

**THE FIFTEENTH CHAPTER OF ST.
PAUL'S FIRST EPISTLE TO THE
CORINTHIANS, EXPLAINED AND
ILLUSTRATED IN A SERIES OF
SERMONS**

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The Fifteenth Chapter of St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, Explained and Illustrated in a Series of Sermons by St. Paul & Thomas Ainger

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ST. PAUL & THOMAS AINGER

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OF
ST. PAUL'S FIRST EPISTLE TO THE
CORINTHIANS,

EXPLAINED AND ILLUSTRATED

IN A

SERIES OF SERMONS,

PREACHED BY THE

REV. THOMAS AINGER, M.A.

PREBENDARY OF ST. PAUL'S,
AND INCUMBENT OF HAMPTREAD.

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PREFACE.

OF the following series of Sermons, explanatory of the 15th chapter of St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, five were preached during Lent, and the sixth upon Easter Day, 1860.

In compliance with the wish of the congregation who heard them, they are now printed, almost in the form in which they were originally written; though the writer has gratefully availed himself of the valuable suggestions of two judicious friends, who were good enough to examine the manuscripts.

The fact that the larger portion of this wonderful chapter is introduced into the Burial Service of the Church of England, secures for it a hearing by many, who are not regular students of the

Holy Scriptures ; and at a time, too, when their hearts are open to solemn and tender impressions, and the question is forced upon the attention of each—What will become of *me* when I die? Of what incalculable value would it be, if this inquiry and the thoughts connected with it could, under God's blessing, be improved into something better than a mere passing emotion !

THOMAS AINGER.

Parsonage, Hampstead,
August, 1880.

ANY profits which may arise from the sale of this volume, will be added to the fund for the erection of a new 'Girls' School in the Parish Church District of Hampstead.

SERMON I.

1 CORINTHIANS XV. 19.

“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.”

I PROPOSE this day to commence a series of Sermons upon the 15th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians, which, with God's permission, will occupy our meditations during the greater number of the Sunday Mornings in the present Lent. Such a series has many advantages in it. The Sermons will form something like a complete whole; for this chapter of the Epistle stands, as it were, isolated and separate from the rest of the chapters. The Apostle has, in the 14th, just concluded his exhortations and instructions regarding the abuse of the gift of tongues; and the 16th, which follows, is filled with directions for the collection of alms in aid of the suffering

Christians at Jerusalem, with notices of his own plans for the future, with affectionate remembrances from his colleagues, and benedictions from himself. So that this treatise on the resurrection does not require much preliminary explanation or introduction. The truth is, there is no notice in the Epistle of the circumstances which called forth this elaborate and invaluable essay. Possible causes for it may be inferred from what we know of the general condition and the prevalent heresies of the Church at that early period. But there is nothing in the Epistle itself which will authorize us to speak with certainty as to the immediate causes which led to the abrupt introduction of so powerful and detailed a notice. As to the subject itself, it is one which excites not merely our natural curiosity, but our deepest feelings and our liveliest hopes. It answers, as fully as in this imperfect state the question can be answered, what shall become of each one of us when our probation upon earth is concluded. It opens some of the mysteries of the grave, and of the life to come. Who would not fain penetrate into the secrets of that unknown state of being, when the body shall rest in its kindred earth, and the spirit return to the God who gave it? And who does not confess *the limited powers of man's apprehension, and*

the impossibility of realizing the particulars of a state of being, of which no man's personal experience can inform us; seeing that none has returned from the grave to reveal what God has been pleased to hide from us? For aught we know, the planets and the innumerable stars of heaven may be the dwelling-place of living and thinking beings; but whilst we cast our wondering gaze upon them, who can conceive any thing of the nature, and power, and characteristics of their inhabitants? And if such be the case in the *visible* firmament of heaven, who can conceive any thing of that *invisible* world of the dead, towards which we are all hastening? What inspiration teaches, we thankfully and humbly accept; and God be praised, who, while He forbids all vain and unpractical speculations, has vouchsafed much that is solid and reasonable and comforting, in the truths revealed to us, under the direct inspiration of His Holy Spirit, by so gifted and wise a guide as St. Paul.

Whatever knowledge of immortality might have been granted to our first parents before or even after the fall, it is clear that their posterity soon corrupted their ways, and crippled their understandings; so that the early covenants were made to hinge mainly upon temporal conditions. Doubtless the more spiritually minded among