

Elizabeth Singer Rowe, "A Hymn on Heaven"

Description

ELIZABETH SINGER ROWE

"A Hymn on Heaven"

What glorious things of thee, O glorious place!
Shall my bold muse in daring numbers speak?
While to immortal strains I tune my lyre,
And warbling imitate angelic airs:
While ecstasy bears up my soul aloft, 5
And lively faith gives me a distant glimpse
Of glories unrevealed to human eyes.

Ye starry mansions, hail! my native skies!
Here in my happy, pre-existent state,
(A spotless mind) I led the life of gods. 10
But passing, I salute you, and advance
To yonder brighter realms allow'd access.

Hail, splendid city of th' almighty king!
Celestial Salem, situate above:
Magnificent thy prospect, and august, 15
Thy walls sublime, thy towers and palaces
Illustrious far, with orient gems appear.
There, regent angels, crown'd with stars, command,
High in the midst, the awful throne of God
Ascends, the utmost empyrean arch, 20
The heaven of heavens; where in conceiveless light,
Such as infinity alone can prove,
He enjoys th' extremest bounds of happiness,
And was in perfect blessedness the same
Ere any thing existed but himself; 25
Ere time, or place, or motion, had a name;
Before the spheres began their tuneful round;
Or through the air the sun had spread his beams;
Ere at his feet the flaming seraphs bow'd,
And cast their shining crowns before his throne; 30
Ere smiling angels tun'd their golden harps,
Or sung one hallelujah to his praise.
But mighty love, which mov'd him to create,
Still moves him to communicate his bliss.

O, speak! you happy spirits that surround	35
His dazzling throne, for you alone can tell;	
For you alone those raptures can describe,	
And stem thâ?? impetuous floods of joy that rise	
Within your breasts, when all unveilâ??d, you view	
The wonders of the beatific sight:	40
When from the bright unclouded face of God	
You drink full draughts of bliss and endless love,	
And plunge yourselves in lifeâ??s immortal fount;	
The spring of joy, which from his darling throne	
In endless currents smoothly glides away,	45
Throâ?? all the verdant fields of paradise;	
Throâ?? balmy groves, where on their flowâ??ry banks,	
To murmâ??ring waters, and soft whispâ??ring winds,	
Fair spirits in melodious concert join,	
And sweetly warble their heroic loves.	50
For love makes half their heavâ??n, and kindles here	
New flames, and ardent life in evâ??ry breast;	
While active pleasure lightens in their eyes,	
And sparkling beauty shines on every face:	
Their spotless minds, all pure and exquisite,	55
The noblest heights of love preparâ??d to act,	
In everlasting sympathies unite,	
And melt, in flowing joys, eternity away.	
To those blest shades, and amaranthine bowâ??rs,	
When dazzled with thâ?? insufferable beams	60
That issue from the open face of God,	
For umbrage many a seraphim resorts:	
Nor longer here oâ??er their bright faces clasp	
Their gorgeous wings, which open wide, display	
More radiance than adorns the chearful sun,	65
When first he from the rosy east looks out:	
Gentle as love, their looks serene as light,	
Blooming and gay as everlasting springs.	
But oh! when in the lofty blissful bowâ??rs,	
With heavâ??nly skill, to the harmonious lyre,	70
The clear, the sweet, the melting voice they join;	
The vales of heavâ??n rejoice, and echoing loud,	
Redouble evâ??ry charming close again;	
While trembling winds upon their fragrant wings	
Bear far the soft, melodious sounds away;	75
The silver streams their winding journeys stay,	
Suspend their murmurs, and attend the song;	
The laughing fields new flowâ??rs and verdure wear,	
And all the trees of life bloom out afresh.	
The numâ??rous suns which gild the realms of joy,	80

Dance in their lightsome spheres, and brighter day
 Thro' all that interminable ether darts,
 While to the great unutterable name,
 All glory they ascribe in lofty strains,
 In strains expressless by a mortal tongue. 85
 O happy regions! O transporting place!
 With what regret I turn my loathing eyes
 To yonder earthly globe, my dusky seat!
 But ah! I must return; no more allow'd
 To breathe the calm, the soft, celestial air, 90
 And view the mystic wonders of the skies.

NOTES:

4 *warbling* – To modulate the voice in singing; to sing with trills and quavers (OED).

13 *almighty king* – Designating a god, especially the Christian God or Christ (OED).

14 *Salem* A reference to Jerusalem (*Britannica*).

17 *orient* – Eastern countries; the East (OED).

29 *seraphs* – Angels (OED).

37 *raptures* – Transport of mind; ecstasy esp. ecstatic delight of joy (OED).

43 *fount* – A spring (OED).

59 *amaranthine bow* – An idealized abode (OED).

62 *seraphim* – In Biblical use: the living creatures with six wings, hands and feet and a (presumably) human voice, seen in Isaiah's version as hovering over the throne of God (OED).

SOURCE: *Poems on Several Occasions* (London, 1759), pp. 59-62. [Google Books]

Edited by Franny Baronian