

**"Emily Dickinson and Eternity" / Judith Farr
St. Alban's Church / 24 March 2019**

**Some keep the Sabbath going to Church –
I keep it staying at Home –
With a Bobolink for a Chorister –
And an Orchard, for a Dome –**

**Some keep the Sabbath in Surplice –
I, just wear my Wings –
And instead of tolling the Bell, for Church,
Our little Sexton –sings.**

**God preaches, a noted Clergyman –
And the sermon is never long,
So instead of getting to Heaven, at last –
I'm going, all along.**

[F 236]

**"Heaven" has different Signs – to me –
Sometimes, I think that Noon
Is but a symbol of the Place –
And when again, at Dawn,**

**A mighty look runs round the World
And settles in the Hills –
An Awe if it should be like that
Upon the Ignorance steals –**

**The Orchard, when the Sun is on –
The triumph of the Birds
When they together Victory make –
Some Carnivals of Clouds –**

**The Rapture of a finished Day
Returning to the West –
All these – remind us of the place
That Men call "Paradise" –**

**Itself be fairer – we suppose –
But how Ourselves, shall be
Adorned, for a Superior Grace –
Not yet, our eyes can see –**

[F 544]

From a letter to T.W. Higginson in 1864:

The only News I know
Is Bulletins all day
From Immortality.

[J 290]

Behind Me - dips Eternity -
Before Me - Immortality -
Myself - the Term between -
Death but the drift of Eastern Gray,
Dissolving into Dawn away,
Before the West begin -

'Tis Kingdoms - afterward - they say -
In perfect - pauseless Monarchy -
Whose Prince - is Son of none -
Himself - His Dateless Dynasty -
Himself - Himself diversify -
In Duplicate divine -

'Tis Miracle before Me - then -
'Tis Miracle behind - between -
A Crescent in the Sea -
With Midnight to the North of Her -
And Midnight to the South of Her -
And Maelstrom - in the Sky -

[F 743]

Given in Marriage unto Thee
Oh thou Celestial Host -
Bride of the Father and the Son
Bride of the Holy Ghost -

Other Betrothal shall dissolve -
Wedlock of Will, decay -
Only the Keeper of this Ring
Conquer Mortality -

[F 818]

Because I could not stop for Death –
He kindly stopped for me –
The Carriage held but just Ourselves –
And Immortality.

We slowly drove – He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too,
For His Civility –

We passed the School, where Children strove
At Recess – in the Ring –
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –
We passed the Setting Sun –

Or rather – He passed us –
The Dews drew quivering and Chill –
For only Gossamer, my Gown –
My Tippet – only Tulle –

We paused before a House that seemed
A swelling of the Ground –
The roof was scarcely visible –
The Cornice – in the Ground –

Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses Heads
Were toward Eternity –

[F 479]

Quotations from Emily Dickinson's poetry are from The Poems of Emily Dickinson,
Edited by R.W. Franklin, Harvard University Press, 1998

Quotations from Emily Dickinson's letters are from The Letters of Emily Dickinson,
Edited by Thomas H. Johnson, Harvard University Press, 1958

Judith Farr on Emily Dickinson

BOOKS

The Passion of Emily Dickinson, Harvard University Press, 1992

The Gardens of Emily Dickinson, Harvard University Press, 2004

**I Never Came to You in White, A Novel About Emily Dickinson,
Houghton Mifflin Company, 1996 (Currently Argo Navis)**

ESSAYS

**“‘Compound Manner’: Emily Dickinson and the Metaphysical Poets”, in
On Dickinson: The Best from *American Literature* (pp. 52-68), Duke
University Press, 1990**

**“Dickinson and the Visual Arts,” in The Emily Dickinson Handbook (pp. 61-92),
University of Massachusetts Press, 1998**

**“Preface” to Emily Dickinson’s Herbarium, *A Facsimile Edition*, Harvard University
Press, 2006**

POEMS

**What Lies Beyond, Deerbrook Editions, 2019 (Contains a sequence of poems about
Emily Dickinson)**