

that preaching is at least one means of education, and that, under favorable conditions, it is a most important means of education.

Is preaching then carried on in the Intermediate Life? In my text St. Peter tells us that "The Gospel was preached to them that are dead." And lest we should by any possibility misunderstand this general statement, the Apostle in the preceding chapter has reminded us of one notable instance in which the Gospel was preached to them that are dead.

The preacher was Jesus Christ Himself. The time was the interval between His death on the cross and His resurrection from the grave. The audience was the vast multitude of those who had perished in the judgment of the flood. The place was one of those divisions of Hades where these people were in ward, or safe-keeping.

The Apostle's words literally translated are, "Christ was put to death in the flesh, but quick (or alive) in the spirit, (that is, His own spirit,) in which (spirit) He went and preached to the spirits in ward : which sometime were disobedient, &c."

It may be fairly asked, why *this* visit of our Lord in Hades should be specially recorded?

Bishop Horsley, in one of his sermons on this passage, points, I think, to the true answer. The circumstances under which those vast multitudes perished in the judgment of the flood were so exceptionally terrible, that they above all others in Hades needed the comfort to be derived from our Lord's preaching : for this reason Christ's visit to them is specially recorded.

But surely it was not the only visit : surely we may reasonably conclude that our Lord, in the interval between His death and His resurrection, visited, as far as possible, all the realms of Hades, and announced to the dwellers therein the glad tidings, or Gospel, of His accomplished sacrifice on the Cross, through which alone salvation is offered to mankind. We are justified in drawing this inference by the general statement of the text : "The Gospel was preached to them that are dead."

More than this. We are justified by this general statement of St. Peter in concluding that the preaching of the Gospel in the realms of Hades, inaugurated by our Lord between His death and His resurrection, has been carried on ever since by the ministry of His Church in Paradise.