

THE LIVING PULPIT,

OR

EIGHTEEN SERMONS

BY EMINENT LIVING DIVINES

OF

THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH.

WITH

A BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF THE EDITOR,

BY GEO. W. BETHUNE, D. D.

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CHRIST, THE LIFE OF HIS PEOPLE.

A DISCOURSE

TO ILLUSTRATE THE NATURE OF THE DIVINE LIFE; AND ITS DEVELOPMENT IN OUR SPIRITUAL, OUR MORTAL, AND OUR ETERNAL BEING.

BY

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Christ, who is our life.—COL. iii. 4.

THE grand point of view in which we should habitually contemplate the Scriptures, is as a divine revelation of the only mode in which lost sinners can be saved. As a history of much that has happened in this world of ours, the enduring importance of its statements results from their setting before us the method in which this salvation is brought to light, and applied practically to men. As a spiritual system, unfolding and enforcing a most peculiar view of the unseen world, and our relations to it, its living power is derived from the bearing of its doctrines upon our eternal destiny, as depraved creatures to whom divine mercy is offered in a particular way. As a code of morals suited to direct the conscience, and to regulate the life of such beings as we

are, it is the connection of its precepts with the doctrines which constitute its spiritual system, and the dependence of both upon its great proposal of salvation for sinners, which invests its rules of duty with so much majesty, and gives such sublime force to the idea of duty itself. As a source of support, of consolation, of peace, and of joy, in such a world as this, and in such a course as our pilgrimage through it must needs be, it can avail us nothing, except as we receive its precepts, and accept its doctrines, and believe its statements, as one and the other bear directly upon the grand conception of the Gospel—salvation for lost sinners. Every thing short of this is little better than trifling with our own souls. Every thing inconsistent with this is little else than handling the word of God deceitfully.

Whatever men may imagine concerning other portions of the contents of God's Word, it is past all doubt that the portion which relates to the person, the work, and the glory of the Lord Jesus, must be invested with divine power, or must be absolutely useless in the matter of our salvation. That part of the Scriptures is a glorious revelation, or it is a most empty imposture. Let us proudly conceive what may suit our vain and foolish hearts, about the history, the morality, nay, even the religion of the Bible, using the word religion in its largest sense, and persuade ourselves, if we will, that all these things are level to our unaided faculties, and that no divine wisdom, nor any divine power, is manifested in them. The moment we come upon the conception of the Son of God incarnate to save sinners, and begin to expatiate amidst any of the multiplied

and overwhelming exhibitions which are made, throughout the Scriptures, of this vast conception, we find ourselves carried at once, into a region where, at every step, we must recognise the guidance and the presence of God, or we must nerve ourselves before the most daring of all human impostures, invested with more than all human force and grace, and all available to no end. There is not one solitary point connected with the person, the work, or the glory of Jesus Christ—nothing that touches his humiliation or exaltation—that is involved in his prophetic, his priestly, or his kingly office—that concerns his incarnation, his sacrifice, or his resurrection—that fits him to be the Redeemer of God's elect, or exhibits his work of redemption—that relates to his eternal being or his eternal reign; there is absolutely nothing, in the presence of which human nature can stand and say, I know this to be true, or, I know this to be effectual in the manner, and for the end proposed! God must utter it, God must propound it, or it must be uttered and propounded alike in mockery of God and man—an audacious braving of the majesty of heaven—a ferocious trifling with the sorrows and the hopes of earth—a fiendish aggravation of the woes of hell!

The alternative we take is the one which gives us peace and reconciles us to God. They who like can take the other, and reap its fruits. Taking that alternative, we must bear in mind its fundamental condition as a question to be settled at the bar of human reason, namely, that this whole doctrine of Christ, and of the salvation offered to us through

him, is a matter of pure and absolute revelation. It is God who has spoken, it is God who propounds it to us; we accept, in its simplicity and its fulness, every word which has proceeded out of the mouth of God; and we attest our sincerity herein by sitting down at the feet of Jesus, to learn of him, and by resting our souls upon him. We must remember, also, the second great condition, which in the very nature of the case controls the whole question, namely, that all these utterances of God, all that he propounds concerning his only begotten Son, are matters connected, more or less, directly with the salvation of lost sinners, and that herein lies the sum total of our interest in it all. Thus full of the sense of God's presence in his Word; thus alive to the awful interest with which that Word is invested for us—there is no part of it in which we may not find some manifestation of that infinite grace in which all of it is conceived, and we shall see, with joyful surprise, how directly and how continually this recovery of our souls is its burden and its theme. Amongst ten thousand other passages, my text is all alive with this precious Saviour, and this great salvation. To him as our life, and to the nature of the life we enjoy in him, in our spiritual, our mortal, and our eternal being, the apostle, in this passage, directs our thoughts. Such is, therefore, the subject of our present meditations.

Amongst the things expressly revealed to us, concerning the origin and destiny of our race, are these which follow, namely, that the Lord Jesus Christ is the only and the absolute Creator of the entire physical universe, and every part of it; that he is

the author of all that we call *life*, the bestower of every thing that we understand by conscious existence, throughout the universe; and that every form, and every grade of what we mean by *intelligence*, from the lowest manifestation of it, in any living thing, up to its most exalted exhibition in his presence around God's throne, is an emanation and a gift from him. (John i. 1—14.) By the entrance of sin, first into heaven, and then upon the earth, this universal frame of nature has fallen under God's curse; and every creature that possesses conscious existence, and every being endowed with intelligence—each in proportion to its own degree, and its own connection and dependence with fallen angels and fallen men—has lost its primeval estate, and fallen under the divine wrath. (Gen. iii. 14—19; Rom. v. 12—21, and viii. 20—23; Jude 6.)

The wages of sin is death; (Rom. vi. 23.) This is the comprehensive, the unalterable necessity which pervades the universe, and which God has announced to us as the simple and universal result of the administration of divine justice against sinners. They who sin must die; transgression leads directly to death; in the nature of the case, and without any exception, and by the eternal ordination of God, when lust hath conceived it bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death, (James i. 15.) This terrible and universal penalty of sin is set before us in the Scriptures in a threefold light.

1. In a point of view purely moral; namely, the separation of our whole man, in this life, from the likeness and favour of God—which is spiritual death.
2. In a point of view purely physical; namely, the

separation of our souls and bodies from each other—which is temporal death. 3. In a point of view resulting from a certain combination of both the preceding; namely, the ruin of our souls and bodies in hell for ever—which is the second death. (Ephesians ii. 1—3; Ecclesiastes xii. 7; Matt. xxv. 41; Rev. xx. 14.) To each one of these conditions, as fully comprehended in the penalty of death denounced against sin, every sinner of the human race is exposed. He is liable to have the sentence of death executed upon him, in every one of these aspects, in exact proportion, as to the measure of its relative severity, as comparing the case of one sinner with another, to the demerit of his offences. As a sinner, he already lies under the condemnation, and only awaits the full execution of the entire sentence, because God does not desire him to perish, but would rather he should turn and live. Under each aspect of the penalty denounced against him for his sins, is involved all the sorrows and all the anguish which the very vilest can ever incur or endure; and he may so run to the most terrible excess of riot, that the depth of his pollution and spiritual death, the anguish and degradation of his physical existence, and the temporal death which will close it, and the eternal agonies of his soul and body in hell, when the second death shall swallow him up for ever—may make any sinner, who now least expects it, a monument of eternal horror. As sinners, we are actually, to every moral intent, dead in trespasses and in sins; as sinners, we are actually dying daily, as to every physical intent; as sinners, we have not yet incurred the irreversible sentence of

the second death, simply because our souls and our bodies are not yet separated by the stroke of temporal death. To add to all the terrors of such a condition, it is absolutely remediless by all human means; nay, even according to any human conception; and the interposition of God himself is liable to conditions resulting from his own glorious being, and from the very nature of his relations to his fallen creatures, which appal human reason, and crush the wildest human hopes. We have not only incurred this death—we have not only deserved it—but our destiny is cast under a divine administration, in which there is an absolute necessity for that which is deserved to be done; an unalterable determination to inflict that which is incurred.

Thus are we undone; thus are we sold under sin; thus are we shut up under the law. All behind us is shame; all within us and around us is darkness; all before us is terror. And now it is, through all this gloom, and above all this despair, that heavenly accents fall upon our trembling hearts: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest!" And then the majestic utterance, before which hell and the grave tremble, bursts over our troubled souls: "He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me, shall never die!" And then the sublime and consoling appeal, at once to our reason and our faith: "The first man, Adam, was made a living soul; he was of the earth, earthy; as is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy; and ye have borne the image of the earthy. But the last Adam was made a quickening spirit; he is the

Lord from heaven; as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly; and ye shall also bear the image of the heavenly." (Matt. xi. 28; John xi. 25, 26; 1 Cor. xv. 45—9). "Behold the new and living way! He who knew no sin hath been made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. Jesus Christ hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel." (2 Cor. v. 21; 2 Tim. i. 10.)

Now, then, standing in the very centre of the plan of salvation, we are prepared, as we look in all directions through the unsearchable riches of God's grace, to appreciate with clearness the sense in which Christ is our life. And knowing that all that was lost through the first Adam is more than recovered through the last, and that where sin hath abounded and reigned unto death, grace shall much more abound and reign through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord, we may, with a firm hand, take up and unravel the thread of our sad destiny as sinners; and, as we retrace the points of our condemnation unto death, develop that life of our souls, of our bodies, and of both united to all eternity, which, though we be dead, is hid with Christ in God.

And, *First*, of Christ, as the life of our souls.—If you would either see or enter into the kingdom of God—if you would comprehend or possess the divine life—you must be born again. This is the simplest, the most elemental principle of spiritual religion. Do not marvel at it, said Christ to Nicodemus, for it is the first and the clearest part of all that portion of the mystery of Christ which is developed in this

world; and the comprehension and reception of this earthly part lie at the foundation of our ability to comprehend and to possess all its heavenly parts. Do you not perceive? You are dead in sin: but God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, that all who looked upon it might live, so is the Son of Man lifted up, a sacrifice for sin, that a divine Saviour, crucified for us, might become the specific object of that saving faith by which, being united to him, we obtain eternal life. For, by our union with him, he bears our sins in his own body on the tree, and offers up to divine justice a full satisfaction for them all. Now, then, can God be just and justify those who believe in Jesus Christ. But still further—this offering up by Christ of himself for the redemption of his people hath wrought far deeper than any outward work, even for the pardon of sin. That which is spirit can be born only of the Spirit; and your spirit is dead, in the only sense in which a spirit can die; it is corrupt, depraved, alienated from God. The life inherited from the living soul, Adam, is utterly forfeited and polluted, and is incapable of being healed again any more for ever—ininitely incapable of recreating itself. But there is a power adequate to this new creation; and there is, as has been already shown, a ground and a cause adequate to justify it. The eternal love of God is cause enough, and the infinite sacrifice of his Son Jesus Christ, is ground enough; and it is plain enough, that if we could live at all by reason of our connection with that first

Adam, who was only a living soul, we may also live a new and better life by reason of our connection with the last Adam, who is a life giving spirit. - A spiritual power, sent down from heaven, is therefore expressly declared by Christ to be the efficient agency in our new creation; and this is true, without exception, concerning every one that is born again. Because God has loved us with an unchangeable love, Christ has redeemed us with his most precious blood; and the divine Spirit of life covenanted in that blood, and purchased by it, sets us free from the power of sin and death. opens our eyes, and turns us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that we may receive forgiveness of sins and inheritance amongst them which are sanctified by faith that is in Christ. As the wind bloweth where it listeth, so this free Spirit, sovereign as it is divine, cometh and goeth, not by mortal control; but so cometh and goeth as for ever to justify and honour Christ; for ever to condemn the world for its darkness and its evil deeds; for ever to comfort and bless all the children of the light and the truth; for ever to manifest his special presence while he abides, and leave ineffaceable proofs of his work when it is done. (John iii. 1—21.)

Verily—verily—is the reiterated assurance of Christ; marvel not—marvel not—his earnest command. Why should we doubt—why distrust God? This doctrine of a spiritual and supernatural regeneration is not only distinctly and continually asserted throughout the Scriptures, as the very foundation of the life of God in our souls, but it underlies every portion of God's dealings with the human race, both

in time and eternity, as those dealings are explained to us in his holy Word. When we speak of the fall of man, we utter we know not what, unless we intend to signify that man has lost the image of God and needs to be restored to it. When we dilate on the whole work of Christ, in his estate of humiliation, we rob that tremendous dispensation of all its significance the moment we lose sight of the condition of man, as helpless and depraved, and the necessity of a divine intervention to save him from perdition. When we speak of the entire work of the Holy Ghost, we utter sheer nonsense, unless we mean that man needs, and that God has provided, in the agency of that Spirit, the effectual means of his moral renovation. When we think of God as the moral ruler and final judge of a race of sinners, we have no alternative but to admit the universal destruction of the whole race, or to admit the existence of some divine and efficacious mode of restoring a sinful soul to God. When we contemplate our race as rational creatures, having any souls at all, no matter how sinful those souls may be, it is the merest absurdity to speak of any regeneration for them that is not purely spiritual; and when we survey them as helpless creatures, morally helpless through their depravity, though still spiritual creatures, every thing short of supernatural aid is a mere trifling with their despair. Every part of the plan of salvation revealed in the Scriptures involves the idea of a supernatural and spiritual regeneration of the soul of man; and every fact upon which that glorious plan rests, and every issue to which it points, is contradicted and rendered nugatory the

moment we reject the doctrine of the Holy Ghost in its divine fulness. And then, to crown all, and as if to set in the most awful light God's estimate of the necessity under which we lie, to perish if we are not born again, and of the clearness with which that necessity is revealed to men, he forewarns us that the sin against the Holy Ghost is one for whose pardon we need not pray, for it will never be forgiven! Yet, beyond all doubt, a low appreciation of the work of God's Spirit in the hearts of the children of men lies at the root of most of the heresies that now dishonour and deface the nominal Church of God, and is the cause of most of the deadness and unfruitfulness of the true followers of Christ. Belief in the efficacy of forms and ceremonies, confidence in the power of rites and ordinances, bigotted advocacy of errors and delusions, daring rejection of saving truths, growing indifference to instructive and pungent ministrations, aversion to strictness in doctrine and in life, mournful departures from simplicity and spirituality, shallow interpretations of God's word, increase of ostentation and laxity in all religious things, and wide spread restlessness, commotion, and love of carnal excitement in spiritual matters; all these, and how many other sorrowful proofs rise upon every side, to attest that the work of the Spirit is not cherished amongst men, and that Christ is not the life of their souls in that exalted sense which the Scriptures inculcate, and which other times have witnessed. It is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing. (John vi. 43—65.)

Still, the life of God in the soul remains the fun-

damental necessity of every renewed heart, as it is the first and simplest element of practical Christianity; and in connection with the aspect of it presented in my text, there are several things further which ought to be briefly suggested, before I pass from this topic. You will note, in the first place, the peculiar turn of the apostle's thought. He does not content himself with saying, that we have a life derived from Christ, nor yet that Christ has bestowed on us a life essentially like his own; but he mounts to the loftiest height, and declares that Christ is himself our life! Christ is found in his people, the hope of glory. In receiving, accepting, and relying upon him, there is a lofty and hallowed sense in which they are nourished by him. I am, said he, the bread of life! (John vi. 48.) Beside all that Christ has uttered—and he spake as never man spake; beside all that he hath done for us—and he hath done more than it has entered into our hearts to conceive; there is Christ himself, the friend, the teacher, the master, the Saviour, the very life of our souls! Again: you are to remember that this abolishing of our spiritual death by Christ, and this regeneration of our souls by his Spirit, is the condition not only of all other and further mercies to be received through him, but, in part, constitutes our very capacity to enjoy any of them aright, and the chief of them at all. The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Without form and without comeliness; or the chiefest amongst ten thousand, and altogether lovely; one or other of these two is the only view we can

take of him. One is the view of a dead soul, hastening to perdition, and fit only for it. The other is the view of a living soul, renewed in the image of the invisible God, and meet to partake of the inheritance of the saints in light. Once more: you will bear in mind that the Lord has said, this spiritual regeneration is an earthly, in contradistinction to a heavenly, thing. It must occur, if it occurs at all, while you are in the flesh. The life of Jesus, if it is ever manifested in us, "must be made manifest in our body"—"in our mortal flesh." (2 Cor. iv. 10, 11.) Temporal death puts an end for ever, to every hope of impenitent men. From the instant that the soul and the body are separated, the expectation of the wicked shall perish. Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do with thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest. (Eccl. ix. 10.) Still further: you may rejoice in the divine assurance, that the gift of this new and imperishable life in Jesus Christ, draws after it every other blessing, and every other benefit of the covenant of grace, in so far as is needful to bring you off more than conquerors, through him that loved us. Many toils—many tears—fightings without—fears within—troubles on every hand—fierce temptations—fearful backslidings—the malice of hell—the plagues of your heart! It is no light thing to make such sinners angels of light. Nevertheless it can be done. It has been done. It will be done again. If when we were enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more being reconciled we shall be saved by his life! For I am persuaded that

neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Rom. v. 10, and viii. 38, 39.) And finally: you may take continual comfort, and make continual progress in that new life into which you have been begotten by the Holy Ghost; more and more of the knowledge of God; a conformity unto him, greater and greater; an insight into his word, and into divine things, deeper and deeper; a love of Christ more and more fervent; a more rooted abhorrence of all sin; increasing joy in the Holy Ghost; compassion for sinners, tenderer every day; hardness borne as becomes a good soldier of the cross; the good fight of faith manfully waged; the cross borne aloft through our pilgrimage; Christ, and him crucified, more and more the life of our souls! For the Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, doth grant, according to the riches of his glory, that you may be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend, with all saints, what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye may be filled with all the fulness of God. Therefore, unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the Church, by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. (Eph. iii. 16—21.)

Secondly—Of Christ as the life of our mortal nature. I remind you that the whole doctrine of Christ is matter of pure revelation. It is only from God himself that we can know what Christ is, and what Christ does. All this is not less true concerning every portion of Christ's work in us, and every part of our relations to him, than concerning the essential truths which relate to his own being, and to his relations to the Godhead, and to the whole universe, of which he is the central object.

Temporal death, as we call the separation of the human soul and body, is to the human race the direct result of the entrance of sin into the world. God not only forewarned Adam of a fact infinitely certain, in the nature of that dependence in which the whole creation stood, but denounced to him the ordained penalty of transgression, when he told him that in the day he should eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, "dying he should die." From that moment he and all his race should endure the power, and incur the judgment of death in their bodies, as well as pollution in their souls; and starting from that point of deliberate rejection of God, dying they should die, man after man, and generation after generation, as long as the curse of a violated covenant, and the penalty of a broken law, worked together with the power of sin in the ruins of their fallen nature. And then, after the work of ruin was begun, and to prevent the immortal continuance of death itself upon the earth, "lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever," the Lord God drove out the man from the garden of Eden, and placed a cherubim and a

flaming sword to keep the way of the tree of life. (Gen. ii. 17, and iii. 22—24.) Expounding and enforcing these solemn truths, prophets and apostles have argued the whole matter with unusual fulness, and made it clear above most of the wonders of our being. By one man, even Adam, sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. That offence was an act of deliberate disobedience; and that death which followed it, was not only a condemnation, but a judgment. And if we shall say that death reigned from Adam to Moses, that is, before the giving of the law, and that sin is not imputed when there is no law, and, therefore, death cannot be either the fruit or the penalty of sin; the divine answer is, that we have just perverted the facts and drawn an inference that is precisely opposite to the one which those facts imply. For as death *is* both the fruit and the penalty of sin, God being the judge, the reign of death, before the law was given, proves that there is a law deeper than that given by Moses, even that covenant of works, under whose curse we lie, and that law of our very being, created in the image of God, and that law of eternal order, and fitness, and truth, which is involved in the very being of God, and to which he has made the human conscience responsive; and that the violation of each one of these primeval laws is, in a proper sense, sin, and is imputed. Again, if we answer further, that death reigned, even from the beginning, over those who never sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression; that is, over those who never wilfully transgressed the known law of God, and, therefore, this

plainly shows that death is neither the fruit nor the penalty of sin, the divine response is, that herein we abuse ourselves by a false idea of sin, as before by a false idea of law; for the fundamental truth being, that death is the result of sin, simply, absolutely and universally, in the absence of known law and deliberate transgression, death proves the existence of that which is properly sin, and which God will impute; namely, sin in our very being, original and congenital with us, derived from the first parent of our race, as its natural and its covenanted head, in whom we fell. And again, if we now turn to attack the very nature of such an order of things, and urge that it cannot be after this fashion, because it involves that the sin of Adam should be imputed to his race; that through the offence of one man judgment should come upon all men to condemnation; that for one offence so terrible and universal ruin should occur; and that by the fall and death of one man death should pass upon all men; the divine answer is, that as before we deceived ourselves as to the nature of sin, and the nature of law, so here we delude ourselves about the nature of God's relations to his creatures, and attack the very foundations of divine grace. For the righteousness of Christ must be imputed to his people; the obedience and sacrifice of Christ must lie at the foundation of that free gift which came upon all men to justification of life; and by one man, even Jesus Christ, and by one sacrifice of himself, grace must reign through righteousness unto eternal life; or else, where sin has abounded it must continue to abound for ever, and where death has reigned it must continue to reign eternally. Rom. v. 12—21.

Taking their start from this point, the Scriptures develop the whole dispensation of man. For awhile he abides here on earth, his ordinary condition being that of an immortal but sinful soul united to a mortal and sinful body, and his best estate that of a partially sanctified soul united to that mortal and sinful body. His soul may be regenerated, and to a certain degree sanctified, while in union with the body; and this change, as has been shown, must occur during that union here below, or never occur at all. By and by he dies. His soul and his body are separated; the latter returning to the dust, as it was—the former to God who gave it. In their separated state, regenerated souls pass at death into the presence and fruition of God; and impenitent souls pass to a place of torment. Of the whole human race two men only, Enoch and Elijah, have as yet escaped the stroke of death; and at the second coming of Christ, his people who are then alive will also escape that stroke. (1 Cor. xv. 31; 1 Thess. iv. 15—17.) But that second coming of Christ will cut short this dispensation of man upon earth, and bring death itself to its second great arbitrement. The dead will arise. A resurrection of life—a resurrection of damnation. This is the end of temporal death. The souls and the bodies of men are united once more, and so united will undergo the final judgment. (1 Cor. xv.)

It is said of our divine Redeemer, that in order that he might be a merciful and faithful High Priest, it behooved him to be made like unto his brethren in all things. (Heb. ii. 17.) In every part, therefore, of this human dispensation, this resem-

blance exists to the utmost degree possible. He has taken a true human soul, and a true human body, into ineffable and eternal union with his divine nature. The man Jesus of Nazareth was as really a man as any man that ever was born of woman, though supernaturally made in the womb of the virgin Mary, and so not begotten under the covenant of works, and thus not polluted by original sin. He tabernacled amongst men—tempted in all points like as they are, and bearing all those temporal sorrows which the Scriptures embrace under the wide appellation of death—so far as that was possible to one free from sin. Being sinless, he was, so to speak, naturally free from temporal death, in its proper sense, whether as the fruit or the penalty of sin. Though he was crucified, yet it is also true that he laid down his life, of which there was no power in the universe that was able to rob him. (John x. 18.) Like his brethren, who are to be changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, he was transfigured upon the mount. Like his brethren, who endure the stroke of death, he also gave up the ghost. Like his brethren, whose separate souls dwell with God, while their bodies sleep in the grave, his separate human soul was in the bosom of God, while his human body laid three days in the sepulchre. Like his brethren, who are to arise and shine, he first of all arose from the dead. And so we may not doubt that the parallel will complete itself utterly; and his brethren like him will yet walk the earth in their resurrection bodies, and then ascend like him in glory to the highest heavens! (Rev. xx. 4, 6, 15.)

Now, then, I may group together, as under the preceding head, several topics too essentially connected with the subject matter of my text, to be passed by even in the briefest exposition of the subject. And, first: you will perceive how absolutely our life depends on Christ, and how completely the whole scheme of the resurrection rests upon him and terminates in him. Since the fall, we are as essentially mortal as we are depraved. In him we not only live and move and have our being; by him and for him not only were all things created, and by him do all things consist; but, since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead; for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. (1 Cor. xv. 21, 22.) Except by the power of Christ, and for the sake of Christ, there is no reason why the human race, or any individual of it, should live for a single moment, or receive a single mercy while they live; or why, having died, they should rise again from the dead; just as there is no reason why any human being should be either regenerated or sanctified, except for the sake and by the work of Christ; for to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be the Lord both of the dead and living. (Rom. xiv. 9.) Again: It is very obvious from what has just been said, how fundamental to the whole theory of Christianity, and therefore to the whole destiny of man, is the fact of the resurrection of Christ himself. To establish this fact is one main end of all the Gospels; to illustrate its bearing is one capital object in all the discourses of the apostles and inspired evangelists that have come down to us; and to settle it in our hearts as

a truth, at once infinitely certain and infinitely pregnant, is the aim of perhaps a larger portion of the New Testament Scriptures than is devoted to any other single point; for if Christ did not rise from the dead, then we shall never rise; then is our preaching vain, and your faith vain; then are the apostles false witnesses of God, and we are yet in our sins, and all they which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. But if Christ, who is the image of the invisible God, and the first born of every creature, has risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that slept, then it is certain that in him shall all be made alive, every man in his own order, and next after Christ himself they that are Christ's at his coming. (1 Cor. xv. 3—23.) Still further: though the union of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ, and his death and resurrection, establish the unalterable certainty of the utter destruction of temporal death and the resurrection of the whole human race, yet the resurrection of the righteous, and the resurrection of the wicked, will be infinitely diverse in their manner and in their results. It is of the bodies of men only that the Scriptures predicate the idea, and proclaim the fact, of a resurrection. Death and resurrection will produce on the bodies of the righteous a change so far analogous as is possible to the change wrought upon their souls by regeneration and sanctification; and they will in like manner produce upon the bodies of the wicked a change analogous to that produced in their souls, by the total and final withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from them, and their own complete and irreversible rejection of Christ and salvation.

There will be a resurrection of life and a resurrection of damnation. In the latter, the wicked will rise to shame and everlasting contempt; monuments of dishonour, of corruption and of the second death. In the former, the righteous will arise to incorruption, immortality and eternal glory; monuments of the grace of God and of the triumph of Christ over his last enemy. (Rev. xx. 4—15.) Once more: in the very nature of the whole case, as the Scriptures open it to us, the necessity of our enduring what we do, is clearly set forth. God has provided for us an immortal existence, not here, but in another and higher estate. For his own glory, and for our blessedness, the scheme of redemption is so arranged as to operate upon us partly while our souls and bodies are united, partly after they are separated, and partly after they are united again. In the first period of its operation, it proposes to do nothing directly for our mortal nature, beyond what is involved in the bearing of its provisions for our immortal part upon our mortal during its pilgrimage. Therefore we suffer, and weep, and die. Jesus himself suffered, and wept, and died. Yet even in these conditions the grace of God presses to the very limit of the possibility which his own glorious goodness and wisdom had established. Our sufferings are made the means of drawing us to Christ and perfecting us in holiness; our tears are wiped away as they flow, by the hand of God himself; all the struggles through which we pass give greater vigour to the life of God within us; when we come to die, our very death is precious in the sight of God, and the grave yields to us a glorious victory; and then comes the resurrec-

tion, to own and crown us heirs of light! (Psalms xxxvii; Rom. viii.) And, finally: from the beginning to the end of all, how completely is Christ our life; and how wonderfully is the foundation of all laid, and the surprising result brought about! In such a world as this, what would we be without a throne of grace to which we could flee? Amidst the afflictions and temptations of life, what are we without divine support? Under the burden of sin, and the doom of impending death, and the darkness of a fathomless eternity, whither can we turn without a Saviour? But who would ever have thought, with hearts full of enmity to God, of asking him to save us, by the sacrifice of his only begotten Son? Who would have conceived the idea of the incarnation, or, after it, that of redemption by the blood of Christ? Who would have imagined the stupendous concatenation of removing the sting of death by removing the virulence of sin; of getting rid of the guilt of sin by satisfying the law which denounced it; of silencing the law itself, by enduring its curse and penalty; of conquering death, which the law denounced, by entering into the consuming and pitiless grave? In such a case, such a plan, with such a result! Oh! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! Oh! the unsearchable riches of Christ! (1 Cor. xv. 54—58; Eph. iii. 8—21.)

Thirdly, of Christ as the life of our eternal being. The Scriptures hardly recognize what we ordinarily call life, as an estate worthy of that name. The pollution of our moral nature, the darkness of our rational faculties, and the perishing and suffering

condition of our physical man, make up an estate not so much of life as of living death; the resurrection of the wicked is expressly distinguished from a resurrection of life, by being called a resurrection of damnation; and the final estate of the impenitent is denominated their second death—the doom of Satan, and of all who are deceived by him, of “the beast and the false prophet,” and of all whose names are not found written in the Book of Life. (Rev. xx. 10—15.) God alone hath life in himself; and the Lord Jesus, claiming for himself this divine prerogative, and the right, at his own good pleasure, to bestow life upon others, expressly sets it forth as a proof of his own Godhead. Himself the way, the truth, and the life, it was his express errand upon earth to bestow eternal life upon as many as the Father had given him; and this, saith he, is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent. (John v. 26, and xvii. 3.) I have already traced the operation of this incorruptible life in man, up to the period of the resurrection. It remains, under the present topic, to indicate briefly its after course.

God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead. (Acts xvii. 31.) This, you will observe, is the pith of the crushing argument why men ought to repent of their sins, addressed by the great apostle of the Gentiles to the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in the Areopagus at Athens; the last men to hear, and the last place in which to utter such an

appeal, unless there was that in it to which the human conscience responds, and on which the human reason may rest. Somewhat dilated the argument might run thus: You are sensible of your ill desert, and that you ought to be held accountable for it; the proper result of that state of mind is repentance; but this is the more urgent when you consider that your inward sense of ill desert and accountability is but the shadow of your impending destiny, for the true God has in fact appointed not only a time to judge you, but also the judge, even Jesus Christ, whom I preach unto you; and of these truths he has given you absolute assurance in the resurrection of Jesus, which resurrection not only I, and hundreds besides, still live to attest, but which the power of the divine truths I proclaim, and the power of the eternal Spirit accompanying those truths in your souls, which truths and which Spirit alike proceed from Christ, enforces with an intimate and divine demonstration. Probably not one of these sceptics and fatalists had ever, before he saw Paul, had any distinct idea of any single one of all the great elements of this universal and overwhelming argument, delivered that day on Mars' hill. Natural enough, therefore, was it that some mocked, and that others doubted; and most natural of all that the link they struck at in the argument was the one they knew least about, and on which all turned—the resurrection of the dead; for even they could see, and that on the first hearing, that if that were true, all the rest must needs follow. Howbeit, Dionysius the Areopagite, and certain men beside, and a woman named Damaris, and others with her, clave unto Paul and be-

lieved; God thus attesting that his servant had divine warrant for what he uttered. And therein, through eighteen centuries, down to this very hour, the proclamation of this impending judgment—of its divine demonstration—and of its eternal issues—has been the burden of the message of Christ's servants to a ruined world. To it we are now come.

Let us stand first in the midst of the just, that we may see how completely Christ, in this tremendous period of their being, is to every one of them eternal life. Here are the redeemed of every race—every age. Patriarchs, prophets, apostles, martyrs—all are there. They who had seen from afar the promised Messiah; they who had followed him as he went in and out upon earth, despised and rejected of men; they who had heard and believed, through all succeeding ages, the sound of him, as it went out through the whole world, not one of them is missing. The throng that had fought the good fight; the hosts that had passed through great tribulation; the multitudes who had sung the song of rejoicing, and the still greater multitudes who had wept all along the ascent of Zion; pilgrims who had counted their years by centuries; pilgrims whose days had been few and evil; pilgrims snatched from the evil to come, who had seen of earth only the valley of the shadow of death; multitudes—multitudes—thousand thousands—ten thousand times ten thousand! Here and there are scattered those who never tasted death; they had been changed in a moment at the coming of the Lord. The rest had been with Christ in glory, and their sleeping dust had heard the trump of God; and now they stand arrayed in glo-

rious, spiritual bodies. Mortal has put on immortality; death is swallowed up in victory! And yet it is judgment, eternal judgment, to which they have come. And there are thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers, and heavenly hierarchies—all the exalted spirits of the upper world. And in the midst of all—enthroned in light that is inaccessible and full of glory—one like unto the Son of man—the Judge of quick and dead! Think of Pilate's bar—where he once stood and was condemned, and then see him seated on the throne of the universe, with all that universe contains of pure and good, waiting with adoring trust to hear his judgments. Think of his crown of thorns, and then behold the diadems which are cast down before him, in token of exulting love that will not be repressed! Think of the cruel mockings, the unpitied agony of Calvary, and then listen to the triumphant alleluias that arise around his throne, and, mounting with eternal melody, strain after strain, from countless millions, re-echo from the highest spheres, and swell beyond the farthest star! Alleluia! salvation, and glory, and honour, and power unto the Lord our God! Alleluia! King of Kings, and Lord of Lords! (Matt. xxv. 31; Rev. v. 9—13; xv. 3; xix. 1—16.)

Yes, it is a judgment, but a judgment of the just made perfect. Of the countless millions who have part in that resurrection of life, there is not one who has not been washed in the blood of the Lamb, and been made a king and a priest unto God. (Rev. i. 5—6.) It is not a judgment to ascertain whether they will be saved or not—for they are saved already; nor to ascertain whether they are worthy of

eternal life—for every one of them has already received it at the hands of Christ. Most of them have been with him in glory; the rest were changed, and caught up to him, at his second coming. But still the Books are opened—that Book which is the rule of eternal judgment—God's blessed Word, which we have in our hands to-day; the Books of convincing testimony, in which is written the whole record of our lives; the Book, also, in which are set down the names of the redeemed—the Lamb's Book of Life! One by one the story of every saved sinner is traced. All the secrets of his heart are revealed—all the actions of his life are recounted—all the greatness of his ill desert established and confessed. But along with all this, the dealings of Christ with his soul—the commencement, the progress, the consummation, of the grace of God towards him—the life of God within him. And then his glorified Saviour, the God-man, proclaims, as King of Kings, the result he has reached as eternal Judge, and the precise method of that result in that individual case. Come, ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world! Here is the mansion you are to inhabit for evermore; here is your seat at the marriage supper of the Lamb; here is the light with which you are to shine to all eternity; here is the service in which you are to be glorified for ever and ever! Enter into the joy of your Lord; inherit eternal life! And then new alleluias arise from all the armies of Heaven! And so another exhibition of God's method of grace and salvation, and renewed alleluias. And then another, and another, and another; onward, and onward, as

the eternal cycles pass over a universe in which time no longer exists to be measured; until every manifestation of God's grace in every redeemed sinner shall be exhibited to all the angels of God, and to all the just made perfect; and until the fact and the method of salvation, in the case of every saved sinner, shall be judicially ascertained, and the position of each one in the heavenly hosts proclaimed from the throne of God, in the hearing of all worlds! Oh! what majesty to God; what blessedness to the redeemed; what glory with Christ their life in this first period of their eternal being, as they reign with him in the heavenly Jerusalem, and expatiate through a universe wherein he has made all things new! (Matt. xxv.; 2 Pet. iii.; Rev. xx.)

And where are the impenitent? David has told us long ago that sinners shall not stand in the congregation, nor the ungodly in the judgment of the righteous. (Psalm i. 5.) Christ himself has said, that when he comes in glory he will separate the blessed from the accursed, as a shepherd separates his sheep from his goats, and then will judge the righteous first, and afterwards doom the accursed. (Matt. xxv. 32.) We are abundantly informed that there is a first and a second resurrection; that there is an eternal order, both in the resurrection and the judgment, by which the triumphant acquittal of the redeemed precedes the doom of the wicked; and by which the rest of the dead live not again till the thousand years are fulfilled, during which those who have part in the first resurrection live and reign with Christ. (1 Cor. xv. 23. Rom. xx. 3—6.) And now, when the hour is come for the Lord Jesus to be re-

vealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, they shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power. (2 Thess. i. 7—8.) Now is the hour fully come for fire to come down from God out of heaven and destroy all the wicked; for hell to give up the dead that are in it; for Satan to be cast into the lake of fire; for death and hell to perish; for the enemies of God to be tormented day and night for ever and ever; for the second death to begin its interminable reign! (Rev. xx.) As we contemplate this scene of horror, and bear in mind that we have deserved to incur its eternal woe, and will escape it only because Christ is our life, we ought to have some foretaste of the thrill with which the hosts of God turn away from the abyss and shout hosannah to the Lamb!

There is another point. The Scriptures teach us, with abundant clearness, that although every part of the dispensation of God's grace has direct relation to the person, the work and the glory of Christ, yet Christ occupies, in many respects, a different position under each successive development of the whole plan of God's infinite mercy. During his personal ministry on earth, he occupied a position materially dissimilar to any he had ever occupied before; and so now, seated at the right hand of God, his position is widely different from what it had ever been before his infinite exaltation. In like manner, when the dispensation of grace, strictly so called, is ended by the second coming of Christ and the resurrection of

the righteous, a new aspect of his work and his relation to his people manifests itself; and again another, in all that constitutes the judgment and acquittal of the righteous, and the doom of the wicked. After these things, what will follow? Let us hear what the Holy Ghost saith. In his great discourse on the day of Pentecost, under which three thousand souls believed, and in his second mighty exposition a little after, in the temple, under which five thousand men believed, the apostle Peter carries us far into these sublime events. The heavens must receive Jesus Christ, said he, *until* the times of the restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began; and he urged that great testimony of David: "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou on my right hand *until* I make thy foes thy footstool." (Acts ii. 34, and iii. 21.) That exaltation and that reign of Christ was not, therefore, the final dispensation; it was a dispensation and a reign *until* such a time and such events. I suppose the second coming of Christ, and the resurrection of the righteous dead, will develop what was wrapped up in that *until*. Again: in the revelation of Jesus Christ, amongst the infinite blessings and glories promised to those who shall come off conquerors, the crowning promise is: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in *my* throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father on *his* throne." (Rev. iii. 21.) Here is a very broad distinction between the throne of the Father and that of the glorified God-man; and a very clear indication that, as yet, the latter had not been ascended; that *until* before

spoken of stood between the two thrones; the whole period, namely, from the ascension of Jesus Christ till his second coming. Now, of those who have part in the first resurrection is it expressly written, that they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (Rev. xx. 4, 5.) The Lord Jesus plainly said to his apostles, that when the Son of Man shall sit in the *throne of his glory*, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (Matt. xix. 28.) And the apostle Paul, in his treatise on the resurrection, declares that the resurrection of Christ's people, at his second coming, will be followed by the reign of Christ *till* he has put all his enemies under his feet, and that the last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. (1 Cor. xv. 23, 25, 26.) Here, then, is another limitation, another *until*; and as we are told that death will be destroyed when Satan is cast into hell, and the wicked enter upon the second death, (Rev. xx. 10, 14,) this *until* is explained to us, and a new development of the dispensation of Christ intimated to commence after the doom of the wicked. There remains, therefore, after that, another development of the eternal life of the blessed; and the Scriptures briefly, but clearly, initiate us into the knowledge of it.

In the passage just cited from the first epistle to the Corinthians, this order is declared touching the sublime topic of which the apostle is treating. First, the resurrection of Christ himself; afterward, who can tell how long afterward? the second coming of Christ, and the resurrection of his people at that coming; then, when he shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and all power, and shall

have destroyed death, *then*, after that reign of the saints with Christ, *cometh the end!* (1 Cor. xv. 23—26.) And then will Christ deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father. (verse 24.) He will deliver up the kingdom to the Father, upon the Lamb's Book of Life, (Rev. xx. 15, and xxi. 27,) that glorious record containing a complete list of their names, and being of itself a perfect evidence of their redemption, their regeneration, their sanctification, their glorious resurrection, their acquittal in the day of judgment, their reign with Christ, and their right, through him, to inherit the eternal kingdom. And then shall the Son also himself be subject unto Him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all. (1 Cor. xv. 28.) And here made partakers of the divine nature—admitted to the immediate presence and full fruition of God—made perfectly blessed in the enjoyment of him—the Scriptures launch us upon this eternal and inconceivably glorious and exalted state of existence, and close the revelations of God! The dispensation of Jesus Christ, as the Redeemer of God's elect, has passed through all its wondrous phases; the kingdom, the power, and the glory, have all been illustrated and established; nothing remains that is not subject to him, except only He which did put all things under him (1 Cor. xv. 27); the end is fully reached, in that highest conception which mortals can have of it, that God is all in all! The human race, too, has passed through all its revealed phases; its existence upon earth; its existence after death; its existence after the resurrection; and its high service and enjoyment of God in glory to all eter-

nity, is begun. In the broadest view it is possible for us to take of all Christ's work, and our own career and destiny, as well as in the most minute and circumstantial examination we can make of every particular part, both of one and the other, nothing is so clearly and so constantly obvious, as that Christ is our life in the whole, and in every part; the life of our spiritual nature, the life of our mortal being, the life of our immortal existence. This is the sublime and consoling truth we set out to elucidate by the testimony of God.

If we desire to live under the impression which this divine truth ought to create, and which this glorious destiny requires, we have only to listen to what the apostle has told us in connection with the words of my text, to discover what is required of us in that great endeavour. We ought, says he, to seek those things which are above, and set our affections on them, and not on things on the earth; remembering that we are dead, and that our life is hid with Christ in God. We ought to mortify our members which are upon the earth; for the lack of doing which, we are prone to fall into those sins, for the sake of which the wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience, and in which we once lived ourselves. But now, seeing that we have put off the old man, with his deeds, and have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him; we ought continually to shun all evil, and pursue all good; under the fixed and felt conviction, that to us Christ is all and in all. We ought, as the elect of God, who profess righteousness and who trust that God loves us, to

put on bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering, forbearance, forgiveness; striving to imitate the Lord Christ, and crowning all with that charity which is the bond of perfectness. Thus may the peace of God reign in our grateful hearts; thus may the Word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom; thus the power of the Lord Jesus may be shown forth in us; thus in all the relations which we sustain upon earth, may we adorn the doctrine we profess, and honour the Lord whom we adore. So may we be able, by God's grace, to make our way good out of this, a ruined world, and get safely, perhaps triumphantly, through the sin and death that reign in it. And when Christ, *who is our life*, shall appear, then may we also appear with him in glory. And when all the redeemed shall be presented faultless before God, and be delivered up upon the Lamb's Book of Life, then may we too inherit the kingdom, prepared from the foundation of the world, for all the blessed of the Father! Glorious hope, which maketh not ashamed!