Elizabeth Singer Rowe, “A Hymn on Heaven”

Description

ELIZABETH SINGER ROWE

â€œA Hymn on Heavenâ€•

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, Â 5
And lively faith gives me a distant glimpse
Of glories unrevealâ€™d to human eyes.

YeÂ starry mansions, hail! my native skies!
Here in my happy, pre-existent state,
(A spotless mind) I led the life of gods. Â 10
But passing, I salute you, and advance
To yonder brighter realmâ€™s allowâ€™d access.

Hail, splendid city of thâ€™ almighty king!
Celestial Salem, situate above:
Magnificent thy prospect, and august, Â 15
Thy walls sublime, thy towâ€™rs and palaces
Illustrious far, with orient gems appear.
There, regent angels, crownâ€™d with stars, command,
High in the midst, the awful throne of God
Ascends, the utmost empyrean arch, Â 20
The heavâ€™n of heavens; where in conceiveless light,
Such as infinity alone can prove,
He enjoys thâ€™ extremest bounds of happiness,
And was in perfect blessedness the same
Ere any thing existed but himself; Â 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 bowâ€™d,
And cast their shining crowns before his throne; Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â 30
Ere smiling angels tunâ€™d their golden harps,
Or sung one hallelujah to his praise.

But mighty love, which movâ€™d him to create,
Still moves him to communicate his bliss.

O, speak! you happy spirits that surround Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â 35
His dazzling throne, for you alone can tell;
For you alone those raptures can describe,
And stem th’ impetuous floods of joy that rise
Within your breasts, when all unveilâ€™d, you view
The wonders of the beatific sight: Â 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, Â 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. Â 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, Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â 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 Â 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, Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â 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, Â 70
Â 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; Â 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, Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â Â 80
Dance in their lightsome spheres, and brighter day
Throâ€™ all thâ€™ interminable ether darts,
While to the great unutterable name,
All glory they ascribe in lofty strains,
In strains expressless by a mortal tongue. Â 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 allowâ€™d
To breathe the calm, the soft, celestial air, Â 90
And view the mystic wonders of the skies.

Â NOTES:

Â 4 *warbling* â€œTo modulate the voice in singing; to sing with trills and quaversâ€• (*OED*).

13 *almighty king* â€œDesignating a god, especially the Christian God or Christâ€• (*OED*).

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

17 *orient* â€œEastern countries; the Eastâ€• (*OED*).

29 *seraphs* â€œAngelsâ€• (*OED*).

37 *raptures* â€œTransport of mindâ€¦ecstasy esp. ecstatic delight of joyâ€• (*OED*).

43Â *fount* â€œA springâ€• (*OED*).

59Â *amaranthine bowâ€™rs* â€œAn idealized abodeâ€• (*OED)*.

62Â *seraphim* â€œIn Biblical use: the living creatures with six wings, hands and feet and a (presumably) human voice, seen in Isaiahâ€™s version as hovering over the throne of Godâ€• (*OED*).

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

Â *Edited by Franny Baronian*

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