

**No Continuing City**  
(working title)

Words by Margaret Morgan

Text. St. Luke 9. 33

*et factum est cum discederent ab illo ait Petrus ad Iesum praeceptor bonum est nos  
hic esse et faciamus tria tabernacula unum tibi et unum Mosi et unum Heliae nesciens  
quid diceret*

And St. Peter, when he thus said  
He knew not what  
Was in the mount with Jesus  
Moses and Elias  
And saw their glory.

One cannot blame his crying out  
'It is good to be here'  
Words that would sound nothing amiss  
On our late being  
With Christ at the Holy Table.

It is good for us to be here  
In thy holy presence.  
Let us build tabernacles,  
Tarry here, nor go  
In affection to earth.

But somewhat was wrong in Peter's words  
As there is commonly  
In the most of our best words  
If God should enter  
Into judgment with them.

Our common judgments, expressions  
In contentment, happiness  
Extraordinary, spiritual or temporal  
Are we know not what,  
So branded by the Evangelist.

Begin we then to sift the saying

But this 'here' was in the mount,  
A place of solitude and retirement.  
Surely it is good to withdraw  
From the world and worldly business  
And think of heavenly things?

When we have tasted dainties  
May we not chew and relish them?  
Sit down a little and bethink ourselves  
Of the glory we lately bathed in  
Under the fringes of blazing light?

Oh how good, yea, joyful, a thing  
The presence of Jesus and Moses,  
Elias and another we understood not..  
Nothing drives away sad thoughts  
Like the presence of good company.

But did we hear what they spoke of  
Enveloped in shimmering cloud  
And the light that shone but overshadowed  
And the very voice of the father, until sound  
and sight merged in one great movement  
that overwhelmed our senses?

Surely we know the shining glistening garments,  
The encompassing of everlasting glory,  
The changing fashion of Christ's countenance,  
The heavenly rays that lit us from his eyes  
Lie over a chasm of sighs, sweating and bleeding  
And blows and mocking and death?

Surely we realise that mountain tops  
Are where the lightening strikes and thunder roars,  
Nearer the heart of danger than low valleys?  
Away from the fringes of the shining, with him  
We must go to the plains of action.  
The Transfiguration will not last for ever

No. The transfiguration will not always last  
Nor Christ's face shine like the sun upon us  
Here is no continuing city, no abiding stay.  
Christ will return to lower ground  
And have less splendid clothing.

Still. Let us pitch three tents.  
Let us build them here.  
Let us pitch them not  
'among the tents of Kedar'  
nor choose to dwell in 'Mesech'.  
Let us keep out of the streets  
Of Gath and Askelon.

And let them be but shelters  
Place not our minds and dwellings there.  
Make them but tents  
To lodge in for a night or stay in  
For a shift along the way.  
Have our abiding city somewhere else.

Or we know not what we do.

A chamber, bed and candlestick  
That the prophets who pass by  
May enter in and bless us.  
A sanctuary in our hearts  
Where zeal of God's glory may lodge.

Or we know not what we say.  
Know not what we ask.

But at heart we would make tabernacles here,  
Make them no higher than Thabor,  
Seek out our Heaven on earth  
As though we are here for ever.

For we know not what we need.

At heart we would shun the Cross.  
We would have nothing but comfort.  
All for Mount Thabor or Mount Olivet.  
Peace. Quiet. Nought for Mount Calvary.

Then we know not what we ask,  
We who would coop up Christ  
Who came to redeem the world,  
Not just a pittance on a hill,  
A few particular elected  
Mountaineers.

We are talking in our dreams.  
Build no such tabernacles in our brains,  
Raised on a mound of vain imaginings.  
We say, believe, advise  
We know not what.

Words proceed from fear of death.  
                    Words proceed from excess of delight.  
Squeeze from the very rapture of joy,  
                    Or scatter over conditions judgments  
On things we have no knowledge of..

All will be good unto us,  
All will work for good  
If we but temper our words  
And speak them soberly

And place them rightly  
And direct them every one  
To his *hic et nunc*,  
His proper circumstance.

Then Christ will tarry with us,  
Moses not forsake us,  
Elias not depart away  
Out of the mountain

And our clothes whiter  
Than any earthly fuller  
Can white them. We shall  
Forever shine bright as stars.