

Those eternal bowers

Those eternal bowers, man hath never trod,
those unfading flowers round the throne of God:
who may hope to gain them after weary fight?
who at length attain them, clad in robes of white?

He who wakes from slumber at the Spirit's voice,
daring here to number things unseen his choice:
he who casts his burden down at Jesus' cross--
Christ' reproach his guerdon, all beside but loss.

He who gladly barterers all on earthly ground;
he who, like the martyrs, says "I will be crowned;"
he whose one oblation is a life of love,
knit in God's salvation to the blest above.

Shame upon you, legions of the heavenly King,
citizens of regions past imagining!
Why with pipe and tabor waste the hours of light,
when he bids you labor, when he tells you, "Fight"?

Jesus, Lord of glory, as we breast the tide,
whisper thou the story of the other side;
where the saints are casting crowns before thy feet,
safe for everlasting, in thyself complete.

Words: John of Damascus, eighth century;
trans. John Mason Neale, 1862
Music: St. Alban's, St. John Damascene, Cuddesdon
Meter: 65 65 D