

**MAN'S LIFE AND DESTINY.
FOUR SERMONS. PREACHED
IN THE DISTRICT CHURCH
OF ST. PETER, WALWORTH**

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Man's life and destiny. Four sermons. Preached in the district church of St. Peter, Walworth by
George Alcock Macdonnell

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OF

ST. PETER, WALWORTH.

BY

GEORGE ALCOCK MACDONNELL, B.A.,

CURATE IN CHARGE OF ST. MARK'S DISTRICT, WALWORTH.

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TO
PAUL NINNIS, ESQ.,
I DEDICATE
THESE SERMONS,
IN GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT
OF VERY VALUABLE SERVICES RENDERED BY HIM
TO ME,
AND TO THE DISTRICT IN WHICH I NOW LABOUR
AS A MINISTER.

Easter 1861.



G. A. M.

P R E F A C E.

“To justify the ways of God to men,” to show that infinite justice, mercy, and love were, and are exhibited to man, in his Edenic, and in his fallen condition, is the object of the following discourses. This subject lies at the root of religion. If not examined into, and to some extent apprehended, life is a mystery that perplexes and saddens, and God is not felt to be what He is—our Father which is in Heaven—one who has done all things well, all things for our good, and therefore for our real happiness.

Were this subject to receive the attention it demands and requires, not merely would men’s minds be less anxious and less complaining, but their hearts would abound in love to “the Author and Giver of all good things,” and their lives would exhibit more abundantly the fruits of the Holy Spirit. But, important as this subject is, it is seldom discussed in its entirety and its practical bearing. This I have endeavoured to do, briefly, in the following discourses. I should not have presumed to print them of my own accord; but inasmuch as the Churchwardens, and many other members of St. Peter’s congregation, requested me to publish them, believing that good would result from my doing so, I, after some hesitation, deemed it right to comply with their request. If what I have written leads any man into such a train of thought as shall eventuate in his seeing his true relationship to God, and resolving to love and serve Him more than in time past, the object of my writing will be achieved, and the highest reward I seek, or could seek, be gained.

G. A. M.

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SERMONS.

SERMON I.

ADAM'S LIFE IN PARADISE.

"And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed."—GENESIS, Chapter II., Verse 8.

I PROPOSE, in this and the following discourses, to set before you the life of man in its connexion with the past and future; for it is only when so viewed that our life ceases to be an enigma, such as it has always been to thinking men not blessed with revelation.

Our life is full of those elements which go to make it anything but happy; yet it was given to us by One, who, we believe, had unbounded love for our race, and power to make us happy beyond what we can conceive. Did the Creator so love man? Had He such power? Then why is human life the sad reality which we know it to be? Why such a life from such a Creator? To answer this question—to reconcile the apparent inconsistency on our Maker's part—we must remember that, as revelation informs us, our

present life is abnormal: it is not that which God made it; it is not that which He willed it to be. In considering man as a result of God's creative power, we must in all fairness consider him such as he was when God first called him into being; and if his condition then was such as we should expect that an all-loving and all-powerful God would make it, and if we can show that that condition has changed for the worse, not owing to anything that God has willed or done, but owing to man's unfaithfulness to his own nature, then we must acquit our Creator of all injustice and unlovingness towards our race, and charge to our own account whatever in our present life is distasteful to our minds and saddening to our hearts.

God's power and love are abundantly evidenced in the life with which He endowed man at the beginning—in His using Himself, and not even the highest of the angelic order, to be the model after which to image Adam,—in His constituting man lord of the new world which He made for him, and in which He placed him,—in His doing everything in connexion with this world and man's creation Himself directly, and not through the agency of His ministers,—in His planting as it were with His own hand the garden that was to be man's home.

But here comes the question which puzzles not a few—the question, how is it that man's life is no longer what it was? How came it to pass that God permitted or caused that life to change? Desiring

to honour and love the race, why did not God make man so that he would be ever worthy of that honour and love, and therefore be ever happy? Why did He make Adam's retention of Paradisiacal life conditional; and conditional upon obedience to a command, not founded upon what we call any moral law?

Now those who ask these questions clearly imply that God, as intending to confer honour and bestow happiness on our race, ought to have made men greater and happier than He did—ought to have made us angels at once, and placed us by His side in heaven. Well, suppose He had made us at once equal to the angels, and that we, in all essential matters, resembled those glorious beings; then (we know from the case of Satan and his followers), as angels were capable of sinning, and liable to eternal expulsion from heaven, we should have resembled them in that respect. This being the case, was it not an act of great love on the Creator's part, to form man and place him in such a condition, that if only true to his nature, and obedient to a certain command, he should be translated to heaven, the grandest of all the worlds, and once enrolled among the shining ranks there, should be incapable of sinning, incapable of corrupting his glorious nature and losing his infinite happiness?

Now angels, the sacred record implies, were originally created for heaven. They passed through no probationary course to fit them for God's highest world. It was their first estate which those of them who sinned kept not. So created then, some of them