

# Meditations, December 23-30, 1941

By **Thomas Merton**

Introduced by **Jonathan Montaldo**

*As the editor of Merton's journals for 1941-1952, published in 1996 as *Entering the Silence*, I included what I believed to be the only extant remnant of a journal Merton had kept as a novice at Gethsemani. I had found this remnant in a folder of the Thomas Merton Collection at Columbia University. On a small card included with these few pages Merton had written to Sr. Thérèse Lentfoehr: "I found these old copies of poems & some fragments of a novitiate journal long since torn up & so I send them to you, assuming you might be interested." However, in October 1997, as I researched Merton's published and unpublished work in order to gather together all his prayers, my pupils dilated as I read in *The Road to Joy* Merton's letter to Mark Van Doren dated April 14, 1942: "Also, I enclose a page or two of a journal I have been keeping: it is [sic] completely to do with religious experience – & so are the poems, & so is my life, naturally" (p. 14). Returning to Columbia University and researching the Mark Van Doren Collection, I found the text included below. It is a nine-page typescript with the headings "JMJT / MEDITATIONS. Gethsemani." It was too late at that point to have this material included in the paperback edition of *Entering the Silence*. After I had alerted Patrick Hart, the general editor of the Merton Journals, and the Merton Legacy Trustees, it was decided that I would include these meditations in a forthcoming collection of Merton's prayers. Then work on *The Intimate Merton* unexpectedly intervened. Now, three years after its discovery, and after I had decided to include only a small section of the material in the book of Merton's prayers and drawings to be published in 2001, this text of the earliest known monastic journal of Thomas Merton, written during the Christmas season fifty-nine years ago, two weeks after his entrance into Gethsemani, appears in print for the first time. It is included in this final twenty-fifth anniversary issue of *The Merton Seasonal* with the permission of the Thomas Merton Legacy Trust.*

(Dec. 23rd 1941)

In the middle of myself, so to speak, (because it is really in no place at all, but in the infinity of the spirit) there is an emptiness without any features at all, without stars or light or any wind, without movement, without walls. It is an emptiness full of silence sometimes cool and sometimes sweet and sometimes frightening. There, with the grace of God, I retire and walk, wondering: "Where is Jesus? He is here, somewhere: not in the other parts of my mind, but really here. But where?"

For there is absolutely no way of finding Him, that I can control or regulate. I cannot will to find Him, and instantly know that He is there. On the contrary, the more conscious effort of will, on my part, to find Him, the less I find Him. Yet sometimes He is very near to me in this darkness, and not until afterwards do I realize how near He was.

Why is this? Sometimes I cry out so much in the emptiness, that it is entirely filled with the sound of my own voice: (I mean all the vocal prayers and protestations of faith and love on my part, by which I am trying to force Him to come to me), and when I am making so much noise myself, how can I expect to hear anybody answer? And all the time, too, when I look for Him, am I not insisting

that He come to me the way *I* expect Him to come, and be what *I* imagine He ought to be, and tell me what *I* imagine He ought to say. It is not the least of His mercies to me, that he should not only tolerate such animal selfishness in me, such brutal and coarse and infantile pride, but that He should do no more than refuse to appear when I call Him in this way. What if He should suddenly answer me? What if He took me at my own word? I would be instantly annihilated.

In His infinite goodness He does not choose to let me see Him as He could not possibly be, (that is, the way I think He is) but remains hidden in His own perfection until I grow quiet – and then, it sometimes pleases Him to give me, and from the most unexpected quarter of all, some news of Him, such news as I had never thought of or bargained for.

That is why it is so important to be humble and obedient *outside* of mental prayer, obedient to exterior authority, to the Rule, to common usages governing all those whom God has brought into this house to seek Him by the communal life of Trappists. Because without this training in exterior obedience and humility, the will that is not humble will never humble itself interiorly before God either, nor obey Him within itself. Therefore, blind obedience in apparently trivial and silly things, in those situations which are the most removed of all from the Choir and from mental prayer, nevertheless has an awful lot to do with contemplation.

In giving ourselves up to the Rule, we also give ourselves up to Him – and that is, after all, what I am always protesting I want, in my prayer. And we never possess Him by trying to catch Him: we only catch Him by letting ourselves be caught. We only possess Him by being His prisoners, because He is too mighty and too infinite to let us catch Him in any but the most paradoxical sense. And when we think we have captured Him, He has captured us.

As long as we remain intellectually preoccupied, wilfully preoccupied with trapping Jesus in our own favorite trap, he will leave us to ourselves; he will leave us to get tangled up in our own nets: the nets of our pride, or of our sentimentality, or of our own self-deceptions.

Supposing I look down into the deep well of my own soul, wondering where God is, and demanding a particular answer, “here” or “here” or in this feeling, or in this idea, I am asking to be deceived, because I am asking God to limit Himself to some conception that I can grasp and see and hold and possess. But from the instant the notion of Him becomes thus limited, it is no longer Him: it may remotely say something of Him: but that cannot satisfy me, because I am living for only one thing, and that is God Himself. But if I fail to get such an answer, and then become disappointed, I am also deceiving myself. Because God is there, and, in a way, I possess Him before I even ask to possess Him. For it is only because He is present in me that I am even capable of thinking, or daring, to ask Him where He is!

If I cry out, in the darkness and quiet of this depth I speak of, “O Jesus, where are You?” it means nothing more certainly than that He is there already.

I will see Him today a hundred or a thousand times, and will probably not have eyes to see Him. I shall have passed Him in the cloister, seen Him in chapter, worked beside Him in the woodshed. He shall have come in clouds of glory at the High Mass. He shall have given me bread with His own hand. He shall have died for me, and raised me up to His eternal Father. And if in all this I have been humble and quiet and gentle and obedient, and prayed for the world and for those who are now what I myself have been, then I shall see Him too, obscurely. And, in a way, I shall know I have seen Him, too. But if I go through all this demanding to see him, and protesting that I am humble, O, so humble that I am the scum of the earth, and protesting a lot of other things besides, and weeping and wringing

my hands in the hope that He will display some sort of magic lantern slide of Truth and Beauty in the depth of myself, in spite of the fact that I have been proud and selfish and disobedient, then I am asking to be deceived.

It is not the least of His mercies to men that He even bears with such prayers as these, and turns them into good. For if we had to pray all of us humbly and unselfishly and purely from the start, what one of us would ever be heard?

Christmas, 1941. (Before Midnight Mass)

Lord, it is nearly midnight, and I am waiting for You in the darkness, and the great silence.

I am sorry for all my sins.

Do not let me ask any more than to sit in the darkness and light no lights of my own and be crowded with no crowds of my own thoughts, to fill the emptiness of the night in which I await You. And in order to remain in the sweet darkness of pure Faith, let me become nothing to the pale, weak light of sense: and, as to the world, become totally obscure from it forever. Thus through this darkness may I come to Your brightness at last, and having become insignificant to the world, reach out towards the infinite meanings contained in Your peace and Your glory.

Your brightness is my darkness. I know nothing of You, and, by myself, I cannot even imagine how to go about knowing You. If I imagine You I am mistaken, and if I understand You I am deluded, and if I am conscious and certain I know You, I am crazy. But darkness is enough.

(Christmas Day)

“O Jesus, I beg You to fill me with a sense of Your greatness, of Your power and Your might and Your infinite strength. Then perhaps I might be so overwhelmed that all the pride would be driven clean out of me forever.”

So I asked that. That was an idea I had. Perhaps I ought to be shown how mighty He was, it would scare the pride out of me. As if I had any idea what I was asking: but in His mercy He gave me this answer.

“My Child, if you want to know what My power is, it is My immense Love: that is My power, that is My majesty, and that is My infinite strength.”

And also:

“But when you think of My Love, be careful never to confuse it with any feeling of love that you yourself have ever known, even in My presence.”

(If somebody says, “Nobody as proud and selfish as you are ever had a conversation with Christ,” I will not deny that I am both proud and selfish and a great sinner, so great I cannot begin to imagine how frightful my sins, all by themselves, would appear in the mind of God if they had not been obliterated by God Himself. As to having a conversation with Him, I am not a saint, either. But sometimes after Holy Communion or other times you can get ideas that simply couldn’t be out of your own memory or mind by itself without some direct help from God.)

O Lord! This is the feast of Your power and Your majesty! For this mystery really contains an infinitely higher and purer and more supernatural notion of power than the notion of Christ the King could ever convey. And yet we have to separate Your power from Your love, and give Your Kingship a special feast, because otherwise, being too weak to see how Your love is Your might, we might forget your Kingship altogether, if we did not keep it to our own terms, our own conception of might.

But our own conception of power is infinitely multiplied, (as we will know when our minds, in You, have become pure enough to understand it) when we see You conquer everything by the poor, meek, weakness of a little child born in a manger.

To be judged by a King in Glory is terrifying: because of the immense disproportion between our offense and the *power* we have offended. But to be judged by this holy, meek and gentle infant, (and that King is this infant) is a thought that fills me with an almost unbearable agony at the completely intolerable disproportion between my offense and the *goodness* against which I have sinned.

Not like a man speaking, but like a spring appearing suddenly in the dry earth of my mind, Christ said to me:

“Do not put anything above the love of Me in this darkness. *Do not prefer the graces I give You to the Love itself from which they proceed.* You should prefer this darkness to any other state you yet know, and be thankful when I send you some small light of peace from time to time: but to all such lights, since they are still like the lights of the day of sense that you have left, is to be preferred the darkness itself. Because that darkness is really a light far brighter and more pure than your eyes are capable of bearing, or your mind capable of imagining.”

My Jesus! I am like a child to whom his father has given a penny and, (if such an unnatural child were possible, I am that one,) I have valued the penny more than my father’s love. Supposing such a child were to think that in this penny he possessed everything he wanted, and, taking it, ran away from his father’s love: how would he suffer when he found out the true worthlessness of this sour little bit of copper.

For such children, all the pains and chastisements that prove the real worthlessness of pennies, all these pains are far greater and better gifts than pennies themselves.

“Child, when you are weary, and impatient, and almost ready to fall down for sorrow, think that I have come to you, in the form of that sorrow, and am asking you if you still love Me. And if you do, you will learn to be as glad of this trial, and as willing to accept it as any consolation.”

Dec 27. St John the Evangelist.

“Child, I tell you again, do not imagine that any kind of love which you are capable of feeling is the Love which I Am. Although it may be the gift of My Grace, or the sign of My Presence, it is not My self, which you cannot even apprehend, let alone knowingly possess. Yet you do possess Me, but in a darkness of unknowing that you cannot even imagine, and, *therefore even the word darkness is meaningless with respect to it:* the notion of darkness does not signify an experience of Me – only a momentary escape from the experience of all the limitations of your natural self. Beyond that, I am. I teach you in depths deeper than you can be sensible of.”

Lord! forgive me! Even the love I have for You has to take flesh, and since it is human, and carnal, it is to that extent *selfish*: and in so far as it is selfish, it is not love. How can natural, and selfish and human love be compared to the true eternal love which is Your very Being, and comes to us in Your holy Grace?

“Child, that is why you must be very humble. Beg Me constantly not for the kind of love you know, which is the love of creatures, but for the kind of love which you are incapable of knowing, which is My Holy Spirit, and which even the word Love misrepresents to your mind. Beg Me, not for the love which you are able to expect, or would like to receive, or think you remember having received, or imagine you are able to give, but beg for the love which is only according to My infinite

will, and is My will.”

Lord! forgive me! Every day, if You pleased, you could send us the same consolations, or take them away, or vary them, or increase them. But what if, in Your inscrutable wisdom, You turn them to tribulations? And as for us, would these trials be trials to us, if we were not so set on having the same consolation we had before? Would tribulations be tribulations at all, if we were not so stubbornly attached to the consolation we wish You would give us again?

“Child, you should be not only patient, but *grateful*, every time I refuse you the particular consolation, or light that you desire or expect. If I merely gave you the same consolation you had yesterday, I would be doing your own will, to your own harm. No consolation is, by itself, my grace, which is holy and inscrutable, but a delight which I allow you to extract from my grace: and that delight is finite and imperfect – and has to be, or you could not apprehend it. Nevertheless, because it was My will, and was of My grace, the delight was pure, yesterday, when you had it, and it partook of heaven then. *But your desire for that consolation today, when it is not according to My will, is a carnal desire and it is selfish.*”

Lord! Now please forgive me for my stupidity: I have become so engrossed in the metaphor of darkness, that I have begun to assume that I can't see You in anything but a real physical darkness, with my eyes closed: forgetting that it is essentially a figure of the real darkness of faith, not just the absence of physical light.

Feast of the Holy Innocents. Dec 28 1941.

“Quando tulit puerum et matrem ejus, ut in Aegyptum transeat, *nocte tulit, et in tenebris: quia noctem ignorantiae his, a quibus ipse recessit, reliquit incredulis.* Quando vero revertetur in Judaeam, nec nox nec tenebrae ponuntur in Evangelio; quia in fine mundi Judaei fidem, tamquam Christum ab Aegypto revertentem suscipientes, illuminabuntur.” St Jerome.\*

God comes to me in darkness and goes from me in darkness: and sometimes I could use darkness as a figure for faith, as St John of the Cross does, meaning, of course, that it is dark with respect to our own intellect. However, darkness can also be used with respect to the object of our Faith, the light which our Faith seeks to apprehend: in that case, the more perfect our faith is, the more perfectly will we be in possession of that light, and our darkness will be illumined. In that sense, then, darkness is the *lack of* faith. That is the sense in which St Jerome uses it, in the reference to the flight into Egypt, from today's night office.

To our intellect, God's light appears as a darkness. To our faith, as light. The light of faith is darkness to the intellect. That does not mean that God is a darkness, or a light which could ever appear truly as anything but pure light. God cannot be a darkness. But our ignorance is darkness: and the knowledge of faith is ignorance, to the natural reason alone, and therefore the knowledge of

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\*When [Joseph] took the child and his mother in order to pass into Egypt, *he took them at night and in darkness: for he left behind the night of ignorance to these unbelievers from whom he himself withdrew.* But when he returns into Judea, neither night nor darkness is mentioned in the Gospel; for at the end of the world the Jews will be enlightened, accepting faith as though it were Christ returning from Egypt [*Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew, Book I*].

God we possess by faith seems like darkness to the intellect: not, however, God Himself. He cannot be darkness.

Even our faith, with respect to the infinite purity of the light of God's perfection, is a darkness and a terrific ignorance. But to our own misery and degradation and confusion it brings an intense and holy illumination, and is a great light, and the only constant light, that serves us in everything, even in the teeth of death.

As to the intellect, it has its own light, and God enlightens it in a manner appropriate to its own imperfect way of knowing, by reasoning based on something given it by the senses. And that light, to faith, is another darkness, because what reason has to say about God in order to satisfy its own hunger for His light, cannot satisfy Faith at all, for Faith can only be satisfied by the possession not of ideas about God, but of God Himself.

But then, also, Faith and the reason illuminate one another, with respect to God, because after all, since He is truth, He is the highest and most perfect and final object of all the strivings of both faith and reason.

Through faith, our intellect is enlightened by a darkness: since the dark knowing of faith can give the reason a lot to know in its own sphere which it would not otherwise be able to attain to. That the reason *knows something* in what faith offers it, is an illumination. But that the *thing it knows* through faith is, to the reason, obscure, means that we still remain in a kind of darkness, but a clear darkness, to which we are brought in freedom from our misery.

Reason and faith, in this world, are one another's night, but also one another's Egypt. In the minds of the worldly, they can be enemies, as the Jews and Egyptians were enemies. In the minds of saints their darkness with respect to one another, is one another's refuge, the way Christ had to flee to Egypt by night. But when He returns by the clean light of His true glory, then everything shall be light, and there will be no more escaping and wandering and exile, and there will be *no more faith*, (Reason's Egypt) because all will be seen clear.

## Holy Innocents. II.

My Saviour, there is only one thing I desire, and that is, to do Your Will, even to the complete extinction and blindness of my own judgement: even if to my own darkness, it seems ruin.

"Child, My will is most simple and most safe: for it is only that you should be joyful in all things, on earth as well as in heaven, for My sake. I desire nothing but this: that you do everything you have to do, in pure joy, for the love of Me."

Very well, Jesus, in the worst sickness or the most terrible sadnesses I will pretend to be joyful: even in complete ruin, I will pretend that I am joyful.

"Can I will that you pretend to be anything? No, Child, my will is that you should *be* joyful. Whatever you do for my sake, if you do not do it in pure joy, *then you are not really doing my will*, no, not completely."

O my Lord! Please forgive me for my carnal stupidity and stubbornness. For even now I am resisting You with questions when I am, really, filled with Your Joy, for You are joy itself, and if You are within me, then all joy is within me, and I do not need to look for it any further. But if I am not content with the faith and trust in Your joy within me, and *do* go wandering away again, dissatisfied, how will I ever find any joy or any peace?

I have received You in Your infinitely holy Sacrament of Communion, and instead of thanking

You at once for giving me Yourself, who are *everything*, absolutely everything, I kept on asking for more, as if there were still something real left for me to desire.

If I possess You, that is, Your love, (You are Your love, your love is Your Being, and that is infinite) then I possess all reality, and anything I desire beyond that can only be unreality, and to desire it is a kind of dying, a turning to ashes, and running away into the shadows. But missing the joy of thanking You for Your immense goodness (which is our highest joy) I wilfully continued in my own misery and want by stubbornly continuing to ask You for what I no longer lacked.

And the reason for that stubbornness was my insistence on desiring not the pure possession of You in faith and hope and pure love, but preferring you selfishly in the imperfection and delusion of consolations that I might feel and enjoy.

“Child, the only joy that exists is My joy, which is the joy of an infinite love. I am all joy. I am heaven. I am perfection. I am a terrific happiness. My happiness is the beginning and the end of all things. If you want to know joy, learn to thank Me for having given Myself to you before you could ever think of asking. My joy is unimaginable: how would you know how to ask for it if it were not obscurely present to you already? But a joy that is totally obscure can be no joy: the only way you can make Me your own joy, and to know my love, drawing Me from your own obscurity, is to give my love back to me in holy praise and thanksgiving and the love of souls, to bring all to share in My glory.”

Lord! Forgive me for my poverty of faith. It is a wilful poverty: You have desired to make me rich in faith and joy, and my pride refuses You. My pride trusts in its own nothingness, merely because my own opinions and my own weak actions have tangible results, immediate results. These results are never very good, often terrible. Yet I trust my own crazy judgements more than Your infinite wisdom, because I have so little faith. But if I trusted You perfectly, I would be at peace in all circumstances of life, provided I believed I had done Your will. For once I have done Your will, I possess You, by not being any longer in conflict with You, and to all who do not resist You, it is Your delight to give Yourself completely in Your whole infinity of happiness. Even if my body were broken in half, or my mind seemed to be torn apart, yet if I cared for nothing but doing Your will, and, beyond that, trusted in You completely, even in sorrow or sadness, I would have a real joy still, and a real peace: because I would have You, who are all joy and peace. Yet how will I overcome the fear that I have failed to do Your will?

“Child, You know very clearly what my will is. The things men must do, to do My will, are simple and written clearly in the Bible and rewritten clearly in Saints’ lives, and explained by the Church, and there is no room for any doubt about what I want you to do. Love Me and love all men for my sake, that is, love that all should come to my infinite joy, as much as you would love to come to Me yourself, and love all as I have loved You. Give yourself to your brothers as completely as I have given Myself to you. Do what you have seen me do, or try to, and beyond that, trust in Me: if you try to do what I have done, and never refuse Me anything I may ask You, in my commandments and counsels, in the voice of your superiors or of all men who need anything of you in charity, and in the incidents of my providence, and in the inspirations of My grace, then beyond that is only one thing necessary for perfect peace and perfection: to trust completely in Me to make all the faults you have committed unwillingly as though they had never existed. Do all this in pure joy, sinless and submissive entirely to Me, and never angry at yourself for seeming to fail or seeming to make mistakes, but remaining in pure joy that My life should have visited and filled your nothingness: then

you will have joy even on earth, and what you have given up for Me, you shall receive even on earth a hundredfold.”

Dec 30 1941.

The will of our Heavenly Father is our joy: that is, the only perfect peace and joy are in doing His will. So, penance only pleases Him in so far as it rescues our wills from the misery of desiring all that is less perfect than God Himself.

We do not please Him by the mere act of self-denial, or self-chastisement, or fasting, or mortification. Athletes mortify and chastise themselves, too. And an empty stomach does not, of itself, please God: the greed that causes some men to take everything while others starve shall not know His mercy, for starvation does not please Him.

We do not please Him if we do penance out of hatred for our bodies, or out of hatred for anything else, except misery: and “hate” can only be applied to misery in a purely analogical sense. For there is no real sense in which hatred can please God, for God is love, and hatred is a denial of His very Being.

Yet we please Him if we do penance and chastise our flesh out of a supernatural love of our bodies and our souls, seeking joy in Him and for His sake alone by training ourselves to desire nothing but Him alone, Who is perfect love and peace and goodness.

Jesus departed from His Father in Heaven, in order to be among us men. He departed, in some sense, from His own perfection, that is, from His own perfect union with God the Father in Glory, in so far as He remained for a time united with Him only in the less perfect union of which mortality is capable – even descending to the depths of darkness which make that union hide under an agony, on the Cross, crying “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?”

The Terrible darkness the writers speak of and the saints have to sometimes go through, in which Divine Union is disguised under an agony, is a suffering appropriate to sin, since by our wills we have so separated ourselves from God that His perfection *hurts* our fallen nature although it is the perfect fulfilment of our being when we come home from this exile. But this darkness is only a figure of the suffering which Jesus, sinless, took upon Himself. Only He, who had never sinned, could possibly know the pure misery and agony of sin. For sin is the absolute denial of all that He is: sin, if He felt it, would seem to tear Him from His own Being, and He felt it, on purpose, because of us. The saints, in proportion as they are near to God’s own purity, and filled with God’s love, that is, His sinlessness (all God’s attributes are One Being: God Himself) are also able to feel sin as an agony, since they know it as the separation from this purity and this life and this goodness. They are able, in some measure, to approach the knowledge (that actually tore Christ to pieces upon the Cross) that sin tears us away from God, who is our life.

Only saints can really know what sin is, and suffer for it. But the condition of the salvation of men is that we realize what is our life and what is our death, and that God is our happiness and sin is our destruction. To know that sin is our destruction, it is necessary that we become aware of its destroying power, and know sin for what it really is. To reach a condition where we are able to receive such knowledge at all, is to become a saint. Sinners are, themselves, completely anaesthetized to sin: and that one thing, that inability to know what is wrong with us, is the greatest tragedy and danger sin brings with it.

Sinners are like people in anguish who have become used to some kind of a dope: so used to it,



that they would almost die if it were suddenly taken away. When they do come to themselves, for a moment, and realise how hopeless a state they are in, they can only think of one thing to do: take some more dope and forget about it. It is the same way with all kinds of sin: it deadens all sense of the desperate urgency of escaping into purity and kindness and truth.

If it is a bloodcurdling scandal, to sinners, to think of saints doing penance for their own sins, it drives them completely out of their minds when they are told that saints, like Christ, can also suffer for the sins of mankind as a whole.

That is not altogether surprising, because the good results of personal asceticism are quite evident in the lives of saints, who are wonderful and admirable people, and undeniably happy people, and unquestionably possess peace and joy: but the whole notion of vicarious suffering, whether of Christ or of His saints, is tied up with faith in the Mystical Body of Christ.

God Himself compares His Church to a vine: He is the vine, and we are the branches, and He is our life, and that the branches that bear no fruit are cut off and cast away, for the happiness of the whole vine. But also, those branches that do bear fruit are cut and pruned, and chastised, and suffer so that they bear even more fruit: and their fruitfulness is also for the happiness and joy not of themselves, but of the whole vine.

This vine is the Church, and not the whole Church bears fruit: but the saints, who are capable of knowing sin, and suffering for it, and growing stronger and stronger and more fruitful, because the more they are cut back, the more they are filled with God's life, (God is not only the vine but the vintner, and He knows the right place to stop pruning, so as to keep the vine at its most fruitful state, and not stunt her,) these saints with their suffering and fruitfulness in and by God contribute in a very necessary way to the happiness and salvation of the rest of us, whose only distinction is that we are not yet bad enough to be cut away for good and cast into the fire.

What is God's will? My joy. My joy is that, in Him, I bear very much fruit, that is, become a saint. And to become a saint, I must above all yield gladly and quietly to chastisements that are not hatred, not violence, not horrors, although they may seem so at a distance to my revolted senses. Whatever they seem at a distance to my five cowards, near at hand they become the vintner's love. And suffering these things, and bearing fruit, I am living in Christ and through Christ and for Christ and my life profits people I never heard of, and never saw, maybe people who are not yet born, and I will never see or recognize until they come to heaven, where it is God's will for us all to rest, if only we will, ourselves, for ever.