

compatible with this, to hold that they may not have reached the perfection of the salvation which they shall enjoy in the eternal state, after "the redemption of the body." Professor Trench says they have "blessedness, but not glory." The phrase "Abraham's bosom," he considers as not suggesting the idea of a feast, as when John leant on Jesus' bosom, but, says he, "it finds its explanation from John I, 18, where the only begotten Son is declared to be in the bosom of the Father; it is a figurative phrase to express the deep quietness of an innermost communion." And, he adds, that "Theophylact assumes the image to be rather that of a harbor, where the faithful cast anchor, and are in quiet, after the storms and tribulations of life." "The intimations of Scripture," says Dr. Balmer, "though they do not imply that the redemption of the saint is consummated at death, or that his happiness will not receive a vast accession when the component elements of his nature are re-united, warrant us to assert that on leaving this earth he enters on a state of purity and peace—of sinless purity and undisturbed peace." Certainly Scripture encourages Christians to "hope for grace (favour, additional blessedness) to be brought unto them at the revelation of Jesus Christ." *

Satisfactory and delightful as all this is, we are, nevertheless, unable to form any distinct, definite idea of the condition into which the disembodied spirit is introduced. It is not necessary, for duty or happiness, that we should. Curiosity, however, to give it no more dignified name, is not easily repressed. The late John Foster was apt to be almost impatient and fretful in reference to our ignorance on a subject so interesting and momentous. He admitted, of course, that the final state—that after the resurrection—is unspeakably the most important on many accounts, especially on account of its being everlasting, while the intermediate, however long, must necessarily be, in comparison, only as the twinkling of an eye. But then, on the other hand, his spirit was stirred within him by the reflection that, while the eternal state may be at a vast distance, the intermediate is close at hand; or, as he said, to a person like himself advanced in life, it is "almost in actual contact." We are just on the boundary-line, and that boundary one which, with the exception of a few all-important particulars, is a boundary of impenetrable darkness. He was wont to be excited, and almost irritated, when, on the death of some acquaintance, not superior to himself in knowledge here, he reflected that that individual had now all at once got ample and certain information on a subject which so deeply concerns us all, but after which, mortals on earth, so vainly grope. He admitted, indeed, that there must be good reasons, upon the whole, for the profound ignorance in which we are kept; but these reasons he held to be of a "punitive" nature, and he said:—

"It is probable that some circumstances of the invisible economy may be of such a nature, so little in analogy with anything within our present experience

* It is perhaps fanciful to suppose some sort of analogy between the three states of Christians, and the three great stages in the life of Moses: the Present corresponding to his dwelling in Egypt—a period of adolescence and education: the Intermediate, to his sojourning in Midian—a period of repose, meditation and maturation: the Eternal, to his subsequent career—one so responsible, so energetic, so exalted; during which his previous attainments were turned to account, and for which he had been so long in a course of wisely adapted preparation.