

**THE INTERMEDIATE STATE: AN
ESSAY UPON THE RELATION OF
PRAYER TO A CONSCIOUS AND
PROGRESSIVE LIFE IN THE
INTERMEDIATE STATE**

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The intermediate state: an essay upon the relation of prayer to a conscious and progressive life
in the intermediate state by Arthur Williamson

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ARTHUR WILLIAMSON

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THE INTERMEDIATE STATE:

AN ESSAY

UPON

THE RELATION OF PRAYER TO A CONSCIOUS
AND PROGRESSIVE LIFE
IN THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

BY

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THE INTERMEDIATE STATE.

THE subject of any part of human life which lies outside the range of known experience demands the exercise of great care in its treatment, lest the imagination be found to transgress the boundaries of truth and revelation, and the conclusions of mere speculation, prejudice, and sentiment be accepted as possessing equal credibility with those of sound and reasonable argument.

Beyond the fact of the future life itself, the *truth* of which is established by the facts revealed and taught in Holy Scripture, and the reasonableness of which is shown us in its analogy to the lessons learnt in our study of the natural world,* so placing this fundamental doctrine of the Christian religion without fear of much contradiction amongst the verities of the faith, all else that is connected with the life itself, both with its nature and possibilities, must remain a matter in greater or less degree of probable evidence.

In some points of detail connected with this future life, it is to be observed, the grounds of supposition are so strong, that there is a moral as distinguished from an actual and positive certainty of the correctness and truth of the conclusions which rest upon them, and although we abide by the statement that "probable evidence in its very nature affords but an imperfect kind of information," still, if there be a reasonable presumption that such evidence is something more than conjectural speculation, and at least of the character of "low probability," we may without violence to truth and justice, and in the absence of ascertained proof to the contrary, accept such evidence as a satisfactory foundation for faith and even practice.

* "Butler's Analogy," part i., chapter 1.

This we confess to be the nature of much of the evidence that we shall bring forward in regard to that period of the future life called *intermediate*, as coming between death and final resurrection. We at least have no wish to claim for it the authority of certain proof unless it should be in agreement with the express or justly inferential word of revelation ; at the same time we maintain, that in much of the probable evidence we shall produce, there is a credibility which should, and where the mind is not biassed by preconceived ideas will, carry great weight.

Our contention then in this Essay is that *a conscious and progressive life in the Intermediate State is a reasonable argument in support of the ancient authorised practice of prayer for the dead.*

The premise or antecedent proposition of the argument involves, it will be seen, three distinct considerations, viz., (i.) that there is a state of life intermediate between death and resurrection ; (ii.) that this life is one of conscious existence, and (iii.) that the state of life possesses certain possibilities of development and progress.

On the other hand, for the argument itself, it will be necessary to show what the ancient practice was with regard to prayer for the dead, as well as to discuss the nature of the authority on which it is found to rest.

Before, however, we enter on the subject, it is important to view its consideration generally from the standpoint of modern thought and necessity. In a speculative age, where the demand and search after orthodox truth press hardly upon the minds of men, it is a matter of no slight consequence that a careful and competent investigation of what may really be accepted as "of the faith" should always be made. Ignorance, it may be rightly assumed, can never be desirable where knowledge would be of real and essential benefit.

So in the matter before us, there is an amount of unauthorised speculation, and popular misconception as to

what really takes place after death, which forces upon us the deprecatory assertion of the Apostle made to the Thessalonian Church concerning such ignorance.*

It is only by becoming possessed of such knowledge as may be rightly entertained, we can hope to escape from the erroneous ideas of the life of "them that are asleep" which are being propagated and widely circulated in much of the popular literature on the subject. The irreverent materialism, the fanciful conjecture, the foolish superstition, the vain romance, the quixotic delusion, of much that is said and written about the condition of the departed soul, tend to destroy the dignity and true meaning of this part of the scene of future life.

It is hardly a matter of surprise that there should be a general revolt of the educated mind from such teaching: whilst at the same time it is more than necessary to seek to substitute in its place, as far as possible, the true knowledge, and by this means counteract the evil influence of that which is untrue and misleading.

We live unmistakeably in a time when a special attraction is being felt towards every subject connected with the future. There are those who would regard this as an indication of the approaching Advent of Christ, and as the awakening of a desire within the human soul which will in that day be met and satisfied. This may be true or not, but whatever be the right explanation, the fact remains that there is considerable anxiety felt in the present day to know more about all that lies beyond the range of present time and existence.

This tendency, then, of modern thought needs to be guided, or it may drift almost unconsciously into the tide of speculation, which is often more disastrous to the cause of truth than actual unbelief, and certainly less welcome to it than ignorance.

Returning to the previous point, viz., the prevailing ignorance at this special crisis on the subject of the Intermediate State,

* 1 Thess. iv. 13.