

**THE DESTINY OF THE
CREATURE: AND
OTHER SERMONS**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649561322

The Destiny of the Creature: And Other Sermons by Charles J. Ellicott

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CHARLES J. ELLICOTT

**THE DESTINY OF THE
CREATURE: AND
OTHER SERMONS**

THE
DESTINY OF THE CREATURE:
AND
OTHER SERMONS.

PREACHED BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE.

BY

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LONDON:
JOHN W. PARKER AND SON, WEST STRAND.

MDCCCLVIII.

100. a. 41.

LONDON :
SAVILL AND EDWARDS, PRINTERS, CHANDOS STREET,



P R E F A C E.

THE first four of the following sermons were preached by me before the University of Cambridge during the month of March last, in the capacity of Select Preacher for that month. The fifth and sixth sermons were preached before the same honourable audience, the former in the morning of one of the Sundays in Lent, 1856, on one of the turns of my own College: the latter on the morning of Commencement Sunday, 1857, at the request of the Vice-chancellor. These two sermons are here added, partly in tardy compliance with a wish expressed at the time that they should be published, partly, and more especially, because they both illustrate, and are illustrated by, the course with which they are associated. On the suggestion of friends, a few hastily gathered notes are appended to the whole; as it was considered that the subjects which are here discussed are all of a kind that require this further mode of illustration. In justice, however, to myself, I feel it right to say, that, as the sermons were not written with a view to publication, no record was kept of the many sources from which the opinions expressed in them were derived. The notes, therefore, must be regarded, and kindly allowed for, as simply illustrative collections and reminiscences of mere general reading, rather than as the results of a

definite course of study, of which the sermons might be considered the exponents. They are, I am well aware, notably incomplete; still they may, perhaps, serve their purpose, which is only that of interesting the general reader, and of directing the student to sources of information from which he may complete and fill in what in the sermons is only imperfect and in outline.

As to the sermons, they must speak for themselves. They are all on subjects of great moment, and attempt to give a few faltering answers to questions that I verily believe are almost daily rising up in the hearts of most of the earnest thinkers of our own time; but which, nevertheless, by a kind of common consent, are either at once repressed, or only answered with a sweeping temerity which too often places its own intuitions in undisguised antagonism to the written word of God. I am well aware that the answers that I have presumed to make will provoke much criticism. It will be, not improbably, urged, that the interpretations of Scripture on which these sermons are based are narrow and bibliolatrous; their deductions chimerically literal; that their general views of life are depressing and melancholy; that they speak of nought but obstructions and retardations, where all is buoyancy and progress; that they see only unreal and sentimental shadows, where all is vivid and exhilarating sunshine. Be it so. I have neither the will nor the ability to enter into controversy; but this only will I say, that I would sooner trust the results of an honest, fair, yet *exact*

interpretation of Scripture, than the mere plausibilities of a specious philosophy. Nay, I am old-fashioned enough to be fully persuaded, that if modern thinkers lent an ear to the express declarations of Inspiration as readily as they do to the deductions of philosophy—if we perused the Book of Life as studiously and as lovingly as we do the Book of Nature, our theology would be of a higher strain, and our philosophy no less attractive and veracious. I cannot forget that the Father of Inductive Philosophy was sincerely of the opinion that there were some questions which even science must be content to hand over to religion for their complete, or approximately complete, solution.¹ Science may teach us much, but when we gaze far into the past or far into the future, we must always observe that it signally fails us; we ever find, that between the farthest point to which its deductions may help to lead us, and—the beginning or the end, there is a chasm that cannot be bridged over.²

But it is not for me to discuss such things. The main aspect of these sermons is practical and consolatory, not polemical and antagonistic. My humble object has been to put before the young, the generous, and the impressionable, some high and ennobling views of Scriptural truth; and if I have succeeded in this great and important object,—if I have raised the religious tone of one heart that has gone with my words,—if I have been permitted to be the feeble

¹ See Bacon, *de Augmentis* iv. 3, Vol. i. p. 605 (ed. Ellis).

² See Whewell, *Philos. of Inductive Sciences*, Book x. ch. 4.

instrument in raising one sinking brother from the deep waters of doubt and perplexity,—if I have pointed out ever so generally to one lorn wanderer in this world's weary wilderness, the narrow way to Christ then I shall solemnly rejoice, and my joy no man shall take from me. Then, indeed, I shall feel that I have given up to publicity and criticism my cherished speculations and private convictions, not wholly, not utterly in vain.

To the younger members, then, more especially, of that ancient and illustrious body which I have been appointed to address, I desire earnestly and affectionately to commend these thoughts. There is much in them with which the young will perhaps readily sympathize. There is a speculative tone which is often distasteful to those who are pre-occupied with, what are called, the realities of life, but which rarely fails to interest, and, I most religiously believe, to edify, those on whom the morning sun of life has not yet ceased to shine. To the young, then,—yet not to the young only,—to the generous, the pure, and the thoughtful among us, I humbly dedicate these sermons, with earnest prayer to Almighty God, that His blessing may go with them, and out of their very weakness and imperfection, may perfect His glory and His praise.

ΤΟ ΔΕ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙ ΤΩΝ 'ΑΙΩΝΩΝ,
'ΑΦΘΑΡΤΩ 'ΑΟΠΑΤΩ ΜΟΝΩ ΘΕΩ,
ΤΙΜΗ ΚΑΙ ΔΟΣΑ,
'ΕΙΣ ΤΟΥΣ 'ΑΙΩΝΑΣ ΤΩΝ 'ΑΙΩΝΩΝ. 'ΑΜΗΝ.

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