

**STATE OF THE SOUL
BETWEEN DEATH
AND THE RESURRECTION,
A SERMON**

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State of the soul between death and the Resurrection, a sermon by Christopher Wordsworth

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CHRISTOPHER WORDSWORTH

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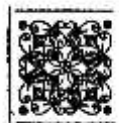
THE
FOUNDATION STONE

WAS LAID BY

H.H.H. The Crown Princess of Prussia,

ON

NOVEMBER 21ST, 1864.





STATE OF THE SOUL AFTER DEATH.



Luke xxiii. 43.—*“Jesus said unto him, Verily, I say unto thee, To-day thou shalt be with me in paradise.”*

TO-DAY is the first anniversary of the consecration of this church. It is also the second anniversary of the laying of the foundation-stone.

This church bears the name of “All Saints,”—not that it is dedicated to the Saints; no, a church is the House of God, and is dedicated to Him—and this church, by its name “All Saints,” exhorts us to bless Him for all the graces bestowed upon all who have lived

holy lives upon earth, and who have departed in His true faith and fear.

Such being the case, brethren, it seems not unseasonable, that on this happy anniversary, we ourselves, who are still alive, and are permitted to worship God in this church, should meditate on the present condition of the Saints departed; with whom—though they are divided from us for a little while in the body by death, like a party of fellow-travellers on the other side of a stream, which we have not yet passed,—we are still united spiritually, “in one communion and fellowship, in the mystical body of Jesus Christ our Lord.”

For meditations on this subject no words can be more appropriate than those of our Blessed Lord to the penitent on the Cross: “Verily, I say unto thee, to-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise.”

Consider, brethren, his case. His companion, who was crucified with him, railed

at Jesus. But he, of whom we speak, prayed to Christ, though he saw Him forsaken by His disciples, pierced with nails, crowned with thorns, hanging on the Cross, and working no miracle for His deliverance. Yet his faith was not staggered by what he saw. Through that dark cloud of sorrow he beheld the Lord of Glory. He confessed his sins; he owned God's justice; he declared Christ's innocence; he prayed to Him as his Lord and King: "Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy Kingdom." He asked no present boon; he was content to die, in the hope that at that future day, when He who was about to die on the Cross would come again in glory, he himself should not be forgotten. Then, "Lord" he said, "remember me."

Our Lord read the suppliant's heart; He saw how sincere was his repentance, and how strong was his faith; He forgave him his sins, and did not defer his recompense, but

gave him an immediate reward. Jesus said unto him : " Verily, I say unto thee, *to-day* thou shalt be with Me in *Paradise*."

Brethren, in the time that has passed since the foundation-stone of this church was laid, some of our dear friends and relatives have been taken from us. What is their condition now ? And we ourselves must soon follow them. Where shall we then be ? What will become of our souls when separated by death from our bodies ? These, surely, are questions of the deepest and most solemn interest ; and He who died for us, and who will judge us at the great Day, has answered these questions, particularly by His reply to the penitent on the Cross : " Verily, I say unto thee, *to-day* thou shalt be with Me in *Paradise*."

Consider, therefore, dearly beloved, what these words mean.

On that day, very soon after He had spoken *these words*, Jesus died. He said : " Father,

into Thy hands I commend My spirit," and He gave up the ghost—that is, He breathed forth His human soul. He expired. The penitent also died.

Their bodies were taken down from the Cross. The body of the penitent was probably consigned to the receptacle of the bodies of condemned malefactors. The body of our Blessed Lord was, we know, laid by itself in the new tomb of Joseph of Arimathæa. Hence it is clear that the promise of our Blessed Lord to the penitent, "Verily, I say unto thee, to-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise," did *not* refer to the penitent's *body*. That was not with our Lord's body; and the *grave* is *not Paradise*.

The promise of our Lord, therefore, referred to the penitent's *soul*. Its meaning was this; to-day thou—that is, thy soul, thy better part—shall be with Me; fear not, therefore, whatever may happen to thy body, let that be cast into promiscuous heaps of

dead in the dark charnel-house; yet fear not. I know thy repentance, I see thy faith; thou hast owned Me as thy Lord and King, therefore the wicked One shall not hurt thee, and I will not defer thy reward. Verily, I say unto thee, to-day thou—that is, the immortal part of thee—shall be with Me in a place of peace and joy. To-day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise

Brethren, two questions arise here—*First*, How was our Lord with the penitent on that day? *Secondly*, What is Paradise, of which He here speaks?

In answer to the first question, it is to be borne in mind, that our Blessed Lord is perfect man, as well as perfect God. As perfect man, He has not only a human body but He has a human soul also. It is of that human soul that St. Luke speaks when he says, "Jesus increased in wisdom." In Him, as God, and as therefore infinite in wisdom, there was no room for any such increase.