

*But apart from this*, the language of Scripture is most explicit on the consciously active state of the soul after death. The revelations of the Man Christ Jesus are such as to place the matter beyond all doubt. Possessing the keys of hell and of death, and knowing the universe in all its fulness and extent, he discloses to our gaze the place and state of the lost, and the place and felicity of the saved. In his representations of the hereafter condition of the soul, we find no countenance given to the idea that it is one of unconsciousness and inactivity. Concerning the state immediately succeeding death, we are not left in the darkness of doubt and uncertainty. They who are one with faithful Abraham, when set free from "this earthly house of our tabernacle," are conducted by angels into the land of love and purity, and bliss. We are taught to think of those loved ones who have been removed from us, not as dead, but as alive, and in the enjoyment of the highest bliss of which their nature is capable. We are taught not to indulge in undue sorrow and mourning over the departure of pious friends, but enlightened by the Spirit of God, feel calmly resigned and meekly submissive—grateful that they have fallen asleep in Jesus. When we speak thus, we believe we speak according to the "Oracles of God," the testimony of Christ and his Apostles. Many a poor, weak, weary one has been comforted and strengthened, and cheered, by the hope of being soon let free from their prison-house of clay, and ushered into scenes of everlasting bliss, joy and delight. But to sink into a state of profound and long protracted unconsciousness, would be a thought almost insufferable for a soul filled with peace and love, and joy in God. The nightfall of life, however, has come upon few Christians who entertained such a notion. The teachings of St. Paul are in entire harmony with the revelations of Christ, (2 Cor., v. 1—9.) Here he teaches us that to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord, and that absence from the body is, in a very important sense, necessary to presence with the Lord. In another place he tells us that while for him to live was Christ, to die was gain. Phil. 1, 21. But how, we ask, could it have been thus to him, with his heart overflowing with love and joy in God through Christ, and in deep, true, unflinching devotion to his service, had he sunk into a state of dormancy and obliviousness? Still further we find him assuring us that he had "a desire to depart and be with Christ, which," said he, "is far better." But how could he have been with Christ in a dreamy, slumbering state, and how could such a state be better than the one in which he then was? For whilst it had its fears and perplexities, its pains and sorrows, it had also its hopes and perfect composure, its pleasures and rejoicings, with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

The character of the intermediate state, be it observed, is in exact correspondence with the character of the departed. Men die and leave this probationary state, either in a saved or unsaved state, either righteous or wicked. They depart just or unjust, pure or impure, holy or unholy, perfect or imperfect, happy or unhappy, blessed or miserable, and cursed. As is their state and character at death's solemn hour, so is it ever after, the probation period is closed, the reward and award inheriting age begun. The nature of the soul's everlasting portion is experienced in its immediate release by death. Each goes to his own place—the realm of the kingdom of light, life, love, or that of darkness and death. The