

**CIHM
Microfiche
Series
(Monographs)**

**ICMH
Collection de
microfiches
(monographies)**



Canadian Institute for Historical Microreproductions / Institut canadien de microreproductions historiques

© 1996

Technical and Bibliographic Notes / Notes techniques et bibliographiques

The Institute has attempted to obtain the best original copy available for filming. Features of this copy which may be bibliographically unique, which may alter any of the images in the reproduction, or which may significantly change the usual method of filming, are checked below.

L'Institut a microfilmé le meilleur exemplaire qu'il lui a été possible de se procurer. Les détails de cet exemplaire qui sont peut-être uniques du point de vue bibliographique, qui peuvent modifier une image reproduite, ou qui peuvent exiger une modification dans la méthode normale de filmage sont indiqués ci-dessous.

- Coloured covers/
Couverture de couleur
- Covers damaged/
Couverture endommagée
- Covers restored and/or laminated/
Couverture restaurée et/ou pelliculée
- Cover title missing/
Le titre de couverture manque
- Coloured maps/
Cartes géographiques en couleur
- Coloured ink (i.e. other than blue or black)/
Encre de couleur (i.e. autre que bleue ou noire)
- Coloured plates and/or illustrations/
Planches et/ou illustrations en couleur
- Bound with other material/
Relié avec d'autres documents
- Tight binding may cause shadows or distortion along interior margin/
La reliure serrée peut causer de l'ombre ou de la distorsion le long de la marge intérieure
- Blank leaves added during restoration may appear within the text. Whenever possible, these have been omitted from filming/
Il se peut que certaines pages blanches ajoutées lors d'une restauration apparaissent dans le texte, mais, lorsque cela était possible, ces pages n'ont pas été filmées.

- Coloured pages/
Pages de couleur
- Pages damaged/
Pages endommagées
- Pages restored and/or laminated/
Pages restaurées et/ou pelliculées
- Pages discoloured, stained or foxed/
Pages décolorées, tachetées ou piquées
- Pages detached/
Pages détachées
- Showthrough/
Transparence
- Quality of print varies/
Qualité inégale de l'impression
- Continuous pagination/
Pagination continue
- Includes index(es)/
Comprend un (des) index

Title on header taken from: /
Le titre de l'en-tête provient:

- Title page of issue/
Page de titre de la livraison
- Caption of issue/
Titre de départ de la livraison
- Masthead/
Générique (périodiques) de la livraison

- Additional comments: /
Commentaires supplémentaires:

This item is filmed at the reduction ratio checked below /
Ce document est filmé au taux de réduction indiqué ci-dessous.

10X	14X	18X	22X	26X	30X
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12X	16X	20X	24X	28X	32X

The copy filmed here has been reproduced thanks to the generosity of:

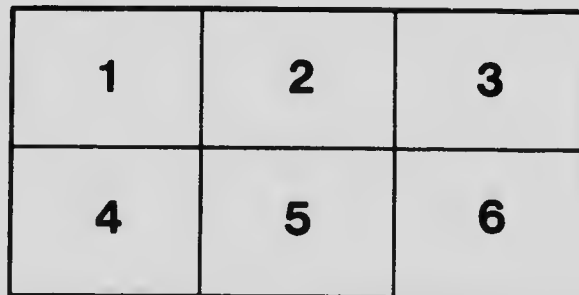
Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library
Baldwin Room

The images appearing here are the best quality possible considering the condition and legibility of the original copy and in keeping with the filming contract specifications.

Original copies in printed paper covers are filmed beginning with the front cover and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression, or the back cover when appropriate. All other original copies are filmed beginning on the first page with a printed or illustrated impression, and ending on the last page with a printed or illustrated impression.

The last recorded frame on each microfiche shall contain the symbol \rightarrow (meaning "CONTINUED"), or the symbol ∇ (meaning "END"), whichever applies.

Maps, plates, charts, etc., may be filmed at different reduction ratios. Those too large to be entirely included in one exposure are filmed beginning in the upper left hand corner, left to right and top to bottom, as many frames as required. The following diagrams illustrate the method:



L'exemplaire filmé fut reproduit grâce à la générosité de:

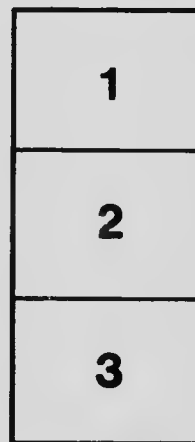
Metropolitan Toronto Reference Library
Baldwin Room

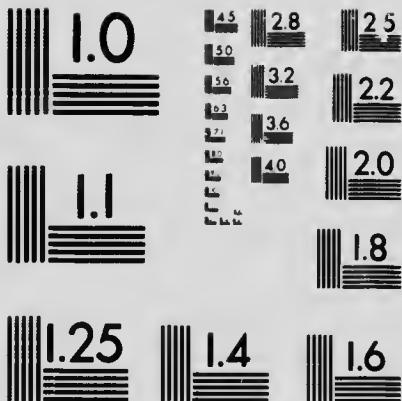
Les images suivantes ont été reproduites avec le plus grand soin, compte tenu de la condition et de la netteté de l'exemplaire filmé, et en conformité avec les conditions du contrat de filmage.

Les exemplaires originaux dont la couverture en papier est imprimée sont filmés en commençant par le premier plat et en terminent soit par la dernière page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration, soit par le second plat, selon le cas. Tous les autres exemplaires originaux sont filmés en commençant par la première page qui comporte une empreinte d'impression ou d'illustration et en terminent par la dernière page qui comporte une telle empreinte.

Un des symboles suivants apparaît sur la dernière image de chaque microfiche, selon le cas: le symbole \rightarrow signifie "A SUIVRE", le symbole ∇ signifie "FIN".

Les cartes, planches, tableaux, etc., peuvent être filmés à des taux de réduction différents. Lorsque le document est trop grand pour être reproduit en un seul cliché, il est filmé à partir de l'angle supérieur gauche, de gauche à droite, et de haut en bas, en prenant le nombre d'images nécessaire. Les diagrammes suivants illustrent la méthode.





MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
 NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS
 STANDARD REFERENCE MATERIAL 1010a
 (ANSI and ISO TEST CHART No. 2)

*For Alfred
his father is best loved*

TWO SERMONS

PREACHED

In St. Luke's Cathedral, Halifax, Nova Scotia,

AND

In the Church of St. John the Evangelist,
Montreal, P. Q.,

BY THE REV. ISAAC BROCK, D. D.,
Canon of St. Luke's Cathedral, Halifax.

THE FIRST ON

THE REST OF PARADISE.

THE SECOND ON

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE:

ITS EDUCATIONAL AND THEREFORE
PROGRESSIVE CHARACTER.

C. R. RUGGLES & CO., 143 Barrington St., Halifax.

10 CENTS.

A. D. 1901.

TWO SERMONS

PREACHED

IN ST. LUKE'S CATHEDRAL, HALIFAX, N. S.

AND

IN THE CHURCH OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST,
MONTREAL, P. Q.

THE REV. ISAAC BROCK, D. D.,

Canon of St. Luke's Cathedral, Halifax.

THE FIRST ON

THE REST OF PARADISE.

THE SECOND ON

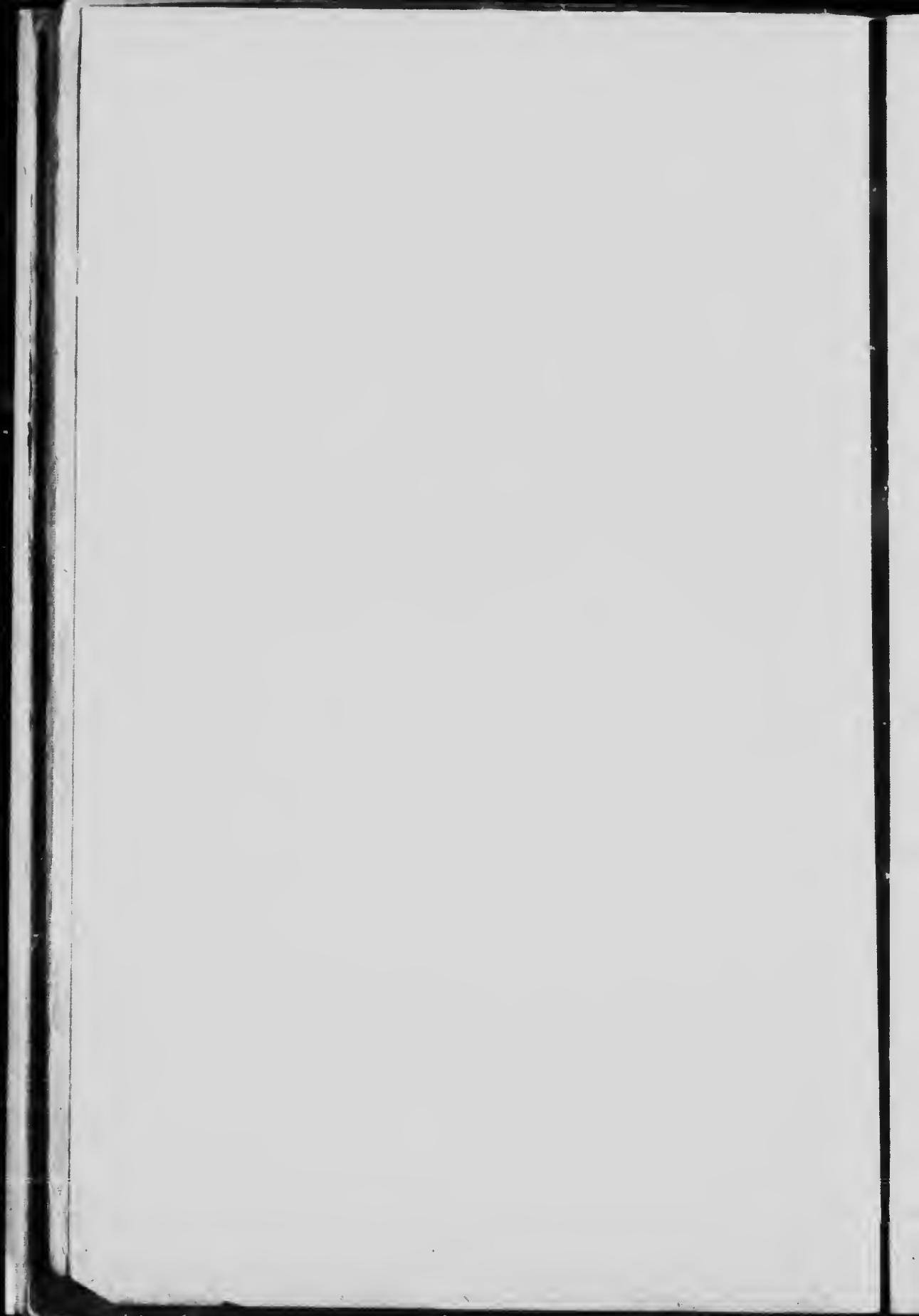
THE INTERMEDIATE STATE:

ITS EDUCATIONAL AND THEREFORE
PROGRESSIVE CHARACTER.

C. R. RUGGLES & CO., 143 Barrington St., Halifax.

10 CENTS.

A. D. 1901.



THE PREFACE.



THE two following Sermons were preached in St. Luke's Cathedral, Halifax, Nova Scotia, in May and November, 1901, in the author's turn as Canon: They were also preached in the Church of St. John the Evangelist in the City of Montreal, Province of Quebec.

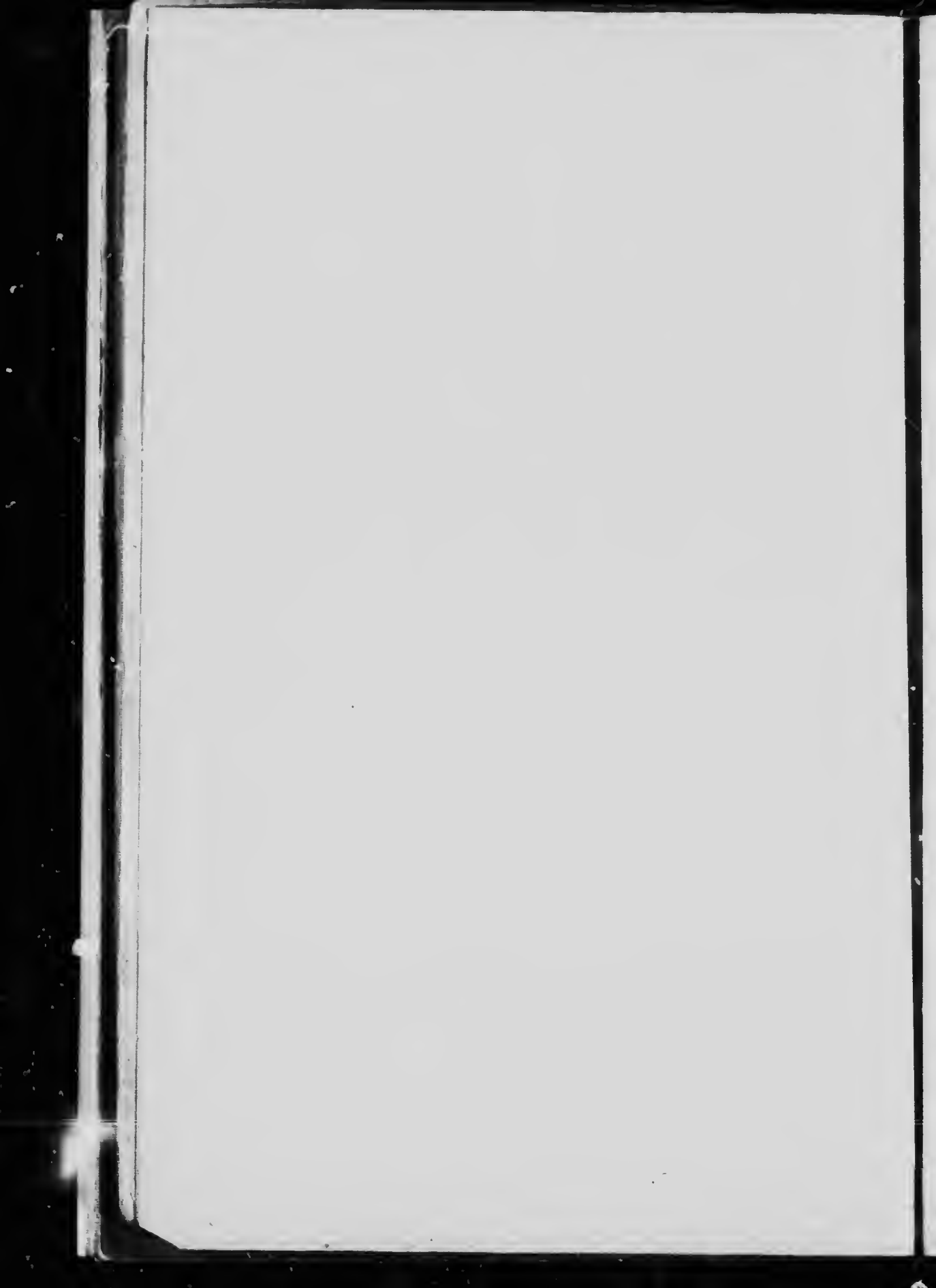
They are now published at the earnest request of the Very Rev. E. Gilpin, D. D., Dean of Nova Scotia, at that of the Rev. Canon Edmond Wood, M. A., Rector of St. John the Evangelist, and at the request of many others.

The author acknowledges his deep indebtedness to two Books by the Rev. Arthur Chambers, Vicar of Brockenhurst, Hants, England, "Life after Death," and its sequel, "Man and the Spiritual World." To those books he refers his readers for fuller information on the important subjects dealt with in these Sermons.

St. Andrew's Day, A. D. 1901.

Prospect House, Kentville, Nova Scotia.

The Clergy and others desiring copies of this pamphlet for distribution may obtain them at the rate of \$2.00 for 25 copies, including Postage, by writing to the Rev. Canon Brock, at the above address.



THE REST OF PARADISE.



"There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God."—*Heb. iv, 9.*

The rest, which the people of God enjoy here, or shall enjoy hereafter, advances through three successive stages to its fullness of blessing after the Resurrection in the Heavenly Zion.

1.—There is first the present rest which the people of God enjoy now in Christ Jesus :

The rest which our Saviour promised to give here and now to the weary and the burdened ones when He spake those "Comfortable Words" : "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me ; and ye shall find rest unto your souls."

2.—There is next, the present rest which the people of God enjoy now in Paradise :

The rest that is referred to in those well-known words of St. John : "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth : Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors."

3.—Finally, there is the future rest which all the people of God shall enjoy after the Resurrection in the perfect consummation and bliss of God's eternal and everlasting glory :

The rest which, I think, is referred to in those words of St. Paul in II Thess. i, 7. "To you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with the angels of His power."

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, (whoever he was,) is referring probably to both the intermediate rest of Paradise, and to the final and more perfect rest of Heaven. Of both, the rest of the earthly Canaan, of which he has just been speaking, was a type. "There remaineth therefore a rest (keeping of a Sabbath—in the

margin) for the people of God." This blessed Sabbath of rest begun now in Paradise for Christ's departed saints, will be perfected hereafter in the heavenly glory, after the Resurrection, and at the second coming of the Lord.

Let us look now at these three stages of the rest which the people of God enjoy now, or shall enjoy hereafter, though it is on the second THE REST OF PARADISE, that I wish more particularly to dwell.

I.

First, there is the rest which our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ promised to all the weary and burdened sons and daughters of men who come to Him, or, as our Church puts it, to all, "Who truly turn to Him."

This is the rest, which through faith in our dear Lord, we may enjoy here and now: Yes even here and now, amid the trials and temptations and sorrows, amid the partings and changes and chances of our life on earth.

This is the rest of pardon; the rest of deliverance from the guilt, and also from the reigning power and dominion of sin, through the precious blood of Jesus, and the indwelling presence in our hearts of the Holy Ghost.

Yes, through that precious Blood sprinkling our conscience, and through that hallowed Presence ruling our will, and sanctifying our whole inner man, we may attain to this present rest of the people of God.

This is the rest of which one of Scotland's poets sings as he dwells on the gracious promise of our Lord:

"I heard the voice of Jesus say,
Come unto Me and rest;
Lay down, thou weary one, lay down
Thy head upon My breast:
I came to Jesus as I was,
Weary and worn and sad;
I found in Him a resting-place,
And He has made me glad."

II.

There is next, THE REST OF PARADISE.

On this I wish to dwell a little more fully : and from this part of my subject, I would like to remove, so far as I am able, some of the popular misconceptions.

This is the rest of Christ's departed saints in Paradise, of which a sainted Bishop of our Church sings in one of our loveliest and best known hymns :

"For all the saints who from their labors rest,
Who Thee by faith before the world confess'd,
Thy Name, O Jesu, be forever blest.

Alleluia.

The golden evening brightens in the west :
Soon, soon to faithful warriors comes the rest :
Sweet is the calm of Paradise the blest.

Alleluia."

This is the rest from the toils, and weariness, and strifes of earth : this is the rest from all the pains and diseases, and manifold ills and sorrows of this mortal life : but *not*, (oh! no) *not* a rest from prayer, and praise, and holy worship ; not a rest therefore from the loftiest, the noblest, the most inspiring of all our spiritual activities.

The saints departed are described by our Lord not as dead, but as living, living unto God. They are living in the Intermediate Life. In the words of St. Paul, "They are absent from the body, present with the Lord : " That is, their spirits, their living spirits, equipped no doubt with a spiritual body, are now present with their Lord, and ours, in Paradise.

It is needless to say that this Intermediate Life, lived in the presence of Jesus in Paradise, is a life of happiness. Holy Scripture more than justifies our Church in describing the present state of Christ's departed saints as one of "joy and felicity."

But for all that, they are not yet made perfect. How can they be made perfect till they receive the resurrection body? How can their happiness reach its fulness till after the awards of the judgment throne of the Son of man? Till they hear the voice of their Saviour and their Judge welcoming them to their heavenly home, and to their eternal inheritance : "Come, ye blessed children of My Father, in-

herit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

They, (the saints departed in Paradise) without us, (the saints still on earth) cannot be made perfect. (See Heb. xi, 40) Therefore our Church teaches us to pray, "That we with all those that are departed in the true faith of God's Holy Name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in God's eternal and everlasting glory."

The rest of the saints of God in Paradise therefore is *not* the rest of perfection, or of consummated happiness. No, they are still being trained, trained by our Lord and His Holy Spirit in a more perfect school than that of earth: and as they are being trained they are necessarily growing.

On this subject let me quote a few words of the late Dr. DeKoven, Warden of Racine College, Wisconsin. In a Volume of his Sermons, edited and published by the Rev. Dr. Morgan Dix, Rector of Trinity Church, New York, is one on "The dead in Christ," from which I quote a few words on the growth of Christ's saints in Paradise.

"In that blessed state of waiting, each soul, according to its measure and capacity, progresses on and on, ever drawing nearer and nearer unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. They go from grace to grace. There is growth in intellect, growth in knowledge, growth in perception, growth in judgment: There is growth in patience, because it is a time of waiting: There is growth in faith, because the full vision of the eternal glory of the undivided Trinity is not yet vouchsafed: There is growth in hope, for the new heaven and the new earth are not yet revealed: There is growth also in love, in it the saints departed are being more and more rooted and grounded: In the training school of Paradise they are being led to comprehend far more fully than we can in the school of earth, the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."

Should we not be most thankful that there will be growth in the Intermediate Life? Most thankful when we think of our own most grievous failures, most sad imperfections, and manifold short-comings! Most thankful when we think of the slender beginnings of grace in not a few who are called into the world unseen!

But as there is to be growth in Paradise, and, as all admit, the

perfect state is not reached in the Rest of Paradise ; there is room, yea, there is need for prayer for those who have passed into the Intermediate Life.

On several occasions in our Book of Common Prayer we remember the departed in our prayers. Let me remind you of these occasions.

(a) We remember them when we commit their mortal remains to the grave :

We pray Almighty God, "That it may please Thee, of Thy gracious goodness, shortly to accomplish the number of Thine elect, and to hasten Thy kingdom, that we, with all those that are departed in the true faith of Thy Holy Name, may have our perfect consummation and bliss, both in body and soul, in Thy eternal and everlasting glory."

(b) We remember them, even when we "pray for the whole state of Christ's Church militant here on earth."

In the first Prayer-Book of our Reformed Church, (A. D. 1549) that prayer was offered for the whole of Christ's Church : and the commemoration of the saints departed was followed by this commendation and prayer : "We commend unto Thy mercy, O Lord, all other Thy servants which are departed from us, with the sign of faith, and now do rest in the sleep of peace ; grant unto them, we beseech Thee, Thy Mercy and everlasting peace, and that at the day of the general resurrection, we and all they which be of the Mystical Body of Thy Son may altogether be set on His right hand, and hear that His most joyful voice, Come unto Me, &c.—"

Let me remind you that in the judgment of the Revisors of our Prayer Book in A. D. 1662, "That Book, as it stood before established by law, doth not contain in it anything contrary to the Word of God, or to sound doctrine, or which a godly man may not with a good conscience use and submit unto." (See Preface to the P. B.)

The unfortunate limiting words "Militant here on earth" were added in the Prayer Book of A. D. 1552, owing to the influence of some of the Continental Reformers. The words "here on earth" are happily omitted in the American Prayer Book.

But even now our prayer for the Church militant closes not without a distinct remembrance of the faithful departed in these words : "We also bless Thy Holy Name, O Lord, for all Thy servants departed

this life in Thy faith and fear ; beseeching Thee to give us grace so to follow their good examples, that WITH THEM we may be partakers of Thy heavenly kingdom."

(c) We remember Christ's departed saints very especially when we plead with God in the Holy Eucharist the merits of Christ's once offered, and all-perfect Sacrifice.

After all the communicants have received the Body and Blood of Christ, and after the eucharistic use of the Lord's Prayer comes a prayer of which I quote the opening sentence :

"O Lord, and Heavenly Father, we Thy humble servants entirely desire Thy Fatherly goodness mercifully to accept this our sacrifice of praise, and thanksgiving ; most humbly beseeching Thee to grant, that by the merits and death of Thy Son Jesus Christ, and through faith in His blood, we, and ALL THY WHOLE CHURCH, may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of His passion."

Observe very carefully the expression in this prayer, "We, and all Thy whole Church."

Try and take in its significance, its comprehensiveness, and the vastness of its embrace. The greater part, aye, by far the greater part of the Church of God is now in Paradise. This therefore, is a clear and distinct pleading of the merits of Christ's death for His whole Church, including those (the greater number) now in Paradise.

We plead with our God and Father, "that we, and all God's whole Church," militant on earth, and at rest in Paradise, "may obtain remission of our sins, and all other benefits of His Passion."

However some persons may be disposed to limit "the remission of our sins" to those in the Church militant on earth, it is impossible so to limit "All other benefits of His Passion," especially when we remember that in that vision of the worship rendered to our enthroned Lord by saints, by angels, and by the universe of created life, of which we are allowed to catch a glimpse in Rev. v. Jesus there appears "as a Lamb as it had been slain." That vision then teaches us amongst other things the boundless sweep of "the benefits of Christ's Passion "

(d) . Once more, we remember the departed saints on one special Festival in our Church's sacred year : The Festival of All Saints.

Then we remember all who have died in the Lord, and specially

of course our own beloved ones. By that commemoration of the faithful departed we recognize that *all* God's elect, both those on earth, and those in Paradise are "One Communion and fellowship, in the mystical Body of God's Son, Christ our Lord." In other words we recognize the truth of that article in our Creed.

"I believe in the Communion of Saints."

Such remembrances, as these various instances in our Prayer Book bring out, clearly imply that our Church teaches that those now living in Paradise are in a condition to profit by our prayers.

One more thought before I glance at the closing and final stage of "The rest that remaineth for the people of God."

We remember in our prayers God's people in Paradise: Surely the remembrance is mutual.

Affection of course survives. That is those who have passed from the life on earth to the life in Paradise do not cease to love us. Can the outpourings of such affection in prayer for their loved ones cease? Surely they who have prayed for us on earth, do not cease to pray for us in Paradise.

For example: think you that the fond wife and loving mother who prayed every day for her husband and children during her life on earth, can possibly cease to pray for them when she has passed on to the blessed life within the veil? And so of all the other relations in life.

Surely our own common sense, as well as our sanctified Christian reason assure us that those who have prayed for us on earth, do not cease to pray for us when they have entered into the Rest of the Paradise of God.

III.

Once more:

Beyond the rest which the people of God enjoy here and now in Christ our Lord:

Beyond the present rest which Christ's departed saints enjoy now in Paradise:

There is the rest, which in Holy Scripture is connected with the second coming of our dear Lord, the resurrection of the body, and the judgment thro' of the Son of Man.

This will be the final rest : the rest of perfect newness of body, soul, and spirit in the resurrection, and in the Kingdom whose centre and metropolis will be "The Heavenly Jerusalem"—"Jerusalem the Golden" of St. John's vision, and of St. Bernard's song.

This will be the perfect and final rest : the rest of completed victory ; the rest of our dear Redeemer's fully accomplished redemption : the rest of which Isaiah sings, when speaking of the future days when the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea, he says of Israel's Messiah and ours, "His rest shall be glorious."

To conclude.

May the God of all grace give us His grace to enter by faith in Christ Jesus into the present rest of the people of God, the rest of deliverance from sin's guilt and sin's power.

Then when the summons comes to us to depart hence, we may be permitted through the infinite merits of our beloved Lord and Saviour to enter into the rest of Paradise, there to be trained according to our several needs, and to look humbly and hopefully forward to the final and victorious rest of our King at His second Advent in glory.

And thus will we realize as we advance from step to step in our Christian life here on earth, and beyond in Paradise, that

"There remaineth a rest for the people of God."

THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.



"For this cause was the Gospel preached also to them that are dead, that they might be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit."—I Peter iv., 6.

The subject to which I wish to invite your most thoughtful attention this morning is this :—

THE EDUCATIONAL, AND THEREFORE PROGRESSIVE CHARACTER OF THE INTERMEDIATE LIFE ; that is, the Life in Hades, the unseen world.

Let me preface all I have to say on this subject by the remark that our light on the Intermediate Life is to be gathered, *not* from the very imperfect glimmerings of the O. T. Scriptures, but from the clearer teaching, and the fuller revelation of the N. T. Scriptures.

It is the risen Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who hath "The keys of Hades and of death." He, and He alone, "hath brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel."

To Jesus Christ, therefore, and to His Holy Apostles, whom He guided by His Holy Spirit into all truth, are we indebted for our knowledge of the Intermediate Life, that is, Life in the vast and varied realms of Hades, the world unseen.

One further prefatory remark I must make. Numerous side-issues, which this subject suggests to thoughtful minds, I must leave undiscussed. The short space of time allowed in these days to a sermon compels me to do this.

I.

My first statement is this :—

PREACHING IS A MEANS OF EDUCATION.

It is not necessary for me to prove this. However some persons to-day may be disposed to undervalue preaching, most people would admit

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.

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.”

Again, "The earth is full of Thy mercy."

Again, "God is long-suffering, and of great mercy."

Then take that statement which rings again and again through the Holy Scriptures like the sweet refrain of some sacred song :—

"Thy mercy, O God, endureth forever."

The language of one of our hymns only re-echoes these and similar statements of God's Holy Word.

"There is a wideness in God's mercy,
Like the wideness of the sea :
There is a kindness in His justice,
Which is more than liberty.

"There is no place where earth's sorrows
Are more felt than up in heaven :
There is no place where earth's failings
Have such kindly judgment given.

"There is plentiful redemption
In the Blood that has been shed :
There is joy for all the members
In the sorrows of the Head.

"For the love of God is broader
Than the measures of man's mind :
And the heart of the Eternal
Is most wonderfully kind."

But what are you going to do with the statements of Inspiration which affirm that it is God's earnest desire that all should be saved? And what are you going to do with the reiterated statements of Holy Scripture respecting the endurance, the width, the vast embrace of God's mercy, in the face of the facts, the startling and appalling facts, which confront us on every side?

Millions upon millions in Pagan and Mahomedan lands are dying without ever hearing of Jesus Christ and His blessed Gospel.

Even in Christian lands hundreds of thousands, owing to the circumstances of their depressing environment, have never heard "The Old, Old Story of Jesus and His Love." Jesus, "The Saviour of the world," is to them a Name unknown.

A city missionary visiting a dying girl in one of the slums of London, asked her if she knew Jesus Christ. "No," she said, "I never heard of Him. I am sure He does not live in our court."

Hundreds in our great cities grow up in like ignorance of Him, Who, nevertheless, is "The Saviour of all men."

Are these countless millions to perish everlastingly?

Surely, if our God will have all men to be saved: and if God's mercy, to say nothing of His fair-mindedness and justice, endureth forever, these millions, who have had no chance here of learning of Jesus and His Love and His Work for all, will, and must, have a chance of so learning hereafter in the Intermediate Life.

Yes, in all the accessible realms of Hades the Gospel of the Lord Jesus is to-day being preached to them that are dead, that hereafter they may be judged according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in the spirit.

Do you ask how, or by what ministry, is Christ's Gospel being preached to-day in the realms of Hades?

Surely that is not a very difficult question to answer, when we bear in mind that by far the larger part of Christ's Church is now in Paradise.

As from the Church of God on earth go forth to-day the preachers of Christ's Gospel throughout the world, so from the Church of God in Paradise have been going forth for many a century the preachers of the crucified and risen Saviour to all the realms of Hades, which, by God's permission, are accessible to such ministrations.

What our blessed Lord did personally during His own brief visit to Hades, He has been doing ever since, by the varied and ever-increasing ministry of His Church in Paradise.

Only thus, so it seems to me, can you begin to justify those statements of Holy Scripture which affirm God's desire that all should be saved: and those other statements which announce the endurance, the width, and the vast embrace of God's Mercy.

So far we have been contemplating the need for an educational and therefore progressive state in the Intermediate Life, from its aspect towards God.

(b) Now let us contemplate it in its aspect toward man.

Every faithful child of the Bible and the Church knows that salvation for all is only in Jesus Christ our Saviour. When we pray in the Visitation office for the sick person:

"The Almighty Lord make thee know and feel, that there is none other Name under heaven given to man, in Whom, and through Whom, thou mayest receive health and salvation, but only the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

We know that we are only echoing in this prayer the re-iterated statements of Holy Scripture.

Holy Baptism, grafting us into a living Saviour, brings us into a "State of Salvation." The Church, into which we are brought by our Baptism, is (as Acts ii. shows) the body of those "who are being saved."

But then let us go on to think of the very imperfect state of grace in which a large proportion of professing Christian people leave this life—They are in "state of salvation," but they are very far from being absolutely saved. Think further of the most imperfect development of Christian character which marks a large number of those who are called away from this earthly life.

Surely all this implies the need of an extensive work of education, development, and therefore progress to be carried on in the Intermediate Life, the Life in Hades.

I am well aware that the popular conception is that when a person who is in a "State of Salvation" dies, and enters on the Intermediate Life in Hades, all differences and distinctions of spiritual character and Christian attainment will be for ever done away, and that all will be alike perfect.

For example: we are asked to believe that the penitent bandit who at the eleventh hour of most sinful life turned to Jesus on the Cross, and recognized Him as His Saviour-King, will evince the same spiritual character, and therefore occupy the same blissful condition, and locality in Paradise as that occupied in later years by St. Paul and St. John.

But as the Rev. Arthur Chambers has shown in his "Life after Death," "The only supposition under which it would be possible to conceive of this being the case, is that the act of dying works a moral miracle." This however, is inconceivable.

"The fact is, God's moral miracles are wrought not in the act of dying but in the act of living. Moral perfection is no more reached at a single bound, than is physical and intellectual perfection. No mere change of locality will effect it."

Growth in spiritual character like every other kind of growth is slow and gradual.

If therefore a person enters the Intermediate Life in a very imperfect state of grace, with a Christian character, hardly developed at all, he must not expect that his lot, as long as he remains in that state, will be cast with those of whom we read in Heb. xii, "The spirits of just men made perfect."

There is yet another consideration which must not be lost sight of in this part of our subject.

Think of earth's bloody battlefields strewn with the dead: Think of what we read of almost every day in our newspapers; those appalling catastrophies, those railway accidents, those mining horrors, those shipwrecks, earthquakes, cyclones, tidal waves, and so on, by which thousands of our fellow-creatures are suddenly taken from the Life on earth to the Intermediate Life in Hades.

How it mitigates the inevitable sadness which we must feel when we read of those fields of battle, and of those frequent and various catastrophies, if we can bring ourselves to believe that death does *not* end all: that the school of earth may be followed by a higher school, the school of the Intermediate Life in Hades, where the imperfect work of grace begun on earth will be carried on and perfected: Where the Christian character, hardly formed here, will be developed and unfolded.

Have we any Scriptural warrant for this expectation?

There are many passages in our N. T. which bear with more or less clearness on this point. There are however two in particular which I would commend to your thoughtful consideration.

In the 4th Chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians it appears that among our Lord's objects in giving the Christian Ministry were these: "The perfecting of the saints;" and the bringing of His people "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

Will any one venture to assert that these objects have been as yet attained by any portion of the Church of God on earth?

Have any of God's saints on earth been perfected? Among the holiest of God's people have we as yet seen any who have reached

“The perfect man,” or who have attained here to “The measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ?”

And if not, does it not follow as a matter of legitimate inference, that in the Intermediate Life beyond by gradual growth, development and progress such perfection is to be reached?

If this does *not* follow, we are then confronted with the possible failure of our Lord's great purpose in the gift to His Church of the Christian Ministry.

There is yet another passage whose bearing on this subject should be carefully weighed.

St. Paul in writing to the Church at Philippi is confident that “He (God) which hath begun a good work in you will perform it, (will finish it, is the marginal reading) until the day of Jesus Christ.”

How often, by an early death or otherwise, is the good work which God has begun broken off, yes broken off here, only to be carried on in the Intermediate Life, until it is finished and perfected in the day of Jesus Christ.

III.

Passing to another part of my subject :

There is yet another reason why there must be progress in the Life to come, the Life in Hades.

The whole analogy of Nature demands it. Nature shows us that where there is no progress there is death.

All living things grow.

The departed are not dead : They are living, they are living to God, and in God, as our Lord showed in His reasoning with the Sadducees, when God called Himself, “The God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For He is not a God of the dead, but of the living : for all live unto Him.”

Therefore, the departed in Hades, absent from the earthly body, in the spiritual body, present with the Lord.

They are therefore, living : and if living they are making progress : they are growing, growing in knowledge, growing in grace, growing in likeness to our great Example, Jesus Christ, yes they are growing up unto “The perfect man” : they are gradually and slowly attaining “Unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”

According to the popular conception the Intermediate Life is for one class a hopeless Life, while for the other class it is a stagnant Life.

It is neither the one nor the other. It is not a hopeless life, because progress, improvement and growth are always possible.

It is not a stagnant life either, because such progress, such improvement, and such growth are forever and ever being carried out.

The babes in Christ are growing to be children in Christ: The children are growing to be young men, and young women in the Lord; and these last are still growing till in them our Lord's standard in His Sermon on the Mount is reached:

"Be ye perfect, as your Father also, which is in heaven, is perfect."

It is however of the highest importance to remember, as Mr. Chambers as forcibly pointed out in his "Life after Death," that our position in the Intermediate Life "will answer exactly to the degree of sanctification which has been wrought in us by the Holy Ghost, in the period before death. The road to the distant goal of moral and spiritual perfection is a long one, and every inch of the way must be traversed. When death overtakes those who, for many years, have been patiently and perseveringly plodding along that road, they will find themselves, in the unseen-life, within a measurable distance of the end. On the other hand, when death comes to those who have but only just commenced the journey, the goal will be far ahead. And between the starters and the finishers will be an intervening distance."

IV.

This leads by a natural transition to the great practical lesson of this whole subject, at which I must glance in conclusion.

THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF THE CULTIVATION AND THE FORMATION OF CHRISTIAN CHARACTER HERE AND NOW.

The author to whom I have referred says, "Thousands of Christian people are positively indifferent about the formation of character, because they do not realize that God means what He says when He states that "whatsoever a man soweth, *that* shall he also reap."

The pardon of our sins through the precious blood of Jesus cannot

reverse this law of God, or do away with the consequences of a long and evil seed-sowing.

Mr. Chambers uses a very happy illustration on this subject, which I think may help to impress upon us the vital importance of the cultivation and the formation of Christian character here and now :—

“ If we be wise men, the truth that there are different spheres of experience in the Hades-World will goad us into being earnest about our life and character. Just as we dare not be neglectful of our education in youth, because our position in later years will be affected thereby, so the cultivation of our moral and spiritual nature will be a task to which we shall devote ourselves, for the reason that we shall know that the neglect of it may involve a handicapping of ourselves in the life to come. Thus human existence will assume a greater responsibility and significance : new incentives will be given to the struggle after holiness, and a greater importance will attach itself to even the thoughts, looks, and words, as well as the actions, of our every-day life.”

Let us then, by grace of God, and by the indwelling power of the Holy Ghost, set ourselves to the cultivation of our Christian character. Above all, let us, by prayer and the diligent use of all the appointed means of grace, seek to be made more and more like Him whose Name we bear : ever remembering that our Heavenly Father has given His only Son to be both a Sacrifice for sins, and also an Example of godly life. While, then, we thankfully receive the priceless benefit of Christ's Sacrifice, let us also, by God's help and grace, daily endeavor to follow the blessed steps of Christ's most holy life.

I close with the words of a Proverb which seems to me to be appropriate to this subject, because it enforces its all-important lesson.

“ Sow an action, reap a habit :
Sow a habit, reap a character :
Sow a character, reap a destiny.”

*PRINTED AT THE "HANTS JOURNAL" OFFICE, WINDSOR, N. S.,
BY J. J. ANSLOW.*

