

A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns, rendered in a dark brown color, framing the central text.

**Bickersteth
DeadSaints**

Rev. Edward Bickersteth

The Blessed Dead:

What does Scripture Reveal of Their State Before the Resurrection?

By E. H. Bickersteth

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Followed by

The Risen Saints:

What Does Scripture Reveal of Their Estate and Employments?

The sequel to ... The Blessed Dead

By E. H. Bickersteth

[Spelling, punctuation, and grammar selectively modernized. Bible citations converted to all Arabic numerals. Footnotes moved into places of citation.]

The following paper was one read before a private prophetic society a few months since. And as other friends, to whom it has been submitted, have expressed much interest in the line of Scripture investigation here pursued, I have been induced to lay these thoughts before a wider circle of readers, though deeply conscious what an imperfect sketch this paper presents of a most momentous subject. If other work permitted, I would gladly have filled up more at length the outline here roughly drawn; but, unable to redeem time for this at present, I yet venture to hope that this little essay may, with the Divine blessing, prove suggestive, especially to "those who mourn," of holy meditation on the communion of saints – a communion extending to the whole family in heaven and on earth, which bears the name of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ Church Parsonage, Hampstead, 17th October, 1862

I have taken advantage of a Second Edition of this little tract being called for to revise and rewrite certain paragraphs, though it still presents only a skeleton of truth which I must trust to others to fill up. But I cannot again send forth my humble messenger without earnestly reminding my readers that this essay only proposes to treat of the blessed dead, and that there is a solemn and awful reverse to these consolatory meditations. Nor can I lay down my pen without imploring anyone whose conscience bears witness that he has not been "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light," today while it is called today, to wash his robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb. They who die in the Lord are blessed, but only they.

E. H. B.

27th January, 1863.

The Blessed Dead

What does Scripture reveal of their state before the Resurrection?

This must needs be a question of the deepest interest, whether we think of those now sleeping in Jesus whom we have known and loved; or whether we remember the bereaved mourners whom we are so often called to comfort with assurances gathered from the Word of God; or whether we consider that if Christ does not return in our lifetime, then the Paradise of the blessed dead is the *next* stage before ourselves: and that which is *near and next* ever has such great influence.

What, then says the Scripture regarding the intermediate state of departed saints, who are absent from the body and present with the Lord? Here, eminently, it becomes us to tread with humility, to take no partial views of truth, not to seek to be wise above what is written, but reverently to gather up every scattered ray of Divine Revelation.

The period to which our consideration is invited is bounded on the one hand by the hour of the death of each saint, and on the other by the day of Christ's return, their One Lord. I do not enter on the details of that day: its morning, as I believe, ushered by the sunrise of the returning Saviour, and by the resurrection of the just; its millennial course of prevalent blessedness on earth; its solemn evening of universal judgment: all this lies beyond the limit of the interval in question. Our subject is the state and condition of disembodied saints.

I. It is a state of imperfection.

St. Paul declares this expressly: "These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect," Heb. 11:39–40. And again in his emphatic words: "Not for that we would be unclothed," 2 Cor. 5:4. The body is here spoken of as the clothing of the spirit, and the unclothed (disembodied) state is not, the Apostle says, the consummation of our hopes. These are important as New Testament recognitions of truths so frequently and forcibly stated in the Old Testament: truths which at first sight have a very dark and depressing aspect. Let me instance: –

Psalm 6:5: "In death there is no remembrance of Thee: in the grave ("in Hades," *Sept.*) who shall give Thee thanks?"

Psalm 30:9: "What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise Thee? shall it declare Thy truth?"

Psalm 88:11: "Shall Thy loving kindness be declared in the grave? or Thy faithfulness in destruction?"

Eccles. 9:10: "There is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

Isa. 38:18: "The grave cannot praise Thee, death cannot celebrate Thee: they that go down into the pit cannot hope for Thy truth."

We must not ignore these and such like scriptures, or they will recur in the hours of bereavement and desolation, and disquiet us most when we most need tranquility, and assurance, and comfort. How, then are we to understand them in connection with other scriptures, which certify us of the conscious blessedness of departed saints?

It is true that it was reserved for the Incarnate Saviour to rend away the veil spread over all nations, and to swallow up death in victory (Isa. 25:7–8): it is true that you find no laments, betokening *such* gloom, in the New testament; but yet I think every honest student must admit that these words expressed the real mind of the writers, – writers who wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost; and, therefore, that this aspect of the state of the dead was no error whereby they were deceived, but *one* view of a great and solemn truth.

This mortal body of ours, so fearfully and wonderfully made, belongs to God. He formed it for his praise. So David sings, "Awake up, my glory" i.e., "my tongue" Psalm 57:8. So St. Paul urges us to "present our *bodies* a living sacrifice," Rom. 12:1; and exhorts us, in one breath, "Glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" 1 Cor. 6:20. Now this body and spirit "God hath joined together." Their union is the result of the counsel of his love, Gen. 1:26. Their separation one from the other is the result of man's sin, Gen. 3:19; when "the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God, who gave it," Eccles. 12:7. This is the reign of death in its earthly aspect, Rom. 5:14; the ghastly triumph of the king of terrors.

And in all these lamentations over the grave and those who go down to it, the eye of the Old Testament saint seems to have been fixed, either upon the body, which turned to dust; as, for example, Psalm 30:9, quoted above, "Shall the dust praise Thee?" in which view the expressions have their full weight; or else upon the powerlessness of the immortal spirit to reanimate its own natural tenement, and to make its own familiar organ

vocal; of, finally, on this earth as the allotted theater of man's service and worship. When death came, there was the end of saintly praise, so far as the Church militant was concerned. When David gave up the ghost, his harp might be touched by others, but not again by the sweet psalmist of Israel: for the "grave would not praise God, nor death celebrate Him." This was that vanity of vanities which weighed so heavily on the mind of the preacher, whose cry, "vanity of vanities – all is vanity" (Eccles. 1:2), seems pointedly alluded to by St. Paul, Rom. 8:20: "The creation was made subject to vanity."

The disembodied spirit is in a state of imperfection, an abnormal state a state in itself bearing witness to the triumph of sin and death; and the sacred writers seemed to have been moved by the Spirit to bring strongly before us the execution of the sentence which passed on Adam when he fell, "*Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return,*" to humble our pride, and to prove our faith.

But now having freely and fully admitted that their state is one of imperfection and incompleteness, let us see its excellency and blessedness, *notwithstanding* this imperfection, is in part revealed to the Old Testament saints, and much more clearly to ourselves.

II. It is a state of rest.

Thus Job says: "Why died I not from the womb?: ... "For now should I have lain still and been quiet, I should have slept. ... There the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary are at rest." Job 3:11–19.

And the spirit of Samuel asks, "Why hast thou disquieted me to bring me up?" 1 Sam. 28:15.

And Isaiah writes, "The righteous is taken away from the evil to come. He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds": [to which is immediately added, as if to negative the suspicion of mindless repose] "each one walking in his uprightness." Isa. 57:1–2.

This seems the prominent thought in the word "*sleep,*" which is so frequently used of death, relating perhaps first to the body, which is laid in the grave as in a bed, but also, when used of the saints, to the calm rest of the spirit when the day's work is over.

To this the following passages bear abundant witness:–

Dan. 12:2: “Many of *them that sleep* in the dust of the earth shall awake, some in everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.

John 11:11: “Our friend Lazarus *sleepeth*.” Observe, still *our friend* though asleep.

Acts 7:60: “And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”

1 Thess. 4:14: “Them that sleep in Jesus (τους κοιμηθέντας δια του Ιησου [Observe, the *διά* here, not *εν*, Jesus the efficient *cause* of their rest.]) will God bring with him.”

Rev. 14:13: “They rest from their labours.”

Oh, sweet and blessed rest!, rest from physical toil, rest from mental weariness, rest from pain and from the shadows of death, rest from dim and indistinct views of truth, rest from the consciousness of leaving so much undone, rest from grieving the Spirit, rest from anxiety over the souls of others, rest from conflict with the powers of darkness.

When we are made to feel “all things are full of labour, man cannot utter it,” Eccles. 1:8; how much this one word *rest* tells us of the blessed dead.

III. It is a state of consciously living to God.

Thus Genesis 26:24: “I am the God of Abraham thy father”; when Abraham was dead: and Genesis 28:13, “I am the Lord God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac”; the same declaration respecting both, though then Abraham was dead and Isaac was alive. And then Exodus 3:6: “I am the god of thy father” (does this refer to Amram distinctively, who we know from Heb. 11:23, was a man of faith?) “the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob,” which our Lord, in proving the resurrection of the dead, expounds thus: – “He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live unto Him.” Compare Rom. 7:11, where “live unto God” is spoken of spiritual life.

This seems conclusive that it is no state of unconscious slumber, as some have supposed; not the rest of a stone; but conscious, intelligent life, capable of fellowship with and fruition of God.

To this we may add the interesting and important testimony of St. Peter, that our Lord “*having been put to death in his (human) flesh, but quickened in spirit* (i.e., in his disembodied human spirit), *went and*

preached even to the spirits in prison,” 1 Peter 3:18–19. Whence we learn that when Jesus Christ died upon the Cross, his human spirit being separated from his human flesh, acquired new life, gained new powers of motion, and travelled (επορεύθη) on a blessed mission to the region of departed spirits. See Wordsworth’s cautious and reverent exposition of this difficult passage – an exposition entirely in harmony with the 3rd Article of the Church of England, as first published, viz., “That the body of Christ lay in the grave till his resurrection, but his spirit which He gave up was with the spirits which are detained in prison, or in hell, and preached to them, as the place in St. Peter testifieth.” These words were afterwards omitted, but our Church sufficiently indicates her interpretation of this Scripture by appointing it to be read as the epistle on Easter even. As, therefore, Christ’s human spirit was not in any way impaired by death, but was quickened therein, we may assuredly gather that our spirit shall suffer no loss, but acquire new life, when it shall have been delivered from the burden of the flesh.

IV. It is a state of being with Christ.

Not only in general terms of conscious life to-God-ward, but of personal intercourse with Him, who reveals the Father, and is the brightness of his glory.

This dominion over *the dead* as well as over the quick was included in the great design of Christ’s redeeming work: for “to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that He might be the Lord both of the dead and living,” Rom. 14:9.

So He said to the dying thief, “Today thou shalt be with me in paradise.” Luke 23:43.

So, Phil. 1:23: “To depart, and to be with Christ, is far better.”

So, 2 Cor. 5:8: “Absent from the body, present with the Lord”; *present like a citizen at home in his own country*, and not a coexistence only in the same locality. But the next verse is most suggestive: “Wherefore we labour” (φιλοτιμούμεθα, are ambitious,” “love the honour”), “whether present or absent, to be accepted of Him” or “well-pleasing to Him”; which proves that in the disembodied state the saints in the immediate presence of Jesus covet and enjoy the honour of His complacent approval. There they see Him whom unseen they loved.

V. It is a state of paradisiacal bliss.

For the Lord said to the thief upon the cross, not only “today thou shalt be with me,” but “with me in paradise.” Paradise, then, is one division of Hades – the abode of blessed in contrast to that of lost souls.

Thus the words of Samuel to Saul, “Tomorrow shalt thou and thy sons be with me,” 1 Sam. 28:19, when we remember that this included godly Jonathan, suggest that there is *one* comprehensive receptacle of the dead; one, though sundered by a great gulph into two divisions – the respective habitations of woe and of felicity. This is confirmed by the rich man seeing Lazarus afar off in Abraham’s bosom; the whole scene is represented as taking place “in Hades”. Compare also the word of the Psalmist, as quoted Acts 2:27, “Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell” (εις ἄδου), i.e., in Hades.

It is asked where paradise is? We can only answer in the words of the patriarch, “hell (Hades, *Sept.*) is naked before Him, and destruction hath no covering,” Job 26:6. Compare Psalm 139:8, and Prov. 15:11. Hades signifies “the unseen world”; and its limits and locality are among the secret things which belong to the Lord our God.

Some Scriptures seem to point us *upwards*, as Eccles. 3:21, “The spirit of man goeth upward.” And consult Acts 7:55–60. To these many would add, 2 Cor. 12:4, “Caught up into Paradise”; but we cannot argue from this expression that St. Paul’s rapture was to the Hades of blessed souls; for, as here used by him, it seems to be equivalent (see verse 2) with being “caught up to the third heaven: (έως τρίτου ουρανού); and the third heaven is a Jewish phrase for the heaven of heavens, the scene of the immediate manifestation of the Divine glory.

Many more Scriptures, on the other hand, seem to point to Hades as a region *below*. The dying are frequently spoken of as “going *down* to the pit,” or “going *down* into silence,” etc.; so we read “David is not ascended into the heavens” Acts 2:34. And our Lord says of Himself, “The Son of Man shall be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth,” Matt. 12:40. And the apostle writes of Him, “He descended first into the lower parts of the earth,” Eph. 4:9. So that, perhaps, our conceptions of *up* and *down*, height and depth, ascent and descent, are here altogether at fault: and with respect to the *locality* of Hades, “the thing is hidden from us.” But seeing that paradise is the word used by the Septuagint for “the garden” of Eden or

Delight, that it was currently employed by the Jews to designate the place of peace and joy in which the faithful dead awaited their joyful resurrection, and that our Lord (Luke 23:43) solemnly sanctions such usage, we may confidently conclude that this name of their home implies purity and gladness, and that those who dwell therein must enjoy a freedom from every sorrow, and a rich profusion of supply for every want.

I do not adduce Rev. 2:7, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God," as it is doubtful whether any of the promises to the seven churches refer to the intermediate state, and not rather to the future and final glory of the saints.

VI. It is a state of mutual recognition; and moreover of holy fellowship, both of saints with saints and of saints with angels.

It might seem almost superfluous to demand Scripture proofs of so self-evident a truth as the mutual recognition of saints in another world, if it were not strangely questioned by some in our own day. Man is conscious of his own existence, of his standing before God, his Creator, and of his relationship to his fellow men. In this threefold consciousness consists his life. You cannot separate one from the other. If, after death, I do not know myself as the same being I was before, it is not "I" who continue to life: if I do not recognize my unbroken relationship to God, all moral and spiritual connection of this world with the next is at the end: and so, if I do not know again those whom I have known on earth, my identity and individuality are lost. If I know myself there, I must know God, who made me; and if I know myself and my Maker, I must know my fellow saints in the heavenly household. We should as soon expect to find an elaborate proof of this most certain truth in Scripture, as of our own identity being preserved. But the following passages, in which the recognition of saints is taken for granted, may serve to dispel any clouds that may obscure the prospects of some believers. In this limited enquiry regarding the blessed dead *before the resurrection*, I am not at liberty to adduce those scriptures which tell of their mutual joy in each other's society, when clothed in their incorruptible bodies, such as Matt. 25:40; 1 Thess. 2:19, 4:13–18; 2 Thess. 2:1, etc., etc., but without these enough remain to tell that the hopes of dying saints without number, that they are immediately about to rejoin those who have fallen asleep before them, are no baseless dreams.

The frequent expression, “gathered to his fathers,” as of Abraham (Genesis 25:8), is surely suggestive. When man went to his “long home” (Eccles. 12:5), he went to the great trysting place of his fathers.

1 Sam 28:14, establishes the fact that the *spirit* of one who is dead is recognizable; for “Saul perceived that it was Samuel.” Samuel’s body was lying “buried in his house at Ramah” (1 Sam. 25:1), but his bodiless spirit was by God’s permission seen and conversed with by Saul. *How* the lineaments of an immortal spirit were made visible, and his tones audible to a mortal man, we know not; but the plain historic statement surely does not admit of doubt.

Isa. 14:12–19, sets forth the descent of the King of Babylon to Hades. The spirits below “narrowly look upon him and consider him,” and ask tauntingly, “Is this the man that made the earth to tremble?” Hence, by parity of reasoning, by every analogy, the blessed dead will also be recognized and welcomed, as one by one they join the circle which is being gathered in Paradise.

So David solaces himself respecting the infant he has lost – “I shall go to him” (2 Sam. 12:33).

In the transfiguration, Moses (disembodied) and Elijah (embodied) were evidently known by each other, and by the disciples. We may suppose the Lord introduced the Old Testament saints to his apostles, or Peter, James, and John may have heard Him addressing Moses and Elijah by their names; but however this may have been, when once they were revealed, there was no difficulty of recognition, no confusion. The favored disciples heard the subject of the elder saints’ conversation with the Lord, and Peter expressed the blessedness they all felt. Observe also that both Moses and Elijah are said to have “appeared in Glory” (Luke 9:31). This justifies the use of the word “glory,” as applied to their state who now sleep in Jesus.

Luke 16:22: In this story of the rich man and Lazarus (and the name of the beggar being given, as in any other authentic narrative, seems to indicate that it is rather history than parable), the spirit of Lazarus is “carried by the angels” (υπο των αγγέλων – are we to understand *the* angels who had been ministering spirits?) into Abraham’s bosom. The father of the faithful is represented as knowing him and comforting him. Dives knows both the patriarch and the beggar. Their past life on earth is vividly present to all.

Heb. 12:22–24: with all its great difficulties of interpretation, surely certifies us that there is a high and holy communion which we by faith anticipate, betwixt “the myriads of angels, the church of the firstborn, and the spirits of just men made perfect.”

Rev. 4 and 5 crown the witness of Scripture to the united adoration of saints and angels, as now gathered in the presence of Him that sitteth upon the throne and of the Lamb. All the distinctive features of that glorious scene point to its being a revelation of that which is now taking place in heaven, and not of the eternal ages after the resurrection.

VII. It is a state of victory and assurance of reward.

The expression just quote, “the spirits of just men made perfect” (τετελειωμένων), seems at first sight to preclude any imperfection; but the image is taken from the athletes who, having won the crown in the Isthmian games, stood ready to receive it; just as among ourselves a Victory Cross may have been bravely won, and the award gazetted, and yet the cross itself not have been received by the soldier from his sovereign’s hands: *that* awaits his presentation on some great field day. So here, in that the just had run their race and won their prize, they were made perfect (τετελειωμένοι); Cf. 2 Tim. 4:7 – “I have finished (τετέλεκα) my course”: – in that they had not received it, they without us were not yet perfect; and so St. Paul immediately adds of himself, as being yet an uncrowned victor, “Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness.”

Again, we read, “Their works do follow them,” Rev. 14:13. There is some ambiguity in the expression in English, whether it may not refer to the effects on earth, after their death, of their labours of love. These effects no doubt surpass all human calculation. Shakespeare was wrong when he said:–

“The evil that men do lives after them;
The good is oft interred with their bones.”

No man liveth and no man dieth to himself. Every work of love is like the fruit tree whose seed is in itself after its kind. This, however, is not the fact revealed here. There is no doubtfulness in the Greek. “Their works do follow along with them” (ακολουθει μετ’ αυτων), when they die in the Lord. Nothing else passes the gates of the grave; his pomp shall not follow the man of pride, nor his wealth the man of riches; but of toil, time, talents

devoted to Christ, none of these things are lost. The memory is ever fragrant, the influence is ever powerful, and the reward commences when the soul enters Paradise.

VIII. Lastly, I would say, it is a state of earnest, though not irksome, of patient, though not painful, expectancy.

Thus, Job 14:12–15: “All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change.”

And possibly Isa. 25:9 includes the welcome of the blessed dead as part of the Church who shall cry, “Lo! This is our God, we have waited for him.”

And so in Rom. 8:23–25, if we eliminate the thoughts of the *suffering*, but retain that of the *longing*, we may reasonably apply the passage to the departed saints as part of the whole creation.

Nor can we forget the apostle’s glowing words, after his noble enumeration of the faithful in Hebrews 11. “Therefore, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us run with patience the race set before us,” etc., Heb. 12:1. It is a living picture drawn from the throngs of spectators at the Corinthian games, or in the Roman circus. We must not, indeed so press the metaphor as to attempt to prove from it that departed saints actually see our struggles here; but this, at least, we learn that they are intensely eager for the success of the Church militant here on earth, as having themselves fought the good fight of faith, and now waiting for the last trump, and the final shout of victory.

And so yet more distinctly, Rev. 6:10: “The souls under the altar cry, ‘How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?’ White robes were given them, and it was said unto them that they should wait yet for a little season, until their fellow servants and their brethren should be fulfilled.” This indicates a knowledge in the blessed dead, probably derived from Christ, and from those who are continually joining their society (do many hours now pass without some saint leaving us and going home?), a knowledge of things transpiring on earth, and an earnest longing for the second Advent.

There need be no sorrow in this yearning: but thus they share more fully the mind of Christ, who is Himself expecting till his foes be made his

footstool. A lofty and even nearer hope must animate every heart: the time is short, and the perfected glory certain.

On the whole, when we combine these various elements of their present happiness, and reflect that theirs is –

A state of rest;

A state of consciously living to God;

A state of being with Christ;

A state of Paradisaical bliss;

A state of mutual recognition and of holy fellowship;

A state of victory and of assurance of reward;

A state of earnest expectation;

how abundantly is the Apostle's declaration proved, "To depart and be with Christ is *far better*," Phil. 1:23. How reasonable appears his willingness: "We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord," 2 Cor. 5:8. And how heart gladdening is the voice which the beloved John heard from heaven, "Blessed are the dead which die ["The dead which die" – οι νεκροι οι αποθνήσκοντες – the νεκροι shows that it is not the *dying* believer, but the believer after death that is intended; the αποθνήσκοντες shows that it refers to the present dispensation, when believers *are dying* in the Lord, and falling asleep one by one.] in the Lord from henceforth. Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them," Rev. 14:13.

While we grant, therefore that the state of the blessed dead is imperfect – imperfect personally while their bodies are here in the grave; imperfect socially, while so many of their brethren are yet fighting their way here on earth; yet, seeing that they enjoy rest from every labour and every grief; that theirs is a spiritual life to God-ward of far higher intelligence than is possible here below; that they are with Jesus, whom to see was their most ardent desire in their most holy moments when in the flesh; that they repose in a paradise of delight and of peace; that they know each of the other whom they have known before, and are introduced to elder saints, and have won the prize and are assured of the reward; and that they are expecting the near accomplishment of all the counsel of God in the marriage supper of the Lamb, we enter more deeply than ever into David's words, "O, that I had wings like a dove, for then I would I fly away, and be at rest."

Till He Come
1 Cor. 11:26

“Till He Come” – Oh! let the words
Linger on the trembling chords;
Let the little while between
In their golden light be seen;
Let us think how heaven and home
Lie beyond that “Till He come.”

When the weary ones we love
Enter on their rest above,
Seems the earth so poor and vast,
All our life-joy overcast?
Hush, be every murmur dumb:
It is only – till He come.

Clouds and conflicts round us press:
Would we have one sorrow less?
All the sharpness of the cross,
All that tells the world is loss,
Death, and darkness, and the tomb,
Only whisper, “Till He come.”

See the feast of love is spread,
Drink the wine and break the bread: –
Sweet memorials, – till the Lord
Call us round this heavenly board:
Some from earth, from glory some,
Severed only – till He come.

E. H. B
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The Risen Saints:

What Does Scripture Reveal of Their Estate and Employments?
The sequel to ... The Blessed Dead

By E. H. Bickersteth

Some time since I ventured to publish some thoughts on the testimony of Scripture with regard to the blessed dead before the resurrection. The question now suggested to the reader is designed to be a sequel that investigation. It embraces the estate and employments of the saints, whether during the millennium or in the eternal ages beyond; for, as the word of prophecy certifies us that holy Sabbath can only be introduced by the Personal Advent of the Lord, by the resurrection of those who sleep in Him, by the translation of those who are alive, and remain unto his coming, and by their eternal reunion in his presence.

The present is in more than one respect an easier inquiry than that regarding the disembodied state. In the first place, the testimony of Scripture is here far more copious. And then there are but few of the exceeding great and precious promises, describing the felicity of the blessed dead as they are now, which do not also embrace in their magnificent fullness the joys of the people of God, as they will be forever. Thus, for example, with regard to the intermediate state, we read, "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord; they rest from their labours, and their works do follow along with them" (Rev. 14:13); they "live to God" (Luke 20:38); they "depart and are with Christ, which is far better" (Phil. 1:23). But we cannot doubt that when this corruptible has put on incorruption, then in a more eminent degree will the people of God enjoy the Sabbath rest which remaineth for them, and reap the reward of their labours, and have the fruition of eternal life, and enter into the joy of their Lord. We may possibly be wrong in assigning some promises of felicity to the present condition of the blessed dead; we can hardly err in ascribing all or most of them in the fullness of their meaning to that of the risen saints.

There are some who would foreclose any further investigation by saying, "We are assured that 'when we wake after his likeness, we shall be satisfied'; why need we ask any more? is not this enough?" I answer, no: it is not enough; if more is revealed. For *all* Holy Scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect (2 Tim. 3:16–17). And again when it is urged, "Eye hath not seen, for ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared from them who love

Him,” they who bring forward this Scripture to condemn all attempts to search into the things to come, seem to forget that the apostle continues, “But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit” (1 Cor. 2:9–10). If we only cleave to God’s *word written*, in humble dependence upon the teaching of the Holy Spirit, we shall not go far astray. We may perhaps, in our shortsightedness, or in the feebleness of our faith, interpret as spiritual what is literal, or as literal what is spiritual. But God’s word, unlike the baseless theories of human invention, will never lead us to idle dissipation of thought. It cannot err; it must stand forever. The quickly coming futurity will soon more than vindicate every hope we have conceived from inspired prophecy; for, if we might venture to substitute *Scripturae* for *naturae*, in the well-known words of Cicero, *Opinionum commenta dies delet, Scripturae judicia confirmat*.

The witness of the Old Testament Scriptures, though the light is feeble compared with that of the New, is yet amply sufficient to refute those “who feign that the old Fathers did look only for transitory promises.” The tree of life was planted in Eden from the beginning; and though it is true man was soon driven from its precincts, its very name would be a symbol of immortality to the primeval saints. We cannot suppose that the reason assigned for man’s expulsion from Paradise, “lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat and live forever” (Gen. 3:22), was kept secret till the writing of the Pentateuch by Moses. The possibility of living forever, or, in other words, of eternal life, would therefore be enwoven in their minds with the promise of the Seed of the woman bruising the head of the serpent.

Then Enoch’s translation without death must have awakened deep searchings of heart in the antediluvian world. We read that he was not found, which implies that most probably search was made for him as for Elijah; and the baffled inquirers must have tracked with inquisitive thoughts the flight heavenward of that translated saint.

And when the fathers of the Jewish church were called of God to walk the life of faith, we are assured by the inspired apostle that they confessed they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth, that they were mindful of a heavenly fatherland, and that they looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God (Heb. 11:10–16). What testimony to this is

the holy utterance of Jacob when dying, “I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord” (Gen. 49:18).

One little glimpse in the autobiography of Moses reveals volumes – I mean when, in the intensity of patriotic love, he prayed, “If not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written” (Exod. 32:32). This, then, his name written in the book of life – for in that hour of holy and intense enthusiasm he seems to ransack the treasuries of his being, and to select that which was choicest and costliest, that, like Paul, in after ages he may lay it down as a votive offering for his people’s sake – this was “the recompense of reward unto which Moses had respect” (Heb. 11:26).

So the faith of the patriarch Job shines forth as a star in that early firmament, who contemplating the ravages of death, confesses, “So man lieth down, and riseth not; till the heavens be no more, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep. O that thou wouldest hide me in the grave, that thou wouldest keep me secret, until thy wrath be past, that thou wouldest appoint me a set time, and remember me! If a man die, shall he live again? all the days of my appointed time will I wait, till my change come. Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee; thou shalt have a desire to the work of thy hands.” And yet more triumphantly in the well-known words, “I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth; and though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God; whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me” (Job 14:12–15; and 19:25–27).

But it was reserved for the sweet Psalmists of Israel to sing most fully of those hopes which lie beyond the grave. The very first Psalm strikes a chord which is struck over and over again in that wonderful collection of the songs of the pilgrim church – I mean the abiding of the righteous in contrast with the perishing of the wicked, for surely “the judgment” spoken of at least looks on to the great day of decision, and “the congregation of the righteous: to the general assembly of those whose names are written in heaven (Psa. 1:3–6).

Then the glowing words of the 16th Psalm, “My flesh also shall rest in hope, for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; and at thy right hand there are pleasures for

evermore” (Psa. 16:9–11) – these words, though we know from an inspired interpreter that they find their plenary accomplishment only in the Lord Jesus, yet were uttered by David as foreseeing the resurrection of the promised Christ (Acts 2:25–31), of the Christ – not of one separable from those He came to save, but indissolubly bound with them, the wave-sheaf which was the firstfruits of the mighty harvest. Then in the next Psalm how vivid is the contrast betwixt “men of the world, who have their portion in this life,” and the persecuted saint who solaces himself, saying, “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness” (Psa. 17:14–15). Nor shall we, I imagine, consent to limit the august expressions of Psalm 21:4, “He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days, forever and ever,” to the threescore years and ten of our earthly span.

In the same spirit the Psalmist writes of a fearless passage through the valley of the shadow of death, leading on at last to the dwelling in the house of the Lord forever (Psa. 23:4, 6). And what shall we say to the burst of adoring expectation, “Oh, how great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men” (Psa. 31:19); and to the glowing promises, “They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures; for with thee is the fountain of life: and in thy light shall we see light” (Psa. 36:8–9)? Were not the riches reserved in heaven, and the many mansions of the Father’s house, and the crystal river of life, and the future beatific vision, in the inspired Psalmist’s eye?

The solemn exordium of the 49th Psalm prepares for its dealing with the lights and shadows of eternity. And so it proves; for, while bemoaning the triumph of death over the ungodly, the sacred writer declares, “But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave; for He shall receive me” (Psa. 49:15). And the next Psalm goes far beyond this, for it distinctly speaks of the advent of God with all the ensigns of majesty, of the rapture of the saints, and of their great gathering before the judgment seat (Psa. 50:5–6). In the 73rd Psalm the reception of the saint to glory hereafter, when once realized, redresses the apparent inequalities of Divine Providence here, and sustains him, although flesh and heart are failing, with the certainty of an enduring and eternal portion in his God (Psa. 73:19–26).

St. Paul has taught us that the closing words of the 95th Psalm look on to that Sabbath rest which remaineth for the people of God (Heb. 3:7 to 4:9). And the 102nd and 103rd Psalms declare, in contrast with the crumbling earth and the dissolving heavens, the abiding perpetuity of the children's children of the righteous (Psa. 102 25–28, and 103:15–17). The 110th Psalm proclaims the everlasting priesthood of Messiah, and thus by necessary inference their service among whom He will exercise his sacerdotal office. The 112th Psalm reveals the incorruptible character of works of love. The 145th Psalm foretells the proclamation by the saints of the mighty acts of the Lord, and of the glory of his everlasting kingdom to a regenerate world. And the five closing Psalms lead our thoughts onward to the time when the heavens and earth shall resound with ceaseless Hallelujahs.

Let us review for one moment what these scattered notices affirm regarding the saints hereafter: (1) their abiding perpetuity; (2) their resurrection as certified by the resurrection of Messiah their Head; (3) their awaking satisfied with the likeness of their God; (4) their fruition of length of days forever and over; (5) their eternal dwelling in the house of the Lord; (6) their inheriting the goodness laid up for them, and drinking of the river of Divine pleasure, forth flowing from the Fountain of life; (7) their redemption from the grave, and gathering together before God; (8) their presentation in glory; (9) their entrance into a Sabbatic rest; (10) their enjoyment of God's mercy, which from everlasting has chosen them, and will to everlasting embrace them; (11) their service under One who abides a Priest continually; (12) their possession of an incorruptible righteousness; (13) their proclamation to the sons of men of the marvels of redemption; and (14) their share in the songs of Hallelujah, which shall fill the universe with praise. If we gather these separate rays of truth together, how powerful are the concentrated light and heat.

Upon the consenting witness of the other books of the Old Testament I must only briefly touch. The royal Preacher while laying bare the vanities of life, no less than four times anchors his faith on the certainty of the judgment to come (Eccles. 3:17, 5:8, 11:9, 12:14). Isaiah, true to his Jewish mission, dwells especially on the coming felicity of his own people, and on the glory of the millennial Sabbath; but yet he evidently foresees in the regeneration of Israel a pledge of the restitution of all things, and in that

blessed millennium an earnest of a sinless eternity; for who shall venture to dim the luster of his prophecy, “The Lord God shall swallow up death in victory,” or to narrow the meaning of his twice repeated proclamation, “The redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away”? (Isa. 25:8, 35:10, and 51:11).

It is to the same Sabbath Jeremiah refers, when he says of the people of God, “Their soul shall be as a watered garden, and they shall not sorrow anymore at all” (Jer. 31:12).

Ezekiel describes the ritual which will be observed on Mount Zion, and the coming of the God of Israel to his temple, “his voice being like the voice of many waters, and the earth shining with his glory” (Ezek. 43:2).

Daniel reveals the awful judgment of the last day, the resurrection of the just, and of the unjust, the possession by the saints of an everlasting kingdom on earth, and their undecaying glory as stars in the firmament of heaven (Dan. 7:9–18, and 12:2–3).

Hosea exultingly foretells the abolition of death and the grave (Hos. 13:14); Zephaniah, the Lord’s resting in his love over Zion (Zeph. 3:17); Zechariah, the advent of Messiah to Olivet with all his saints accompanying Him (Zech. 14:4–6), and the canon of the Old Testament, with almost its latest utterance, closes with the double promise, “They shall be mine, saith the Lord, in the day when I make up my jewels”; and again, “To you that fear my name shall the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his wings” (Mal. 3:17 and 4:2).

Thus, when we appeal to the elder Scriptures alone, the hope of good things to come is built on no bleak and barren fore-announcement of the absence of sorrow, and the fruition of endless life, but is brightened and warmed with the sunlight of distinct and definite promises.

But the evidence of the New Testament is far too abundant and copious to be thus referred to in consecutive order. In looking through it with this object in view, I marked down between two and three hundred verses directly bearing on the state and employments of the risen saints. That is, one verse in thirty at least of the New Testament points us onward to the resurrection life. I must not attempt to adduce all at length, but I have grouped some portion of this abundant testimony under the following heads, – the only difficulty being this, the characteristics of the good things

to come are so intimately and harmoniously blended, that, like the tints of the rainbow, it is sometimes difficult to know where one ends and another begins:—

I. But first I would say, the state of the risen saints is one of personal perfection, a perfection both of body and spirit.

St. Paul prays for his Thessalonian converts, that “their whole spirit, and soul, and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:23) – a prayer which in itself implies undecaying integrity afterwards. And so we are assured it will be. “He shall change the body of our humiliation, that it may be fashioned like unto the body of his glory, according to the working whereby He is able to subdue all things to Himself” (Phil. 3:21). Would we know then what our glorified body will be like, we must carefully gather up all the intimations of Holy Scripture regarding the body of our Lord after his resurrection, that body in which He appeared to his disciples during the forty days, in which He ascended from Olivet, in which He revealed Himself to St. John in Patmos, and in which He will return to judge the quick and the dead. [A strange theory has been held by some in modern times that the body in which our Lord appeared to his disciples during the Forty Days was still the body of his humiliation, and that this was not transformed into the body of his glory until the ascension. But this is grievously to obscure the central fact of his victory over death and hell. The stupendous conflict raged around his cross and sepulcher, not around Oliver. Though death He destroyed him that had the power of death, that is, the devil (Heb. 2:14). His body, which was sown in weakness and dishonour, was raised in power and in glory. He arose an High Priest forever after the power of an indissoluble life (ζωης ακαταλύτου, Heb. 7:16). Death had no more dominion over Him. It is quite true that the plenary effulgence of his glory was of necessity veiled during these Forty Days, or the disciples when He appeared would have been awestruck and astonished as St. John in Patmos, and in this respect the ascension was a further state in our Lord’s glorification (cf. Ephes. 1:20). But the resurrection was the crisis. Before He rose, his body was the body of his humiliation. After He rose, without any interval or intermission, it was the body of his glory.] That body was visible or invisible at his will. It was not corruptible flesh and blood, which St. Paul assures us cannot inherit the kingdom of God (1 Cor. 15:50); but it was veritable flesh and bones, the same flesh and bones, though now immortal and incorruptible, which had been nailed to the cross, for our Lord said to his affrighted apostles, “Behold my hands and my feet, that it is I myself; handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have: (Luke 24:39).

The corn of wheat had fallen into the ground and died, and had risen again (John 12:24). Through a spiritual body, it was capable of receiving material food, for our Lord took of the broiled fish and honeycomb, and ate before them (Luke 24:43). Though tangible, and therefore solid, it was not bound to our solid globe, for therein He ascended till a cloud received Him out of their sight (Acts 1:9), yea, therein He took his seat at the right hand of the Father, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion (Ephes. 1:20–21).

When He appeared to St. John in vision, we have a minute description of his glory, (Rev. 1:13–16), and it is to me, I confess, a subject of wonder that we do not more often and habitually study that divine portrait of Him whom our soul loveth. Now when He shall appear, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is (1 John 3:2). The same Omnipotence which transformed his body will transform ours; for “He who raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken our mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in us” (Rom. 8:11). We shall be planted together (σύμφυτοι or “become united”) with Him in the likeness of his resurrection (Rom. 6:5). Our mortal body likewise is the seed, our immortal the plant that grows out of that seed, transformed, and yet its identity not lost, renewed and yet recognizable raised in incorruption, glory, and power, and yet the same as that which was sown in corruption, dishonour, and weakness (1 Cor. 15:42–43).

There are other helpful illustrations in nature which are often appealed to, such as the apparent death of winter followed by the life of spring, the chrysalis and the winged moth, etc.; but this divinely chosen analogy of the seed and the plant is to me of all the most suggestive regarding our spiritual body, as it shall be hereafter. For, take the bulb of a hyacinth, or of any other flower, submit it to a naturalist, and he will tell you by aid of the microscope what the perfected flower will be; yet who that did not know the mysteries of vegetation could believe that from that dull and dismal bulb would spring that gorgeous flower enveloped in its sheltering leaves? Yet such shall be our body then, compared with our body now; that building of God, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, compared with the earthly house of this tabernacle, which is awaiting its dissolution (2 Cor. 5:1). Did the risen Lord say of Himself, I am the bright and morning star, and was his countenance, as seen by St. John, like the sun shining in its

strength? We are assured that when the wise awake from the sleep of death, in that day of the manifestation of the sons of God (Rom. 8:19), they shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and as the stars forever and ever (Dan. 12:2). Our bodies will be suitable for the presence chamber of the King of glory.

But this physical perfection will only be a worthy expression of the spiritual perfection within. The saints now, as with unveiled face they behold the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory (i.e., from one degree of glory to another) as by the Lord the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18). And “he who hath begun this good work in them will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6), which again implies undecaying perfection afterwards.

And to this Scripture bears abundant testimony. As to our mental and intellectual power, “whereas now we know in part, then shall we know even as also we are known” (1 Cor. 13:12), that is, I apprehend, so far as our faculties extend – for no finite being can ever attain omniscience – our knowledge of Christ will resemble Christ’s knowledge of us, being perfect, symmetrical, and unperplexed. We shall then have “all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13).

Furthermore we shall then be perfectly holy. For the Bride “is arrayed in the fine linen, clean and white, and the fine linen is the righteousness of saints”: [By this righteousness of saints we are, I apprehend, to understand *glorifying righteousness*, that of which Hooker writes in his memorable words, “There is a glorifying righteousness of men in the world to come; and there is a justifying and a sanctifying righteousness here. The righteousness wherewith we shall be clothed in the world to come is both perfect and inherent; that whereby here we are justified, is perfect but not inherent; that whereby we are sanctified, inherent but not perfect: (Sermon ii. 3).] (Rev. 19:8).

God “hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love” (Eph. 1:4); that good pleasure of his goodness will then be fulfilled. He “is able to present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24), and He will accomplish that which his love designs. Compare 1 Thess. 3:13. The well of life within shall spring up then in every heart, unmingled with tears, into everlasting life (John 4:14). Our love will then be

perfected (1 John 4:17). And every faculty, whether of body or spirit, will be in full and harmonious exercise, as indeed is implied in the one emphatic word, “glorified” (Rom. 8:30).

What felicity is condensed in this one thought, personal perfection – the body responsive to every volition, the mind clear as the light, the spirit filled with love, the whole complex being clothed with the beauty of holiness.

II. It is a state of eternal rest and refreshment.

Christ, having ceased from his mighty work of redemption, has entered into his rest, and He promises, Where I am, there shall also my servant be (John 12:26). The Sabbath rest of the millennium is a foretaste of this (Heb. 4:9), the beginning of those times of refreshing which shall come from the presence of the Lord (Acts 3:19). Then will God recompense rest (ἀνεσις “relaxation”) to his persecuted people (2 Thess.1:7). This rest and this refreshment are often described under the figure of reclining at a banquet, as when the Lord says, “Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down (ανακλιθήσονται) with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven: (Matt. 8:11), or in yet more marvelous words of grace, “Blessed are those servants whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching; verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them” (Luke 12:37).

I have called it the figure of a banquet, and yet it is by no means easy always to discern what is to be taken figuratively and what literally in these descriptions of glory. I believe that we shall actually eat and drink in the kingdom of God, in such wise as befits the spiritual and incorruptible body. Why should we not take our Lord’s words literally, “I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom” (Matt. 26:29)? And again, “I appoint unto you a kingdom as my Father hath appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:29–30). Why should we from these words expect a visible and palpable enthronization, but an invisible and impalpable feast? It seems to me that we gain nothing, nay, that we lose much, by trying to etherealize or explain away those Scriptures which give solid and substantial

reality to our conceptions of the world to come. I doubt not that all things there will have a sacramental character: they will be outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual truths. But, as the elements of bread and wine in the Lord's Supper do not exclude the spiritual meaning, but are a great help to us to apprehend it, so in heaven that which is spiritual will not exclude the actual and material, but will give the greater zest to our enjoyment of it.

So with regard to our eating of the tree of life and drinking the crystal river of life. That these are not mere symbols, but prophetic realities, I am persuaded. Why should they be through more incredible than the historic verities of Eden? We do not give ear for a moment to the mythical interpretation of the first three chapters of Genesis. The tree of knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life were no unreal, unsubstantial figures. They were actual trees, which struck their roots into the actual soil of this our earth; though both one and the other were solemn signs of heavenly things. Now of this celestial fruit we are assured the beatified will partake, and hunger no more; and of this living stream they will drink, and thirst no more – “For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them to living fountains of water, and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes” (Rev. 7:17). Could words express more perfect rest and refreshment?

III. The saints will there receive the reward of the inheritance – (την ανταπόδοσιν της κληρονομίας, Col. 3:24).

I have chosen this expression out of very many, because it combines the thoughts of retribution and of grace; for if reward implies recompense, inheritance implies a free gift. An inheritance is not purchased, but descends by lineage or bequest. This twofold aspect of eternal felicity is continually presented to us in the New Testament.

First, it is an heritage. We are “heirs of god, joint heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17). This is our only title deed. It is “our Father's good pleasure to *give us* the kingdom” (Luke 12:32). We “are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory” (Eph. 1:14). The words of welcome before the throne are these “Come, ye blessed of my Father, *inherit* the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world”

(Matt. 25:34). It is “the inheritance of the saints in light, of which the Father hath made us meet to be partakers” (Col. 1:12). It is “an inheritance among all them that are sanctified” (Acts 20:32). He gives to his children an inheritance which is, in the glowing language of St. Peter, “incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, reserved in heaven for those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation” (1 Peter 1:4–5).

But it is no less certainly *the recompense of the reward* – μισθαποδοσία – (Heb. 11:26). To his persecuted saints, Jesus says, “Great is your reward in heaven” (Matt. 5:12). He who gives, and prays, and fasts in secret shall be rewarded openly (Matt. 6:4, 6, 18). Not even a cup of cold water given to one of Christ’s little ones shall in any wise lose its reward (Matt. 10:42). The entertainment of Christ’s poor here will be “recompensed at the resurrection of the just” (Luke 14:14). Yes, “whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free” (Eph. 6:8). What a vista this one promise opens! No faithful labour, from the drudgery of the most menial employment to the loftiest triumphs of literature, forgotten or unrequited.

The builders of the spiritual temple, if their work abides, shall receive a reward (1 Cor. 3:14). Yea, he that soweth and he that reapeth shall then rejoice together (John 4:36). “They that sow to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting” (Gal. 6:8); the connection betwixt the life of godliness and of glory being as strict, and close, and necessary as that betwixt the seed and the plant which grows from it. Every trial of true faith, though tried with fire, “shall be found unto praise, and honour, and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:7). Every one who has dealt faithfully with the talents entrusted to him shall hear the words, “Well done, good and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things; I will make thee ruler over many things” (Matt. 25:21). Observe also, in the after part of that chapter, the interlinking of the inheritance with the works of love: “Inherit the kingdom, *for* (γάρ) I was an hungered, and ye gave me meat,” etc. The reward of the inheritance is the spiritual tradesman’s accumulated property: “Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt,” etc. (Matt. 6:20). See also Luke 12:33. It is the racer’s nobly won chaplet, the prize of the high (άνω, heavenly) calling in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:14).

Thus, while all will adoringly acknowledge that they owe their standing in the kingdom entirely to the free sovereign love of God, that eternal life is his gift through Christ Jesus, and that the glorified Bride is all she is for the Bridegroom's sake, there will be the delicious sense of appreciated affection, of rewarded work, and of the crown which we cast at his feet, being a real token of victory achieved.

IV. It is a state of combined royalty and service.

This is expressed in the words, "a royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9), and in the opening doxology of the book of Revelation, "To Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father" (Rev. 1:5–6). And of this the worship of the twenty-four white-robed elders, who cast their crowns before the throne, presents us with an angelic antitype* (Rev. 4:4, 10, and 5:8). Not only will the twelve apostles sit on thrones in the regeneration (Matt. 19:28–30), but every faithful witness for Christ shall reign with Christ (2 Tim. 2:12). To every one who lives his appearing will the Lord give a crown of righteousness at that day (2 Tim. 4:8); an incorruptible crown (1 Cor. 9:25); a crown of glory (1 Peter 5:4); a crown of life (Rev. 2:10). To everyone that overcometh, the promise is sure, "will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne (Rev. 3:21).

*[On the angelic nature of the four living creatures, and of the twenty-four elders described in the Apocalypse, I venture to extract a few notes from my Commentary on the New Testament:—

Rev. 4:4. *And round about the throne were thrones (θρόνοι) twenty and four, etc.* The crowned elders, seated on these subordinate thrones round about the supreme throne, are probably an order of the angelic hierarchy in its character of a royal priesthood. They are apparently distinguished from the saints whose prayers they offer (ch. 5:8). So "one of the elders" distinguishes himself from the white-robed multitude of the redeemed (ch. 7:13). They speak of the servants who are to be rewarded as a distinct body from themselves (ch. 11:16–18). They do not seem to form a part of the Bride (ch. 19:4–7). The Mosaic tabernacle we know was a pattern of things in the heavens (Heb. 9:23–24); and so, we cannot doubt, was the more elaborate service of the temple; for David says, "All this the Lord made me understand in writing by his hand upon me, even all the works of this pattern" (1 Chr. 28:19). Every whit was therefore, we may suppose, typical of heavenly realities. Now David appointed twenty-four courses of priests, and an elder who presided over each course

(1 Chr. 24:4–19; cf. 2 Kings 19:2 and Jer. 19:1; LXX). If then these twenty-four Jewish elders were earthly types of celestial antitypes, we may conclude that the crowned elders seen by St. John were those ministering spirits, after whose order those human priests were appointed. This is strongly confirmed by St. Paul naming “thrones” (θρόνοι) among the angelic principalities (Col. 1:16). Their white raiment betokens their priesthood; their golden crowns, their royalty.

Rev. 4:6–8. *And in the midst of the throne, and round about the throne, four living creatures (ζωα), etc.* “Beasts” is a most unhappy translation. The word simply signifies “living ones,” and is used throughout Ezekiel’s vision by the Septuagint, where it is rendered “living creatures” (Ezek. 1 and 10). Now of these we are expressly told, “This is the living creature which I saw under the God of Israel, and I knew that they were the cherubim” (Ezek. 10:20). When man fell we read, “God placed at the east of the garden of Eden cherubim, and a flaming sword, which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life” (Gen. 3:24). This seems entirely to preclude the idea which some entertain, that the living creatures seen by St. John are mere symbolic unsubstantial appearances. From Ezekiel we learn that the living creatures are the cherubim; and from Genesis that the cherubim were real beings, evidently angelic, whose office it was to keep the way of the tree of life. Their angelic nature is confirmed by the golden cherubim which God commanded to be made, shadowing the mercy seat with their wings, and to which St. Peter apparently alludes when he says, “these things the angels desire to look down into” (1 Peter 1:12). In 1 Chr. 28:18, we read of “the chariot of the cherubim”; and in Psa. 18:10 of God “riding upon a cherub”. Again, in Psa. 80:1, Jehovah is represented as dwelling between the cherubim. Whether in rest or motion, therefore they appear, if we may use an earthly illustration of such heavenly mysteries, as a guard of honour attending the Divine Majesty. On the whole, we may safely conclude that these living creatures are of the highest order of angels, among whom we know there are gradations of glory (Col. 1:16), pure and blessed intelligences admitted the nearest to the throne of God; and such was undoubtedly the judgment of the church as expressed in the language of the *Te Deum*, “To thee cherubim and seraphim continually do cry.”

These living creatures were *full of eyes before and behind*. The eye is the index of intelligent life. And this plenitude of eyes betokens the most intense vitality. Nothing escapes them. They are as we say *all mind*, and ever awake to discern the will and accomplish the behests of Him they serve. Again, their fourfold characteristic (verse 7) are those of a lion, and ox, a man, and eagle; or royal dignity, self-sacrificing labour, human sympathy, heavenly sublimity. The same fourfold excellence is plainly discernible in the portraiture of the Son of Man as drawn in the four Gospels. Now the highest glory of the creature is to reflect the image of the Creator. And if the cherubim be the first and foremost of created intelligences, then will they reflect most nearly the character of Him by whom and for whom they were created. Nor can any combination of attributes be conceived more perfect than that which should unite in itself royalty and service, tenderness and soaring contemplation.

And the four living creatures had each of them six wings about him. We cannot positively identify the seraphim seen by Isaiah (ch. 6:1–8) with these cherubic forms, yet we may gather from that earlier vision the use of this glorious investiture of wings. Each one of the seraphim likewise had six wings, and of these we read, “With twain he covered his face, with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly,” which seems to import that reverence and humility have each an equal share with active obedience in the service rendered by the angels before the throne. *And they were full of eyes within* (not only “before and behind” – verse 6), perhaps intimating meditative and reflective intelligence. *And rest they have not by day and by night* (they have no rest, for the need none who are never weary of adoring infinite inexhaustible goodness), *saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty* – thus acknowledging the glory of the eternal Trinity, and in the power of the Divine Majesty worshipping the Unity – *who is, and who was, and who is to come* – from everlasting to everlasting the immutable I AM.

Rev. 5:8–14. *And when he took the book* – sure presage of his opening the seals – *the four living creatures, and the four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb* – who thus received the highest adoration of the celestial hierarchy – *having each of them harps* (see the counterpart to this in the minstrelsy of the singers appointed by David, 1 Chr. 25:6) *and golden vases* (φιάλας), here used for “censers”) *full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints.* It need scarcely be said they come not as mediators, but as ministers, as the loftiest created intelligences leading the worship of the church. The priestly functions of these blessed spirits in glory no more interfere with the one eternal priesthood of Christ than the tutelary offices of other angels on earth interfere with his alone and omnipotent guardianship. *And they sing a new song* (new, for it regarded a new unfolding of the Divine counsel), *saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof* (Zech. 6:13), *for thou was slain, and redeemedst them* – i.e., the saints – *to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation;* and hast *made them* (αυτούς) *unto our God kings and priests* (or “kingdom of priests”), *and they reign* (βασιλεύουσιν) *on the earth.* The word “us” is omitted in the ninth verse by Alford, Wordsworth, etc., on the authority of important MSS., and the ponderating evidence; and this leaves the way quite open for the interpretation I have ventured to give (ch. 4:4, 6) of the cherubim and crowned elders, being the highest orders of angels. In the victory of faith they speak of the saints already entering on their royal inheritance.

And I beheld – for the blaze of the angelic hose flashed upon the apostle’s eye ere the music of their Hallelujahs reached his ear – *and I heard the voice of many angels,* etc. The innumerable company of angels is here distinguished from the living creatures, and from the crowned elders, though these also were of angelic nature, as in the Tabernacle worship the children of Israel were distinguished from the family of Aaron, and from the tribe of Levi, though they were all a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Exod. 19:6). Their glorious doxology is full of joy, for they delight in redeeming love as the fullest manifestation of his character whom they adore and serve, as the salvation of those to whom they are ministering on earth, and thus as a

mighty increase of their own pure and unselfish felicity. Their sevenfold ascription of praise is the perfect expression of that their angelic bliss – *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive* (i.e., by adoring acknowledgment that these things are his own) *power* – as the Heir of all things – *and riches* – those unsearchable riches from which He supplies the needs of all – *and wisdom* – for omniscience only can dispense infinite wealth – *and strength* – for omnipotence only can carry into effect the designs of omniscience – *and honour* – the most exhaustive honour which creation can render (John 5:23) – *and glory* – the reflection of the display of his own triumphant goodness – *and blessing*, the utterance of eternal gratitude.

And every creature – every intelligent, and sentient, and animated being, angels and men, spirits embodied and disembodied – *which is in heaven* – around the throne of God – *and on the earth* – around his footstool – *and under the earth* – i.e., Hades (perhaps not without reference to the enforced subjection of the lost) – *and on the sea* (perhaps added to show that no distance hindered the universality of this praise, compare Psa. 139:9), *and all things that are in them*, etc. There is no lapse, no jar in that majestic diapason of creation's harmony. "glory to God" fills the universe; and this is re-echoed by the holy cherubim, and acknowledged by the silent prostrate adoration of the royal priesthood of heaven.]

This royalty in itself implies service. If it is the characteristic of a faithful governor on earth, "He that ruleth, let him do it with diligence" (Rom. 12:8), we may be assured that when those words are fulfilled to us, "I will make thee ruler over many things" (Matt. 25:21), this government will demand the strenuous, though untoilsome, exercise of every power. And first the saints will take their solemn share in the judgments of the last day. They will be assessors to Christ on his throne. "Know ye not," asks St. Paul, "that the saints shall judge the world? know he not that we shall judge angels?" (1 Cor. 6:2–3.) And again the Lord says to the church in Thyatira, "He that overcometh, and keepeth my words unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers, even as I received of my Father" (Rev. 2:26–27). During the millennium the saints will live and reign with Christ (Rev. 20:4) over a renovated earth. And the closing words of the vision of the New Jerusalem, the light of which penetrates the eternal ages beyond, are these, "they shall reign forever and ever" (Rev. 22:5).

Nor is the service of government the only one we shall there be permitted to render. The word "priesthood" implies all the varied ministries of worship. And so we read, "They serve Him day and night in his temple" (Rev. 7:15). In this service all the powers of heavenly minstrelsy and music

will be combined, for the apostle writes, “I heard the voice of harpers harping on their harps; and they sang as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four living creatures, and the elders; and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand which were redeemed from the earth (Rev. 14:2–3).

There will probably be high and holy festivals in those ages to come. For we read, “There was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and after an interval, “Again there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord” (Job 1:6; 2:1). So the promulgation of the Divine decree respecting the eternal Sonship of Messiah is referred to a definite period (Psa. 2:6–7). And in the latest revelation of perennial bliss there are recurring seasons during which the tree of life yields in its manifold fruit.

Nor will the ministrations of condescending love be wanting there. There is I think, a beautiful intimation of this in the words following those just alluded to – “The leaves of the tree were for the healing* (θεραπείαν, or rather the ‘service’) of the nations” (Rev. 22:2). That tree of life grow in the Paradise of God, in the Heavenly Jerusalem. The nations spoken of are the inhabitants of the earth. And even as after our Lord’s temptation we read angels came and ministered unto Him (Matt. 4:11), so may we well believe that it will be our privilege, when equal to the angels, to minister to our younger brethren below.

*[The word *θεραπεία* by no means of necessity implies a previously inflicted wound, or a previously existing disease. The noun only occurs three times, beside this instance, in the New Testament. Twice it is translated “household” (Matt. 24:45; Luke 12:42). Once it is joined with the cure of diseases (Luke 9:11). This throws us on the derivation of the word; and in classical usage the healing of disease is quite a secondary sense. The meanings, as given in one of our best lexicons, are these – *A waiting on, service, attendance; and so the body of attendants, a king’s suite, and hence in various relations, (1) service done to the gods, worship; (2) a fostering, tending, nurture, care, such as of the body or of the soul; (3) service done to gain favour; and lastly (4) service done to the sick, etc.* The only passage in the New Testament where the root (*θεράπων*) occurs, is Heb. 3:5, where it is rendered “servant”.]

There is another Scripture with regard to the service of heaven which seems to be peculiarly suggestive – I mean Luke 16:11–12 – where our Lord, after speaking of his servants being received into everlasting habitations b

those whose necessities they have succored, or whose friendship they have won in mutual deeds or charity; and after comparing fidelity in that which is least with fidelity in much, says, "If ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches? and if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" This, at least, we are taught, that in heaven there will be the administration of that which deserves the name of riches, not tarnished, not corruptible, not fugitive, but pure, and genuine, and enduring; and the possession of that which each, to the added joy of all, will with a peculiar propriety inherit as his own. The distinctions betwixt *meum* and *tuum* are not evanescent. The five cities entrusted to me will not belong to my brother, who is charged with the oversight of ten other cities. There will be no exclusiveness in heaven, but there will be no confusion of responsibilities. For it is the same Lord who now "has given authority to his servants, and to every man his work" (Mark 13:34), of whom we read in the revelation of the ages to come, "His servants shall serve Him" (Rev. 22:3). Yea, when we are assured that the Church is the body of Christ, the fullness of Him who filleth all in all (Eph. 1:23), are we not humbly permitted to infer, that as we perform all the functions of our mortal life by means of the various members of our body, so will the Lord hereafter carry on the administration of the heavenly kingdom through his Bride, the Church?

V. It is a state of social perfection.

Not one saint will be wanting. "The Son of Man will send forth his angels, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matt. 24:31). This will be "our gathering together unto Him" (2 Thess. 2:1). Then shall the children of God who are now scattered abroad be gathered together into one (John 11:52). No less than this implied in the figure of the spiritual temple (Eph. 2:20–22): no stone shall be lacking there. The whole family, which is now part in heaven and part on earth (Eph. 3:15), shall then all meet in the presence of their One Father. The Bride shall be without blemish or defect, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing.

Then shall the spiritual father present his children perfect in Christ Jesus (Col. 1:28), and shall rejoice that he has not run in vain or laboured in vain (Phil. 2:16). His converts shall be his joy and crown of rejoicing in that

day (1 Thess. 2:19–20). Then shall those over whom we have sorrowed, and still sorrow, as sleeping in Jesus, be reunited with us in his presence, and be forever with us and with the Lord, in the full enjoyment of an indissoluble society (1 Thess. 4:13–18). What a glimpse the passing clause respecting Onesimus, in St. Paul’s brief letter to Philemon, affords of this! “He departed for a season, that thou shouldest receive him forever.”

Then shall we have come, not only by anticipative faith, but in blessed reality, “to the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven” (Heb. 12:22–23). See the glowing picture of their harmonious adoration (Rev. 5:8–14). Will not this be the triumph of the Eternal Spirit’s work? If He can carry on his divine operations with such feeble and imperfect instruments in this world of sin and sorrow, energizing affectionately, and dividing to every man severally as He wills (1 Cor. 12:4–11), what will be the glory of his administrations in a sinless universe! For then shall be “the restitution of all things” (Acts 3:21).

Then the harp
Of all creation, jarred too long by sin
And grating discords manifold, at last
Returned and tempered by the hand of God,
Shall yield to every breath of heaven, that sweeps
Across its countless and melodious strings,
Eternal songs of gratitude and love,”

Then will he Father “have gathered together in one all things in Christ which are in heaven and which are on earth” (Eph. 1:10); then “in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord” (Phil. 2:10–11; then shall God, “by Christ, have reconciled all things to Himself, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven” (Col. 1:20). Could words more expressly foretell the perfection of the society of glory than these last exceeding great and precious promises?

For this blessed society there will be suitable and everlasting habitations (Luke 16:9), the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness (2 Peter 3:13), the Paradise of God (Rev. 2:7), the many mansions of our Father’s house, prepared for us by Christ Himself

(John 14:2), the holy Jerusalem (Rev. 21:10), the city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God, situate in the better fatherland, that is the heavenly (Heb. 11:10, 16), the court of the King of kings, corresponding to the Holy of holies in the Jewish tabernacle (Heb. 9:24), where they have no need of the sun or moon to shine, for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof (Rev. 21:23).

Space quite forbids us to enlarge on the wondrous description of the New Jerusalem, and I would only venture to express my own deep conviction that it is both real and typical, and actual city, of which every part typifies the spiritual temple of living stones; that as the glorified body will be the worthy habitation of the perfectly regenerate spirit, each part responsive to the soul's attributes, so the celestial city will be the metropolis of the saints forever, where their spiritual characteristics will each and all find a counterpart in that marvelous structure prepared for them by their God (Heb. 11:16).

And this naturally leads me to the crowning and central glory of their felicity.

VI. It is a state of perpetual communion with God in Christ.

His people shall be found of the Lord in peace, without spot, and blameless (2 Peter 3:14). They obtain mercy of Him in that day (2 Tim. 1:18). They enter in through the open door into the Master's house (Luke 13:25–28). They have confidence before Him at his coming (1 John 2:28). Christ presents them to Himself, a glorious church, holy, and without blemish (Eph. 5:27). He presents them before his Father (2 Cor. 4:14). He confesses them to be his own (Luke 12:8). And the shout shall be heard in heaven, "Hallelujah! for the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready." And again, "Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Rev. 19:6–9).

They shall see the Eternal Son of God as He is (1 John 3:2). But, furthermore, I cannot but believe they shall also see the Eternal Father. I know that some have doubted whether any finite creature can ever behold the face of the First Person of the adorable Trinity. I confess that I think (though I would speak with the greatest humility of so profound a mystery) the words, "They shall see his face" (Rev. 22:4), decide that it is possible. Of

course I do not mean the full-orbed splendor of his countenance, which can only beam on Him who is the brightness of his glory and the express image of his substance; but yet a visible similitude. The reply that God is a Spirit, and that spirit is invisible, seems to me far from conclusive; for angels are spirits, yet have they been, but God's permission, visible to man, and doubtless are constantly visible to other spirits. And if the objection be the impossibility of the finite beholding the Infinite, it seems answered by the assurance of our Lord regarding the angels who minister to the little lambs of his flock: "I say unto you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 18:10). And so I cannot doubt that when we have received in its fullness the adoption of children, we shall not only cry Abba Father, but enjoy the uttermost of the promise, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8), and thus, in his presence, drink forever of the crystal river of life, which in its spiritual significance seems to symbolize the pure and holy hoys of the Eternal Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son (Rev. 22:1).

And VII. It is a state of perpetuity and yet of progression.

The saints, "by patient continuance here in well doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality" (Rom. 2:7). The first two were incompetent without the last; but according to the sure promise they find all they seek for. Their corruptible body shall then have put on incorruption, and their mortal have put on immortality (1 Cor. 15:53). Christ has brought not only life, but life and immortality to light through the Gospel (2 Tim. 1:10). It is not only life, but eternal life to know God in Christ (John 17:3). No foe can ever assail them. All enemies are put under the feet of Christ (1 Cor. 15:25). The Son of God will then have destroyed the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). The wheat will be all safely gathered in the heavenly garner (Matt. 3:12). The glory of the ministration of the Spirit is "that which remaineth" (2 Cor. 3:11). The joy of the redeemed is fulfilled, and their joy no man taketh from them (John 15:11, 16:22). They are made pillars in the temple of God, and shall go no more out (Rev. 3:12). The city they seek is a continuing city (Heb. 13:14). And in contrast with their light affliction here, which is but for a moment, there awaits them a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory (2 Cor. 4:17).

The necessity for certifying us who are so accustomed to the transitoriness of all earthly joys, that the felicity to come is as limitless as it is cloudless, explains those repeated negative assurances which have led some unguardedly to assert that we are rather told what heaven is not, than what it is. I entirely differ from them, and could, I think, pledge myself to find ten positive assertions for every negation. Indeed, these negative predictions are no more than are sufficient to fence round our heavenly home from every fear of the invasion of evil. But they are amply sufficient. For such a promise as that, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4); may well banish every shadow of suspicion from every mind.

But the joy of the saints shall be progressive as well as perpetual. They will then have entered the joy of their Lord. And respecting his kingdom we read, "Of the increase of his government and peace (not only, observe, of his peaceful dominion itself, but of its increase) there shall be no end" (Isa. 9:7). He must increase (John 3:30). And in his ever increasing empire we shall increasing delight. The whole Church is but the earnest and sample of the illimitable harvest, for it is written, "Of his own will begat He us by the word of truth, that he should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures" (James 1:18). And throughout eternity we cannot doubt the Son will be revealing to us the infinite riches of the Father (Matt. 11:27, John 16:25), while the Father "in the ages to come will show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus" (Eph. 2:7).

We have thus seen that –

1. The state of risen saints is one of personal perfection, a perfection both of body and spirit.
2. It is a state of eternal rest and refreshment.
3. The saints will there receive the reward of the inheritance.
4. It is a state of combined royalty and service.
5. It is a state of social perfection.
6. It is a state of perfected communion with God in Christ.
7. It is a state of perpetuity and yet of progression.

And what shall I more say? I know that there are many Scriptures which I have passed over. But time and space would fail me. And I would only ask the reader to observe, how in this passing glimpse which we have

taken at the coming glory, the word of God has in describing it exhausted all the images of the purest and the deepest human joy. I once tried to call to my recollection all the happiest scenes of earth, and then, taking my Bible, looked to see whether they were used to prefigure the good things to come. I found that in every case Holy Scriptures had appropriated the figure.

If we think of a happy home, our earliest conception of joy, in heaven the whole family is gathered in the many mansions of the Father's house (John 11:52, 14:2; Eph. 2:14–15).

If of rural delights, of a fruitful garden, of shady pastures, and of crystal waters, heaven is the paradise of God, and there the Lamb will lead his people by those living waters, along the banks of which grow the many-fruited trees of life (Rev. 2:7, 7:16–17, 22:1–2).

If of the joy of harvest, in heaven the saints reap in joy that which on earth they sowed in tears (Psa. 126:5–6, John 4:36).

If of the social pleasures of a well-ordered city, with all the frank intercourse of citizen with citizen, heaven is the New Jerusalem, the city of the living God, the metropolis of his boundless empire (Heb. 11:10, Rev. 21:10).

If of the keen interest of honourable merchandise, and the luxury of doing good which wealth makes possible, in heaven the saints are entrusted with the true riches, and put in possession of treasures which shall be their own forever (Luke 16:11–12, 18:22).

If of the true delight of active work, in heaven his servants shall serve Him (Rev. 22:4).

If of the refreshment and repose after work, heaven is that home where they rest from their labours (Rev. 14:13).

If only a magnificent banquet, heaven is the marriage supper of the Lamb (Rev. 19:9, Luke 14:16).

If of the subduing power of vocal and instrumental music, the song is heard there of harpers harping upon their harps (Rev. 14:2–3).

If of a royal presentation, the saints will in heaven be presented faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy (Jude 24).

If of the exultation of victory, heaven's armies follow the King of kings in ventures of radiant white, and sing the song of Moses and the Lamb (Rev. 15:2–3, 19:14).

If of students clustering round a beloved master, as he explains to them the mysteries of truth, then Jesus will show us plainly of the Father, and will declare unto us the name (John 16:25, 17:26).

If of the joy of a successful competitor in the athletic or literary arena, heaven is the winning of an incorruptible wreath, and the receiving the prize of our celestial calling from the hand of Christ Himself (Phil. 3:14; 2 Tim. 4:8).

If of the high responsibilities of government, the diadem shall there shine reign with Christ forever and ever (Rev. 22:5).

If, to change the current of illustration, of the holy calm of the Sabbath, heaven is that Sabbath rest which remaineth for the people of God (Heb. 4:9).

If of ministrations in the house of prayer, the royal priesthood shall there serve Him day and night in his temple (Rev. 7:15).

And, lastly, to touch on that which is perhaps the most sacred of all human joys, if you think of the communion of heart with heart, which a holy bridal consummates, then the marriage of the Lamb will have come, and the Bridegroom will have presented the Bride to Himself in the perfect beauty of his own glorious likeness (Eph. 5:27; 1 John 3:2).

This at least we may say, whatever earth has of delight, heaven has; only that, as the heavens are higher than the earth, so much will the perfect bliss of eternity transcend the fragmentary joys of time. And I know not how I can better close this unworthy effort to gather together some of the abundant testimony of Scripture to the excellency of the inheritance which awaits us, than in the words of the prayer we know so well, that God who has prepared for them that love him, such good things as pass man's understanding, may pour into our hearts such love towards Him, that we, loving Him above all things, may obtain his promises, which exceed all that we can desire, through Jesus Christ our Lord.