

## **Heaven in the American Imagination: From the Puritans to the Present**

### **Gary Scott Smith**

Heaven itself cannot be described, but the human concept of heaven can be. Jeffrey Burton Russell, *A History of Heaven: The Singing Silence* (1997), 3.

Dwight L. Moody: "Soon you will read in the newspaper that I am dead. Don't believe it for a moment. I will be more alive than ever before."

Heaven. Does it exist? If so, what is it like and how do people gain admittance? While interest in these questions has been greater in some eras and places than others, human beings have pondered and debated them for millennia. Most members of virtually every society in history have believed that people will live forever somewhere. The ancient Babylonians, Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans all depicted a future existence where heroes rested, pharaohs resided, or the righteous picnicked in Elysian Fields. Australian aborigines as well as early Polynesians, Peruvians, Mexicans, and Native Americans all had concepts of an afterlife.

Like people in other cultures, Americans have been deeply interested in life after death. From the works of Puritan Increase Mather, to the sermons of theologian Jonathan Edwards and Yale president Timothy Dwight, to the writings of such nineteenth-century revivalists as Dwight L. Moody, to the books of positive thinker Norman Vincent Peale, evangelist Billy Graham, and novelist Mitch Albom, many have offered visions of heaven and/or explained how to get there.<sup>1</sup> Throughout most of American history evangelicals have led the way, but mainline Protestants, Mormons, Catholics, Jews, spiritualists, New Agers, Muslims, and numerous others have also described heaven and discussed the entrance requirements.<sup>2</sup>

The study of heaven is a complex subject. It involves examining works of art, music, sociology, psychology, folklore, liturgy, sermons, poetry, fiction, first-hand narratives, devotional books, and systematic theologies. Artists, musicians, social scientists, philosophers, theologians, pastors, evangelists, and novelists have portrayed the nature of heaven, described its wonders, speculated about the requirements for entry, or analyzed people's beliefs about the afterlife.

Americans who have described and analyzed heaven have often not clearly distinguished between

the life of its residents before and after the last judgment and general resurrection when, according to the Bible, people will receive new bodies. Space does not permit a detailed appraisal of the differences between the intermediate and post-resurrection states but, wherever appropriate, distinctions will be noted.

Speculation about life in heaven has been very appealing throughout most of American history. Hymns about heaven have been greatly cherished and widely sung. Thousands of books, articles, and essays on heaven have been published, and countless sermons have been preached about the subject. Jokes, works of art, and kitsch about heaven have proliferated. American authors penned more than fifty books about heaven between 1830 and 1870. The novels of Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, most notably *The Gates Ajar* (1868), sold hundreds of thousands of copies in the United States and Great Britain.<sup>3</sup> Between 1870 and 1900 dozens of additional books, mostly written by evangelical Protestant pastors and revivalists, provided vistas of heaven and urged people to prepare properly to meet God after death. The literature about heaven published per year declined slightly between 1900 and 1970, but still a considerable number of books and articles were issued. Fueled in part by world events, especially those in Israel, and conjecture about the end times, a new surge of literature about heaven filled the shelves of bookstores between 1970 and 2000. Meanwhile, numerous accounts of near-death experiences (NDEs) increased Americans' interest in the afterlife. Philosopher Jerry Walls calls Raymond Moody's *Life after Life* (1976) the book most "responsible for a renewed fascination with life beyond the grave in contemporary Western culture."<sup>4</sup>

Recently, interest in heaven has become even greater. Polls consistently find that high percentages of Americans believe in heaven and expect to spend eternity there. Gallup reported in 2004 that 81 percent of Americans believed in heaven, while, according to a 2005 Fox News Poll, 87 percent of Americans believe in heaven.<sup>5</sup> An earlier Gallup Poll found that 77 percent of Americans rated their chances of getting to heaven as "good" or "excellent." Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones* (2002), the tale of a murdered fourteen-year-old girl who watches events on earth

while exploring heaven, has sold more than three million copies. More than eight million people around the world have purchased Albom's *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* (2003), a story about an octogenarian amusement park worker who dies while heroically saving a little girl from a runaway ride, and made into a television movie in 2004.<sup>6</sup> Anthony DeStefano's *A Travel Guide to Heaven* (2003), a detailed, highly speculative tour of the wonders and joys of heaven, reached number one on Amazon.com several times. These imaginative portraits of the afterlife both reflect and fuel Americans' interest in heaven.<sup>7</sup> In a *20/20* special on ABC that aired in 2005 titled "Heaven—Where Is It? How Do We Get There?" Barbara Walters examined the meaning of heaven and the afterlife, interviewing evangelicals, Catholics, Muslims, Buddhists, and atheists as well as people who claimed to have had near-death experiences and scientists who analyzed them. Current *New York Times* best seller *90 Minutes in Heaven*, in which Texas pastor Don Piper recounts his return to life after being pronounced dead, is replete with memories of inexpressible heavenly bliss. Researchers in religion, philosophy, sociology, psychology, biology, medicine and neuroscience have all examined these experiences, and the media reaction to them has been "nothing short of spectacular."<sup>8</sup> Descriptions of NDEs appeal to many because they can be adapted to many different worldviews and because they support the presupposition that life continues after death.<sup>9</sup> NBC's *The Today Show* featured a five-part series in 2006 that explored Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, Christian, and secular views of the afterlife. Evangelical Randy Alcorn's four novels that portray life in heaven and his book, *Heaven* (2004), have sold very well.<sup>10</sup> Nevaeh (heaven spelled backward) is a popular name for girls today, and numerous pop, rock, country, and religious songs focus on heaven.<sup>11</sup> Perhaps the most well known of these songs is Los Lonely Boys' "Heaven," which is widely played on both the pop and country charts:

How far is heaven, Lord can you tell me?  
Cause I've been locked up way too long  
In this crazy world, how far is heaven  
Lord can you tell me?  
Cause I know there's a better place  
Than this place I'm living.  
How far is heaven?<sup>12</sup>

Speaking for many, Alcorn argues that every culture and religion affirms an afterlife because God has built that belief into us. “We know we were made for something more than a life where pleasures and joys are mixed with suffering and death.”<sup>13</sup>

Although many Americans’ picture of heaven is rooted in a religious tradition—Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, or Muslim—the way Americans depict heaven is directly related to what they have most valued at particular periods in history. Like people in other places and times, Americans have tended to describe heaven as the most ideal and desirable place they can imagine. As religion professor Alan Segal argues in *Life After Death* (2004), Americans “tend to project on our view of a happy afterlife those things that we think are best, most lasting, virtuous, and meaningful in this life, while eliminating those things we think are the most difficult, frustrating, evil, and inessential.” Definitions of the afterlife, he adds, “are mirrors of our cultural and social needs” and goals that can be promoted and manipulated.<sup>14</sup> “The kinds of heaven men hope for,” argues historian Paul Carter, “can be taken as unconscious commentary on what they cherish or regret in this world.”<sup>15</sup> The general political, economic, and social climate has helped shape the prevailing view of heaven as reflected in music, art, and literature. When peace and prosperity prevail, Americans have typically either ignored the afterlife or emphasized its “kinder, gentler aspects.” In times of depression and war Americans have tended to think more about heaven either as a means of escape from problems or a remedy for sin.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, heaven has often appealed more to the downtrodden, poor, and enslaved than to the rich, powerful, and sophisticated.

While many people’s understanding of heaven is strongly shaped by their interpretation of sacred scripture, it is usually also significantly influenced by their view of what is reasonable and their personal life experiences. “We build heaven out of our joys,” suffering, griefs, and experiences, asserted America’s leading pulpiteer Henry Ward Beecher in 1872, “taking the best and noblest things, and arranging them so that they shall fill the imagination.” “Thus we

construct our heaven to suit our personality.”<sup>17</sup> Views of heaven, Unitarian John Haynes Holmes, pastor of the Church of the Messiah in New York City, arguing in 1915, invariably assumed “the form of that particular kind of life which each particular” group considered ideal. Throughout history most Christians conceived of heaven as “a place where every desire of the human heart for happiness was realized,” as the fulfillment all people “fondly yearned [for] and earnestly” strove to accomplish on earth.<sup>18</sup> “Descriptions of heaven,” insisted Catholic John Shea in 1972, “reveal the soul of the culture more than the nature of the future life.”<sup>19</sup>

At various times American have pictured heaven as an unparalleled paradise, an unending banquet, a celestial city, a refuge of the redeemed, a glorious kingdom, a magnificent home, an illusory escape from the world’s problems, a posh vacation resort, an eternal playground, and a therapeutic center. Jonathan Edwards called the saints’ eternal residence “a garden of pleasures, a heavenly paradise, fitted in all respects for an abode of heavenly love.”<sup>20</sup> Those who referred to heaven as a city, the New Jerusalem, emphasized its “security, safety and stability,” varied occupations, cultural enrichment, educational opportunities, and sense of community.<sup>21</sup> The image of a heavenly home connoted reunion with family, tranquility, love, intimacy, shelter, comfort, and bliss.<sup>22</sup> Following Karl Marx and Friedrich Nietzsche, some Americans have complained that their longing for an imaginary heaven gives people false hope that their privation and exploitation on earth will be redressed above and prevents them from working to remedy injustice on earth. Others have insisted that their vision of heaven enables individuals to cope with earthly disappointment, suffering, and sorrow.<sup>23</sup> DeStefano’s *Travel Guide* portrays heaven as “Disney World, Hawaii, Paris, Rome, and New York all rolled up into one,” “the ultimate playground, created purely for our enjoyment.”<sup>24</sup> For Albom and Sebold, by contrast, heaven “is the place where you listen to your inner child, repair your self-esteem, and finally reach closure.”<sup>25</sup> Such contemporary pictures of heaven testify to Americans’ preoccupation with personal fulfillment, entertainment, and pleasure. In this heaven, David Brooks protests, “God and his glory are not the center of attention. It’s all about you.”<sup>26</sup>

Throughout American history Christian commentators on heaven have agreed that the Bible focuses much more on how to get to heaven than on what heaven is like. Christ used parables and similes to describe heaven's glories, Increase Mather maintained in 1711, because mortals could not comprehend its riches.<sup>27</sup> Providing "a minute and particular description of heaven," argued George Whitefield, "would be vain and presumptuous, since we are told that 'eye hath not seen, nor ear heard'" what Christ has prepared for his followers.<sup>28</sup> Boston pastor Ebenezer Pemberton contended in 1770 that the wonders of heaven were veiled, but enough could be discovered about them to inspire Christians to ardently desire heaven and actively and earnestly prepare for it.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps no one waxed more eloquent about the indescribability of heaven than James McGready (1763-1817), a key figure in the Second Great Awakening. Were the angel Gabriel "to leave his shining seat in Paradise, and stand in the midst of this assembly," McGready proclaimed, "he could not fully describe the glory and blessedness" of heaven. "Had I a quill plucked from the wing of a cherub, and dipped in a ray of glory emanating from the divine throne, and were I to write for millions of ages, I should fall infinitely short of having portrayed its transcendent glory."<sup>30</sup> The Bible, declared Presbyterian Robert Patterson in 1874, does not provide a very detailed description of heaven; "its great object is to teach us how to get there."<sup>31</sup> "I have tried many a time to describe" what heaven is like, lamented leading late-nineteenth-century evangelist Dwight L. Moody, "but my tongue seems as if it were tied." If he could picture what heaven was truly like, he reasoned, multitudes "would flock into the kingdom."<sup>32</sup> To Billy Sunday, the nation's principal revivalist in the early twentieth century, it did not matter if the streets of heaven were paved with literal gold. "God said 'streets of gold' in order to convey to us the highest ideals our minds could conceive of beauty."<sup>33</sup> God's revelation of the future, James Campbell declared in 1924, "is intentionally and wisely limited." The Bible's description of heaven attempted "to portray in human language things for which there are no earthly equivalents." Although it did not satisfy human curiosity, it provided enough information to create faith, inspire hope, assuage sorrow, banish fear, and purify motives.<sup>34</sup> If God had given us

a more detailed description of heaven, Don Baker maintained, “we would have been unwilling to wait.”<sup>35</sup> The biblical metaphors that describe heaven, historian Jeffrey Burton Russell wrote in 1997, “are written in the language of earthly delight: sound (melody, silence, conversation); sight (light, proportion); taste and smell (banquet, sweetness); [and] touch (embracing the beloved).”<sup>36</sup>

One exception to this tendency is Billy Graham during his early crusades. At his 1950 Boston revival, he specified the exact dimensions of hell and heaven: “Heaven is 1600 miles long, 1600 miles wide, and 1600 miles high.”<sup>37</sup> In heaven, he added, “we are going to sit around the fireplace and have parties, and the angels will wait on us, and we’ll drive down the golden streets in a yellow Cadillac convertible.”<sup>38</sup> More typical is Bill T. Arnold’s statement in *Christianity Today*, a leading evangelical periodical: “When the Bible describes our blissful existence in the age of the new earth, it consistently uses metaphorical language; indeed, it must because the next life can only be seen through a glass darkly, even for the inspired authors.” Therefore, “most descriptions of streets of gold and pearly gates are metaphors for a life that is beyond our abilities to comprehend.”<sup>39</sup>

### **Shifting Conceptions of Heaven**

In *Heaven: A History* (1988) Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang argue that in the nearly 2,000 years since Christ’s death several major shifts have occurred in how Christians viewed heaven. Although changing social, political, cultural, and economic circumstances have contributed to substantial differences about the nature of heaven, some aspects of American perceptions of heaven have been quite similar across time. As will be discussed later, throughout history many Americans have reached similar conclusions about personal identity in heaven, recognition of friends, the activities of the afterlife, whether people make progress, and how individuals get to heaven. Some in earlier eras even shared today’s rather pervasive fear that heaven will be boring. Numerous authors in various periods have stressed that Christians’ true citizenship is in heaven and have urged believers to adopt a heavenly perspective toward life on this earth.

From the Pilgrims to the present, many Americans have been fascinated with heaven. Although the New England Puritans strove to build a “city upon a hill” to help advance God’s kingdom on earth, they also strove to prepare people to reside eternally in a heavenly city. Following Richard Baxter’s *Saints’ Everlasting Rest* (1649), the classic Puritan statement of a God-centered heaven and arguably the most important work ever penned about heaven, the Puritans typically depicted a heaven, where the redeemed, both in the intermediate and post-final judgment state, constantly worshipped God. So committed to education that they founded a college—Harvard—seven years after establishing Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1629, the Puritans viewed heaven as a marvelous opportunity for greater learning. Their leaders John Cotton, and Increase and Cotton Mather, were confident that all the riddles and perplexities of this life would be unraveled in heaven.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, the earliest Puritan pastors described heaven as “a place of unimaginable” bliss without evil or sorrow.<sup>41</sup> Michael Wigglesworth’s *The Day of Doom* (1662) concluded:

For God above in arms of love  
Doth dearly them embrace,  
And fills their sprights with such delights,  
And pleasures in his grace;  
As shall not fail, not yet grow stale  
Through frequency of use  
Nor do they fear God[’]s favour there,  
To forfeit by abuse<sup>42</sup>

By the 1670s, many Puritan ministers portrayed heaven in a concrete and regimented way that was similar to the Catholic conception of the beatific state.<sup>43</sup>

America’s preeminent theologian Jonathan Edwards (1703-58) taught that heavenly life revolved around glorifying God. As a young man, he resolved to act as if he “had already seen the happiness of heaven, and hell[’s] torments.”<sup>44</sup> “We ought above all things,” he proclaimed, “to desire heavenly happiness; to be with God, and dwell with Jesus Christ.”<sup>45</sup> In heaven, the saints would see the splendor of Christ’s “divine nature, consisting in all the glory of the Godhead, the beauty of all his perfections; his great majesty, almighty power, his infinite wisdom, holiness, and grace” as well as “the beauty of his glorified human nature, and the glory which the

Father hath given him, as God-man and Mediator.” The redeemed would “eat and drink abundantly, and swim in the ocean of love, and be eternally swallowed up” by the “beams of divine love.” During the intermediate state, the saints enjoyed “a glorious and immediate intercourse” with Christ and shared with Him in “the joy and glory of the advancement” of His kingdom on earth.<sup>46</sup> The “happiness of heaven,” Edwards argued, centered on beholding God’s manifestations “of himself in the work of redemption.”<sup>47</sup> At the same time, however, Edwards taught that the redeemed would enjoy “very near and dear relations in heaven” as they basked in each other’s love “in perfect and uninterrupted prosperity.”<sup>48</sup> Although he exalted the saints’ fellowship with God the Father, Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit, unlike Thomas Aquinas and John Calvin, Edwards did not see the relationship of the saints with each other as nonexistent, minimal, or inconsequential. “The love of the saints, one to another,” he argued, “will always be mutual and reciprocated.” “No inhabitants of that blessed world will ever be grieved with the thought that they are slighted by those that they love, or that their love is not fully and fondly returned.”<sup>49</sup>

In the first two great awakenings (1730s-1740s and 1800-1840) “hell was used more often than heaven to inspire conversions.” The benefits of heaven rarely provided an impetus for these revivals because most evangelists were convinced that the terrors of hell, more than the joys of heaven, would produce conversions.<sup>50</sup> Edwards, Presbyterian Gilbert Tennent, and English Calvinist George Whitefield, the colonies’ most widely traveled and successful evangelist, James McGready, who lighted revival fires on the western frontier around 1800, and Charles Finney, the most important figure in the Second Great Awakening, all used images of hell more than of heaven to stimulate the unregenerate to repent, most famously in Edwards’ sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.”<sup>51</sup> Whitefield occasionally employed the allures of heaven to coax sinners to come to Christ by emphasizing the glories of heavenly life, most importantly fellowship with Jesus and the angels, as an incentive. In heaven, he trumpeted, “we shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob sitting, with all the redeemed company; and we shall know the names

of every one mentioned in the book of God. O blessed prospect! O blessed time!” Anyone who contemplated “seeing the Lamb sitting upon the throne, with all God’s people about him,” would “desire to go to heaven, and be forever, forever with the Lord.” While believers would derive wonderful comfort from knowing one another in heaven, those who had “lost fathers, mothers, or friends” would experience even greater joy when they were reunited in heaven.<sup>52</sup> The central attraction of heaven, Whitefield exalted, is Jesus, “the darling of eternity, admired by angels, dreaded by devils, and adored by saints.”<sup>53</sup>

McDannell and Lang argue that during the Victorian age (roughly 1837 to 1901) perceptions of heaven shifted in both Europe and America from a theocentric model, a God-centered heaven that focused on worshipping and serving God, to an anthropocentric model, a more human-centered heaven revolving around family and fellowship. Before the Civil War, American Calvinist clergy rarely described social relationships as being important in heaven. They asserted that a husband “would be so enraptured with the Lord Jesus that [his wife] might be at his side for ages before he would think of looking at her.” McDannell and Lang claim that after the Civil War numerous ministers, “theologians, poets, and popular writers depicted heaven as a social community” and most Christians came to see the family as “the foundation of heavenly life. The true Christian merely moved from one loving home to another. Meeting one’s departed family in heaven” became more important to many Americans “than union with God.”<sup>54</sup> This shift was fueled by the nation’s increased emphasis on individualism and voluntarism, Arminian theology, which accentuated the role of people in choosing to accept Christ as their savior, and the new conception of revivals as more dependent on using the right methods than God’s miraculous intervention.

McDannell and Lang conclude that after 1865 “the fatherlike God of the theocentric system, who demanded the total attention of his saints” was “replaced by the mothering God who serves her children.” Building on the ideas of prominent German theologian Friedrich Schleiermacher and other Romantics, American Protestant ministers increasingly insisted that

family life and love would be extremely important in heaven.<sup>55</sup> For Lutheran Henry Harbaugh, Unitarian William Ellery Channing, Congregationalist Austin Phelps, and many other mid- and late-nineteenth century pastors, heaven featured “homes restored, families regathered and friends reunited.”<sup>56</sup> As Harbaugh put it, heaven is “our father’s home, with . . . familiar homelike scenes, . . . not the cold ivory hall of a strange king.”<sup>57</sup> T. DeWitt Talmage, pastor of the Brooklyn Tabernacle, declared that heaven was a “great home circle” where loved ones waited for Christians on earth and families sat together around the fireplace.<sup>58</sup> Similarly, the nation’s most popular late-nineteenth-century evangelist, Dwight Moody, minimized the physical features of heaven and instead accentuated fellowship with family and friends. “It is not the jasper streets and golden gates,” but rather the presence of spouses, children, friends, angels, and biblical heroes “that attract[s] us to heaven,” he declared.<sup>59</sup> This shift was evident in consolatory literature, funerary art, and the rise of the rural cemetery movement.<sup>60</sup> Although some of the hymns Protestants sang at Sunday services continued to portray “a God-oriented heaven,” newer hymns pictured heaven as the home of the redeemed where joyous reunions occurred.<sup>61</sup>

McDannell and Lang label the nineteenth century “the apex of the anthropocentric heaven.”<sup>62</sup> Nevertheless, the theocentric conception of heaven remained strong during the Victorian years. James Kimball argued in 1857 that the chief occupation of “the heavenly world is praise.” He expected people’s “friendship and fellowship with Christ” to be so deep that they would not need human companionship.<sup>63</sup> “Every redeemed soul, upon being admitted into heaven,” added James MacDonald, would “for a while, be so completely absorbed in the contemplation of that DIVINE PERSON” that he would “be incapable of paying much attention” to anyone else.<sup>64</sup> Presbyterian theologian W. G. T. Shedd informed Christians in 1884 that in heaven their adoration of God would “become spontaneous and irrepressible.”<sup>65</sup> For Robert Patterson, heaven would feature “magnificent choirs” singing “to the glory of the Most High.”<sup>66</sup> Similarly, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, revivalists portrayed heaven as a gigantic church service. The redeemed worshipped God either in huge throngs or more

intimately around His throne while angelic choirs sang hymns of praise.<sup>67</sup> Moody pictured heaven as a place of continuous praise, prayer, and singing.<sup>68</sup> “Heaven will be a very musical place,” Torrey added.<sup>69</sup> “Glory Song,” a frequently sung hymn around 1900, declared,

When all my labors and trials are o’er,  
And I am safe on that beautiful shore  
Just to be near the dear Lord I adore,  
Will thro’ the ages be glory for me.<sup>70</sup>

As evident in sermons, books, and hymns, worshipping the Trinity in heaven continued to be strongly emphasized in the post-bellum years.

During the antebellum years Southern slaves combined African and biblical ideas about the afterlife to produce a distinctive portrait of heaven. Central to their views was the concept of a judgment day when God would punish oppressive owners and reward faithful slaves. In heaven they would be free and superior to whites. Their understanding of heaven brought slaves hope, comfort, and consolation in the midst of their exploitation and suffering. Like many whites, slaves looked forward to being reunited with loved ones in heaven, particularly ones they had been separated from through sale or death. Numerous slave songs emphasized “meeting fathers, mothers, relatives and friends in Heaven.”<sup>71</sup> Many Negro spirituals also focus on heaven. “All God’s Chillun” declares “When I get to heab’n I’m goin’ to put on my shoes. I’m goin’ to walk all ovah God’s Heab’n.” The better known “Swing Low, Sweet Chariot” proclaims, “I looked over Jordan and what did I see? Coming for to carry me home, a band of angels coming after me, coming for to carry me home.” “Oh Dem Golden Slippers” speaks of walking on streets of gold in heaven. “Deep River” and “Roll, Jordan, Roll” have similar themes.<sup>72</sup>

Not surprisingly, the Civil War unleashed a tidal wave of interest in heaven. The fears it evoked, the tremendous number of deaths it caused, and the tragedy and suffering it brought led many to contemplate heaven. During the war heaven was seen primarily as a place for which people should prepare, not a subject for speculation.<sup>73</sup> Hundreds of diaries and letters contained biblical images of heaven, but they offered few specifics beyond the Bible’s description of pearly

gates and golden streets where residents experienced peace and rest and were reunited with deceased family and friends.<sup>74</sup> Some pastors warned soldiers heading to the front lines that their reward in heaven depended upon their earthly conduct as a means of stimulating them to avoid the vices of camp life and to perform their duties faithfully, obediently, and courageously.<sup>75</sup> Chaplains challenged soldiers to accept Christ as their savior while they still had the opportunity. Moreover, the war generated great demand for literature about heaven. Between 1871 and 1876 alone, more than eighty books were published on the subject.<sup>76</sup>

During the nineteenth century, McDannell and Lang contend, “service and education, hallmarks of nineteenth-century Protestantism,” became the principal occupations of the redeemed in heaven.<sup>77</sup> While focusing more on relationships with other saints than worship of God, many Americans also substituted a heaven of activity and progress for one of eternal rest.<sup>78</sup> Around 1900, historian James Moorhead argues, realizing earthly dreams in heaven became as important as glorifying God there.<sup>79</sup> By the 1880s and 1890s as “the strenuous life” and muscular Christianity became popular and many Christians dreamed of evangelizing the world in a single generation, Americans increasingly espoused an “energetic conception of heaven.” Teddy Roosevelt, a pastor argued in 1907, would not be able to enjoy a heaven of everlasting rest. Instead, the former Rough Rider and current president would seek “new worlds to conquer in the hereafter.”<sup>80</sup> For theological conservatives such as Talmage and theological liberals such as Union Theological Seminary professor William Adams Brown, heaven was a busy place where service was paramount.<sup>81</sup> Speaking for many, Austin Phelps, a professor at Andover Seminary, declared that the worship pictured in Revelation was not a literal picture, but rather an emblem of the gladness, spontaneity, purity, and dignity “of untiring and diversified service.”<sup>82</sup> Most depictions of heaven in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries stressed personal growth and continuous activity. The saints, Baptist Walter Ulyat contended, would have “fresh summits to scale” in heaven. New York Presbyterian pastor David Gregg expected heaven to involve ceaseless activity and the full realization of each person’s talents, while popular author S. D.

Gordon anticipated “a busy[,] purposeful life.”<sup>83</sup> Some Protestants condemned laziness, not only because it thwarted earthly progress, but because it failed to prepare individuals for the energetic, productive life of heaven.<sup>84</sup>

After 1870 biblical criticism, Darwinism, immigration, urbanization, and industrialization threatened religious orthodoxy and its conception of heaven. As socialists, labor reformers, feminists, and others increasingly attacked the Victorian home, Protestant and Catholic authors exalted the family’s place in heaven to help sanctify and legitimize it. Confronted by all these challenges to their faith as well as “theological debates, sectarian splintering, and rapid secularization,” many Victorians exalted “the home as a religious refuge.”<sup>85</sup> The key revivalists of the years between 1870 and 1920—Moody, R. A. Torrey, J. Wilbur Chapman, Sam Jones, and Billy Sunday—preached sermons about heaven and hell primarily to win converts, not explicate what the Bible taught about the afterlife. Not wanting to antagonize their audience in an age when the traditional concept of hell as a place of eternal punishment was under attack, these revivalists used the tantalizing benefits of heaven much more than the punishments of hell to woo sinners. They “preached a more bright and benevolent afterlife message than their First and Second Awakening” predecessors, Jon Butler argues, because it helped generate conversions.<sup>86</sup> These revivalists typically “associated heaven with an ideal pre-urban world and sentimentalized it as the place of home, mother, and celestial family reunions.” Conceptions of both heaven and hell helped “buttress the middle-class Victorian ethos against intellectual and social turbulence.” “Across the theological spectrum, religious bodies” stressed “the continuity of the world to come with this one” and ignored or dampened “the fires of hell. Groups as different as Mormons, Christian Scientists, spiritualists, and theological liberals converted death into a minor incident in the eternal progression of human life.”<sup>87</sup> More liberal pastors and theologians, most notably Henry Ward Beecher, Newman Smyth, and William Adams Brown, “softened the evangelical emphasis on divine judgment,” viewed death principally as a passage to another life, argued that in heaven people completed the development they began on earth, and strove to “restate views of

death, immortality, and resurrection in light of modern science.”<sup>88</sup>

Yet another shift in the years after 1865 involved placing less emphasis on the kind of life believers should live to prepare for heaven and more focus on describing heavenly life and on discussing the communication between the two worlds. Consolation literature, largely written by females and liberal ministers, encouraged mourners “to follow the journey of their deceased loved ones to heaven in minutest detail; to inquire what they ate for breakfast, . . . who they met, how they lived” and “promised them that such facts” were available.<sup>89</sup> Meanwhile, after the Civil War numerous spiritualists and visionaries used their alleged personal experiences and communication with the dead to meticulously detail life in heaven and justify belief in the afterlife. Although Protestants and spiritualists had an antagonistic relationship, their views of heaven generally did not sharply disagree.<sup>90</sup>

Much more than Protestants, Catholics retained the theocratic conception of heaven, portrayed a more mystical, reflective, abstract heaven, and stressed the beatific vision of God. In 1870 Jesuit F.J. Boudreaux accused Protestants of neglecting this intuitive, spiritual communion with and delight in God and instead depicting the happiness of the redeemed as resulting exclusively from interaction among saints.<sup>91</sup> Catholic hymns and authors writing later emphasized the wonder of contemplating God and enjoying communion with Him. They focused more on God’s majesty and splendor and less on Christ as a teacher and friend than their Protestant counterparts. Continuing this perspective, *The New Catholic Encyclopedia* (2002) accentuates the beatific vision as the central feature of heaven and the principal source of human happiness and only briefly discusses the fellowship of the blessed.<sup>92</sup>

The new theological currents flowing from Germany and Great Britain influenced the development of Progressive Orthodoxy at Andover Seminary in Boston in the 1880s. The professors and ministers associated with this school of thought rejected the long-standing Protestant belief that people’s eternal destiny was determined by whether they accepted Christ as their savior while on earth. They advocated instead a probationary theory that taught most people

would ultimately be saved either by accepting the gospel on earth or in an intermediate state after death. Although not totally repudiating the concept of hell, they largely ignored or rejected the dogma of everlasting punishment, stressed “a theology of universal salvation through moral improvement,” and argued that the doctrine of future probation was more just and humane than the traditional Christian position that many who never heard the gospel were damned. This doctrine produced great controversy among Congregationalists and some in other denominations during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.<sup>93</sup> During these years liberals reduced the contrast between the good life on earth and the life to come, concentrated on perfecting people’s personalities in this world, and argued that moral growth in heaven would continue the process begun on earth.<sup>94</sup>

American Jews, especially Reform Jews, emphasized some of these same themes. Jews constituted a very small percentage of Americans before 1890 and have been about two percent of the population since then. Since its creation in 1885, advocates of Reform Judaism have competed for adherents with the Orthodox and Conservative branches. Jewish traditionalists contend that a messiah will someday come to redeem the Jewish people. He will gather the Jews from around the world in Israel, reconstruct the Temple in Jerusalem, and restore the sacrificial system. Rejecting this view, Reform Jews argue that people must work to bring a messianic era on earth, characterized by world peace, prosperity, and the end of exploitation and suffering.<sup>95</sup> On the whole, in the United States Jews have paid less attention to and have speculated less about the afterlife than Christians. Jews have typically emphasized leading a good life on earth more than the hereafter. While Orthodox Judaism retains the traditional rabbinic belief in the resurrection and heaven, Reform Jews, in their Pittsburgh Platform of 1885, explicitly rejected the concept of a bodily resurrection and eternal rewards. Reform Jews tend to view heaven as a spiritual state rather than a specific place and to conceive of immortality as living on through one’s children or accomplishments. Since God is just, other Jews have countered, an afterlife is necessary to redress the injustices of earth.<sup>96</sup>

From 1890 to 1920 the Social Gospel became a powerful force in American Protestantism. Concentration on heaven, many of its proponents complained, detracted from efforts to improve earthly life. Led by Baptist church historian Walter Rauschenbusch and Congregationalist pastor Washington Gladden, they emphasized building the Kingdom of God on earth by proclaiming and incarnating the spiritual and social aspects of Christ's teachings. The Christian church, Rauschenbusch complained, had long taught believers to fix their attention "on another world and a life to come." However, the calling of Christians was to refashion "the present world" and make "this earth clean and sweet and habitable." Social Gospellers, he declared, expected life in heaven, like that on earth, to focus on love and service.<sup>97</sup>

After 1930 the increasing development of theological liberalism, the fundamentalist counteroffensive, and the rise of neo-Orthodoxy produced a split among Protestants over the reality and nature of heaven. Most of those who embraced fundamentalism wrote little about the afterlife, stressing instead the authority of the Bible, the concept of regeneration, evangelism, and eschatology. Preoccupied with battling modernists, resisting secularization, and preparing for the final events in earthly history, they largely ignored heaven. However, other conservative Christians, both ministers and laypeople, continued to espouse the nineteenth-century consensus that emphasized worshipping God, recognition of and reunion with loved ones, and spiritual and intellectual growth in heaven. Meanwhile, most liberal seminary professors and some pastors, influenced by German theologian Rudolf Bultmann and American theologian Paul Tillich, rejected belief in heaven and hell as actual places and saw them more as states of mind.<sup>98</sup> For them as well as for most Unitarian Universalists, "eternal life" did not "involve everlasting bliss beyond physical death" but rather referred to "a quality of life gained through personal encounter with the Christian revelation."<sup>99</sup> Rejecting this position, Neo-Orthodox theologian Reinhold Niebuhr defended the doctrine of the resurrection of the body as an essential aspect of biblical eschatology.<sup>100</sup>

Although church attendance increased significantly during the 1950s, John Sunderland

Bonnell, pastor of the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church in New York City, complained that “our secularized and materialistic civilization” displayed little interest in discussing “the nature of the afterlife.”<sup>101</sup> A leading popularizer of biblical images of heaven around mid-century was Bishop Fulton Sheen, arguably the most important twentieth-century American Catholic. A prolific author and radio and television personality, he portrayed the grandeur of God and the glory of heaven in books, most notably *Go to Heaven* (1960), devotional readings, and radio and television programs.<sup>102</sup> Beginning in the 1960s the “death of God” theologians who espoused a radical, more secular worldview abandoned the concept of heaven.<sup>103</sup> Meanwhile, many African-American and feminist theologians and advocates of the theology of hope, as well as liberation theologians in Latin American and Africa, adopted a position similar to that of the Social Gospellers: Christians must strive primarily to establish a just society on earth rather than help individuals get to heaven; the principal purpose of biblical images of heaven is to inspire people to improve conditions on earth.<sup>104</sup> Articulating this perspective, Martin Luther King, Jr. exhorted believers to establish a “colony of heaven” on earth. Christians must not be content to be “thermometers that record or register the temperature of majority opinion”; instead, they must become thermostats “that transform and regulate the temperature of society.”<sup>105</sup> While not depreciating the importance of heaven, some Catholics and evangelicals also urged Christians to adopt a heavenly perspective toward earthly life and to work to build God’s kingdom here. Focusing on the post-resurrection heaven, Paul Marshall challenged Christians in *Heaven Is Not My Home* to take good care of this earth because God plans to renovate it as a place for people to live eternally.<sup>106</sup> Finally, in recent years evangelicals, Mormons, New Agers, and cults such as Heaven’s Gate and the Branch Davidians have placed the greatest emphasis on the afterlife.

“To the modern mind,” Jeffrey Burton Russell explains, “heaven seems bland or boring, an eternal sermon or a perpetual hymn. Evil and the Devil seem to get the best lines.”<sup>107</sup> In more than 1,000 compositions written in 1892, California students ages six to twenty typically depicted heaven as a monotonous place with limited activities where residents flew, played harps, and

praised God.<sup>108</sup> S. D. Gordon noted in 1920 that many people saw heaven as “one ceaseless church service on plain, hard, wooden benches with straight, stiff backs” where people sang hymns and heard “long, proper sermons.”<sup>109</sup> W. H. R. Faunce, the president of Brown University, asserted in 1930 that the imagery of the Book of Revelation and *Pilgrim’s Progress* “repels us.” Harps, crowns, psalms, and an unending chorus “would be intolerable.” On the other hand, simply “expanding our present daily tasks is equally unthinkable.”<sup>110</sup> In 1975 the *U.S. Catholic* featured an article titled “Heaven: Will It Be Boring?”<sup>111</sup> Boston College professor Peter Kreeft complained in 1982 that the Medieval imagery of heaven featuring “light, jewels, stars, candles, trumpets, and angels” has been replaced with “pathetic modern substitutes of fluffy clouds, sexless cherubs, harps, and metal halos . . . presided over by a stuffy divine Chairman of the Bored.”<sup>112</sup> “Our ancestors were afraid of Hell; we are afraid of Heaven,” wrote Carol Zaleski in 2000. “We think it will be boring.”<sup>113</sup> Science fiction writer Isaac Asimov professed relief that he did not believe in an afterlife because “whatever the tortures of hell, I think the boredom of heaven would be even worse.”<sup>114</sup> Rick Warren, author of best-selling *The Purpose Driven Life* (2002), puts it bluntly: “A lot of people think” heaven involves “sitting on a cloud, wearing angels’ wings, playing harps. To me, that would be hell.”<sup>115</sup>

Throughout American history, many have countered that heaven will be incredibly stimulating and enjoyable, not tedious and boring. God created heaven for his children, asserted Timothy Dwight, and “adorned and enriched it with everything” that could “contribute to their happiness and glory.”<sup>116</sup> God will spend eternity, Anne Sandberg contended, making his children “happy and fulfilled.”<sup>117</sup> Kreeft argued that heaven cannot be boring because people will forever be exploring God’s eternal love.<sup>118</sup> Heaven will not be dull, John Gilmore maintained, because its residents want to be there; they will no longer be selfish, will not experience fatigue, pain, or weariness, and will have no sense of how long they have been there.<sup>119</sup> Heaven, proclaimed Foursquare pastor Daniel Brown, will be “beyond our wildest expectations.” “All the delights and treasures of our entire earthly life could be contained in each *instant* of . . . Heaven”<sup>120</sup> Since

“all of our highest desires find their ultimate meaning in heaven,” asserted Gary Habermas and J. P. Moreland, how could we possibly be bored.<sup>121</sup> Randy Alcorn labeled the widespread contemporary “belief that Heaven will be boring” “a heresy” because it assumes “that God is boring.”<sup>122</sup>

On the other hand, many Christians argue that heaven would be a miserable place for the unregenerate. What would “an Unholy sinner” do in heaven, asked Increase Mather. He would find no delights or any suitable company there.<sup>123</sup> Because the essence of heavenly life is a loving union with God, Edwards maintained, those who do not love God cannot enjoy heaven.<sup>124</sup> Heaven, George Whitefield announced, “would be a hell to your souls, unless you were first prepared for a proper enjoyment of it here on earth.”<sup>125</sup> Similarly, two of the nation’s leading evangelists—Charles Finney and Dwight Moody—argued that people would hate heaven unless they loved God. “Oh! what would heaven be” to the unconverted, Finney declared; “you cannot enjoy a prayer meeting for one hour, and what would you do in heaven, employed in God’s service forever and ever. . . . Would you feel at home? Would you be happy there?”<sup>126</sup> “You take an unregenerated man in Chicago,” Moody asserted, “and put him on the crystal pavements of Heaven, and it would be hell!” A person who could not “bear to spend one Sunday among God’s people on earth” would consider “the eternal worship of heaven to be hell.”<sup>127</sup>

While most Americans have believed in heaven, some in all periods of history have questioned whether there is an afterlife. Freethinker Robert Ingersoll launched a major attack on heaven in the late nineteenth century. Following in the footsteps of David Hume, Ludwig Feuerbach, and Karl Marx, Ingersoll challenged belief in God and life after death in numerous essays and lectures. Between 1900 and the beginning of World War II the assault gathered momentum as psychologist James Leuba, attorney Clarence Darrow, philosopher Corliss Lamont, and journalist H. L. Mencken, joined by Englishman Bertrand Russell and numerous others, questioned the basis for belief in immortality. In later decades of the twentieth century, philosophers Anthony Flew, scientist Carl Sagan, and others fired additional salvos against the

concept of an afterlife.<sup>128</sup> In recent years this offensive has intensified. Sam Harris, in *The End of Faith: Religion, Terror, and the Future of Reason* (2005) and *Letter to a Christian Nation* (2006), and Daniel C. Dennett, in *Breaking the Spell: Religion as a Natural Phenomenon* (2006), assail numerous aspects of Christian orthodoxy including its conception of life after death. Also joining the fray have been Englishmen Richard Dawkins, an evolutionary biologist, and Christopher Hitchens, a journalist who lives in the United States, whose works, most notably *The God Delusion* (2006) and *God Is Not Great: How Religion Poisons Everything* (2007) respectively, have been widely read in this country. These naysayers use a variety of scientific, philosophical, psychological, ethical, and practical arguments to challenge the existence of God and the traditional Christian doctrine of the afterlife.

### **Principal Features of Heavenly Life**

During all time periods leading American theologians and pastors have generally agreed that heaven is an actual place of dazzling beauty, unending delight, and greatly expanded knowledge. Heaven, declared Timothy Dwight, is “the house of God,” “the peculiar and favourite place of his residence,” “the throne of God,” “the seat of [His] universal and endless dominion.”<sup>129</sup> “Heaven is strictly and properly a place—a local and material heaven,” insisted Lutheran Henry Harbaugh in 1849. It is “God’s peculiar dwelling place.”<sup>130</sup> “Heaven is a place,” asserted R. A. Torrey in 1905, not “merely a state or condition.”<sup>131</sup> Billy Sunday averred that “heaven is as much a place as [is] the home to which you are going when I dismiss the meeting.”<sup>132</sup> “Christians are going to a very real place,” argued Hal Lindsey, author of several 1970s best sellers on the end times, “where Jesus is already preparing an incredibly beautiful room for each one in His Father’s house.”<sup>133</sup> “The detailed description of the architecture, walls, streets and other features” of the New Jerusalem, asserted Randy Alcorn, “suggests that the term *city* is . . . a literal geographical location.”<sup>134</sup>

Various authors have depicted heaven as the antithesis of earth—as safe, orderly, clean, beautiful, fragrant, a place of “abundant food, splendid clothes, delightful music, and running

water—all luxuries denied to so many on earth.”<sup>135</sup> “The Happiness of the Saints of God in the Heavenly World,” Increase Mather wrote in 1711, “will be wonderfully Great and Glorious.” Even if a minister studied the glory of heaven his whole life, he could not describe a millionth part of its blessedness.<sup>136</sup> “In the “celestial Paradise,” God made “ample Provision . . . to supply the Wants, satisfy the Desires, [and] complete the Happiness of the illustrious Residents,” Ebenezer Pemberton averred in 1770. The saints enjoyed “unfading Honours, “incorruptible Treasures,” and transporting Delights.”<sup>137</sup> Dwight described heaven as “sublime, alluring, and delightful.”<sup>138</sup> The characteristics of heaven, argued James Kimball in 1857, had “an immeasurable power” to enthrall people’s souls.<sup>139</sup> Reason, intellectual curiosity, imagination, aesthetic instincts, emotions, and the need for fellowship, argued Princeton Seminary professor A. A. Hodge (1823-1886), would “all find in heaven exercise and satisfaction.”<sup>140</sup> Torrey labeled heaven’s beauty “indescribable.”<sup>141</sup> Catholic sociologist and author Andrew Greeley proclaimed in 1976 that heaven “will be filled with the excitement, the wonder, the pleasures, the activity that makes life rewarding and exciting here on earth.”<sup>142</sup> In heaven, John MacArthur Jr. asserted, people would see God’s “infinite glory and beauty” and have boundless and eternal delight and “unmixed and unending joy.”<sup>143</sup> The post-resurrection New Jerusalem, Randy Alcorn argued, “will be a place of extravagant beauty” with mountains, waterfalls, and other natural wonders, “which are more spectacular” than those on earth.<sup>144</sup>

In heaven, explained Increase Mather, the saints would “have a perfect Understanding of the holy Scriptures” and “a far greater and clearer knowledge of the Works of Creation.”<sup>145</sup> Before the final judgment, those in heaven, Edwards maintained, would better understand “the state of Christ’s kingdom,” the connection of events, and “the beautiful order of all things that came to pass in the church” that appeared confusing to the saints below.<sup>146</sup> Edwards and Timothy Dwight agreed that in heaven, “all the works of God are studied, and understood, through an eternal progress of knowledge.”<sup>147</sup> In heaven, averred Presbyterian James M. MacDonald, God’s plan “so replete with perplexity and misgiving to our present, darkened understandings” would be

“cleared up” and would demonstrate His “wisdom, justice, and mercy.” All mysteries would be explained; “every hard doctrine” would be understood.<sup>148</sup> Methodist bishop Randolph S. Foster declared that God’s plan is to develop “grand, robust, spirits,” who would experience “magnificent growth and achievement,” “progress together” in “infinite ranges of study,” and “advance in greatness and power” while in heaven.<sup>149</sup> “The difference between the knowledge of Newton and the most illiterate peasant,” proclaimed the *Encyclopedia of the Presbyterian Church* (1884), “will be far exceeded by the difference between the knowledge of the Christian on earth and in heaven.”<sup>150</sup> In heaven, Torrey claimed, even the most uneducated would fathom the “great ocean of truth” and have “perfect knowledge of all things. The great perplexing problems of God and man, of time and eternity,” would all be solved.<sup>151</sup> Writing in 1947, Southern Presbyterian Robert Hough contended that in heaven “every faculty will be quickened and intensified” and the saints will “have complete understanding of every problem and every question will be answered.”<sup>152</sup> “Our IQs in heaven,” argues Billy Graham, “will far surpass those of the most brilliant people on earth.”<sup>153</sup>

Most American Christians have also insisted that in heaven individuals will have personal identity, recognize their friends, fellowship with the champions of biblical times and church history, engage in similar activities, and worship God. Augustus C. Thompson asserted in 1854 that “no valid objections can be deduced” to show that personal identity will not be preserved in heaven. Defending the concept, Rauschenbusch declared in 1917, “What satisfaction would there be in talking to Isaiah or Paul” if people did not “remember what books they wrote”?<sup>154</sup> Speaking for most Christians, Jay D. Robison maintained that the Bible does not explicitly teach personal identity in heaven, but the scriptures constantly assume it, most notably in the story of the rich man and Lazarus. Moreover the concept of a last judgment in which individuals are held accountable for their earthly deeds implies continuity of personal identity.<sup>155</sup> Based on his understanding of the Bible, Alcorn expects individuals to retain their “memory, personality, traits, gifts, passions, preferences and interests” in heaven.<sup>156</sup>

The vast majority of American Christian authors in all time periods have also argued that the saints will recognize their family and friends in heaven. If the redeemed in heaven did not know each other, asserted Increase Mather, there would be little comfort or intimacy in their communion.<sup>157</sup> Presbyterian J. M. Killen insisted in 1857 that the concept of mutual recognition had been almost universally believed and was “deeply imbedded in our moral constitution.”<sup>158</sup> God made friendships and interpersonal love an inseparable part of humans’ immortal nature and a source of great joy, contended James Kimball. Because “God himself is love, and the truest, warmest friend in the universe,” He would “reunite Christian friends in heaven.”<sup>159</sup> Rufus W. Clark acknowledged in 1854 that he could not adduce many scriptural passages that furnished “direct and unqualified proof of the recognition of our friends in heaven,” but he insisted that there was enough scriptural testimony “to satisfy the longing, and sustain the faith, of all true disciples of Jesus.”<sup>160</sup> In 1884 Reformed Episcopal pastor Samuel Fallows summarized the reasons why Christians believed in this doctrine: The same means that enabled people to identify themselves would enable them to identify relatives and acquaintances; memory could not exist without recognition; some tasks could only be completed in heaven if there was recognition such as thanking those who were instrumental in one’s conversion; the final judgment necessitated recognition; the doctrine was “highly reasonable”; and the interest those in heaven took in earthly affairs strongly supported the concept.<sup>161</sup> J. Aspinwall Hodge repudiated the objection that having one’s friends in heaven “would detract from worshipping Christ” and insisted instead that full fellowship with the Lord was “only possible in communion with His people.”<sup>162</sup> Paradise, Charles H. Strong, the rector of St. John’s Episcopal Church in Savannah, insisted in 1893, “would lose its blessedness if our loved ones did not share in its bliss and the beatific vision.”<sup>163</sup> “A careful and candid reading of the four Gospels” assures Christians, wrote J. T. Whitley in 1925, that their reunion “with their loved ones who died in the faith and hope of salvation through Christ is . . . certain.”<sup>164</sup> Almost everyone agrees, John Gilmore alleged in 1989, that the redeemed will “recognize each other in heaven.” That God created each person as unique and

implanted a desire in people to know family and friends in deeper ways provided support for heavenly recognition.<sup>165</sup> In heaven, Billy Graham declared, “we will have a family reunion like no other.”<sup>166</sup>

In addition to enjoying the company of their relatives and friends, Americans in all time periods have looked forward to spending time in heaven with the heroes of the Bible and church history. Although he expected the principal fellowship of the redeemed to be with the three persons of the trinity, Edwards insisted that the saints would also have companionship “with the patriarchs and fathers and saints of the Old and New Testaments.”<sup>167</sup> Charles Hodge, who taught systematic theology at Princeton Seminary for more than fifty years in the mid-nineteenth century, rejoiced that the saints would be able to fellowship “with the high intelligence of heaven: with patriarchs, prophets, apostles [and] martyrs.”<sup>168</sup> Torrey was eager to see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Elijah, Daniel, and Paul as well as Samuel Rutherford and David Brainerd.<sup>169</sup> For Billy Sunday, one of the best things about heaven was its galaxy of stars—Abraham, Noah, Moses, Joseph, Samuel, Isaiah, Daniel, Jeremiah, John, Peter, Paul, Luther, Calvin, Spurgeon, and Moody.<sup>170</sup> “What a privilege it would be,” declares Billy Graham, “to meet the Apostle Paul, or Peter, or others who served God over the centuries!”<sup>171</sup>

Although a few acknowledged that Jesus said nothing explicitly about the occupations of the redeemed in heaven, many others confidently explained what their employment will be.<sup>172</sup> We do not know the particular responsibilities of the saints in heaven, wrote Edwards; “but in general we know that they are employed in praising and serving God . . . .”<sup>173</sup> In the future world, argued Timothy Dwight, the saints would glorify God, study His works and character, reign with Him, and befriend one another.<sup>174</sup> Rejecting the concept of eternal rest, Dwight declared that glorified spirits were the “most active,” “laborious,” and “unremitting” of all God’s creations.<sup>175</sup> “Incessant and heightened activity,” Robert Patterson asserted in 1877, would occur in heaven.<sup>176</sup> Boston’s prince of the pulpit, Episcopalian Phillips Brooks, insisted similarly in 1897 that heaven would entail “active, tireless, earnest work,” not stagnation or idleness.<sup>177</sup> “Service of the highest,

most adoring and enrapturing form,” Edward Bounds argued in 1921, “will characterize heaven.” Heaven’s inhabitants do the will of God promptly, gladly, and with all possible efficiency, maintained J. T. Whitley in 1925.<sup>178</sup> Don Baker contended in 1983 that heaven’s residents will worship, serve, administer, fellowship, learn, and rest.<sup>179</sup> Alcorn predicts that heaven will have “bustling activity, cultural events, and gatherings involving music, the arts, education, religion, entertainment and athletics.” “We’ll be busy exploring his universe, working on projects, fellowshiping with him and each other, listening to and telling great stories.”<sup>180</sup>

Like many Christians in earlier eras, some today stress that heavenly life will focus on glorifying and adoring God. Heaven, insists John MacArthur, “will be a place of eternal, loving, adoring worship” where the redeemed continuously praise God.<sup>181</sup> Hal Lindsey contends that “the most important thing” about heaven is “that God will be there in person, and we’ll see Him face-to-face.”<sup>182</sup> Heaven, Joni Tada declares, “is a place of eternal, loving worship” where “the saints fall on their faces” around “God’s throne and worship their Savior forever.”<sup>183</sup> “[T]he most important thing about heaven is that we will be with God,” writes Billy Graham. “In heaven, we will have all eternity to explore the wonders of His creation and the depths of His love.”<sup>184</sup>

In addition to describing heaven’s topography, activities, and attractions, many ministers and authors from the Puritans to the present have exhorted Christians to adopt a heavenly perspective while on earth. God commanded Christians, asserted Timothy Dwight, “*to set their affections on things above.*”<sup>185</sup> “The moment a person becomes heavenly minded and gets his heart and affections set on things above,” Moody proclaimed, “life becomes beautiful, the light of heaven shines across his pathway. . . .”<sup>186</sup> Baptist A. C. Dixon urged Christians in 1897 to see everything from a divine perspective and “lay up treasures in heaven by investing [their] time, talent, and money for God.”<sup>187</sup> In 1924 James Campbell exhorted Christians to “live the heavenly life before men, as Jesus did” in order to bring Heaven into people’s hearts and earthly life.<sup>188</sup> Habermas and Moreland labeled the New Testament “perspective on heaven and its relation to the Christian’s life on earth” “the most revolutionary idea (next to salvation) ever

penned” and counsel believers to ‘Set your minds on things above’ (Col. 3:2).<sup>189</sup> “Anticipating a coming world in which all right choices will be rewarded by God inevitably changes the way I live today,” Alcorn declared.<sup>190</sup> For these Christians, concentrating on heaven is not escapism, but the highest form of presentism. It gives Christians a transcendent perspective and an incomparable identity, satisfies their hearts’ deepest longing, empowers them to serve God enthusiastically and energetically in this world, helps them deal with suffering and failure, and prepares them to meet God when they die.<sup>191</sup>

### **Getting to Heaven**

Americans have debated not only whether there is an afterlife and what it will be like, but also how people get to heaven. From the Puritans to the present, most Christians have argued that the only way people gain admittance to heaven is by accepting Jesus Christ as their savior and Lord. “Jesus Christ is the only Way unto Eternal Life,” proclaimed Increase Mather. “No man will ever come to the Enjoyment of God in heaven but by Him.”<sup>192</sup> “Those hopes grounded partly in Jesus Christ and partly on something else,” James Pierpont, the pastor of the New Haven Congregationalist Church, claimed in 1712, “will surely fail us at last.” Christ alone is the “hope and refuge, the only suitable” foundation on which individuals could build to attain “eternal blessedness.”<sup>193</sup> Edwards contended that God would admit into heaven only those who had experienced the “blessed renovation” of their hearts “by the Holy Spirit implanting divine love in them.”<sup>194</sup> His contemporary Samuel Finley declared that some foolishly hoped “to be pardoned without an Heart-purifying Faith, and accepted of God without the imputed Righteousness of Christ.”<sup>195</sup> “Works! Works! A man gets to heaven by works!” protested George Whitefield in 1770. “I would as soon as think of climbing to the moon on a rope of sand!”<sup>196</sup> “Jesus Christ,” Moody maintained, “is the ‘open sesame’ to heaven. Anyone who tries to climb up some other way is a thief and a robber.”<sup>197</sup> “If people knock on the door of heaven for admittance without Christ,” T. DeWitt Talmage asserted in 1897, “heaven’s police will say, ‘Depart, I never knew you.’”<sup>198</sup> The Scriptures clearly taught that people cannot earn, “negotiate, demand, or pay for

salvation,” John Gilmore argued in 1989. Rather, heaven is a free gift based on Christ’s atoning death on the cross.<sup>199</sup> God’s gift of salvation, Randy Alcorn insisted, “cannot be worked for, earned, or achieved in any sense. It’s not dependent on our merit or effort but solely on Christ’s generous and sufficient sacrifice on our behalf.”<sup>200</sup> “We can never be saved because of what we do,” declared Billy Graham; “we can only be saved because of what Jesus Christ has already done for us” by dying on the cross to atone for our sins. “Simply believe that Christ has taken away your sins, and then receive Him into your heart and life.”<sup>201</sup>

On the other hand, throughout American history many have believed that their good works will get them to heaven. They have reasoned that if their good deeds outweigh their bad ones on God’s eternal scale, then God will reward them with eternal life. Or they have believed that God is like a college math professor who grades on the curve, so as long as their conduct places them in the top half, they will gain admittance into heaven. George Whitefield berated those who trusted in their own righteousness for salvation, who thought their “civil, honest, decent lives” would enable them to someday enter heaven.<sup>202</sup> “The most prevalent and popular assumption about heaven,” Gilmore insisted in 1989, is “that heaven is earned by the ethical and upright.” In numerous surveys of his college and adult education classes, writes Peter Kreeft, “the percentage of people who believe the world’s most pervasive superstition, that good guys go to Heaven and bad guys go to Hell,” has always been “well over 50 percent, often over 90 percent.” Similarly, in Gallup polls, 70 percent of Americans in 1965 and 71 percent in 1980 agreed with the statement: “Do you think there is a heaven where people who have led good lives are eternally rewarded?”<sup>203</sup> Alan Segal maintains that most Americans today believe that practicing altruism or achieving self-realization is the path to heaven.<sup>204</sup>

Unitarians, Universalists, liberal Protestants, Catholics, and Jews have been the most likely to contend that good deeds play an important role in people’s pilgrimage to heaven. Rejecting Jesus’ deity, Unitarians and Universalists have generally avowed that “salvation is by character; religion is a matter of deeds, not creeds.”<sup>205</sup> Most liberal Protestants have accepted the

deity of Christ but repudiated the doctrine that He died on the cross to reconcile sinners to God. They have minimized humanity's sinfulness and argued that obedience to God's commandments brings salvation. In his oft-quoted critique of liberalism, H. Richard Niebuhr complained: "A God without wrath brought men without sin into a kingdom without judgment through the ministrations of a Christ without a cross."<sup>206</sup>

Following the teaching of the Council of Trent (1545-1563), most American Catholic leaders have asserted that salvation involves "faith cooperating with good works." They have also argued that in justification God infuses grace into the hearts of believers, changing their spiritual and moral nature. Many Protestants have countered that in the forensic act of justification God imputed the righteousness of Christ to those who trust Him as their savior. These different conceptions have produced many heated debates between Catholic and Protestant theologians and clergy over the nature of salvation and the role works plays in it. In 1983 American Catholics and Lutherans issued a joint statement on justification, declaring that "our entire hope of . . . salvation rests on Jesus Christ and on the gospel; . . . we do not place our ultimate trust in anything other than God's promise and the saving work in Christ." Nevertheless, some Catholics and Protestants still disagree about the way people get to heaven, especially about whether most believers must be purified in purgatory before God will admit them to heaven.<sup>207</sup>

American Jews have rejected the Christian concept that Jesus is the messiah who saves people from sin by His atoning death on the cross. Instead, they have generally taught that people should strive to have a close relationship with God, obey His laws, and be morally upright. Individuals should do this because it is right, not to earn rewards or attain salvation. Focusing on obtaining rewards or avoiding punishments is selfish, they argue, and diminishes the virtue of individuals' acts.<sup>208</sup> Speaking for many Christians, Billy Graham argues that people can never fulfill God's requirement for admittance to heaven because His "standard is nothing less than perfection." A single sin will bar people from heaven. Individuals must accept as their savior,

therefore, the one who lived a perfect life—Jesus Christ—and died on the cross to reconcile them to God.<sup>209</sup>

In summary, throughout our history Americans have expressed great interest in the nature and activities of heaven and the grounds for gaining entrance. Based on their interpretation of the Bible or other sacred scriptures, their varied life experiences, and their political, social, economic, and cultural circumstances, Americans have reached many different conclusions about what heaven will be like and the conditions for admittance. Nevertheless, they have largely agreed that heaven is a spectacular, glorious, beautiful, delightful place whose residents are aware of their own identities and histories, who fellowship with friends and family, worship God, engage in meaningful work, and experience fantastic joy.

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<sup>1</sup> See Increase Mather, *Meditations Upon the Glory of the Heavenly World*; Jonathan Edwards, *Heaven is a World of Love* and other sermons; Timothy Dwight, “The Remoter Consequences of Death: The Happiness of Heaven” and other sermons; Dwight L. Moody, *Heaven*; Norman Vincent Peale, *Life Beyond Death*; Billy Graham, *Facing Death and the Life After*; and Mitch Albom, *The Five People You Meet in Heaven*. The publication data for these works is in the notes below.

<sup>2</sup> Due to limitations of space, this essay will focus principally on American Protestant views of heaven. I wish to thank my colleagues Gillis Harp and Paul Kemeny for reading drafts of this essay. I am also grateful to 2007 Grove City College graduates Leah Ayers Stapleton and Timothy Witt and current students Miranda Bailey, Heather Shaw, and Sean Varner, who did independent studies on various topics related to the essay. Finally, current students Andrew Welton, Elizabeth Miller, and Caroline Harp helped with research.

<sup>3</sup> *The Gates Ajar* alone sold 180,000 copies in these two countries before 1900. During these years only Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* sold more copies (Colleen McDannell and Bernhard Lang, *Heaven: A History* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988], 228, 265).

<sup>4</sup> Jerry L. Walls, *Heaven: The Logic of Eternal Joy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 134. More than a million Americans bought either Moody’s book or physician Maurice Rawlings’s, *Beyond Death’s Door* (1978) within the first two years of their publication.

<sup>5</sup> See “Rising Belief in Hell, Angels, Devil, Heaven,” *Christian Century* 121 (June 15, 2004), 14. Gallup reported that 70 percent of Americans believe in hell. In 1997, 72 percent of Americans believed in heaven and 56 percent in hell.

<sup>6</sup> Moreover, *The Lovely Bones* presently has 2,503 customer reviews and *The Five People You Meet in Heaven* has 1520 on amazon.com, significantly more than other best sellers.

<sup>7</sup> See Mark Ralls, “Reclaiming Heaven: What Can We Say about the Afterlife?” *Christian Century* 121 [Dec. 14, 2004]. Another important recent book is Peter Stanford’s *Heaven: A Guide to the Undiscovered Country* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), which examines how numerous religions have described heaven.

<sup>8</sup> Allan Kellehear, *Experiences Near Death* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 76. See also Walls, *Heaven*, 134-7.

<sup>9</sup> Carol Zaleski, *Otherworld Journeys: Accounts of Near Death Experience in Medieval and Modern Times* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 99.

<sup>10</sup> He has also authored with Linda Washington, *Heaven for Kids* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2006).

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<sup>11</sup> “Spell Heaven Backward and What Do You Get?” *Christian Century* 123 (June 13, 2006), 15. The name is especially popular among African Americans and evangelicals. One exception to this trend has been mainline churches where heaven, like Timbuktu, “is treated as if it were a term for something foreign and far away.” Methodist Mark Ralls argues that most mainline Protestants “no longer speak of heaven as an actual destination, a hope to be realized,” but rather “is a figure of speech, a consoling metaphor to pull out for funeral services” (“Reclaiming Heaven,” 34-39, quotation from 34). Similarly Kenneth Grayston claims that Protestants are reluctant to talk about heaven “less perhaps from loss of belief in life after death as from an embarrassed lack of imagery for speaking of the subject” (“Heaven and Hell,” *Epworth Review* 19 [1992], 19).

<sup>12</sup> Another very popular song is Eric Clapton’s “Tears in Heaven.”

<sup>13</sup> Randy Alcorn interview, *leftbehind.com*

<sup>14</sup> Alan F. Segal, *Life After Death: A History of the Afterlife in the Religions of the West* (New York: Doubleday, 2004), 11, 710, quotations in that order. “The afterlife is constantly in flux and constantly being accommodated to social, political, and economic necessities” in society (712).

<sup>15</sup> Paul A. Carter, *Spiritual Crisis of the Gilded Age* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1971), 88.

<sup>16</sup> I am grateful to my colleague Dr. Beverly Carter for this insight.

<sup>17</sup> Henry Ward Beecher, *Yale Lectures on Preaching* (New York: J. B. Ford and Co. 1887), 3rd series, 320.

<sup>18</sup> John Haynes Holmes, *Is Death the End?* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1915), 285-6. Cf. John Dewey, “Introduction,” in Corliss Lamont, *The Illusion of Immortality* (New York: Continuum, 1990 [1935]), xii.

<sup>19</sup> John Shea, *What a Modern Catholic Believes about Heaven and Hell* (1972), 83. “At any given time,” he adds, descriptions of heaven match a society’s “reigning knowledge and values” (87).

<sup>20</sup> Jonathan Edwards, “Heaven Is a World of Love,” in Stephen J. Nichols, *Heaven on Earth: Capturing Jonathan Edwards’ Vision of Living in Between* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2006), 129. Cf. Timothy Dwight, “The Remoter Consequences of Death: The Happiness of Heaven,” in *Theology; Explained and Defended, in a Series of Sermons*, 5 vols. (Middletown, CT: Clark and Lyman, 1818-19), 5: 521; Burdett Hart, *Aspects of Heaven* (New York: American Tract Society, 1896), 119.

<sup>21</sup> W. G. Heslop, *Heaven: Our Father’s House, Our Heavenly Home, God’s City of Gold* (Grand Rapids: The Peniel Press, 1937), 95 (quotation); A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Rochester, NY: E. R. Andrews, 1886), 585; Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, *Beyond the Gates* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1889), 118 ff. Cf. Woodbury Davis, *The Beatiful City and the King of Glory* (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1860); Dwight L. Moody, “The Heavenly City,” in Samuel Fallows, ed., *The Home Beyond or, Views of Heaven, and Its Relation to the Earth, Moody, Spurgeon, Talmage, and Over Four Hundred Other Prominent Thinkers and Writers* (Chicago: Coburn and Newman, 1884), 319; Edward M. Bounds, *Heaven: A Place, A City, A Home* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1975 [1921]); James M. Gray, *Progress in the Life to Come* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1910), 54; Charles Ferguson Ball, *Heaven* (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1978), 31; Daniel A. Brown, *What the Bible Reveals About Heaven* (Ventura, CA: Regal, 1999), 189; Randy Alcorn, *Heaven* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2004), 240-6.

<sup>22</sup> Rufus Clark, *Heaven and Its Scriptural Emblems* (Philadelphia: John E. Potter and Co., 1852), 105; Augustus C. Thompson, *The Better Land; or, The Believer’s Journey and Future Home* (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1854); William Branks, *Heaven Our Home: We Have No Saviour but Jesus and No Home But Heaven* (Boston: Roberts Brothers, 1864); J. Wilbur Chapman, *When Home Is Heaven* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1917); Don Baker, *Heaven: A Glimpse of Your Future Home* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1983); Joni Ereckson Tada, *Heaven: Your Real Home* (Grand Rapid, MI: Zondervan, 1996); Anne Lotz, *Heaven: My Father’s House* (Nashville, TN: W Publishing Group, 2001).

<sup>23</sup> H. S. Hoffman, *Life Beyond the Grave* (Philadelphia: The Union Press, 1899), 21, 24; Peter Kreeft, *Heaven: The Heart’s Deepest Longing* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1989), 162; Gary Habermas and J. P. Moreland, *Beyond Death: Exploring the Evidence for Immortality* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1998), 339-40.

<sup>24</sup> Anthony DeStefano, *A Travel Guide to Heaven* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 6.

<sup>25</sup> Adam Kirsch, “Paradise Lite: In Heaven, You’ll Be Thinner, Happier, and Smarter—Or So Americans Think,” Feb. 5, 2004 <http://www.slate.com/id/2095002> See also Charles Colson, “An Everlasting Playground: Understanding the Nature of Heaven,” *BreakPoint*, Mar. 23, 2004.

<sup>26</sup> David Brooks, “Hooked on Heaven Lite,” *New York Times*, Mar. 9, 2004.

<sup>27</sup> Increase Mather, *Meditations Upon the Glory of the Heavenly World* (Boston: T. Green, 1711), 15. Cf.

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- Jonathan Edwards, "Nothing upon Earth Can Represent the Glories of Heaven," in *Works*, 22 vols. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), 14: 137-60.
- <sup>28</sup> George Whitefield, "On Regeneration," <http://www.reformed.org/documents/index.html>
- <sup>29</sup> Ebenezer Pemberton, *Heaven the Residence of the Saints* (Boston: D. Kneeland, 1770), 7.
- <sup>30</sup> James McGready, "The Christian's Journey to the Heavenly Canaan," in James Smith, ed., *The Posthumous Works of the Reverend and Pious James McGready, Late Minister of the Gospel in Henderson, Kentucky*, 2 vols. (Nashville, TN: Lowry and Smith, 1833), 1: 326. Cf. George Hepworth, *The Life Beyond* (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph, 1892), 105.
- <sup>31</sup> Robert M. Patterson, *Paradise: The Place and State of Saved Souls between Death and the Resurrection* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1874), 148. Cf. Henry Ward Beecher, "The Heavenly State" and "Future Punishment": *Two Sermons* (New York: J. B. Ford and Co., 1871), 78-9, 81, 99; *Heaven Compiled from the Writings of Ellen G. White* (Nampa, ID: Pacific Press, 2003), 62.
- <sup>32</sup> Dwight L. Moody, "The Eternal Life Indescribable" in Fallows, ed., *The Home Beyond*, 298.
- <sup>33</sup> Billy Sunday, "What Shall the End Be," in *Billy Sunday Speaks* (New York, Chelsea House Publishers, 1970), 176-7.
- <sup>34</sup> James M. Campbell, *Heaven Opened: A Book of Comfort and Hope* (New York: Fleming H. Revell 1924), 21, 76; first and third quotations from 21, second from 76. Cf. John MacArthur, Jr., *Heaven: Selected Scriptures* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1988), 37; Tada, *Heaven: Your Real Home*, 15, 25.
- <sup>35</sup> Baker, *Heaven: A Glimpse of Your Future Home*, 11.
- <sup>36</sup> Jeffrey Burton Russell, *A History of Heaven: The Singing Silence* (Princeton University Press, 1997), 6.
- <sup>37</sup> "The New Evangelist," *Time*, Oct. 25, 1954, 58. Both Alcorn, *Heaven*, 240ff. and DeStefano, *Travel Guide*, provide quite specific descriptions of heaven.
- <sup>38</sup> Quoted in Nancy Gibbs and Richard Ostling, "God's Billy Pulpit," *Time*, Nov. 15, 1993, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,979573-3,00.html>
- <sup>39</sup> Bill T. Arnold, "Vegetarians in Paradise: Based on Isaiah 11:6-7 and 65:25, Will We Be Vegetarians in the New Heaven and Earth as Adam and Eve Were Before the Fall?" *Christianity Today*, 48 (Oct. 1, 2004), 104.
- <sup>40</sup> McDaneel and Lang, *Heaven: A History*, 175.
- <sup>41</sup> Jonathan Butler, *Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling: Heaven and Hell in American Revivalism, 1870-1920* (Brooklyn, NY: Carlson Publishing Inc., 1991), 16.
- <sup>42</sup> Michael Wigglesworth, *The Day of Doom Or, A Poetical Description of the Great and Last Judgement* (Tucson, AZ: American Eagle Publications, 1991), 76.
- <sup>43</sup> See Babette May Levy, *Preaching in the First Half Century of New England History* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1945), 25-59.
- <sup>44</sup> "The Resolutions of Jonathan Edwards," <http://www.reformed.org/documents/Edwards>
- <sup>45</sup> Jonathan Edwards, "The Christian Pilgrim" (1733) <http://www.biblebb.com/files/edwards/pilgrim.htm>
- <sup>46</sup> Jonathan Edwards, "True Saints, When Absent from the Body, Are Present with the Lord" (1747) in Edward Hickman, ed., *The Works of Jonathan Edwards*, 2 vols. (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth Trust, 1992), 2: 28, 29, 28, 30; first and third quotations from 28, second from 29, fourth from 30.
- <sup>47</sup> Quoted by Alcorn, *Heaven*, 308.
- <sup>48</sup> Edwards, "Heaven is a World of Love," 128-9.
- <sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 125.
- <sup>50</sup> Butler, *Softly and Tenderly*, 13-4, quotation from 13.
- <sup>51</sup> E.g. Gilbert Tennent, *Twenty Three Sermons Upon the Chief End of Man, etc.* (Philadelphia: William Bradford, 1744), 415-8; Stuart C. Henry, *George Whitefield: Wayfaring Witness* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1957), 111.
- <sup>52</sup> George Whitefield, "Christ's Transfiguration" <http://www.biblebb.com/files/whitefield/GW030.htm>
- <sup>53</sup> George Whitefield, "Christ the Best Husband," <http://www.jesus-is-lord.com/whitefie.htm>
- <sup>54</sup> McDannell and Lang, *Heaven: A History*, 258, 228-9, quotations in that order.
- <sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 272, 257-8, quotations in that order.
- <sup>56</sup> Ann Douglass, "Heaven Our Home: Consolation Literature in the Northern United States, 1830-1880," *American Quarterly* 26 (Dec. 1974), 512. See Henry Harbaugh, *Heaven: or An Earnest and Scriptural Inquiry Into the Abode of the Sainted Dead* (Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1853), 3; Austin Phelps, *My Portfolio: A Collection of Essays* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1882), 275, 280.
- <sup>57</sup> Henry Harbaugh, *The Heavenly Home; Or, The Employments and Enjoyments of the Saints in Heaven*

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(Philadelphia: Lindsay and Blakiston, 1853), 21-22.

<sup>58</sup> Talmage in Fallows, ed., *The Home Beyond*, 311.

<sup>59</sup> Dwight L. Moody, *Great Joy* (New York: E.B. Treat, 1877), 76. The printed version of this sermon on heaven sold 325,000 copies in its first 20 years. Cf. J. M. Killen, *Our Companions in Glory: Society in Heaven Contemplated* (New York: Anson D. F. Randolph., 1862); Branks, *Heaven Our Home*.

<sup>60</sup> Douglass, "Heaven Our Home," 496ff. See also Robert W. Habenstein and William M. Lamers, "The Pattern of Late Nineteenth-Century Funerals," in Charles O. Jackson, ed., *Passing: The Vision of Death in America* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1977), 91-102; Neil Harris, "The Cemetery Beautiful," in *ibid.*, 103-11; Carter, *Spiritual Crisis of the Gilded Age*, 85-108; James Farrell, *Inventing the American Way of Death, 1830-1920* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1980), 74-98.

<sup>61</sup> McDannell and Lang, *Heaven: A History*, 288.

<sup>62</sup> McDannell and Lang, *Heaven: A History*, 356.

<sup>63</sup> James W. Kimball, *Heaven* (Boston: Gould and Lincoln, 1857), 266, 252, quotations in that order.

<sup>64</sup> James M. MacDonald, *My Father's House*, or, *The Heaven of the Bible* (Philadelphia: Bradley and Co., 1869), 237-8. Cf. Clark, *Heaven and its Scriptural Emblems*, 218; Hart, *Aspects of Heaven*, 57; James D. Burns, *The Celestial City: Glimpses within the Gates* (Boston: American Tract Society, n.d.), 39.

<sup>65</sup> W. G. T. Shedd, *Sermons to the Spiritual Man* (London: Banner of Truth Trust, 1972, [1884]), 78.

<sup>66</sup> Patterson, *Paradise*, 199.

<sup>67</sup> Butler, *Softly and Tenderly*, 132.

<sup>68</sup> Dwight L. Moody, *Conversion, Service, and Glory* (London: Morgan and Scott, [1885]), 350. Cf. Moody, *Great Joy*, 325.

<sup>69</sup> R. A. Torrey, *Real Salvation and Whole-Hearted Service* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1905), 81.

<sup>70</sup> George Stebbins and Reuben A. Torrey, eds., *The Greatest Hymns* (Chicago: Tabernacle Pub. Co., n.d.), no. 346.

<sup>71</sup> John W. Blassingame, *Slave Community, The Slave Community: Plantation Life in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 69. On slaves' views of heaven, also see Albert J. Raboteau, *Slave Religion: The "Invisible Institution" in the Antebellum South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 290-3; Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1974), 248-9, 252.

<sup>72</sup> I am grateful to Beverly Carter for calling my attention to these spirituals.

<sup>73</sup> Douglas, "Heaven Our Home," 512-3.

<sup>74</sup> William J. Jones, *Christ in the Camp, Religion in the Confederate Army* (Harrisonburg, VA: Sprinkle Publications, 1986), 139, 403.

<sup>75</sup> E.g., "To the Members of the Congregation Now in the Army of the Confederate States of America," Mar. 15, 1863, Charlotte, NC: Academic Affairs Library, UNC-CH, University of North Carolina, 1999, <http://docsouth.unc.edu>.

<sup>76</sup> Phillip Shaw Paludan, *A People's Contest: The Union and Civil War, 1861-1865* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 367. See also James H. Moorhead, *American Apocalypse: Yankee Protestants and the Civil War, 1860-1869* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1978).

<sup>77</sup> McDannell and Lang, *Heaven: A History*, 287.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 277.

<sup>79</sup> James Moorhead, *World without End: Mainstream American Protestant Visions of the Last Things, 1880-1925* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), 58.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 61 (quotation); Levi Gilbert, *The Hereafter and Heaven* (Cincinnati: Jennings and Graham, 1907), 181.

<sup>81</sup> T. DeWitt Talmage, "The Heavenly Harvests" in J. Ward Gamble and Charles Morris, eds., *Trumpet Blasts or Mountain Top Views of Life* (Nashville, TN: Southwestern Publishing House, 1892), 500, 502-3, 506; William Adams Brown, *The Christian Hope: A Study in the Doctrine of Immortality* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1912), 170. Cf. John Fiske, *The Destiny of Man Viewed in Light of His Origins* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1884), 118. Most evangelicals and liberals agreed there would be spiritual growth in heaven. See McDannell and Lang, *Heaven: A History*, 279, 282, 304 and Major L. Wilson, "Paradox Lost: Order and Progress in Evangelical Thought," *Church History* 44 (Sept. 1975), 354.

<sup>82</sup> Phelps, *My Portfolio*, 278.

<sup>83</sup> David Gregg, *The Heaven-Life or Stimulus for Two Worlds* (Chicago: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1895), 44, 56, 57, 62-63; S. D. Gordon, *Quiet Talks about Life After Death* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company,

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1920), 41-42.

<sup>84</sup> McDannell and Lang, *Heaven: A History*, 303.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 269, 272, quotation from 272.

<sup>86</sup> Butler, *Softly and Tenderly*, 1, 5, 162, quotation from 162. Unlike Moody, Torrey, Jones, and Sunday, sometimes preached on the danger of hell (79). E.g., R. A. Torrey, "Hell: Its Certainty, What Sort of Place It Is, and How to Escape It," in *Real Salvation*, 36 ff.

<sup>87</sup> James Moorhead, review of Butler's *Softly and Tenderly Jesus Is Calling*, in *Church History* 62 (June 1993), 292-3, quotations in that order.

<sup>88</sup> Farrell, *Inventing the American Way of Death*, 80; Moorhead, *World without End*, 65; quotations in that order. See Henry Ward Beecher, "The Love of God," in *Sermons*, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1869), 1:52; Beecher, "From Glory to Glory," in Fallows, ed., *The Home Beyond*, 306; Newman Smyth, *The Place of Death in Evolution* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1897); Brown, *The Christian Hope*, 18, 176-8; Brown, *Christian Theology in Outline* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1906), 258-60, 412-23. Cf. Holmes, *Is Death the End?* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Son's, 1915), 295-6.

<sup>89</sup> See Douglass, "Heaven Our Home," 501-2, 510; quotation from 510.

<sup>90</sup> McDannell and Lang, *Heaven: A History*, 292-3.

<sup>91</sup> F. J. Boudreaux, *The Happiness of Heaven* (Baltimore: Murphy, 1875 [1870]), 138-40.

<sup>92</sup> "Heaven (Theology of)" in *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2002), 685-90. Cf. J. P. McCarthy, *Heaven* (New York: P. J. Kenedy & Sons, 1958), 72-95.

<sup>93</sup> Daniel Day Williams, *The Andover Liberals: A Study in American Theology* (New York: Octagon Books, 1970), 66, 71-72, 86, quotation from 72.

<sup>94</sup> Kenneth Cauthen, *The Impact of American Religious Liberalism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1962), 11. E.g. Brown, *Christian Theology in Outline*, 258-60, 412-23; Walter Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1917), 223-39; Albert Knudson, *The Doctrine of Redemption* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1933), *passim*.

<sup>95</sup> Dana Evan Kaplan, *American Reform Judaism: An Introduction* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 34; Marc Lee Raphael, *Judaism in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 24-6

<sup>96</sup> See Robert Goldenberg, "Bound Up in the Bond of Life: Death and Afterlife in Jewish Tradition," in Hiroshi Obayashi, ed., *Death and Afterlife: Perspectives of World Religions* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1992), 97-108.

<sup>97</sup> Walter Rauschenbusch, *Christianizing the Social Order* (New York: Macmillan, 1912), 42; Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, 235, quotations in that order.

<sup>98</sup> McDannell and Lang, *Heaven: A History*, 327-31. Bultmann asserted in 1941 that "there is no longer any heaven in the traditional sense of the word."

<sup>99</sup> Cauthen, *The Impact*, 242 (quotation); "Unitarian Universalism" in Christopher Johnson, and Marsha McGee, eds. *How Different Religions View Death and Afterlife* (Philadelphia: Charles Press, 1991), 300-3.

<sup>100</sup> Cauthen, *The Impact*, 118, 272. See Reinhold Niebuhr *The Nature and Destiny of Man* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1949), II: 294-98; Niebuhr, *Beyond Tragedy: Essays on the Christian Interpretation of History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), 289-91; Niebuhr, *Faith and History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 147-50.

<sup>101</sup> John Sutherland Bonnell, *Heaven and Hell: A Present-Day Christian Interpretation* (New York: Abingdon Press, 1956), 23.

<sup>102</sup> See Fulton Sheen, *Treasure in Clay: The Autobiography of Fulton J. Sheen* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993).

<sup>103</sup> See William Hamilton, "Thursday's Child: The Theologian Today and Tomorrow," *Theology Today* 20 (Jan. 1964), 487-95; Thomas J. Altizer, *The Gospel of Christian Atheism* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1966); Harvey Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (New York: Macmillan, 1965); Charles Hartshorne, *The Logic of Perfection* (LaSalle, IL: Open Court, 1962), 245-62; Hartshorne, *Omnipotence and Other Theological Mistakes* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1984); Gordon Kaufman, *Systematic Theology: A Historicist Perspective* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1968).

<sup>104</sup> McDannell and Lang, *Heaven*, 334-5. See Rosemary R. Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), 258; Gregory Baum, *Religion and Alienation: A Theological Reading of Sociology* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), 266-94; Monika K. Hellwig, *What Are They Saying about Death and*

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*Christian Hope?* (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 64-6; Bernard P. Prusak, "Heaven and Hell: Eschatological Symbols of Existential Protest," *Cross Currents* 24, 4 (1975), 475-91; James H. Cone, *Black Theology and Black Power* (New York: Seabury Press, 1969); Cone, *A Black Theology of Liberation* (Philadelphia: Lippincott, 1970); Carl E. Braaten, *The Future of God: The Revolutionary Dynamics of Hope* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).

<sup>105</sup> Martin Luther King, Jr., "Transformed Nonconformist," in *American Sermons: The Pilgrims to Martin Luther King, Jr.* (New York: Library of America, 1999).

<sup>106</sup> Paul Marshall with Lela Gilbert, *Heaven Is Not My Home: Learning to Live in God's Creation* (Nashville, TN: Word Publishing, 1998). Cf. James W. Skillen, *Caring for Creation: Responsible Stewardship of God's Handiwork* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1998); Michael E. Wittmer, *Heaven is a Place in Earth: Why Everything You Do Matters to God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004).

<sup>107</sup> Jeffrey Burton Russell, *A History of Heaven: The Singing Silence* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), xiii.

<sup>108</sup> Earl Barnes, "Theological Life of a California Child," in Stanley Hall, ed., *The Pedagogical Seminary* (Worcester, MA: J. H. Orpha, 1892), 2: 444. Cf. Charles H. Strong, *In Paradise or the State of the Faithful Dead; A Study from Scripture on Death and After-Death* (New York: Thomas Whittaker, 1893), 111.

<sup>109</sup> Gordon, *Quiet Talks*, 41.

<sup>110</sup> W. H. R. Faunce in Jacob Helder, ed., *Greatest Thoughts on Immortality Compiled from Personal Letters to the Author and from Various Other Sources* (New York: Richard R. Smith, 1930), 103. John Sutherland Bonnell argued similarly 25 years later that "the idea of heaven as a city with streets of pure gold, walls of emerald, sapphire, and jasper, and gates made of a single pearl" often repels and antagonizes (*Heaven and Hell*, 21).

<sup>111</sup> Josephine M. Ford, "Heaven: Will It Be Boring?" *U.S. Catholic* 40 (Nov. 1975), 16-20.

<sup>112</sup> Peter J. Kreeft, *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Heaven* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1982), 62. Cf. Kreeft, *Heaven: The Heart's Deepest Longing*, 84-96; John Gilmore, *Probing Heaven: Key Questions on the Hereafter* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1989), 121.

<sup>113</sup> Carol Zaleski "In Defense of Immortality," *First Things* 105 (Sept. 2000), 42. Cf. Anne Sandberg, *Seeing the Invisible* (Plainfield, NJ: Logos International, 1977), 3; Tada, *Heaven: Your Real Home*, 18, 20; Leighton Ford, "A Religious View of Life After Death," in Kimberly Benton, ed. *Life After Death: Fact or Fiction?* (San Diego: Greenhaven Press, 2004), 49; Peter S. Hawkins, "Surprise Ending: Imagining Heaven," *Christian Century*, 123 (Nov. 14, 2006), 30-5.

<sup>114</sup> [http://www.wisdomquotes.com/cat\\_heaven.html](http://www.wisdomquotes.com/cat_heaven.html)

<sup>115</sup> "Making It Through the Pearly Gates," *NBC Today Show* special, Nov. 14, 2006.

<sup>116</sup> Timothy Dwight, "Creation," in *Theology; Explained and Defended*, 1: 292.

<sup>117</sup> Sandberg, *Seeing the Invisible*, 185.

<sup>118</sup> Kreeft, *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About Heaven*, 62.

<sup>119</sup> Gilmore, *Probing Heaven*, 169-70.

<sup>120</sup> Brown, *What the Bible Reveals About Heaven*, 201, 215, quotations in that order.

<sup>121</sup> Habermas and Moreland, *Beyond Death*, 276. Cf. Rene Pache, *The Future Life* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), 356.

<sup>122</sup> Alcorn, *Heaven*, 394.

<sup>123</sup> Mather, *Mediations*, 39.

<sup>124</sup> Jonathan Edwards, "The Way of Holiness," in *Works*, 10: 475.

<sup>125</sup> George Whitefield, "The Potter and the Clay," in *Seventy-Five Sermons on Various Important Subjects*, 3 vols. (London: W. Baynes, 1812), 1: 220.

<sup>126</sup> Charles Finney, "Total Depravity" Part 1 in *Sermons on Important Subjects* [http://www.gospeltruth.net/1836SOIS/04sois\\_total\\_depravity.htm](http://www.gospeltruth.net/1836SOIS/04sois_total_depravity.htm) Cf. Charles Finney "Salvation of Sinners Impossible" in *So Great Salvation: Evangelistic Messages* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1965): Sinners would not be comfortable in heaven and would disturb its bliss (32).

<sup>127</sup> Dwight L. Moody, "On Being Born Again," in *American Sermons*, 678. Cf. *Heaven Compiled from the Writings of Ellen G. White*, 114-5; W. A. Criswell and Paige Patterson, *Heaven* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1991), 91.

<sup>128</sup> See Anthony Flew, *God and Philosophy* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2005 [1966]) and the *Presumption of Atheism* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1976) and Carl Sagan, *Billions and Billions: Thoughts on Life and Death at the Brink of the Millennium* (New York: Random House, 1997).

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- <sup>129</sup> Dwight, "Creation," 1: 289.
- <sup>130</sup> Harbaugh, *Heaven*, 30, 77, quotations in that order.
- <sup>131</sup> Torrey, *Real Salvation*, 72.
- <sup>132</sup> Quoted in William T. Ellis, *Billy Sunday: The Man and His Message* (Philadelphia: John C. Winston 1914), 417.
- <sup>133</sup> Hal Lindsey with C. C. Carlson, *The Terminal Generation* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1976), 180. Cf. Tada, *Heaven: Your Real Home*, 29.
- <sup>134</sup> Alcorn, *Heaven*, 241. Cf. Bounds, *Heaven*, 13, 16, 29, and passim; Peter Toon, *Heaven and Hell: A Biblical and Theological Overview* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1986), 157; Gilmore, *Probing Heaven*, 91-92, 103-105; Brown, *What the Bible Reveals About Heaven*, 189.
- <sup>135</sup> John G. Stackhouse, "Harleys in Heaven: What Christians Have Thought of the Afterlife, and What Difference It Makes Now," *Christianity Today*, June 2003, 40.
- <sup>136</sup> Mather, *Meditations*, 4, 247, quotation from 4.
- <sup>137</sup> Pemberton, *Heaven the Residence of the Saints*, 11, 13, quotations in that order.
- <sup>138</sup> Dwight, "Creation," 294. Cf. Dwight, "The Happiness of Heaven," in *Theology*, 5: 521.
- <sup>139</sup> Kimball, *Heaven*, 216.
- <sup>140</sup> A. A. Hodge, *Evangelical Theology: A Course of Popular Lectures* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth, 1976), 400.
- <sup>141</sup> Torrey, *Real Salvation*, 73. Heaven was "the perfection of beauty," form, color, sound, and odor. Cf. Phelps, *Beyond the Gates*, 42-5.
- <sup>142</sup> Andrew Greeley, *Death and Beyond* (Chicago: Thomas More Press, 1976), 128. Cf. Harry Blamires, *Knowing the Truth about Heaven and Hell: Our Choices and Where They Lead Us* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Books, 1988), 113.
- <sup>143</sup> MacArthur, *Heaven: Selected Scriptures*, 91, 97; quotations in that order.
- <sup>144</sup> Alcorn, *Heaven*, 246, 250-1, quotations in that order.
- <sup>145</sup> Mather, *Mediations*, 78.
- <sup>146</sup> Edwards, "True Saints," 30. Cf. Dwight, "The Remoter Consequences of Death," 5: 539.
- <sup>147</sup> Dwight, "Creation," 289 (quotation); Jonathan Edwards, *A Dissertation Concerning the End for Which God Created the World* (1765) [http://homechurch.org/miscellaneous/edwards\\_purpose.html](http://homechurch.org/miscellaneous/edwards_purpose.html) Cf. Asa Mahan, "Employments of Heaven" in Fallows, ed., *The Home Beyond*, 357; Hoffman, *Life Beyond the Grave*, 289.
- <sup>148</sup> MacDonald, *My Father's House*, 59, 94, quotations in that order. Cf. Clark, *Heaven and Its Scriptural Emblems*, 85.
- <sup>149</sup> Randolph S. Foster, *Beyond the Grave: Being Three Lectures Before the Chautauqua Assembly in 1878, with Papers on Recognition in the Future State* (New York: Philips & Hunt, 1879), 224.
- <sup>150</sup> "Heaven" in Alfred Nevin, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Publishing House, 1884), 314.
- <sup>151</sup> Torrey, *Real Salvation*, 79.
- <sup>152</sup> Robert Ervin Hough, *The Christian After Death* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1947), 113-14. Cf. Gilmore, *Probing Heaven*, 288.
- <sup>153</sup> Billy Graham, *Facing Death and the Life After* (Waco, TX.: Word Books, 1987), 253.
- <sup>154</sup> Rauschenbusch, *A Theology for the Social Gospel*, 235; Thompson, *The Better Land*, 93.
- <sup>155</sup> Jay D. Robison, *Life after Death? Christian Intepretation of Personal Eschatology* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998), 211. Cf. Bonnell, *Heaven and Hell*, 25.
- <sup>156</sup> Alcorn, *Heaven*, 274. Cf. Gilmore, *Probing Heaven*, 320.
- <sup>157</sup> Mather, *Mediations*, 227.
- <sup>158</sup> J. M. Killen, *Our Friends in Heaven* (Cincinnati: L. Swormstedt & A. Poe, 1857), 20-1, quotation from 21.
- <sup>159</sup> Kimball, *Heaven*, 231.
- <sup>160</sup> Clark, *Heaven and its Scriptural Emblems*, 107. Cf. Thompson, *The Better Land*, 73-86.
- <sup>161</sup> Fallows, "Summary of Reasons for Recognition," Fallows, ed., *The Home Beyond*, 381-3, quotation from 382. Cf. Talmage, "Shall We Know Each Other?" in *ibid.*, 384; William M. Punshon, "Recognition in Heaven Is a Fact," in *ibid.*, 416; Matthew Simpson, "The Sainted Dead Interested in the Living," in *ibid.*, 472; John J. Kerr, *Future Recognition: or, The Blessedness of Those "Who Die in the Lord"* (Philadelphia: Hooker, 1847); Foster, *Beyond the Grave*, 190-217; Hart, *Aspects of Heaven*, 119, 175-89;

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Hoffman, *Life Beyond the Grave*, 187-206.

<sup>162</sup> J. Aspinwall Hodge, *Recognition after Death* (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1889), 23, 28, quotations in that order.

<sup>163</sup> Strong, *In Paradise*, 77.

<sup>164</sup> J. T. Whitley, *What Jesus Said About Heaven: A Study in the Four Gospels* (Nashville, TN: Cokesbury Press, 1925), 71.

<sup>165</sup> Gilmore, *Probing Heaven*, 328-9, 338; first quotation from 328, second from 329.

<sup>166</sup> Graham, *Facing Death*, 247.

<sup>167</sup> Edwards, "Heaven, a World of Love," 124.

<sup>168</sup> Charles Hodge, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1952 [1872]), 3: 861.

<sup>169</sup> Torrey, *Real Salvation*, 74. Cf. Thompson, *The Better Land*, 86.

<sup>170</sup> Cited in Ellis, *Billy Sunday*, 417.

<sup>171</sup> <http://www.greaternycrusade.org/SpiritualHelp>

<sup>172</sup> Whitley, *What Jesus Said About Heaven*, 83.

<sup>173</sup> Edwards, "Heaven Is a World of Love," 131.

<sup>174</sup> Dwight, "The Remoter Consequences of Death," 5: 542, 536, 546-7. He added that "no individual will be useless, forgotten, or unemployed." Everyone would have their own job, which they would perform "in the happiest manner." God had fit "the plans, persons, faculties, attributes, and employments" to make the heavenly system work in the most effective way (546).

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, 5: 535.

<sup>176</sup> Robert M. Patterson, *Vision of Heaven for the Life on Earth* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian Board of Publication, 1877), 54.

<sup>177</sup> Phillips Brooks, "The Sea of Glass Mingled with Fire," in *Twenty Sermons* (New York: Macmillan Co., 1897), 125. Cf. Strong, *In Paradise*, 84.

<sup>178</sup> Whitley, *What Jesus Said About Heaven*, 83.

<sup>179</sup> Baker, *Heaven*, 16-21.

<sup>180</sup> Alcorn, *Heaven*, 241, 261, quotations in that order.

<sup>181</sup> MacArthur, *Heaven: Selected Scriptures*, 98.

<sup>182</sup> Lindsey, *There's a New World Coming* (Santa Ana, CA: Vision House Publishers, 1973), 273ff.

<sup>183</sup> Tada, *Heaven: Your Real Home*, 61, 49, quotation from 61.

<sup>184</sup> [http://www.greaternycrusade.org/MyAnswer\\_Article.asp?ArticleID=1848](http://www.greaternycrusade.org/MyAnswer_Article.asp?ArticleID=1848) Cf. Graham, *Facing Death*, 223; Criswell and Patterson, *Heaven*, 70-1.

<sup>185</sup> Dwight, "Creation," 294.

<sup>186</sup> Moody, "Heaven—Its Happiness," Dwight L. Moody, "Heaven—Its Happiness" in *Heaven: How to Get There* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1982), 53-4.

<sup>187</sup> A. C. Dixon, *Heaven on Earth* (Greenville, SC: The Gospel Hour Inc., 1897), 65-6, quotation from 66. Cf. Patterson, *Vision of Heaven*, 318; Strong, *In Paradise*, 117; Gregg, *The Heaven-Life*, 23, 94, 113, 124; Torrey, *Real Salvation*, 72; Bounds, *Heaven*, 120-1, 125.

<sup>188</sup> Campbell, *Heaven Opened*, 128. Cf. Lyman Abbott, "Life, Growth, and Heaven," *Outlook* 104 (Aug 2, 1913), 741-2.

<sup>189</sup> Habermas and Moreland, *Beyond Death*, 323, 333, quotations in that order. Cf. MacArthur, *Heaven: Selected Scriptures* 18; J. Oswald Sanders, *Heaven: Better By Far* (Grand Rapids, MI: Discovery House Publishers, 1994), 14-5.

<sup>190</sup> Alcorn interview, [leftbehind.com](http://leftbehind.com) Cf. Randy Alcorn, *In Light of Eternity: Perspectives on Heaven* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 1999).

<sup>191</sup> Kreeft, *Heaven: The Heart's Deepest Longing*, 168-213. Cf. T. DeWitt Talmage, "The Ministry of Tears" in *American Sermons*, 693-6; Gilmore, *Probing Heaven*, 126, Mark Buchanan, *Things Unseen: Living with Eternity in Your Heart* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2002).

<sup>192</sup> Mather, *Mediations*, 258.

<sup>193</sup> James Pierpont, *False Hopes of Heaven to Be Dreaded and Deprecated* (Boston: T. Green, 1712), 8, 18, quotations in that order.

<sup>194</sup> Edwards, "Heaven Is a World of Love," 135.

<sup>195</sup> Samuel Finley, "The Madness of Mankind" (1754), in *American Sermons*, 452-3.

<sup>196</sup> Whitefield's final sermon, Exeter, NH, Sept. 29, 1770, as quoted in "George Whitefield," *Christian History and Biography*, <http://www.christianitytoday.com/history/special/131christians/whitefield.html>

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<sup>197</sup> Moody, "Heaven—Its Happiness" 38.

<sup>198</sup> Talmage, "The Heavenly Harvests," 514. Cf. R. A. Torrey, *The Voice of God in the Present Hour* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1917), 108.

<sup>199</sup> Gilmore, *Probing Heaven*, 196, 195, 194; first quotation from 196, second from 195. Cf. Hough, *The Christian After Death*, 123; Bonnell, *Heaven and Hell*, 29.

<sup>200</sup> Alcorn, *Heaven*, 35.

<sup>201</sup> [http://www.greaternycrusade.org/MyAnswer\\_Article.asp?ArticleID=1884](http://www.greaternycrusade.org/MyAnswer_Article.asp?ArticleID=1884) Cf. Graham, *Facing Death*, 215-6.

<sup>202</sup> George Whitefield, "Christ the Support of the Tempted"

<http://www.anglicanlibrary.org/whitefield/sermons/19.htm>

<sup>203</sup> George Gallup with William Proctor, *Adventures in Immortality* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1982), 59, 182.

<sup>204</sup> Segal, *Life after Death*, 715.

<sup>205</sup> George N. Marshall, *Why I Am a Unitarian*. See also Jack Mendelsohn, *Being Liberal in an Illiberal Age: Why I Am a Unitarian Universalist* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985); John A. Buehrens and Forrest Church, eds. *A Chosen Faith: An Introduction to Unitarian Universalism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998); and John Sias, *100 Questions that Non-Members Ask about Unitarian Universalism* (Transition Publishing, 1994).

<sup>206</sup> H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Kingdom of God in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1959), 193.

<sup>207</sup> For example, more than twice as many Catholics as Protestants (43% to 20%) agreed with the statement that "Heaven is a divine reward for those who earn it by their good life." See George Gallup, Jr. and Jim Castelli, *The American Catholic People: Their Beliefs, Practices, and Values* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1987), 18.

<sup>208</sup> See, for example, Leo Baeck, *The Essence of Judaism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1948), 13-14, 36-37, 44, 52, 70-1, 88, 118-9, 166, 195, 218-9.

<sup>209</sup> [http://www.greaternycrusade.org/MyAnswer\\_Article.asp?ArticleID=2152](http://www.greaternycrusade.org/MyAnswer_Article.asp?ArticleID=2152)