

**THE BELIEVER'S REFUGE;
OR, MEDITATIONS ON
CHRIST AND HEAVEN**

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The Believer's Refuge; Or, Meditations on Christ and Heaven by Joseph P. Thompson

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JOSEPH P. THOMPSON

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BY

JOSEPH P. THOMPSON,

PASTOR OF THE BROADWAY TABERNACLE CHURCH.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
THE VISION OF DEATH,	7
THE BIRD AND THE CHILD,	14
THE CHILD DEAD,	20
A CRY OF FAITH,	25
"SUFFER LITTLE CHILDREN,"	27
WAITING FOR DEATH,	34
THE FIRST BESSON,	37
MY SISTER'S GRAVE,	40
THINKING TOO MUCH,	42
TROUBLED THOUGHTS,	48
DIVINE CONSOLATIONS,	54
HEART SEARCHING,	58
THE PEACE OF GOD,	65
"TUNE THE GREAT CONSOLER,"	70
A DAY WITH CHRIST,	77
A PORCELAIN-CRIST AND THE HEART-CRIST,	84
CHRIST INDWELLING,	89
A GOOD FOUNDATION,	98
GOD OUR REFUGE,	101
AN UNFALTERING TRUST,	105
RIVEN IN CHRIST,	109
NOT SOLITARY,	116
THE PROMISED COMING,	123
HAS CHRIST COME?	127
THE SYMPATHY OF CHRIST,	129

	PAGE
WEARY AND WORK,	130
CHOOSE A FRIEND,	141
OUR FUTURE SELVES,	147
DEATH NO TERROR,	159
THE POWER OF MONEY,	160
THE GAIN OF LOSSES,	164
MY FUTURE MANSION,	172
THE SPIRIT-WORLD,	178
THE SPIRITUALITY OF HEAVEN,	190
THE RESURRECTION,	198

MEDITATIONS.

The Vision of Death.

ON reading again Bryant's *Thanatopsis* after the lapse of years, I am more than ever impressed with its sepulchral gloom, through which there gleams no ray of hope or consolation, no fire of immortality. A chill comes over me as I ask—Is this all that Philosophy, decked in the gorgeous attire of Poetry, can do to cheer the spirit in view of death?

The last few lines of the poem will be immortal, because that little word *trust*—though the poet does not intimate the object of that trust—awakens in the devout mind associations of faith and hope in Him who conquer-

ed death ; because by that little loop-hole the Christian may pour somewhat of his own light through the dark portal which the poet has reared for the mansion of the dead, thus transforming the huge frowning figures that beset the entrance into pillars that support the massive arch while Faith and Hope pass safely under.

What comfort is there in the thought that I shall lie down in the same bed with patriarchs and kings and warriors, and all the past generations of men ; that the winds, the streams, the forest-leaves, the ever-rolling ocean shall sigh my requiem ; and that all the living in their countless generations shall follow me, until the desolated globe shall swing silent and dark, a crowded sepulcher ? What comfort is there in the thought that death is the common, the universal fate of men ? Nay, does not this add rather to its gloom ? I can have no sympathy with a poem that offers such sentiments as the sum of its consolation in view of death. I turn

from it as from the embrace of an iceberg. Gigantic it may be, and flashes of various colored light may shoot from its surface—but it is cold, deathly cold.

Death in itself is a gloomy event. It must be so. It was meant to be so. Nothing can relieve it but faith in Christ and immortality. A greater poet than Bryant has described the grave as *a land of darkness, as darkness itself; and of the shadow of death, without any order, and where the light is as darkness.*

Such was the view which a good man had of the grave, four thousand years ago. It is the only view possible where Christianity is unknown. And after all the light and warmth which Christianity has shed around it, the grave is still a cold, dark place. It has no attractions; it can have none. We may spread the rich turf over it; we may adorn it with flowers which the hand and the tear of affection shall keep always in bloom; we may surround it with shrubbery, to screen it from storms, and to seclude it

from the noisy, careless world ; the sunbeams may steal softly over it ; the birds may build their nests in the willow that bends at its head, and may warble their sweet notes on the balmy air ; fountains may be murmuring near, and streams may go babbling by ; the evergreen may relieve even the cheerlessness of winter ; but it is still the grave,—the cold, dark, silent grave. Faith may not fear it ; Hope may leap over it into the land of brightness and of joy immortal ; care, toil, suffering, disappointment may render death to the inconsiderate a welcome relief ; or the soul that pants after the fullness of God may long for the dissolution of its earthly tabernacle ;—but none of all these things can make the grave inviting.

The grave, indeed, is another place since Jesus slept there ; but only because He rose again. The light comes not from the grave, but from the resurrection and from heaven beyond. The Christian does not look upon death and the grave with so much of dread