



Where in the Bible is the doctrine of the “Church Expectant” —Paradise, the Intermediate State, “Larger Life,” “the Nearer Presence of God”—found?

Exactly like the doctrine of the Trinity and the term “Holy Trinity” itself, the doctrine of the Intermediate State and the term “Church Expectant” are not found explicitly defined in Holy Scripture. This, of course, is not at all surprising because all of the books of the New Testament are “occasional documents,” written for specific people for specific purposes, and none of the Gospels or Epistles were ever intended to be definitive, exhaustive compilations of Jesus’ teaching. Like the doctrine of the Trinity, the doctrine of the Church Expectant is the summary of the things that the Bible does explicitly say.

On the existence of an Intermediate State:

- no one can enter Heaven until he/she becomes whole or complete as God created humankind to be (St Matthew 5.48; Hebrews 12.14; Revelation 21.27)
- “...at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and *under the earth* [a New Testament term for the Intermediate State]” (Philippians 2.10)
- the Intermediate State is where “the spirits of just men are made perfect” (Hebrews 12.23)
- Jesus refers to the forgiveness of sins both in this age and in the age to come (St Matthew 12.32) Such forgiveness is not necessary for those in Heaven as they have no sin, and forgiveness is no longer possible in Hell. This means that Jesus is referring to another state—the Intermediate State—where forgiveness occurs.
- St John the Divine is referring to the Intermediate State when he writes “...and I heard a great voice saying, ‘...they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away.’” (Revelation 21.3-4) This only happens after the earth passes away (i.e. a person dies). There is no mourning or pain in Heaven, and God does not wipe away the tears of those in Hell. Therefore St John is referring to the Intermediate State.
- Jesus said to the repentant criminal on the cross, “...this day you will be with me in Paradise” [an entirely different word in the original Greek from “Heaven”]. (St Luke 23.43).
- St Paul writing about the deceased Onesiphorus “...may the Lord grant him to find mercy from the Lord on that Day” [Judgment Day]. (II Timothy 1.18) St Paul is referring to Onesiphorus being in the Intermediate State because there is no need for mercy in Heaven, and there is no mercy in Hell.

On the condition of the members of the Church Expectant, the Faithful Departed:

- they are free from temptation and sin (Romans 6.7)
- they are conscious, not “asleep” (St Matthew 22.32; Hebrews 12.1, 23; Revelation 6.9-11)
- they live in comfort and peace (Revelation 14.13; Wisdom 3.1)

- they, while yet not fully, are united with Our Lord (I Thessalonians 4.14; I Corinthians 5.8; Philippians 1.23)

The 20th century English Anglican theologian, the Rev. Dr C. B. Moss, has written that from the earliest days the Christian Church taught that for those in Paradise “their condition is one of continual progress.” At the end of their journey of growth in Christ into the fullness of what God created them to be “they will be admitted into Heaven, the state of glory.... Meanwhile, they are at rest, in Paradise; they are in Christ, they are making progress toward perfection, and they are helped by the prayers of their friends on earth, who ask God to give them refreshment, light, and peace. Paradise is distinguished from Heaven: the former is the temporary abode of the blessed dead, the latter their permanent home; the former is the state of rest, the latter the state of glory.” (*The Christian Faith*, pp. 437ff.)

Like the Early Christian Church and Eastern Orthodoxy, Anglicanism teaches that the official statement of the Church’s doctrine is the Church’s official liturgy (*Lex orandi, lex credendi*). The 1979 Book of Common Prayer makes many references to the Intermediate State:

- “...Give to your whole Church in paradise and on earth your light and your peace....” (p. 202; p. 253)
- “...we remember before you today your faithful servant N.; and we pray that having opened to *him* the gates of larger life, you will receive *him* more and more into your joyful service...that *he* may share in the eternal victory of Jesus Christ our Lord....” (p. 203; p. 253)
- “...for all thy servants departed this life in thy faith and fear, beseeching thee to grant them continual growth in thy love and service....” (p. 330)
- “Remember all who have died in the peace of Christ, and those whose faith is known to you alone; bring them into the place of eternal joy and light.” (p. 375)
- “Give to the departed eternal rest; Let light perpetual shine upon them.” (p. 387)
- “We commend to your mercy all who have died, that your will for them may be fulfilled....” (p. 389)
- “For all who have died in the communion of your Church...that, with all the Saints, they may have rest in that place where there is no pain or grief, but life eternal....” (p. 391)
- “We pray for all who have died, that they may have a place in your eternal kingdom.” (p. 393)
- *At the time of death*: “May your rest be this day in peace, and your dwelling place in the Paradise of God.” (p. 464)
- *Funeral*: “Deliver your servant, N., O Sovereign Lord Christ, from all evil, and set him free from every bond; that he may rest with all your Saints in the eternal habitations....” (p. 466)
- *Funeral*: “...Accept our prayers on behalf of your servant N., and grant him an entrance into the land of light and joy, in the fellowship of your Saints....” (p. 470; p. 493)
- *Funeral*: “Grant that increasing in knowledge and love of thee, he may go from strength [in Paradise] to strength in the life of perfect service in thy heavenly kingdom.” (p. 481)

- *Funeral*: “Into thy hands, O Lord, we commend thy servant N.... Wash him, we pray thee, in the blood of that immaculate Lamb that was slain to take away the sins of the world; that, whatsoever defilements he may have contracted in the midst of this earthly life being purged and done away, he may be presented pure and without spot before thee....” (p. 488)
- *Funeral*: “You promised paradise to the thief who repented; bring our brother (sister) to the joys of heaven.” (p. 497)
- *Catechism*: “Why do we pray for the dead? We pray for them, because we still hold them in our love, and because we trust that in God’s [“nearer”] presence those who have chosen to serve him will grow in his love until they see him as he is.” (p. 862)

The 1928 Book of Common Prayer, in the rubric preceding the Apostles’ Creed in the liturgy for Morning Prayer, explains that the words *He descended into hell* in Archbishop Cranmer’s translation actually refer to the Intermediate State: “And any Churches may, instead of the words, *He descended into hell*, use the words, *He went into the place of departed spirits*, which are considered as words of the same meaning in the Creed.” (p. 15)

The most beloved liturgical exposition of the Intermediate State for Anglicans, however, is without doubt the magnificent hymn “For all the Saints” (Hymn 287 in *The Hymnal 1982*) which poetically describes all three states of the Catholic Church: Militant on Earth, Expectant in Paradise, and Triumphant in Heaven. Stanza 6 speaks of the Faithful Departed in Paradise; stanza 7 speaks of the Saints in Heaven:

The golden evening brightens in the west;
 Soon, soon to faithful warriors cometh rest;
 Sweet is the calm of paradise the blest.
 Alleluia, alleluia!

But lo! there breaks a yet more glorious day;
 The saints triumphant rise in bright array;
 The King of glory passes on his way.
 Alleluia, alleluia!