

If, then, preaching is a means of education, and if preaching is carried on in the Intermediate Life, as the passages I have referred to from the third and fourth chapters of the first Epistle of St. Peter prove, then the progressive character of the Intermediate Life follows.

Education, where effective, implies and necessitates progress.

II.

I pass to the second division of my subject.

THE NEED FOR AN EDUCATIONAL AND THEREFORE PROGRESSIVE STATE IN THE INTERMEDIATE LIFE.

This need may be contemplated from

(a) Its aspect towards God : and,

(b) Its aspect towards Man.

(a) Its aspect towards God.

The ultimate salvation of all through the infinite merits of our Divine Saviour is again and again revealed in Holy Scripture as the earnest desire of our God and Father. Take the words of St. Paul in I Tim., ii, as a specimen of many like statements of the Word of God.

"This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour ; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth : for there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus ; Who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

God's earnest desire that all should be saved, so forcibly brought out by these inspired words of St. Paul, does not, of course, imply that all will be saved. We have to bear in mind the action of man's free will, which sometimes runs counter to the Divine purpose. When our Lord was on earth He had to say to some, "Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life." He has the same sad words to say to some to-day.

Nevertheless it is our Heavenly Father's loving will that all should be saved, and therefore His dear Son "gave Himself a ransom for all."

Again, Holy Scripture sets forth in the strongest possible way, and by repeated statements, the endurance, and the width, and the vast embrace of God's mercy. The Psalmist says :—

"With the Lord there is mercy ; and with Him is plenteous redemption."