

**THE STATE OF THE DEPARTED: AN
ADDRESS. DELIVERED AT THE FUNERAL
OF THE RT. REV. BENJAMIN MOORE,
D. D., ON FRIDAY, MARCH 1, 1816, IN
TRINITY CHURCH, N. Y. AND
DISSERTATION ON THE SAME SUBJECT**

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JOHN HENRY HOBART

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THE
STATE OF THE DEPARTED.

An Address.

DELIVERED AT THE FUNERAL OF THE

RT. REV. BENJAMIN MOORE, D. D.,

BISHOP OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE STATE OF NEW YORK,
AND RECTOR OF TRINITY CHURCH, IN THE CITY OF NEW YORK,

ON FRIDAY, MARCH 1, 1816, IN TRINITY CHURCH, N. Y.

AND

A DISSERTATION

ON THE SAME SUBJECT

BY JOHN HENRY HOBART, D. D.,

BISHOP OF THE PROTESTANT EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN THE
STATE OF NEW YORK.



NEW YORK
THOMAS N. STANFORD, BROADWAY.

1857.

THE
STATE OF THE DEPARTED,
SET FORTH IN
A FUNERAL ADDRESS,
ETC., ETC.

PEOPLE of the congregation! the remains of your pastor lie before you—the beloved pastor who so long fed you with the bread of life, and whose accents of persuasion you have so often heard in this sacred place.

My brethren of the Episcopal clergy! we have long mourned the living death of our spiritual father—his sufferings are terminated—he is at rest.

When we contemplate that venerated corpse, it is natural to inquire,

What has become of the spirit which so recently inhabited it?

What will become of that tabernacle of clay which this spirit has deserted?

Christian believers, these are inquiries deeply interesting to you. Soon each one of you will be, as he whose remains you now behold.

What becomes of the spirit of the believer when it leaves its tabernacle of clay ?

Does it sink into annihilation ? We must subdue all those feelings which constitute the perfection and happiness of our nature, before we can contemplate the extinction of being but with horror. There is not a power of his soul which man does not shudder at the thought of losing—not a virtuous enjoyment which he does not wish to carry with him beyond the grave—not an acquisition that ennobles or adorns him which he would not impress with the seal of eternity. The voice of the Creator speaks in the soul of the being whom he has made, and inspires the hope that he is immortal. But, alas ! that voice is only faint and feeble. Immortality, an unmerited gift to a fallen creature, must be assured by the express promise of Him who alone can bestow it. The word of the Author of our being must be the pledge, that this being shall not be extinguished.

Blessed be God—this word we have—God hath spoken—“The spirit shall return to Him who gave it.”

This, believer, is thy confidence and thy rejoicing. Thy spirit returns to God—to God all glorious and all good ; who so loved thee as to give for thee his only begotten Son ; and who in the blood of his Son hath sealed the assurance that thou shalt be ever with Him. Canst thou doubt whether in his presence thou shalt be happy ? Ah ! the happiness reserved for thee by thy God, thine eye hath not seen, thine ear hath not heard, and thy heart cannot conceive. But,

When does the spirit enter on this state of complete felicity?

There cannot be a moment's doubt, that departed saints do not enter on the *full* fruition of bliss immediately on their release from the body. In what does this fulness of bliss consist? In the union of the purified spirit with the glorified body. But until the voice of the Son of God calls to the corruptible to put on incorruption, and the mortal immortality, that body is confined to the tomb, embraced by corruption, mingled with the dust. Admission to heaven, the place of the vast universe of God, where the vision of His glory, more immediately displayed, shall constitute the eternal felicity of the redeemed, does not take place, according to the Sacred Writings, until the judgment at the great day; when the body, raised incorruptible and glorious, shall be united to the soul, purified and happy. While the soul is separate from the body, and absent from that heaven which is to be her eternal abode, she cannot have attained the perfection of her bliss.

Will the privileges of believers be greater than those of their divine Head? His glory in heaven consists in the exaltation of his human nature—of his glorified body in union with his perfect spirit. But in the interval between his death and his resurrection, his body was embalmed by his disciples, washed with their tears, and guarded in the sepulchre by his enemies. His spirit therefore was not in heaven until He ascended there after his resurrection. "Touch me not," said

He to Mary Magdalene, when He had risen from the dead, "for I have not yet ascended to your Father and my Father, to your God and my God."* Our blessed Lord, in his human nature, was not in heaven until after his resurrection. And will a privilege be conferred on the members which was not enjoyed by the Head? "This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise," was his language to the penitent thief associated with him at his crucifixion—in Paradise, not in heaven; for the happiness of heaven supposes the happiness of the whole man, of his soul united to his body. But on that day in which the Saviour assured the penitent subject of his mercy that he should be with Him in Paradise, the body of the one was consigned to corruption, and the body of the other to the tomb.

What, then, is the state of the soul in the period between death and the resurrection—between her separation from the body and her re-union with it—between her release from this her state of exile, and her admission to final and complete felicity in her eternal home?

Is she in a state of unconsciousness? All probability is against the supposition. Consciousness seems a necessary attribute of spirit in a disembodied state. The temporary suspension of consciousness in the present life arises from that union of the soul with the body, which in many cases controls, and changes, and suspends her operations.

* John xx. 17.

But a state of unconsciousness is a state of oblivion—and this must be an object of aversion to the happy spirit. In the present life indeed there is often an oblivion of care that corrodes, of adversity that wounds the spirit—or that which, from the connection of the body with the soul, is necessary to the renewed exertion of its powers, and to renewed enjoyment. But when the soul, with her mortal tabernacle, has shaken off her sins and sorrows, this oblivion cannot be necessary; it must interrupt her enjoyment—it cannot therefore be assigned her in a state which, her probation being finished, is a state of reward and of bliss.

But, on this as on every other point connected with our spiritual interests, we are not left to speculation, and to a balance of probabilities. What was the language of our blessed Lord to his penitent companion on the cross?—"This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise." But would this have been the language of consolation, of hope, of triumph, if Paradise be a state of oblivion? Or can we for a moment indulge the idea, that the human soul of the blessed Jesus sunk at death into a state of forgetfulness, which reduced it to a level with the body that was sleeping in the sepulchre? No; his soul was actively engaged—engaged in prosecuting that gracious scheme of redemption which occupied his life, which engrossed his last moments of agony, and which He relinquished not even with death. He "went," says the apostle,* "and preached to the spirits in prison," to the spirits in safe

* 1 Peter iii. 19, 20.

keeping, "to the *sometime* disobedient," but finally penitent antediluvians, "in the days of Noah," who, though they were swept off in the deluge of waters, found, through the merits of the Lamb slain from the beginning of the world, a refuge from the flames of Tophet, from the surges of the burning lake. While his body was reposing in the grave, He went in his spirit and "preached," or (as the word signifies) *proclaimed*, the glad tidings, to the souls of the departed saints, of that victory over death which the Messiah, in whom they trusted, was to achieve; and of that final redemption of the body and resurrection to glory, the *hope* of which constituted their enjoyment in the place of the departed.*

* The above is the interpretation of this very obscure passage, which is advanced and maintained with great ingenuity, force, and erudition, by Bishop Horsley in his Sermon on "Christ's descent into Hell." This interpretation gives no sanction, as Bishop Horsley justly observes, to the doctrine of purgatory. Purgatory is considered as a place of punishment and purification for those who die under the guilt of sins of infirmity, from which they are delivered either when they have been sufficiently purified by suffering purgatorial pains, or by the efficacy of the masses which are said for them. There is no foundation for this doctrine in Scripture. At death the souls of the righteous and the wicked go to a state, the one of happiness and the other of misery, in the place of the departed; and there is no *change* in their state except what arises from the complete consummation, in *body* as well as soul, of the happiness of the one in Heaven, and of the misery of the other in (*γέεννα*) Hell.

Christ proclaimed, to the spirits in prison, in a state of seclusion and separation, or, as the word may be translated, in *safe keeping*, the glad tidings of his victory over death, of their final resurrection to glory. Were they previously in doubt as to these events—a doubt which must have been incompatible with their happiness? By no means. They died in the faith that the Messiah was to achieve this victory; and in this faith their spirits rejoiced. But Christ, when he descended to them, changed their faith in this event, as *future*, into faith in it as actually