, rector of Montreal, delivered an interesting White Cross address to a meeting of men at the House of Refuge last evening. The reverend gentleman gives mission addresses at the Refuge on the remaining evenings of the week.

#### ONTARIO.

The Lord Bishop of Ontario, during his recent confirmation tour, confirmed 680 persons, 109 of whom were converts. He also consecrated two churches and two burial grounds.

The Rev. E. Loucks, of Picton, has been appointed rural dean of Prince Edward county and of the townships of Sydney, Rawdon and Marmora in the county of Hastings.

MABERLY MISSION.—The lord bishop of the diocese having reconstructed this mission, attaching the