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Author: William Morley Punshon

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE WESLEYAN METHODIST PULPIT IN MALVERN ***

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THE WESLEYAN METHODIST PULPIT IN MALVERN.

SERMONS
PREACHED AT
THE OPENING SERVICES
OF THE
WESLEYAN METHODIST CHAPEL,
IN 1866,
AT MALVERN,
BY

REV. W. M. PUNSHON,	REV. W. ARTHUR,
REV. J. H. JAMES,	REV. C. PREST,
REV. J. PRIESTLEY,	REV. G. SMITH,
REV. G. WOOD.	

With a Preface by Knowles King.

LONDON:
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1866.

TO
RALPH BARNES GRINDROD,
OF MALVERN,
M.D., LL.D., F.L.S., F.R.G.S., F.G.S., &C., &C.,
This Volume of Sermons
IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,
IN THANKFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF THE LEARNED
DOCTOR'S GREAT GIFT OF HEALING;
BUT MORE ESPECIALLY OF HIS LARGE CHARITY,
AND HIGH CHRISTIAN CHARACTER.

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PREFACE.

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The Sermons which make up this volume were preached at Malvern, in 1866, at, and immediately after, the opening services of the Wesleyan Chapel there.

This beautiful and commodious building owes its erection to the piety and energy of the Rev. W. M. PUNSHON, who, in the year 1862, proposed by Lectures, and otherwise, to raise a fund for building Wesleyan Chapels in places of summer resort.

This proposition was well responded to by Mr. PUNSHON's friends, and the Wesleyan public, and forty thousand pounds have already been expended in the erection of new Chapels at Ilfracombe, Dawlish, the Lizard, Brighton, Weymouth, Eastbourne, Walmer, Folkestone, Bournemouth, Blackpool, Lancing, Llandudus, Rhyl, Saltburn, Bray, Matlock, *Malvern*, Keswick, Bowness, and the Isle of Wight. Others are in progress.

These Sermons are published with the consent of the several preachers, but it must be stated that they were preached without any view to publication, and now appear in print, nearly word for word, as they were delivered, extempore, from the pulpit. Some of them, indeed, have never been committed to writing by the authors; for instance, of the beautiful sermon of Mr. ARTHUR, "not a word" was written by him either before or since its delivery.

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This will account for the fact that the subjects are not treated with any degree of scientific exactness, as essays might require; but in a manner intended to suggest useful thoughts to serious audiences.

Although myself of the Church of England, I have had many opportunities, during the past thirty-five years, of hearing discourses from Wesleyan ministers, and making personal acquaintance with them; and I believe the following Sermons are a fair specimen of the Wesleyan teaching in this country.

Why should not the Church of England and the great Wesleyan body be united? Circumstances are entirely altered since Wesley, and his coadjutors, were compelled to run away from the Church of England. Now, thank God, the majority of our clergy, like the Wesleyan ministers, are zealous, and energetic, and evangelical men; popular in the style of their addresses, distinguished by the vigour of their pastoral ministrations, and incessant in them; paternal in their care of the poor, of broad and social Christian sympathies, and earnestly pursuing the secular and religious education of the young. Why should not the priests of the Church of England and the ordained Wesleyan ministers be permitted to exchange pulpits as they may think fit? There is little danger that a Wesleyan minister would proclaim unsound doctrine. Such an evil is much more shortly and sharply rectified by Wesleyan discipline, which the Courts of Law uphold, than by any mere legal action to which the Church of England is bound.

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May it please God, by His Holy Spirit, to make these Sermons effectual for the spreading of His truth and the quickening of His people.

KNOWLES KING.

SIDMOUTH HOUSE, MALVERN,
December 3, 1866.

* * * * *

If any profit shall accrue from this publication, it will be given to the religious institutions at Malvern.

THE LIVELY STONES. REV. W. MORLEY PUNSHON.

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"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."—1 PETER ii. 5.

There is a manifest reference in the fourth verse to the personage alluded to in Psalm cxviii. 22, 23: "The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes." And this passage is applied by Christ to himself in Matthew xxi. 42: "Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes." The Apostle therefore places the beginning of any connection with Christianity in coming to Christ, and assures believers that in their union with Him alone consists the fulness of their dignity and privilege. And there is no truth that will more readily be acknowledged, or receive a heartier acquiescence from the heart of a believer. What could we do without Jesus? In our every necessity He is our "refuge and strength," in our perils He compasses us about with songs of deliverance, his life is our perfect example, his death is our perfect atonement. Well might the Apostle interrupt the course of his argument with the grateful apostrophe, "Unto you, therefore, which believe, He is precious;" and exhort them "that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." The text presents us with topics of meditation worthy of our prayerful study, as it reveals to us—

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I.—THE CHARACTER.
II.—THE PRIVILEGE.

I. You observe that in the text believers are presented as a spiritual house and a holy priesthood; two different illustrations, which, if you translate the word here rendered "house" by the more sacred word "temple," will be found to have the same religious significance, and a close connection with each other. Coming to Christ as the foundation-stone of the building, "disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious," the Church rises into a spiritual temple. From Christ, the great High Priest, "consecrated after no carnal commandment," believers rise into a holy priesthood by a majestic investiture that is higher than the ordination of Aaron. There are two points in the character of the ransomed Church which are illustrated in these words:—*spirituality* and *holiness*.

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Take the first thought, spirituality. They are lively or living stones, built up into a spiritual house. Any one who thoughtfully observes the successive ages of the world's history, will not fail to discover that each generation of men has in some important particulars progressed upon its predecessor. There has been not only an accumulation of the treasures of thought and knowledge but an increase of the capacity to produce them. Hence in every age there has been a higher appreciation of freedom, a quickened enterprise of enquiry, the stream of legislation has refined and broadened in its flow, improvement has extended its acreage of enclosure, and principles proved and gained have become part of the property of the world. Our nature has had its mental childhood. The established laws of mind admit only of a gradual communication of knowledge. It was necessary, therefore, that men should be first stored with elementary principles, then advanced to axioms and syllables, and afterwards introduced into the fellowship of the mystery of Divine truth. Hence any reflective mind, pondering upon the dealings of God with men, will discover a progressive development of revelation, adjusted with careful adaptation to the preparedness of different ages of mankind. In the first ages God spake to men in sensible manifestations, in visions of the night, by audible voice, in significant symbol. As time advanced the sensible manifestations became rarer, and were reserved for great and distinguishing occasions. From the lips of a lawgiver, in the seer's vision, and in the prophet's burden of reproof or consolation, the Divine spake, and the people heard and trembled. At length, in the fulness of time, the appeal to the senses was altogether discarded; the age of spirituality began, and in the completed revelation men read, as they shall read for ever, the Divine will in the perfected and royal word. And this progress, which appears through all creation as an inseparable condition of the works of God, present in everything, from the formation of a crystal to the establishment of an economy, is seen also in the successive dispensations under which man has been brought into connection with heaven. You can trace through all dispensations the essential unity of revealed religion. There have never been but two covenants of God with man—the covenant of works and the covenant of grace; never but two religions—the religion of innocence, and the religion of mercy. Through all economies there run the same invariable elements of truth. The first promise contains within itself the germ of all subsequent revelation—the Abrahamic covenant, the separation of Israel, all the rites and all the prophecies, are but the unfoldings of its precious meaning. Sacrifice for the guilty, mediation for the far-off and wandering, regeneration for the impure, salvation through the merit of another; these are the inner life of the words, "the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." The gospel therefore was preached unto Abraham. Moses felt the potent influence of "the reproach of Christ." David describeth the blessedness of "the man unto whom God imputeth not iniquity." "Of this salvation the prophets enquired and searched diligently." Christ was the one name of the world's constant memory, "to Him gave all the prophets witness," and from the obscurest to the clearest revelation all testified in tones which it was difficult to misunderstand. "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved." The patriarchal dispensation had no elaborate furniture nor gorgeous ritualism. The father was the priest of the household, and as often as the firstling bled upon the altar it typified the faith of them all in a better sacrifice to come. Then came the Jewish dispensation with its array of services and external splendour, with its expressive symbolism and its magnificent temple; and then, rising into a higher altitude, the fulness of time came, and Christianity—the religion not of the sensuous but of the spiritual, not of the imagination awed by scenes of grandeur nor bewildered by ceremonies of terror, but of the intellect yielding to evidence, of the conscience smitten by truth, of the heart taken captive by the omnipotence of love—appeared for the worship of the world. Our Saviour, in his conversation with the Samaritan woman, inaugurated, so to speak, the dispensation of the spiritual, "The hour cometh, and now is,"—there is the moment of instalment, when the great bell of time might have pealed at once a requiem for the past and a welcome to the grander future, "when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth." Requiring spiritual worship, it was natural that God should have "built up a spiritual house," wherein he should dwell in statelier presence than in "houses made with hands." Hence there is now rising upon earth, its masonry unfinished, but advancing day by day, a spiritual temple more magnificent than the temple of Solomon, costlier than the temple of Herod. "Destroy this temple," said the Saviour to his wondering listeners, "and in three days I will raise it up." "Forty and six years was this temple in building, and will thou rear it up in three days?" "But He spake of the temple of His body." "What, know ye not that *your* bodies are the members of Christ?" Yes! believers everywhere are stones in the spiritual house, broken perhaps into conformity, or chiselled into beauty by successive strokes of trial; and wherever they are, in the hut or in the ancestral hall, in the climates of the snow or of the sun, whether society hoot them or honour them, whether they wrap themselves in delicate apparelling, or, in rugged homespun, toil all day for bread, they are parts of the true temple which God esteems higher than cloistered crypt or stately fane, and the top stone of which shall

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hereafter be brought on with joy.

The second representation of a believer's character is *holiness*, "a *holy* priesthood." In the Jewish dispensation the word was understood to mean no more than an outward and visible separation unto God; the priests in the temple and the vessels of their ministry were said to be ceremonially "holy." But more is implied in the term as it occurs in the text and kindred passages than a mere ritual and external sanctity. It consists in the possession of that mind which was also in Christ Jesus, in the reinstatement in us of that image of God which was lost by the disobedience of the fall. You will remember numerous scriptures in which holiness, regarded as the supreme devotion of the heart and service to God, is brought out as at once a requirement and a characteristic of a Christian. "What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" "Be ye holy, for I am holy," "as He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation." "God hath not called us to uncleanness but unto holiness." "Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." And it is absolutely necessary that this grace should be cultivated if we would either fulfil the mission of our priesthood or abide in the Divine presence for ever. Holiness is requisite whether to see the Lord or to walk before men unto all well-pleasing; and as living witnesses, transcripts of *His* holiness, enabled by his grace to maintain purity of heart and life, God has promised to establish those who put their trust in Him. Some Christians have been deterred from the search after this blessing of heaven by the mistakes of those who have endeavoured to expound it, or by the hypocrisy of those who have assumed its profession that they might the better sin. It is marvellous how many different views of it have at times obtained currency in the world. By some it has been resolved into a sort of refined Hinduism, a state in which the soul is "unearthed, entranced, beatified" by devout contemplation into a pietistic rapture; others have deemed that the best way to secure it was a retirement from the vexing world, a recreant forsaking of the active duties of life, as if it consisted in immunity from temptation rather than in victory over it. Others have placed it in surpliced observance or in monastic vow; an equivocal regard to patterns of things in the heavens which common men mistake for idolatry. Others again, reversing the old Pythagorean maxim, and wearing the image of God upon their ring, have expressed it by unworthy familiarity, a continual adverting to the gifts of the spirit, and the experience of the soul in the flippancy of ordinary conversation, as did some of the fanatics of the Commonwealth. Others have represented it as a perpetual austerity, an investiture of our family circles with all the hues of the sepulchre, and a flinging upon the face of society the frown of a rebuking fretfulness, which would make the good of an archangel evil spoken of in this censorious world. But the scriptural holiness which believers long for, and which the Church is to spread through the land, is not a necessary adjunct of any or all of these. It is not the acting of a part in a drama, but the forth-putting of a character in life, the exhibition in harmonious action of the humble love and filial fear with which men "work out their salvation." "A holy priesthood." It is remarkable of this spiritual priesthood that it descends in no particular succession, nor limits its privileges to any exclusive genealogy. The holiness which is at once its distinctiveness and its hallowing comprehends and can sanctify all relations of life. Let the minister have it, and the love of Christ, his supremest affection, will prompt his loathing of sin and his pity for sinners; will fire his zeal and make his words burn, and will often urge him to cast himself upon the mercy-seat that his labours may not be in vain. Let the merchant, or the manufacturer, or the man of business have it, and it need neither bate his diligence nor hold him back from riches; but it will smite down his avarice and restrain his greed of gold; it will make him abhor the fraud that is gainful, and eschew the speculation that is hazardous, and shrink from the falsehood that is customary, and check the competition that is selfish; and it will utterly destroy the deceptive hand-bill, and the cooked accounts, and the fictitious capital, as well the enormous dishonesties as the little lies of trade. Let this holiness actuate the parent, and in his strong and gentle rule he will mould the hearts of his children heavenward, and train them in the admonition of the Lord, until, a commanded household, comely in their filial love, they shall reverence their Father who is in heaven. Let the child be impressed with holiness, and he will have higher motives to obedience than he can gather from the constraint of duty or from the promptings of affection. Let the master be holy, and while he upholds authority he will dispense blessing. Let the servant be holy, and service will be rendered with cheerfulness, "not with eye-service as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God." Let the man be holy, and vigorous health and lofty intellect and swaying eloquence and quenchless zeal will all be offered to God. Let the woman be holy, and patient prayer will linger round the cross, and ardent hope will haunt the envied sepulchre, and pitying tenderness will wail on the way to Calvary, and the deep heart-love will forget all selfish solitudes in the absorbing question, "Where have they laid my Lord?" Let the world be holy! and the millennium has come, and wrong ceases for ever, and the tabernacle of God is with men, and earth's music rivals heaven's. Brethren, let us seek this blessing for ourselves. There, at the foot of the Throne, let us plead the promise, "I will sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean." Imagination, intellect, memory, conscience, will;—sanctify them all. "Then will we teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners shall be converted unto Thee." It is done, surely it is done. The hands are upon us now. We kneel for the diviner baptism, for the effectual and blessed ordination. Listen, the word has spoken, "Ye are an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ."

II.—Certain blessings are presented to us in the text as the heritage of this spiritual and consecrated Church. *Increase* and *acceptance*. The spiritual house is to be built up firm and consolidated on the true foundation. The services of the holy priesthood are to be "acceptable to God through Jesus." Take the first thought. "Ye are built up a spiritual house, an holy

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priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." The fact of God's constant supervision over his Church and care for its stability and extension is one that is impressed with earnest repetition upon the pages of his word. "Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken, but there the glorious Lord will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams." "Then shall thou see and flow together, and thine heart shall fear and be enlarged, because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee." "Then shall the mountain of the Lord's house be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow unto it." "As I live, saith the Lord, thou shalt surely clothe thee with them all as with an ornament, and bind them on thee as a bride doeth." From these passages, and many others breathing the same spirit, we may legitimately infer that it is the purpose of God that the kingdom of Messiah shall be universal; that the Church shall increase in steady and cumulative progression, and realize in herself all the "glorious things" which by the holy prophets were "spoken of the city of God." And in this matter God has not left himself without a witness. The present existence of the Church, after it has encountered and outlived all varieties of opposition, is in itself a proof which even its enemies, if they were not stupid and indocile learners, might ere this have discovered, that the eternal God is its refuge, and that the Highest will establish it for ever. From its institution it has had in the heart of every man a natural and inveterate enemy. The world has uniformly opposed it, and it has been unable to repel that opposition with weapons out of the world's armoury; for it is forbidden to rely upon the strength of armies or upon the forces of external power. Fanatics have entered into unholy combination. Herod and Pilate have truced up a hollow friendship that they might work against it together. Statesmen have elaborated their policy, and empires have concentrated their strength; the banners of battle have made hideous laughter with the wind; the blood of many sainted confessors has been shed like water, and the vultures of the crag have scented the unburied witnesses and have been ready to swoop down upon the slain. And yet the Church is living, thriving, multiplying; while the names of its tyrants are forgotten, and their kingdoms, like snow-flakes on the wave, have left no trace behind. No inborn strength will account for this mystery. No advance of intelligence nor philosophic enlightenment will explain this phenomenon. The acute observer, if faith have cleared his eye or opened an inner one, will go back for the explanation to an old and unforgotten promise, and will exclaim when he sees the Church struggling, but triumphant, like the fire-girdled bush at Horeb, "God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, and that right early." And not only in the preservation from her enemies but in her unflinching progress among men in every age, has God shown that his purpose is to build up the spiritual house. The rapid spread of the truth in primitive times was a marvel and a mystery to those who saw not the arm which upheld it and the power which bade it multiply and grow. The whole history of gospel extension is indeed a succession of wonders. It began with a Pentecost, local, but prophetic of a universal one, when "its sound shall have gone out into all the earth and its words to the end of the world." In the times of the Apostles, and of their immediate successors, it overleaped the boundaries of nation after nation, acquired lodgment and proselytes in the proudest cities, subjugated the barbaric magnificence of Asia Minor, had its students in the schools of Greece, and its servitors in the imperial household at Rome. In its triumphant course it attacked idolatry in its strongholds, and that idolatry, though fortified by habit and prejudice, and sanctioned by classic learning, and entwined with the beautiful in architecture and song, and venerable for its wondrous age, and imperial in the dominion which it had exercised over a vassal world, fell speedily, utterly, and for ever. And in each succeeding age, obscured sometimes by the clouds of persecution, and sometimes by the mists of error, its progress has been gradual and sure. If it has not dissipated it has relieved the darkness. It has stamped itself upon the institutions of mankind, and they reflect its image. It has insinuated its leavening spirit where its outward expressions are not, and there is a vast amount of Christian and humanizing sentiment abroad, a sort of atmosphere breathed unconsciously by every man, whose air-waves break upon society with unfelt but influencing pressure, but its source is in the gospel of Christ. The building rises still! In distant parts of the great world-quarry stones of diverse hardness, and of diverse hue, but all susceptible of being wrought upon by the heavenly masonry, are every day being shaped for the temple. Strikes among the workmen, or frost in the air, may suspend operations for awhile, but the building rises! Often are the stones prepared in silence, as in the ancient temple-pile, with no sound of the chisel or the hammer. The Sanballats and Tobiahs of discouragement and shame may deride the work and embarrass the labourers; but one by one the living stones, polished after the similitude of a palace, are incorporated into it. Yes! the building rises, and it shall rise for ever. God has promised increase to the Church, and her enemies cannot gainsay it. From the more effectual blessing on churches already formed, from the reversal of the attainder, and the bringing into his patrimonial portion of the disinherited Jew, from the proclamation in all lands of the message of mercy, they shall throng into the city of our solemnities until "the waste and the desolate places, and the land of her destruction shall even now be too many, by reason of the inhabitants, and they that swallowed thee up shall be far away." What Christian heart, looking for this promised blessing, rejoices not with exceeding joy? At the foundation of the second temple, amid the flare of trumpets and the clang of cymbals, while the young men rent the air with gladness, there were choking memories in many a Levite heart that chastened the solemn joy and were relieved only by passionate tears; but at the upbuilding of the "spiritual house" the young and the old may feel an equal gladness, or if some memories steal over the spirit of primitive days, and of the joys of a forfeited Eden, they may be stilled by the memory of the grander and abiding truth, that—

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"In Christ the tribes of Adam boast,

More blessings than their father lost.”

Brethren, have you this joy? Does it pleasure you that the building rises? Do your hearts thrill with gladness as you hear of accessions to the Church and the conversion of sinners to God? Do you love the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob? Have a care if you feel not this sympathy, for ye are none of his. If it is within you a living, earnest emotion, give it play. “Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.”

The second privilege is the acceptance of her service and sacrifice through Jesus Christ.—To us, who are mean and unworthy, it is no small privilege to be assured of welcome when we come to God. To us, who are guilty and erring, it is no small privilege that we can come by Jesus Christ. The hope of acceptance is necessary to sustain the heart of the worshipper, which without it would soon sink into despair. The apostle, you perceive, places the ground of the acceptance of our services upon our union with Jesus Christ.

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“Vain in themselves their duties were,
Their services could never please,
Till join’d with thine, and made to share
The merits of thy righteousness.”

He is careful to impress upon us that in our holiest moments no less than when we are wayward and criminal, our trust for personal safety, and our only chance of blessing are from our exalted Daysman, who can lay his hand upon us both. Our praise would be unmeaning minstrelsy, our prayers a litany unheard and obsolete, all our devotional service a bootless trouble, but that “yonder the Intercessor stands and pours his all-prevailing prayer.” It is “through Him we *both*,” the Jews who crucified Him and the Gentiles, who by their persevering neglect of Him crucify Him afresh, “have access by one spirit unto the Father.” The words of promise touching the acceptance of the worship of the Church are explicit and numerous. “They shall come up with acceptance on mine altar, and I will glorify the house of my glory.” “That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost.” “In the place where my name is recorded, there will I accept.” “In every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him.” Oh, comforting thought, when I am convinced of my own sinfulness, and restless and disquieted wander about in distress, and lie down in sorrow, there is One who hears the stammered entreaty, and smiles a pardon to my agonized cry, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” When in my daily life I encounter a terrible temptation, a temptation so strong that it tries my strength to the uttermost, and gives my heart a struggle and a bitterness which no stranger may know, there is One who marks my resistance and counts my enduring faith for righteousness, and whispers me that by and bye, he that overcometh shall wear the conqueror’s crown. When in some moment of unguardedness I grieve the good Spirit, and become unwatchful, and in remorseful penitence I could almost weep my life away, the offering of my contrition is accepted, and there is One who heals my backsliding and soothes my fretting sorrow. My prayers offered in secret, pleading for purity and blessing, my praises, when the full heart, attuned, gives its note of blessing to swell the choral harmony, wherewith all God’s works praise Him, the active hand, the ready tongue, the foot swift and willing in his cause, the service of labour, the service of suffering,—all these, if I offer them rightly and reliantly, are acceptable unto God by Jesus Christ. There is no room for distrust or for misgiving. I need not fear that, after all my efforts, I shall be met with an averted glance, or with a cold denial. The promise standeth sure, “To that man will I look.” Oh, if there had been a pause after this announcement, how would the eager solitudes of men have gathered round it, and waited for the coming of the words. Where wilt thou direct thy look of favour? To him who is noble, or wealthy, or intelligent? To him who with scrupulous rigidness fasts twice in the week, and gives tithes of all that he possesses? To him whose quick sensibility revels in all expressions of the beautiful, or whose graceful impulse moves him in all works of charity? No, to none of these, but, “To him that is poor, and of a contrite spirit; and that trembleth at my word.”

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III.—If there be this assurance of acceptance, how solemn and resistless is the call to duty, “To offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.” Sacrifice, properly speaking, is the infliction of death upon a living creature for the purposes of religious worship, but *this* sacrifice and offering, happily, God requires not at our hands. No filleted firstling need now be led to the altar, the flocks of Kedar and the rams of Nebaioth may browse quietly in their pastures, for the Great Sacrifice has been offered, and it *abides*—“*one sacrifice for sins for ever*,” needing no repetition, one for ever! unexhausted in its virtue, and unfailing in the blessing it confers. But in a secondary sense the recognized and fulfilled duties of the Church are fitly called sacrifices, for they cannot be properly discharged without the alienation from ourselves of something that was our own, and its presentation, whether time, ease, property or influence, to God. Brethren, to this duty you are called to-day. The name you bear has bound you. The holy priesthood must offer up spiritual sacrifices. Suffered to become Christians, permitted, a race adulterous and dishonoured as you were, to be united to Christ and partakers of his precious grace, the spell of these high privileges enforces every obligation, and hallows every claim. Ye are not your own. First offer yourselves upon the altar, renew your covenant in this the house of our solemnities, on this the instalment of our great Christian festival. It will be easy to devote the accessories, when the principal bestowment has been rendered. I claim from you this sacrifice for God. *Yourselves*, not a half-hearted homage, not a divided service, not a stray emotion, not a solitary faculty; *yourselves, you all*, and *all of you*; your bodies, with their appliances for service; your souls, with their ardour of affection; intellect, with its grasp and

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power; life, with its activity and earnestness; endowment, with its manifold gifts; influence, with its persuasive beseechings. I claim them all. "I beseech you therefore, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." This consecration made, all else will follow in the train; litanies of earnest supplication will rise from the full heart; the "prayer will be offered as incense; the lifting up of the hands as the evening *sacrifice*." Glad in its memory of the past, and hopeful in its trust for the future, the hosanna of gratitude will rise; "the *sacrifice* of praise continually; the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name." The property received gratefully from heaven will be offered freely and bountifully for Christ; and some outcast housed in a safe and friendly shelter, some emancipated slave or converted Figian, some Indian breaking from his vassaldom of caste and Shaster, and longing to sit at Jesus' feet and hear his word, will say rejoicingly of your liberality, "Having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a *sacrifice* acceptable, well-pleasing to God."

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CHRIST'S WORK OF DESTRUCTION AND DELIVERANCE. p. 33 **REV. JOHN H. JAMES.**

"That through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."—HEBREWS ii. 14, 15.

There is a special and ordained connection between the incarnation and the death of our blessed Lord. Other men die in due course after they are born; he was born just that he might die. He came "not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give" his "life a ransom for many." It is therefore evident that the theology which magnifies the incarnation at the expense of the atonement is fundamentally, fatally defective. The brotherhood of Christ with every son of Adam is a blessed truth, but it is by no means the whole truth, nor can it be practically available and influential apart from the offering of his body upon the cross as a sacrifice for sin. This is very clearly and strongly put in the text. The incarnation of the Son of God is proved from the Old Testament, and shown to have had reference to his redeeming death. Many purposes were answered by his becoming partaker of flesh and blood. His influence as a teacher, the power of his spotless example, his identification with the needs and sorrows of humanity, and the deep sympathy resulting therefrom,—these and similar ends were contemplated and fulfilled. But the grand purpose was disclosed and accomplished on the cross, where God made his soul an offering for sin. "Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."

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The death of Jesus, then, and the end to be accomplished by it, constitute the central, vital, culminating truth of Christianity. The apostle puts the death of Christ in a striking point of view,—as a work done, rather than a calamity suffered. And it was a double work,—a work of destruction on the one hand, and of deliverance on the other,—of destruction in order to deliverance. That is the conception of his mission embodied in the first promise. The bruising of the serpent's head by the bruised heel of the Saviour, in order to repair the ruin wrought by the tempter, suggests very significantly the truth which is so explicitly announced here. And a similar combination runs through the ancient providential history. The destruction of the old world in order to the salvation of the righteous, and the fulfilment of the promise of redemption; and the destruction of the first-born of Egypt in order to the deliverance of Israel, are instances in point. But the death of Christ upon the cross in order to the emancipation of the slaves of Satan is the most glorious and perfect illustration. Let me ask your attention to the work of Christ's death,

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I.—AS IT IS A WORK OF DESTRUCTION.

II.—AS IT IS A WORK OF DELIVERANCE.

I. AS IT IS A WORK OF DESTRUCTION. "That He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil."

1. *Satan, then, is a person, and the enemy of Jesus, who died to destroy him.*

(i.) The personality of the devil is necessarily implied in the words of the text. The theory which seeks to divest all that is said about the devil in Scripture of everything like personality, and to refine it away into figurative representation of "the principle of evil," is as unphilosophical as it is unscriptural. How can we conceive of moral evil in the abstract? How can we think of it apart from the depraved will of some intelligent being? Whatever theories may be held respecting the difficult question of the origin of evil, it is surely inconceivable that it should exist independently of some living, conscious, intellectual author. No truer or more philosophical solution can be found than that of the Bible, which attributes it to the devil,—a being originally good, who fell from his first estate, broke his allegiance to the Creator, and so became the leader of a vast and fearful rebellion against Almighty God. The case of man shows us the possibility of a being existing in a holy but mutable state, and lapsing, under certain inducements, into sin. What the

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inducements were in the instance of the prince of darkness we are not told; and thus the question of the origin of evil seems to be insoluble by us. But the identification of it with the personal defection of Satan is far more intelligible and reasonable than the attempt to treat it as a metaphysical abstraction. All the representations of the Bible on the subject are instinct with the awful personality of the devil. He is our "adversary;" he is "the accuser;" he is "the God of this world;" he is "the prince of the power of the air, that wicked one that now worketh in the hearts of the children of disobedience;" he that hath "blinded the minds of them that believe not;" he "leadeth" sinners "captive at his will." Surely that is a bold and unscrupulous theology which resolves all these clear and strong expressions into the mere ideal impersonation of a principle. O no! Satan is a being of subtle intelligence, with a depraved, unconquerable, malignant will; a dread living power, with whom we have continually to do, who "desireth to have us, that he may sift us as wheat," and with whom, if we wish to get to heaven, we must be prepared to fight at every step of our way.

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(ii.) And he is emphatically the enemy of Jesus, who came to "destroy" him. "I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed." It was in pursuit of his designs against the living God that Satan persuaded our first parents to commit sin; it was by lying insinuations against God that he deceived her who was "first in the transgression." Of course, he is the enemy of man. Of course, his design is to inflict ruin and misery on men, and to bring them to his own state and place of torment. But he does this by seducing them into rebellion against the Most High. Hatred of God is the spring of all his conduct, the motive of every enterprise which he undertakes. And Jesus, the Son of God, the vindicator of the divine honour, is necessarily the sworn eternal foe of the devil; and He has come into our world as into the arena of a supreme conflict for the defeat and overthrow of Satan; has assumed the very nature which the foul fiend seduced and degraded, in order that, in that same nature, he might avenge the wrong done to the being and government of God, and put an eternal end to the usurpation and tyranny of his enemy.

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2. *The devil "had the power of death."*

(i.) We must not understand this as meaning that Satan has direct, independent, and absolute control over death, inflicting it how, and when, and where, and on whom, he will. The later Jewish writers taught the horrible doctrine that the fallen angels have power or authority generally in reference to life and death. But this never was the case. Death was the sentence pronounced by God upon man, and it could only be inflicted by his appointment and concurrence. The power of life and death is necessarily in God's hands, and his only.

(ii.) But Satan had the power of death, in this sense; namely, that he tempted man to commit the sin which "brought death into the world, and all our woe." He enticed Eve to sin, partly by denying that her offence would be visited with the punishment of death. "Ye shall not surely die," was the lie by which he contradicted and defied the God of truth, and induced the woman "to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." And so, he was "a murderer from the beginning." "God made man to be immortal, an image of his own eternity; nevertheless, through envy of the devil came death into the world." In this sense, then, as the author and introducer of that sin whose "wages" is death, Satan "had the power of death."

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(iii.) Moreover, it is the work of Satan to invest death with its chief terrors. We shrink indeed from the humiliating prospect of corruption and decay; we cling fondly to those companionships, associations, and pleasures, from which death for ever separates us; we deprecate and dread the blighting of our earthly hopes, and the ruthless frustration of our schemes. These are very painful accessories of death; but they are not its sting; they do not make it a poison for the soul as well as for the body. "The sting of death is sin." That sting has been drawn for the Christian, and death hath no terrors for him. But, had the power of the devil in death been unassailed and uncounteracted, the dissolution of the body and the eternal ruin of the soul would have been alike complete and irrecoverable. By the consciousness of guilt, Satan has infused an element of insupportable terror into death. For it is that consciousness which makes death dreadful. It is quite probable that, if man had not sinned, his body would have undergone some great change, that it might be fitted for that "kingdom of God," which "flesh and blood cannot inherit;" but such change would have inflicted no pain, and involved no humiliation; it would only have been a change "from glory to glory;" and would have been anticipated with no sentiments contrary to desire and hope. But death, besides its own inherent ghastliness, is rendered dreadful through the malice of the devil, and the guilty fear of the penal hereafter which haunts all those who are in his power.

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3. *Jesus died to destroy "him that had the power of death."* He has indeed provisionally destroyed death itself for all "the sons of God." "Death, the last enemy, shall be destroyed." But it is not absolutely and immediately abolished. The death of the body remains, even for God's people, as a sad and humiliating monument of the evil of sin; but to them it is not now a punishment, but the mode of their birth into a new and more glorious life.

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"Mortals cry, 'A man is dead!'
Angels sing, 'A child is born!'"

It may be truly said of the hour when a good man dies, that it is the hour when he enters into life. And this is because Jesus destroyed "him that had the power of death." He did not annihilate him, the word does not mean that, but He neutralized, counteracted, stripped him of his power. The whole design and effect of death, when in the power of the devil, has been

defeated and reversed by the death of Christ. Though the bodies of his people be consigned to the grave, it is in sure and certain hope of the resurrection to everlasting life. That melancholy seed-time in which we cast the dust of our beloved into the earth, is the prelude to a glorious harvest; that when "He giveth his beloved sleep," is preparatory to their awaking to glory and immortality. "It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body." This is what Christ's death has done for the bodies of his people; and is it not an entire breaking of the power of the devil over death? As to their souls, death delivers them from the burden of the flesh, that they may be in joy and felicity with God. "Absent from the body," they are for ever "present with the Lord." Death is no longer a dark and dreadful phantom, rising from the abyss, to drag down his victims and gorge himself upon them. He is an angel, pure and bright, sent to summon God's beloved to their Father's house above. That which men naturally dread as the crown and climax of all evils, becomes an object of wistful longing, for God's servants have "a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better." This stripping away of Satan's power, this destruction of "him that had the power of death," is due to the death of Jesus. He thus redeemed us from the debt of death, "acknowledging the debt in the manner in which he removed it." "Christ, by giving himself up to death, has acknowledged the guilt, and truly atoned for it; He has, in one act, atoned for the sinner and judged the sin." By dying for sins, He expiated that which gives to death its "sting," its power to injure and to terrify. He

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"Entered the grave in mortal flesh,
And dwelt among the dead,"

that He might put an end to Satan's power in and over death. Some sound and excellent divines are of opinion that, in the interval between his death and resurrection He literally "descended into hell," and there, in personal conflict, grappled with and overthrew the devil. However this may be, it is certain that the bruising of his heel by Satan was the chosen means for his bruising of Satan's head. Our enemy, who brought death into the world, is entirely baffled and defeated, as to the purpose and effect of that calamity, in the case of all who believe in the death of Christ. Their last act of faith gives them "the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." Then the God of peace "finally beats down Satan under their feet." Death is "swallowed up of life." What power over death has the devil in such a case? Is it not wholly counteracted? Is not death a wholly different, nay, opposite thing to what he intended, when by tempting and conquering our first parents he brought it into the world? The body of the good man "is buried in peace, and his soul is blessed for evermore." He shall never more, through the long eternity of bliss, be assailed or injured by "him that had the power of death;" nor shall he see his enemy again, unless it be to triumph openly over him, in that day when "death, and hell shall be cast into the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone." Many good people are unduly afraid of the devil, and especially they are in dread of his possible power in their last moments. But we may dismiss this fear as altogether needless and unworthy. Christ has not only rendered our great enemy utterly powerless for evil, but has, by his own most precious death, compelled even Satan into the service of the sons of God. He has turned the supreme calamity brought into the world by the arch-fiend into the supreme glory and joy of all who believe in himself. To all those who are by Jesus' death "to life restored," the day of death is infinitely preferable to the day of birth, for then beginneth that new life which shall never die. "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him until that day."

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II. LET US NOW CONTEMPLATE THE WORK OF JESUS, IN HIS DEATH, AS A WORK OF DELIVERANCE. "And deliver them who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject to bondage." If we ascertain the import of this description of those whom Christ died to deliver, we shall easily understand the nature and mode of the deliverance wrought out for them.

1. *They were in bondage.* They were in fact enslaved by "him who had the power of death." This is a very fearful view of our natural state, and one which contradicts all the conclusions of our own vanity and self-complacency. Unconverted men believe that Christians are slaves, fettered by doubts, scruples, self-accusations; bound in the bands of moral routine, and able only to move in certain prescribed grooves; afraid to do as they list. According to their notion, true liberty consists in throwing off religious restraints, and following as much as may be "the devices and desires of our own hearts." But this is a terrible delusion, which only serves to show the depth and subtlety of him who, besides having "the power of death," is also "the father of lies," the great deceiver and ensnarer of mankind. History is full of analogous examples among men. In how many instances have the most cruel and remorseless tyrants made use of the passions and brute force of the multitude to secure their own elevation to absolute power, inducing their victims to forge and rivet their own chains. And it is so in this case. Sinners are the slaves of Satan; those evil desires and inclinations which they so recklessly obey are but the tools and bonds of the great oppressor. The wicked man sells his soul to the devil for the price of indulgence in "the pleasures of sin, which are but for a season." There is a very easy way of testing this question of freedom or bondage in sin. If you are really free, free to do as you like, you can do good as well as evil; you can give up your companionship with iniquity, and break your covenant with darkness, as readily, and with as little difficulty, as you made the compact. Let the man who rejoices in his liberty to sin try to abandon iniquity; he will surely find it an impossible task. However clearly he may discern the purity, justice, and goodness of God's law, however passionately he may long, and however earnestly he may strive, to regulate his life by it, he will find himself "carnal, sold under sin;" he will "find another law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin and death." It is easy to float with the stream, and the stronger the current the more buoyantly and exultingly it

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bears you on. But try to breast the current. You will soon find that you have undertaken a task which is "impossible with men," and will sink exhausted and undone with the vain endeavour. Alas! Satan is in very truth the lord of every enslaved soul, not rightfully, only by virtue of the foulest usurpation; but he is so in fact, and he "binds our captive souls fast in his slavish chains." And by this bondage unto sin he holds us captive to death. His law is "the law of sin and death;" and till Christ redeem and actually deliver us, we are bound over to endure "the bitter pains of eternal death." It is an awful thought, but it is as true as it is awful. Our cruel and relentless jailer keeps us in the prison of sin, shut up under his power, with a view to our everlasting death. May we be made conscious of our enslavement, for till we become so, we are not likely to seek for deliverance!

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2. *The sure sign of bondage to Satan is continual subjection, or rather liability, to the fear of death.* It would scarcely be true to say of the great mass of the unconverted, that they are continually haunted and incommoded by the fear of death. Their general condition is one of thoughtless and careless ease, but they are always, even through their whole life, liable to be thus haunted and incommoded. Whenever the thought of death is brought home to them, as in the course of events it is ever and again sure to be, they are appalled and terrified. They then feel that death has a sting, and they have some foretaste of its sharpness and venom. They see nothing in death but the ruin of all their earthly hopes and schemes, and nothing after death but "a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries," and when they seem to be themselves stricken by the hand of death, how do the terrors of hell make them afraid!

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"O death, how shocking must thy summons be,
To him that is at ease in his possessions!"

There is a difference however, and a very great one, between the fear of death and the fear of dying. Many good people are often tormented by the latter kind of fear. It is frequently the result of a sensitive organization, or ill health, or a naturally gloomy temperament; and many who have been much troubled by it through life have found it to vanish completely when the supreme moment came. But the fear of death is founded on the consciousness of unpreparedness for it, and on the anticipation of the punishments which it will bring. Every unsaved sinner has abundant reason for the fear which, however he may laugh it off, will assuredly at times gain the mastery over him. The brooding sense of insecurity; the secret sudden pang, stabbing him in the midst of his wildest joys; the desperate effort never to think, and the resolute refusal ever to speak of death; tell their tale, and show that the slaves of Satan are always liable to the fear of death. O, if this be your case, it is high time to look to yourselves! If you cannot bear the thought of death; if the great and solemn hereafter is haunted by images that scare and threaten you; if you "put far away the evil day;" be sure there is something radically wrong. Be sure, by that token, that you are the slave of the devil. Be sure that you "are in jeopardy every hour." Never rest, never for a moment be satisfied, till you can look death calmly in the face, and discern for yourself the life to come, and your inheritance in heaven.

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3. *For we all may have deliverance from our bondage to Satan, and from this characteristic effect and sign of it.* The death of Jesus has provided this deliverance for us. By depriving Satan of his power over death, by expiating that sin which is the sting of death, and so entirely reversing and counteracting its penal efficacy, Christ hath wrought out for us a great salvation. And when we commit ourselves to Him, relying on the efficacy of his atonement, our chains are broken, and our craven fears are banished. Among the "first words" of newly-converted souls none are more common or triumphant than these, "I am not afraid to die now! I have a hope beyond the grave!" It is indeed a mighty deliverance. What calm, what security, what blessed hope does it inspire! To lose all fear of the last and greatest of human calamities; to look into the face of that which was "once an uncouth hideous thing," and to find that through our Saviour's death it hath become "most fair and full of grace;" to see no longer a dark and shrouded fiend arrayed in mortal terrors, and poisoning an envenomed dart for the purpose of laying us low, and compassing our lasting ruin; but a shining and smiling messenger from the King of kings, bidding us to an everlasting banquet in his royal palace; is not this true, priceless, boundless liberty,—worth toiling, striving, suffering, dying for? This flower of immortal hope blooms for each of us at the foot of the cross. If by the death of Jesus we gain spiritual life, we shall rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and shall look forward to the day of our death as the day of our eternal marriage with the King of glory. Let us not lose this unspeakable privilege! Let us, by faith in the death of our Lord, secure our freedom and our birthright! And, as we think of our smitten friends, let us thank God for their final deliverance from the power of death, and their admission into everlasting life. Finally, let us more and more glory in that cross whereby our Saviour Christ "hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light."

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INCONSIDERATION DEPLORED. REV. JOSHUA PRIESTLEY.

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"And they consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness."—HOSEA vii. 2.

Is it possible for any man to conceive of truths more fitted to arrest the attention and impress the heart than are those contained in this volume? It has been said that if a blank book had been put into our hands, and every one of us had been asked to put into it the promises we should like to find there, we could not have employed language so explicit, so expressive, and so suited to all our varied wants, as is here. And may I not say that no facts and declarations and appeals could be more fitted to rouse the conscience, and to regulate the life, than those we here find. Alas! however, with what affecting appropriateness may the Almighty say of Englishmen as of Israelites—of persons living eighteen centuries after Christ's death, as of those living eight centuries before it—"They consider not in their hearts that I remember all their wickedness."

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This passage brings before us two parties. One is the speaker, the other the persons addressed. It states a fact respecting each. Let us look at these facts:—

I. "I remember," says Jehovah, "all their wickedness." What an idea does this statement furnish of the unlimited vastness of the Divine mind! For if He remembered all the evil deeds of all the Israelites, He remembered the evil deeds of all other persons. If He remembered all the evil deeds of all then living, He remembered all the evil deeds of all who ever had lived. And if He remembered all evil deeds, assuredly He remembered all good ones. The Scriptures declare this fact for the comfort of the righteous. What a cheering declaration to a good man is that found in Hebrews vi. 10, "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." What a vast number of incidents are included in the space of but one year in the history of each one of us! What a still vaster number in the whole period of life! And when we think of the ten hundred millions of mankind now peopling our globe; when we add to these the almost countless millions that have departed, and realize the fact that every incident of every individual of them is remembered—remembered as distinctly too as if one solitary incident were all that memory was charged with, what an idea is given us of the vastness of the Divine mind! What can we do but wonder and adore!

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My text says much, but like many others, it means more than it says. How much of what Scripture intends to teach us shall we fail to learn, if we do not consider what is included and involved, as well as what is affirmed! This declaration imports three things. It imports—

1. That God observes all our wickedness. To remember a thing implies knowledge of it. This knowledge the Scriptures frequently declare the Divine Being to possess. They tell us that His eyes run to and fro the earth, beholding the evil and the good; that all things are naked and open to His eyes. They go further. They teach us that He is always present with us all, that there is no part of this earth, of the vast universe, from which He is ever absent. David expresses himself strikingly on this point—"Whither shall I go from Thy spirit?" says he, "or wither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell (hades), behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me, even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from Thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to Thee." Psalm cxxxix. 7-12. How certainly therefore does God observe all our wickedness! Did we but constantly realize this fact what a restraining power it would exert over us when we are tempted to evil. A man left his cottage very early one morning taking with him a sack, and accompanied by his son, a little boy. That boy was a Sunday scholar, and little suspected his father's errand. After proceeding some distance the father entered a turnip field, and throwing down his sack, looked in this direction and in that to see whether any one was observing him. On discovering the father's object, the child said, "Father, there was one way you did not look." "Indeed," replied he, hastily; "which was that?" "You did not look upward," was the rejoinder, "and God is observing you." That was a word in season. The father's arm was paralyzed. He took up his sack and returned home. Remember, my friends, that the sleepless eye of the Omnipresent One is upon you. The man that goes forth at the still, dark, hour of midnight to plunder our habitations, how startled would he be if an inmate should noiselessly and suddenly present himself before him—the servant that robs his master, the circulator of base coin, the man of fraud—would these practise their misdeeds if they realized this truth: "Thou God seest me?" Would the slanderer, or backbiter, or hypocrite, indulge their habits if they realized this truth? Of what immense benefit would the realization of this truth be, both personally and socially!

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2. When God says that He remembers all our wickedness, He means us to understand that He will exhibit it all. Why did He tell this people that He remembered all their wickedness? The Scriptures answer that question. They inform us that He intends to make use of the stores of which memory is possessed, and that He intends to make this use of them—to hold them up to the gaze of the universe. They teach us that the conduct of every individual will be investigated and published. "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil." "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." Important purposes will be answered by this. A declaration will be made of the righteousness of God in condemning the ungodly. He will hold up to view the nature and extent of the requirements He made of us, their reasonableness and beneficialness we shall all acknowledge. He will then make known the innumerable acts of goodness He bestowed—His forbearance to inflict punishment, and the various methods He employed to bring us to repentance. And by the side of all this He will exhibit our conduct toward Him—our ingratitude, our disobedience, our perverseness. And with what enormity will these things then appear invested! So guilty will thy conduct then appear, O sinner, that thou wilt be constrained to

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exclaim: "Thou art righteous, O Lord, which art, and wast, and shall be, because Thou hast judged thus." What an exhibition will he made on that day!

3. When God says that He remembers all our wickedness, He means us to understand that He will punish for it all, if it be not repented of. The maintenance of law and order in the universe require the Divine Being to display His abhorrence of transgression. And how can that abhorrence be suitably displayed otherwise than by punishment? And the punishment must be of a degree to represent the guiltiness of the conduct. It must be impartial, and be inflicted therefore on every transgressor. The rich man cannot buy exemption from it. The man of mighty intellect, or powerful eloquence, cannot persuade himself, not to say the righteous Judge, into the belief that he ought to be exempt. The man of good desires and pious resolutions, he who was born of praying parents, and often bowed his knees at the footstool of his Maker, but delayed to surrender his heart, cannot escape. No, my friends, the decree of the Almighty has gone forth, it is irreversible—there is none more righteous, and none that will more certainly be fulfilled: "Though hand join in hand the wicked shall not be unpunished." "The wicked shall be driven away in his wickedness." "The wicked shall be turned into hell." What a mercy that we are not receiving our merited punishment at this moment! And why are we not? Because the God whom we have so shamefully and inexcusably resisted and provoked "is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Opportunity is afforded for repentance. He employs means to bring us to repentance. How good, how loving, God is! "God is love."

Can any of you still resist the strivings of his Spirit? "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?"

Christ has died that you might live, live with Him in His kingdom of glory for ever. He shed for you His precious blood. For you He now intercedes at the right hand of the Majesty on high. And if you come to Him, however guilty you are, truly sorry for your sins, and believe His own gracious declaration, that He came into the world to save sinners, to seek and to save that which was lost, He will pardon and bless you. "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

God remembers all our wickedness. How much of it do you remember? How little of it do any of us remember! The past is to a large extent a vague and dim expanse. Many of you have climbed these noble hills, and as you stood on the summit, you observed that distinct as were the objects near, those remote were quite indistinct. It is but a few conspicuous objects you can discern at any considerable distance. Just so it is in reviewing our past lives. We can call to mind a few things. We can remember well—ah, we cannot forget, we have often wished we could, an act of rebellion against our parents of which we were once guilty; of obstinacy toward a master; of ingratitude toward a benefactor; of dishonourableness toward a friend, or unkindness toward a neighbour. There are several sad deeds in the life of every one of us which we cannot forget, but how many which we have all forgot. The things we can remember are as the milestones to the weary traveller, far, far apart. Yes, we forget, but God does not. He remembers them all. There is not a single improper word we have ever uttered, not a wrong feeling we have cherished, not an ungodly deed we have done, not a duty we have neglected, but God knew it, will exhibit it, and if unrepented of, will punish for it. Hear it, ponder it, hide it in the depths of your heart, God remembers all our wickedness.

Having considered the import of the declaration as it regards Almighty God, we come now to consider—

II. The charge against the Israelites. They are not charged, you observe, with denying the truth the Divine Being affirms respecting Himself, or even with doubting it. They admitted it, believed it, but it was unpalatable to them, and therefore they put it away from their thoughts. What a melancholy exhibition of character was this! And yet does not this declaration hold true of greatly more than one-half of the population of this evangelized land? Does it not hold true of every *drunkard*? Could he spend his hard-earned money in that which stupifies his mind, injures his body, degrades his character, shortens his life, and destroys his soul; and besides all this, brings want and wretchedness on his family, and makes himself a scandal and reproach to humanity—could any man yield himself to the power of intoxicating liquor that considered what is involved in such a course?

Does not this charge hold true of every *sensualist*? Could any man become the victim of degrading passions, could he consent to sacrifice the mental and moral part of his nature—the man to the animal—if he considered what was due to himself, to society, and to God?

Does not the charge hold true of the *pleasure hunter*? As a condiment, as a relaxation, pleasure seeking, if of the right sort, is not only allowable but commendable. He who gave life intended it to be a joy. To be always seeking after pleasure, however, exercises a dissipating and debilitating influence on the mind, and prevents the acquirement of true nobleness and worth of character. And would a creature, which is the highest workmanship of Infinite Excellence with which we are acquainted, yield himself to this, if given to the consideration of the fact the Almighty here states respecting himself?

To mention but one other class of character, does not the charge hold true of *the fraudulent*? Would a man rob his soul to enrich his pocket, would he narrow his heart to expand his purse, would he build up a character that is to endure for ever with such ill-tempered mortar as falsehood; would he be willing to encounter all the piercing looks and accusing words with which

those he wronged will one day assail him, if he had taken his relationship to God, and man, and eternity, into consideration?

What incalculable mischief and misery this neglect of consideration has wrought in our world! Had our first parents considered the sad consequences that would ensue to themselves and their posterity, would they have plucked the forbidden fruit? Through what a long and mournful list of events that have happened from that day to this might I easily go, all of which would have been avoided if right consideration had been given! Every day during those six thousand years a multitude of such events have happened. Is there one of you but can recal deeds respecting which you say with bitterness of heart, I wish I had given it consideration—I wish I had considered it more fully?

My young friends permit me to urge consideration upon you. Your welfare for both worlds is largely in your own keeping. You can secure it or destroy it. But to secure it, consideration is essential. If you don't addict yourselves to reflection you will be largely at the mercy of impulse, be enticed probably by evil companions, and get wrong perhaps in a thousand ways. Reluctant as you may feel at first to engage in it—uninteresting as you may deem it, do not, as rational creatures, prefer the pleasing to the right and good. The young man of reflection is more respected, more valuable, and unspeakably more happy, than the frivolous and vain. If you forget all else I say, do not forget this—it is the declaration of your loving Father in heaven, who wishes to welcome you there, but can welcome those only who yield to Him a filial love—"I remember all their wickedness."

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THE FRIEND WHOSE YEARS DO NOT FAIL. REV. W. ARTHUR, M.A.

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"And thy years shall not fail."—HEBREWS i. 12.

You know that these words are taken from the hundred and second Psalm. There, they are addressed to God the Creator; here, to Christ the Redeemer. In both cases they express the same truths. Man finds himself here, looks out to what he can see around him, and then in thought passes on to what he cannot see. He knows that a very little while ago he was not here, he was not anywhere. He has an instinct within which tells him that though it is so short a time since he was not the time will never come when he will not be—an instinct that cries for a permanent foundation. He is not such foundation himself—he feels that. He stands upon the foundation of the earth: he did not lay it; it did not lay itself. Those layers of rock were not their own framers. But the foundation *was* laid. "Thou, Lord, in the beginning didst lay the foundation of the earth."

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He is under a covering as well as on a foundation. He did not pitch that canopy, nor fix those lights, nor hang those curtains by whose silent closing and withdrawing the light is heightened or dimmed. "The heavens are the work of thy hand." But will these last? Will this earth that I stand upon last? No; I see on it the marks of age and decay as on myself. Like me it will perish. And those heavens that are over me, they shall perish—will all things perish? Will everything that is go out of being? "Thou remainest." They shall wax old, it is true, but that is only as if a garment waxed old; "As a vesture shalt thou fold them up and they shall be changed." All this that the eye can see above, below, around, is to the great King but as the robe upon the Sovereign to his person, and dominion, and when he folds up that vesture and lays it aside he will command another wherewith to show his glory to his subjects. "They shall perish; but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail!"

We have here a preacher, a listener, a subject: changeful nature, mortal man, immutable Godhead.

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Changeful nature is a perpetual preacher, evermore proclaiming to us the twofold lesson, our own mortality and God's immutable glory and power. "Thy years shall not fail." What strange language applied to the Divine Being—perfectly natural as applied to us—"years!" Our life is finite, our life is measured, our life is dealt out to us in parcels. For us to speak of our "years" is natural, but when we look up to Him that is unmeasured, infinite, eternal, then this word "years" becomes but the representative of our small transient life when trying to contrast itself with his broad and Infinite Being. We are constantly speaking of two things wherewith we find ourselves related—space and time: and what are they? We hardly know. We know but something like this: space is a measured distance in infinity; time a measured duration in eternity.

We are launched in the midst of a sea of eternity, and all the time that comes to us comes by solemn public measurement, measurement conducted in the most formal and stately manner by the hand of the Creator. He made that heaven from which we can never shut our regard—we must see it; and in it He set those lights "for signs and for seasons and for days and for years." He might easily have given us a being that would have flowed on evenly from its beginning to its close without anything to mark it off into stages. We may almost watch a sunbeam starting from the sun and racing all the way to our world, passing over it, far on beyond it, till our eye and even our thought cannot follow it, and never anything to check or register its progress.

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But not so the career that God has appointed to us. Everything is dealt to us under an economy of measure, of trust and of account. "For signs"—He set those things above us for signs. Cannot earth be a sign to herself? Cannot man be his own directory? Cannot the seas and the mountains and the rivers and trees and houses be their own tokens? Try this. Let that ship at sea, on which the fog has settled, ask the waves to say where is north, south, east or west; and when the gale springs up and the clouds cover the heavens let her ask the winds to tell how far from port. No, if the heavens give no signs she has none, she cannot tell where she is or whither she is going.

Suppose you find yourself within a mile of the house in which you were born: you know, as you think, every step of the way as well as you know your own bedroom; but there is neither sun nor moon nor star, the heavens are completely shut off and you are left to earth alone. Will the trees tell you the way? Will the houses show themselves? Will the road be its own exhibitor? No, if heaven fails you you cannot even see your own hand. You are under the perpetual preaching of the sky, that all your hours and all your movements are dependent upon heaven!

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"For seasons" as well as for signs. The Lord might easily have established our lifetime under a different economy; might have given us one perpetual summer, or a perpetual spring, or a uniform co-existence of all the seasons, the fruits being sown, ripening and reaped simultaneously. But not so. He has settled two things so clearly that none, even the most sordid worm that ever wriggled under the clay, showing himself above it as little as possible, can help seeing them. First a fixed order that nothing can change and that proclaims one Lord, one will, one dominion, one plan. The seasons come in regular succession. Every man living knows when the summer is gone that winter is coming. That will not and cannot be changed. Were the whole world to conspire in one effort that spring should come next it would be unavailing. The winter is coming. But with this fixed order is established perpetual change, variety, mutability, so that although we know the season that is coming we know not what kind of a season it shall be, and all our temporal interests hang upon that question. When the merchant has got his stock, when the man of pleasure has fixed for his party, when the General has planned his campaign, when the Admiral has laid down the arrangements for the battle, when the grand politician has perfected the plot for a new crisis of the world, what must they do? Not look to what the earth but what the heaven will do. Everything depends upon that. They cannot decide the market price even of hard sovereigns, they cannot foretell the value of their wheat, they cannot determine the life and health of their soldiers or the hours and effect of movements independent of that one consideration, what will the heavens do? Three days rain will change a whole campaign or a harvest. By the arrangement of the seasons we are constantly kept at the door of Divine mercy, begging "Give us this day our daily bread." That eternal voice preaching through all our temporal interests is to us the solemn, never-ceasing protest against worldliness, earthliness, vanity, living for time, living for the body; and, above all, against every impure or ungodly method of attempting to secure our temporal aims.

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"For days" as well as for seasons. The season passes slowly, but the day—oh what a solemn appointment is that! When the Lord made the sun to rule the day and the moon to rule the night it would have been very easy for Him to make two suns so that we should bask in perpetual daylight. But no, it was his will that our life should be cut into very short lengths and that by a mark so deep, broad, black, that the dullest man could not escape its impression. The dark gulf that lies between the dead day and the day unborn is the ever recurring remembrancer—Thy days are numbered; thy life is held under law; thy time is a measured current of golden sands. Every particle as it comes may easily slip away, if unwatched *will* slip, and once past thy hand it will be borne off by the rushing river and thou shalt never see it again, but if caught, held and brought to the mint of the great King it will there be turned into precious coin to serve in perpetuity the double purpose of enriching man and recording the majesty of God. Seize upon thy days as they pass! The heavens tell thee to do it; the dark and mantled earth tells thee; thy drowsy faculties tell thee; thy weary limbs tell thee; all are saying "numbered, numbered, numbered." Life is running away fast.

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Not only for days but "for years." The days, as I have said, are short; they pass rapidly, and we calculate that the days of our years are threescore years and ten. And when you come to multiply 70 by 365 it makes a very large number, and if we have lost a few handfuls of days, well, cannot we make them up? Have we not been young, and are we not in this pleasant watering place, where one must see life and have a little pleasure, and if we do throw away a few days, why, cannot we recover them? Can we say that of the years? Are the years so very plentiful—such a large number assured to you that you can afford to squander a few, to turn them not only to useless purposes but to bad ones. Can you?—the years!—oh is not it wonderful, the way in which thy Lord and my Lord, thy Creator and my Creator, marks out before our eye the progress of the years?

Perhaps you may remember in childhood watching the day as it grew and spread itself out, making conquests from the night and winning moments, minutes, hours, till you began to think the day was going to do away the night. You saw it stretching over the hours that once were dark till it seemed as if the tips of the sunset touched the tips of the sunrise, and still the light was gaining so that in a little time the darkness would be all driven away and it would be day the twenty-four hours round. But just then the night began to come back and the day grew shorter, dimmer, colder, and the darkness spread itself over the light till it seemed as if in its turn the day was going to be quenched and darkness to wrap up the whole twenty-four hours. But then the day returned.

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Was it an accident this first time? Would it ever occur again? You watched it: just the same process and at the same time, and you began to feel—it is a wheel! with its regulated, measured appointed movement; steady, by rule it rises to a certain point, and then comes down to a certain point, then turns again and comes up. It is a perfectly balanced wheel, making its revolution steadily, steadily. I did not fix those revolutions: the great Architect did! He knows how many the wheel itself can perform; He knows what each revolution marks off and what it accomplishes, and He knows too how many shall measure off my thread of life. I do not know the number, you do not know; but this we do know, it is marked upon the dial, and we are tolerably sure it is not more than threescore and ten. Suppose you saw the dial of life before your eye as plain as that dial is and the hand pointing twenty, thirty, forty, fifty of the divisions gone—gone never to return! Suppose you felt that that hand was pressing forward and would point and point to successive lines till at last, without a moment's warning, the hour will strike and it is over, no recall! Man of twenty, proud of thy youth! man of fifty, proud of thy maturity! man of seventy, proud of thy years! are you prepared to meet your God? Has your time been spent with a view to eternity? Has the measure of your days been taken? Has the course of your years been run in holiness? If not, by the deep voice of the heavens above thee; that voice which evermore is speaking; by the night and the day, and the season and the year, I charge thee prepare to meet thy God. For thy time is passing and eternity at hand.

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"Thy years shall not fail." The thought of man never feels that it can say this to nature. He sees the stones themselves have marks of age and decay—the very mountains, the very seas tell of change and limit. And in the skies too far off for us to trace decay we trace something else—measure. Everything is measured. The moon goes by measure and the sun by measure, and the way of the stars is all measured. There are clear tokens that not one of them is its own master or gives its own law. One government moulds them all. They say "We serve." I take up the blade of grass and at once feel He that made that grass made the light of day, the dew of the morning, the beast that feeds upon it. One law pervades them all. I take up the corn. He that made that made the sun that ripens it and the soil that fattens it, and my blood that is my life. Everywhere is one mind, one plan, one hand, one sceptre, and all nature says "I serve, I serve. There is a force external to myself. I am measured. I move by rule." "I revolve," says every wheel in the heaven, "I roll round by regular law." "Measure" always means "beginning." That which is measured must have begun. Beginning always suggests the possibility of end. That which once was not hereafter may not be. Nature fails to fill the mind of man in any one of the three directions—the past, the future, the outward and the infinite. It cannot fill up this thought of ours that claims an eternity before, an eternity coming, an infinity on every side; and we feel nature is like ourselves—a servant, a creature, a machine, an organ, and every part of it proclaims a mind that lived before it.

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Then will all things fail? all decay? No—"Thy years shall not fail." We turn to Him that made the law whereby the blade of grass grows, that whereby the sun stately comes to it, that whereby the animal feeds upon it, that whereby the man lives upon the animal, and that whereby the human mind reigns over the animal, cultivates the grass and makes use of the light. We come to that great Being whom all these things indicate and proclaim. In Him we find no external law or force compelling Him. At his footstool all say "We serve," and to all He says either "Be" or "Do" or "Do not." We find in Him no internal decay. Years come, ages come, worlds arise and worlds pass away, but "Thou art the same"—the same in strength, the same in youth, the same in beauty, the same in glory, the same in wisdom. Never old, only "ancient of days." "Over all, God blessed for ever. Amen."

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The years of his divine existence shall never fail, the years of his redeeming reign shall never fail. As I said, this Scripture is quoted from the hundred and second Psalm. If you turn to it you will find in it a contrast between man's perishing life and the eternal lifetime of the Lord; and especially the glorious lifetime of his Messiah and Messiah's kingdom. "My days are like a shadow that declineth, I am withered like grass." The Bible makes everything preach—it makes the sparrow preach and the bush preach, and the grass and the lily. It makes even the very shadows preach—"My days are like a shadow that declineth." Perhaps sometime in the morning you have stood and seen the great tree lying on the east of the hill, throwing its shadow broad and thick over the hill-side as if it really was a substance. But as the sun went up in the sky that shadow gradually shrank down until it totally disappeared under the leaves of the tree. My days are like that shadow—perhaps not like that only. You may have seen in the very bright moonlight shadows lying across the street till they looked solid as if they were something, so much so that the young colt started from them. But a cloud passed over the moon and where was the shadow? My days are like that. "But thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations." The remembrance of man is calling to mind those who are no more; the remembrance of God is calling to mind Him that is unseen. "Thy remembrance shall endure unto all generations. Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time is come. For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof. So the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth thy glory." Not only will his days endure but his kingdom will endure; not only will it endure but it will go forward with a perpetual progress. "Thou shalt arise and have mercy upon Zion." The Lord is building a city in the world, a city that hath foundations, a city that is compacted together, a city that has its families and houses and companies, its solemnities and social joys; a city that is all one brotherhood though composed of every nation and kindred and people. The Lord will arise in his strength to build this city and one of the signs for his time to favour her is when her children take pleasure in her stones and favour the dust thereof. We have that sign in our day. God's children are taking pleasure in the stones of Zion and favouring the dust thereof. Let us then, looking at

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the sign, lift up our eye for the fulfilment of the promise, "When the Lord shall build up Zion, He shall appear in his glory." We are trying to build Zion and the Lord is pleased to see it; but let us call upon Him—"Appear in thy glory! Do thou come and build! Give us the living stones, bring them to us by thy power out of the rocks, out of the heights and depths we cannot reach unto wilt thou not bring living stones to thy temple?" Call and He will come and He will build, and "the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord."

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You will say, "They have not heard it yet"—but they shall. You say many that have heard it do not fear it, but they shall, they shall fear the name of the Lord—"and all the kings of the earth thy glory." The kings fear his glory! They think of ancestral glory, courtly glory, military glory, political glory; they do not think about Christ and his glory. But they shall, they shall fear his glory. The proudest kings in the earth shall feel that the glory of Jesus Christ of Nazareth is to them much as the sun is to that shadow I have spoken of upon the hill. Their glory must pale and pass away. It is but a little time ago, only nineteen centuries ago, since Christ had no kingdom in the earth, no follower, no temple, no power. Now is there a monarch in the world will come out and say, "I shall sweep the name, the law, the love, the power of Christ out of the earth?" No, of all powers now acknowledged there is none so deep, wide and mighty.

Every day adds to that power; every year opens to it new spheres, new languages, new adherents, and on will it go and on till the whole earth is subdued under the power of the Lord and his Christ. What is the instrument of its progress? "He will regard the prayer of the destitute and not despise their prayer." Not despise prayer! Why, do not the wise men of the world despise prayer? Do not many talkers tell us that prayer is a thing not to be looked upon as a force in the light of elevated reason? You may despise it if you please and try to rear a kingdom over human souls on a system that does. God will not despise it, Christ will not despise it. There is a kingdom to be invoked by prayer, with its throne and its crown and its sceptre. All the powers of that kingdom are moved with the cry of a destitute heart. It is so, and you cannot alter it. "This shall be written for the generation to come," how you go and write down that prayer is of no effect, and we will write "He will not despise their prayer," and let the "generation to come" judge. Your predecessors, eighteen hundred years ago, wrote what you say—ours wrote these words, and see the kingdom of Christ to-day! "This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people." What people "shall praise the Lord?" The people that are in Jerusalem? No. In Rome? In Athens? No. What people? The people that are not anywhere; the people that are neither in heaven nor in earth; "the people that shall be created." "That shall be created"—existences now not existing, beings now not being, offspring of God and members of the family of immortals not yet born—they shall praise the Lord. Coming up out of the dark of that great future they shall rise to obey the King we worship and to praise the Saviour we love. "For He hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary: from heaven did the Lord behold the earth." Ay, from that holy place, that sanctuary—from that high place, that heaven—He looked to behold this earth, this vile place, this base place. Yet it was not to curse it—He looked "to hear the groaning of the prisoner; and to loose those that are appointed to death." Here in every corner of the world you will see a man who is appointed to death, accused, guilty, a lawbreaker, with witness heard and evidence taken and judgment recorded—the sentence is against him. Oh, if we had an eye such as looks from above how many might we see in this fair congregation who are condemned to death. You know it; you are breakers of eternal law; just judgment is against you; you are appointed to death, and unless you are delivered from that condemnation die you shall, die by a public execution before all worlds in the great day. But He comes to deliver them "that are appointed to death"—to bring you pardon, to bring you salvation, to bring you mercy, to make you a child of God, to blot out all the sin that you have committed. Christ died that you might be delivered; reigns that you may be delivered, and this day He is speaking to thy heart that thou mayest turn from thy sin, seek mercy and follow Him in the way of life.

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So the Psalmist goes on ever anticipating the growth and stability of this kingdom. "He weakened my strength in the way; He shortened my days." God does not make his Church and work to depend upon the length of any man's days. "I said, O my God take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years are throughout all generations. Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure? yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shall thou change them, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end." Ay, and there is something else that has no end. The heavens shall perish, the earth shall perish. God will endure. And will nothing else endure. Yes, "The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee." The servants, the children of God, those that are born again by the Spirit's grace, those that come to Christ, the Messiah, and through Him recover, by adoption, the place in the family of God that was lost by sin, they shall continue, they shall be established. What! when the earth flees away? Yes, when the earth flees away. What! when the heaven falls? Yes, when the heaven falls; they shall be established with the same immortality as their Father in heaven. "Thy years shall not fail." God will not fail; Christ will not fail; the Rock of Ages will not fail; and all and every one that through Christ is in God will never fail. The world will pass away, the word of God will not pass away, and the child of God will not pass away.

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Take then this word to thy heart and say "Thy years shall not fail." It will give you a worthy fear. Man is always rightly or wrongly fearing something. One is afraid of a man that has him in his power. He says, "If I offended him I should lose my bread; it would be as much as my living is worth; I must take care not to offend him;" and rather than offend that man he will stain his conscience and offend his God. Come back in twenty years and ask where that man is, and they

will take you to his grave, and that was what you were afraid of! Another fears this bright, witty, active young man, whose word either cuts or flatters with amazing power. He feels as if he could not face him; as if he could not bear that he should look him in the face and call him a saint or tell him he had been praying to God or been commending his soul for mercy to Christ. If he said these things to him it would actually appear as if it was something against him, something he ought to be ashamed of! Come back in twenty years and enquire for him—perhaps you will find him in a mad-house, perhaps in a gambling-house, perhaps in chains among convicts. Perhaps you will find a broken-hearted mother in black, wishing that he had never been born, and that is what you are afraid of! Another is afraid of the fashion. Every one does it, and if he did not do it he would be remarked. Every one says there is no harm in it, and if he scrupled they would make fun of him, and on this account he will do a thing that he knows ought not to be done. Come back in two generations and enquire from the grandchildren of these people about this fashion and you will find they are all laughing at the folly of their grandfathers and grandmothers. And that is what you are afraid of! Set the Lord alway before you. Say, “Thy years shall not fail. Thou art worthy to be feared. I will fear thee. Thou hast power—power over my breath, over my body, over my day, over my night—power to destroy both body and soul in hell; power to kill, power to make alive; power to condemn, power to save; power to cast me down, power to lift me up to heaven—I will fear thee, O God in Christ, and be thou my only fear.”

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Set the Lord alway before you and there you will find a sure refuge. Nature is changing and decaying, and we are changed faster than nature. We are all passengers in a ship that is floating in an ocean and has fire in her hold. This air around us has an ocean in it, an ocean of real water, and did God will it a little change in the weight of the air would bring a universal deluge. This earth has fire in it, stores of fire, and did God will a very little change in the chemistry of the air it would be a universal blaze. We are passengers, I say, in a ship sailing in an ocean with fire in the hold, and we know that the fire is to break out and that the moment will come when the ship will be burnt up. You and I are pacing this deck with the fire beneath, and the day, the hour, the moment, that the signal will be given no man living can tell. Are we prepared to meet our God? Can we look forth from this frail world unto that infinite bosom of eternal rest and say, “Thou art mine and I am thine to all eternity?” You may look to other refuges but they are not secure, to other coverts but they are not safe. Here is the Rock of Ages and that rock is cleft for you. God manifest in the flesh. Behold Christ crucified and flee to Him, flee for refuge, flee to-day; once in Christ you will know that you are safe. Let the storm come, let the winds blow, let the floods beat, let the fires break out, safe! safe! safe! Nothing can move Him and nothing can touch thee. Thou shalt “dwell under the shadow of the Most High.”

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Set the Lord alway before thee and you will have an unfailling stay, an unfailling resource. Many things you may think will not fail. Here is the old man, and his friends tell him he does not fail, and how he likes to hear it! “Thy years do not weigh thee down.” He goes on and it seems as if to him the years come as the snow falls on the mountains, not to enfeeble but to embellish. He does not fail. Ay, but he will fail and be bowed down to the dust. And the wiry woman that has gone through enough to kill many and yet hath more spirit and energy than the young. Ay, she shall fail too; you will see her smitten and trodden under the grass. “Well I know I must fail,” one says, “I *am* failing, but then there is my boy, I shall never want some one to lean upon, I can trust him.” Ah! he may fail; you may stand by the grave where they are saying, “Dust to dust,” or you may with your hands over your eyes look upon a sadder grave where his character lies corrupting. Another says, “Well, I know I am failing, but there is my daughter so good and sweet and true—I shall never want a comforter for my old age.” Ah, you do not know, she may fail, you may have to weep over her coffin or to blush over her faults. And another says, “Well, I have never depended upon anything but my own honest industry. I have something to rely upon. Mine is not speculation, it is good steady business—I can trust it.” Can you? can you? God may permit you by one mistake to undo the doing of a life. “But I am not depending upon the chances of business—my position is secure—settled property. I shall not fail.” Are you sure? You know not the ways by which earthly things can make themselves wings and flee away; or if they do not flee you may depart from them. Another says, “Well, I have never trusted to anything but my right hand and I shall not want—wherever I go I can take care of myself.” Ay, but suppose the right hand should fail? As long as the strong arm and the strong will work together it is well, but suppose a day should come when an invisible knife should pass between the arm and the will: and the will said, “Stretch forth!” but the arm hung idle by the side. It may fail. “Well, but my heart never fails me; whatever goes wrong I can make the best of it.” But suppose your heart should fail and that you became one of those to whom the grasshopper was a burden, one that made the worst of everything, that could look no difficulty in the face. Your heart may fail, your flesh may fail, your money may fail, your employ may fail, your friends may fail, everything upon earth may fail. If you have Christ for your friend you will never fail, if you have God for your Father you have a shelter, a home, a comfort that will never fail. If you have not you have nothing that you can count upon. Then come this day, come and say to all the shadows, “I trample over you, I clasp the substance. Holy God, my Eternal Father, let me be reconciled to thee! Be thou my God! Make me thy child! Give me a part and a lot in the family of the holy! For the sake of Jesus, who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, write my name in thy book of life and cover me from the storm that is coming, so that amid the change of life and the ruin of death, the awe of the judgment-day, my spirit may abide under an everlasting shelter! may look forward to the eternity that is to be and say to it, ‘Welcome—open all thy scenes—uncover thy deepest secrets—world of the unknown, bring out all that thou hast hidden, for all things are mine, for I am Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.’” Amen and Amen.

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GOD'S CONTROVERSY WITH MAN.

REV. CHARLES PREST.

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"Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel; and because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel."—AMOS iv. 12.

This chapter refers to the condition of Israel at the time of this prophecy, and to the expostulation and threatened procedure of God concerning the nation. God's people had revolted from Him; they had sunk into idolatry; they had been often reprov'd, but had hardened their necks, and therefore the Lord, after recapitulating the calamities which had befallen them, and which all came in the way of fatherly chastisements for their recovery to righteousness, and indicating that his anger was not turned away, says, "and because I will do this unto thee"—and because having done this repentance does not appear, then prepare to meet me. That is, meet me in battle. If you will not submit, then let the battle be fought; if you will not bow down to these kind modes of discipline—kindly intentioned, however terrible in execution, then prepare to meet me. This expostulation proceeds upon a very intelligible principle—a principle, however, which we sometimes sadly forget, and which we are too much in the habit of neglecting—on the principle that man is an accountable creature; and secondly, that God will call him to account for his conduct.

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God has a controversy with man, with us—a controversy with us because of our sin, our sin being an outrage against the divine love; a controversy with us because He is right and we are wrong; because He designs the welfare of all, and the sin that we love is productive of universal destruction; a controversy with sinners that can only be terminated in one of two ways—a controversy with every unconverted person here to-day. Do not deceive yourselves: if you are strangers to the life of God, you are in opposition to Him, and with you as sinners there is a controversy only to be terminated—first, by your submission, your repentance—and, thank God, He has prepared a perfect and suitable method for our submission, and for our repentance. If He has a controversy with us, He wills it to be terminated in such a mode as shall secure the original purpose of his great love, which our sin has outraged. Christ has appeared in our behalf, and for this purpose has offered a full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for our sins. For this purpose the Divine Spirit waits in all our assemblies, and now in this place, that any of you who are now enemies to Him by wicked works, being pricked in your hearts on account of your sins, and groaning under your condemnation, may fly for refuge to the hope set before you in Christ Jesus our Lord. So God would have this controversy terminated. So He invites you in his great mercy to terminate it. And for this purpose we are ministers of reconciliation, and "we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God."

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There is but one other way of terminating this controversy, and that is by our destruction. If we will abide in our controversy, if we will wage the battle to the end, this destruction must ensue, here is no method else—no escape any where between the one extreme and the other; it is submission and life, it is battle and death—death eternal. O that death eternal! What is it? Not the annihilation of your souls. What is the death of a soul? The loss of the life of God—the loss of communion with God. The soul is made for such a communion: this is its true life; it has no satisfaction apart from this enjoyment. There cannot be communion without love; that is the soul of communion; and if you renounce the reign of love, and come under the dominion of enmity, you cut yourselves off from the life of God, you die, and must endure the bitter pains of eternal death. I pray God that you may terminate this controversy, and thank God that you may do so, by the submission of your hearts to his merciful provision of salvation, that so you may live in hallowed Christian blessedness here, and inherit perfect fellowship and communion with God hereafter.

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We should humble ourselves in the presence of that great calamity which has fallen upon our flocks and upon our herds. I think it is well in times of public calamity that public attention should be called to these things; and our attention has been called thereto—not, it is true, by the governing authorities of the country. No matter for that. It is right that we should listen to the admonition that we have received in our own denomination, and do all we can rightly to humble ourselves, and above all, earnestly to pray to God that He would take away the evil from us, and that, in taking away the evil, He would render us the less liable to promote the dire necessity of future visitation. Let me then call your attention to some general principles connected with God's dealings with the nations.

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There is a national as well as an individual providence. In the ancient government of God over the nations of the earth, in his dealings with his own people and with the heathen peoples about them, his hand was clearly discerned on many occasions, and his arm sometimes made bare. There were the predictions of certain events to come, and there was the recognised accomplishment of those predictions sometime afterwards. Then, again, you find miraculous interpositions of correction, of punishment, or of deliverance. If you turn your attention to the history of God's Church, you find all these things manifest; you find Israel in Egypt; then the command that they should be allowed to pass away from their bondage; you find Egypt resisting the command, and God sent among the people of Egypt signs and wonders, and plagues by the hand of Moses, but they submitted not. He called them to obedience, but they rebelled. By and bye, He slew their firstborn, the chief of all their strength, and then the people came out with silver and with gold. Nations are not simply chastised in this world, they are also punished.

Every one of us shall give an account of himself to God at the last great day, and strictly speaking, the punishment of separate individuals will not begin in this life; but nations cannot be judged collectively hereafter; they are dealt with here; and God's dealings with the nations stand out in his palpable acts with these Egyptians. They saw the hand of God for a time, but they fell back into their ancient rebellion and pursued the Israelites to the Red Sea, and God made that sea a way for his ransomed and destroyed the pursuing host. Go through the entire history of God's ancient people. You find the Assyrians round about Jerusalem, you see the angel of God going forth, and that mighty host is destroyed. Go through all the dealings of God with heathen nations, and you find these physical manifestations of God's power. In our day there are no such manifestations as these. In modern times the events of the divine government are not so authoritatively predicted, and the exceedingly foolish attempts of some people to interpret prophecy and to apply it arbitrarily to passing events cannot be too severely condemned. They tend greatly to prejudice the proper interpretation of Scriptural prophecy before the world, and deserve severe reprehension, and should be altogether discountenanced by all men of sound mind. In our day we have not these authoritative predictions of events. But amid all this there is a tendency to ignore the action of God in the government of the world altogether. Instead of recognising his presence or acknowledging his power, the varied events—political, social, and otherwise—events like the one to which I have just referred, affecting the nation, are denied their true character; and the view that I have ventured to place before you in many places would be treated with ridicule. Men say, when they look at political events, that they are to be traced to the conclusions of well-directed political economy, or to the failure of the application of sound principles of government. I know very well that if the pestilence comes there are men who trace it to no higher than physical causes. I know very well that if great calamities happen in storm or tempest the physical cause is alone recognised. And with reference to the scourge of our cattle clever men look, as they ought, after the physical causes. They look, as I think they are bound, to the development of the evil influences leading to such a result. But if men now-a-days are Christian enough to recognise God in the parliament of this country there is no great response, unless it be a response of ill-concealed scorn; and even among people who profess more of Christianity there is a danger of leaving the stern, enlightened, and faithful recognition of God which distinguished our fathers, and of looking, in some fancied superiority of our intellect—which is but a fancy; for there were wise men before us—for explanation in something, in anything oft-times, rather than the recognition of God's power.

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Remember this, however, brethren, that the principles of God's government in our day are the same which have inhered in that government in all ages—that, however human circumstances may differ, however the nations of this world may alter, however the powers of men may vary time after time, God's government is an immutable thing; it changes not. The perfect idea of a human government is this—I do not say it is realised—to have certain fixed principles that are to abide, and then in the application of those principles to find an elasticity which shall meet every conceivable alteration of circumstances about us. That is the idea of a perfect human government; but human governments do not attain to it. The government of God, however, is perfect. The great principle is love—"God is love;" its great end, the welfare of man; the purpose of that government, the spread of Christianity for the welfare of mankind.

There is no expediency in this government, as men understand it. The governments of this world are too much founded upon expediency—the government of this country for the last sixty or seventy years lamentably founded upon it. There was a time when there was less of it here, but the disciples of expediency increase, and it is now rather "What is convenient?" than "What is right?" There is an expediency taught in the Bible, but it is nothing more than the best way of doing the right thing. It never truckles. The government of God knows nothing of our human expedients; it knows a great deal of Divine arrangements, and God as truly governs as though in his government of the nations He should work signs and wonders and divers miracles daily.

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God has spoken in the history of our own country. Look at some of the startling events of the last two hundred years. You look at the act of our noble, intelligent, never-to-be-sufficiently-admired, firm old English ancestors, in driving James the Second from his throne, and working out the glorious Revolution of 1688. Well, if you look at all this politically, you speak of their wisdom, their fortitude, and their indomitable spirit; you speak too of storm and tempest all working in their favour. Aye, aye, but the hand of God was there, as much in sending away that unworthy King as God's hand was in sending Nebuchadnezzar to feed among the oxen. God's hand may not appear in our modern times as in former days, but faith sees that hand in the common affairs of mankind. But because we do not see the operation, because the operation is not palpable to men's senses, the agency of God is forgotten. Depend upon it, it is a great mistake to imagine that if we could see, now and then, some great miracle wrought, we should get into the habit of recognising the power and wisdom of God. The Israelites were fed in the desert by miracle, and rebelled against God whilst they ate the food miraculously given to them. The wonder—the perfection of the Divine operation is this, that without disturbing in our little individual history any of the common affairs which arise in every-day life, without working any miracle at all, and whilst to the eyes of men all things continue as they were from the beginning, whilst there is nothing observable in the method, He works all things together for the good of them that love Him, combining opposing forces and blending together the elements of life and of death in one grand atmosphere of benediction for the welfare of the righteous, and all this without disturbing the ordinary course of cause and effect. The power of God impresses itself not merely through the lower links of the chain of providence—cause and effect, but upon the higher part of that chain which sends down its influence, its intelligence, its all-wise benevolence, to work out the welfare of those that are the objects of his love.

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So it is with nations. You will see public events rising up in connection with ordinary causes, but we ought to acknowledge the great First-cause. The principles of divine government which operated in the old time are now as surely in operation as they were then. They are not antiquated: they are not at all supplanted; they operate in the same way, to the same ends; they operate to national and personal benefit, to national and personal reproof, or, in the neglect of such admonition, to national and personal punishment, showing us that God's government is now the government which it was in the ancient days, and that though we see no miracles in our day God is as much in the midst of unthinking multitudes as when men were startled by the visible interposition of his Almighty power.

Let us look, then, at the state of things about us now. Is there not sufficient cause in this land to lead us to humble ourselves, to improve the admonition of our God; that we should prepare to meet Him, in the only way in which we can meet Him to our profit, by our personal submission to a greater extent; and if we love our country, that we should put ourselves into a position to bring the nation out of any state of rebellion against God, to lead it back to a more perfect reconciliation with Him? What evils have we now to deplore? Why, a great number. It is a blessed land after all; and there is more of Christianity found in it than in any other in the world. There is doubtless more of the direct influence of Christianity in our population than you will find elsewhere, and certainly more of the indirect influence upon the constitution of the nation, upon our legislation, upon our national—aye, and upon our domestic habits. There is a large amount of the indirect influence of Christianity in our midst, for which we have cause to be thankful. But then, on the other hand, how much is there of evil? There is great evil in our midst. There is first, what really our fathers had not so much to do with—there is the presence and power of a subtle, of a most ably-wrought and powerfully-patronised Popery, about which we have been asleep for too long a time, Popery, which is inimical to the welfare of any nation, and inconsistent with the political happiness, prosperity and security of any people. You have not far to go for the proof of this. You have only to go to the present miserable condition of Ireland to prove it. It is all very well for disclaimers to arise from the men who created the disloyal element of this mischief, but they must esteem the Protestants of this country more credulous than I hope they will prove if they expect them to believe their present protestations. What else have you? You have the presence of this Popery also where Protestantism alone ought to be known. You have it dishonestly intruded into the temples of Christian truth; and you have the pernicious nonsense of miserable and disgraceful antics obtruded into what men call divine worship, utterly beneath the dignity of sensible men. You have another thing. You have infidelity, and in the pulpit too—the pulpit in high places—infidelity in its worst form. You have all this, and no power, and very little inclination exists to correct it. You have all this, and multitudes love to have it so. That is one form of evil, leading to many other forms, and causing all thoughtful men to deplore the condition of churches cursed with a schism like this, with a false doctrine and heresy so utterly opposed to the truth and to the salvation of men. Well, then, look, at the profanity of the people around us. Look at the ungodliness of decent people. I am not here to-day to call your attention simply, as people sometimes do, to the lowest classes of society. They are bad enough. They are a festering mass at the foundation of all the greatness of the nation; they are a mass which, if not corrected in their tendencies, may at any time be quickened into an activity that will utterly wreck the entire superstructure of all that as Christians and as Englishmen we hold dear. But higher up, where there is no profaneness or criminality, or gross and disgusting visible intemperance, what other evils are there? There is decency, but there is an absence of the recognition of God. God is not in men's thoughts. And there is a fearful and fatal indifference as to the claims of religion that has come over the nations. Multitudes neglect public worship. I apprehend the least evidence that anybody can give of religious impression, or of recognition of the claims of religion, is that they should attend the public worship of Almighty God. You find, however, hundreds of thousands in this nation who never attend divine service. If our churches and chapels in London were to be attended next Sunday by the usual number of persons, and those besides who ought to attend were disposed to try to gain admission at any one time during the day, we have not half churches and chapels enough to hold them; whilst, as it is, the room provided is not occupied. This indifference is a fearful thing. Paul yearned over his countrymen, but in some respects our countrymen are worse than Paul's. "I could wish," said that glorious, patriotic man—that grand old man, that most blessed and chief of all the Apostles, with heaven in his view, his career well-nigh ended, his work done, and Churches rising up around him of which he was the father—not churches built upon other men's foundations—"I could wish myself accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Yet "I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge." In England, at this day, there are multitudes of whom it may be said, "God is not in all their thoughts." And the heathenism spread about us is as bad in its developments as in any other part of the world, and more aggravated in its character because of its immediate proximity with the light and truth of our blessed Christianity. There is in this land, too, an absorbing of men in worldliness: this, perhaps, comes nearer to us. In my time I have seen worldliness not only enthralling obviously and professedly worldly men. I have seen worldliness come into the Church—aye, among Methodists. How many young men have I seen, earnest, zealous, devoted, doing just that work for God which must be done by young men if the population of this land is to be won to Christ—they enter into business-life, by-and-bye God prospers their industry, and they begin to thrive in the world; and what then? Oh, then this fervour abates—they get immersed in earthly things. We lose their activities in the Church; the ungodly part of the world lose the influence of a blessed example and of their Christian teaching. They are too busy to attend to the service of God at all on the week days, they say to their ministers: "We will find the money if you will send men to do the work among these poor people." Find money to do it! So they ought: but do they think they place the Church under

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obligation by doing that? Not a whit. They ought to be thankful to the Church, and to the God of the Church, that He will have their money, that God permits them gratefully to recognise in this way their stewardship; but I say to every such person, if you think you can purchase exemption from personal devotion to God, and from such devotion as shall lead you to spread the truth by your personal labour, to the utmost extent of your ability, you are greatly mistaken. We can have no such compositions of God's claim; you must not dream of them. There is a feebleness, therefore, of the Church; oft-times arising from this cause, a feebleness we must seek to cure, as it only can be cured, by an increase of our own personal godliness.

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But how do we stand just now? God has sometimes admonished this nation for its ungodliness. I do not speak of the nation now as profane or criminal. Take the best view of it. And I remember that a great theologian has said, the true view of man's depravity is not that every man is profane or intemperate or mischievous—the great proof of the universal depravity of man is found in man's ungodliness—in his not recognising the claims of God, and not bowing to his love. We have had admonition after admonition, within our own lives, most of us. Not long since God sent a pestilence into our midst—on two remarkable occasions. Well do I remember the state of the people where I was labouring in one of the large towns of this country, with between three and four hundred deaths, from cholera, occurring every week. The people were alarmed. There was a national day of humiliation and prayer; our places of worship were crowded. The people were alarmed, but they were not permanently impressed. God heard prayer; yes, he delights to hear prayer. God answered it; he delights to answer it. The evil passed away; the concern passed with it; and I shall never forget the contrast between the congregations on the day of humiliation, and when they were summoned to thank God for the removal of the scourge. "Were there not ten cleansed? but where are the nine?"

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It is only four years ago that another check came upon the nation—that one of our great branches of national industry became suddenly paralysed; and what mercy was there in that! There was the good hand of God in the administration of that chastisement, in the conduct of the people under such calamities, and in the absence of mischievous, designing men from among them. I have known the time when that population would have been inflamed by a calamity of far less consequence to acts of the greatest violence. God's hand was there. He chastised the nation; but He guided the chastisement. And now again, another evil has come upon us—a greater evil, perhaps, than people imagined at first—this plague among our herds. There will be great loss to individuals, and no doubt there will be great loss to all; for it is impossible for so much wealth or money's worth to be destroyed in any nation without all the people in the nation feeling it more or less. I think it right, therefore, that we have been called to recognise the hand of God therein—to look through all external causes to his hand. It is a very dangerous thing, a thing I have never done in my life, and never would do, to talk about the providence of God in its punitive power, to talk about retribution in the application of God's providence in individual cases. It is very unwise to do that, and sometimes it may be most uncharitable. It is different, however, in God's dealings with a nation. We are admonished, or punished, by a great national calamity that has stirred all classes of men each in their own way, and has raised all their activities in order to see if evils of this kind may not be checked in their operation. This evil is present with us. And then, as to other evils that may arise. If you look abroad into the world, to the relations of this country to other nations, you have peace just now; but he would be a bold man who should predict the continuation of this peace for any length of time. No, your statesmen cannot keep the peace of nations; and the folly of our boasting about the peace-working power of our commercial relations has already been seen. We cannot give peace to the world. Who can tell how soon the calamity of war may afflict this country? Not I trust on its shores; but what is this land that it has any right to expect a perpetual immunity from the horrors of war in her midst? Do not say these things will pass away. Do not say these things are remote. They may quickly overtake us, and we should be careful that we do not provoke our God to hasten any of his judgments or to aggravate present ones. If you are delivered from calamity—if this great national calamity, for such it is, has not touched you, or at least not so touched you as to inconvenience you at all, remember to give sympathy to those that are suffering from it; and let thankfulness for your present mercies manifest itself in that godly amendment of life which shall prove your best contribution to the future safety and the prosperity of the nation. If we neglect this we place ourselves in opposition to God's government, and are in danger, by our opposition, of being told to prepare to meet God in conflict. Individual sinners do so who refuse repentance; nations do so that will not submit to God. You that are living without God, pray what prospect have you, what prospect of victory? The potsherd of the earth may strive with the potsherd, but woe to the man that strives with his Maker. The God whom you are called upon to meet is the "God that formeth the mountains, that createth the wind, that declareth unto man what is his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, the Lord, the God of hosts, is his name."

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Let the ungodliness of this land increase—and it will increase if we neglect the manifestation of godliness in opposition to it—and what then? There will be the culmination of national sin, and there will be the enactments of Parliament against the law of God, as on a former memorable occasion in France; let it come to that, and let a crisis arise; and though your statesmen should be the most sagacious, and have all the ability which has ever distinguished the foremost men of the Government of this land; let your Parliament be intelligent and patriotic; let your sons be as brave on flood or field as their fathers; let your commerce be ever so flourishing, your arts ever so perfect, your literature ever so exalted—none of these things would save the nation—none of these things would be an effectual shield against calamity; and upon the wreck of this grand old realm—wrecked by its ungodliness, made rotten at its base by sin—upon the wreck of this nation

which, had it been godly, would have borne the shock of all the earth, and dashed it back like foam—on the wreck of Britain shall be written, “The nation, the kingdom, that will not serve thee shall perish.” That inscription has been often written upon empires as magnificent, as powerful, and as illustrious as this.

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What, then, is our duty? What have we to do with this? We who are gathered together in this chapel may say, can we arrest the course of the nation? Can we turn back the floods of ungodliness? Can we go out and produce an influence that may avert these calamities? I do not say that you alone can do this; but I do say, that you are bound to contribute your utmost to the check of these evils, with as perfect a heart, and with as earnest a purpose, and as free a will, as though your hand could dash back the evil and rescue the nation from its danger.

Our immediate duty is repentance. That is the duty of the nation. But the word nation is a comprehensive one; we lose ourselves in it. We may do as we are in danger of doing with the word Church, lose sight of our own individual responsibility in confused ideas of what the Church collectively is to do. God cannot yield in this conflict; his righteousness forbids this. The nation must yield and become obedient, or the result indicated must follow. If then the nation is to repent, where is that repentance to begin? Why in this place to-day, so far as we are concerned. In whose hearts must this repentance commence? Why in the hearts of every one of you unconverted persons, that are rather contributing to the ungodliness of the country than to the increase of its spiritual power. You may not be drunkards, you may not be profligate; but if you are living without the recognition of God’s love and the enjoyment of his favour, you are ungodly; and your first duty is to repent. There is no salvation without this repentance, let some modern preachers say what they will. The Master of all preachers sent the Apostles forth, and they preached everywhere that men should repent. There is a fashionable preaching, I am told, that has no repentance in it. So much the worse for the people that listen to such error. There is no merit in repentance; the only meritorious cause of your salvation is the blood-shedding and the present and perfect atonement of Christ. But “the law is our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.” The old Puritans were right who said, that the soundest conversions were those with which the law had most to do. Mount Sinai exhibited proofs of God’s love, and Christ, who died for us on Calvary, is the author and enforcer of the whole law. There must be the bowing down of your souls to the claims of the law, the struggle for amendment, the renunciation of sin, the recognition of your own hopelessness, and the cry, “What must I do to be saved?” “Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Then comes Christ, and peace, and joy; a participation in the divine nature; and a power to contribute practically to the repentance of the nation. This is your duty.

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You Christian people, too, are called upon to repent. Depend upon it as we go through life an act of repentance, once for all, will not do: we shall need repentance daily. When a man is admitted to the favour of God it is that his mouth should be stopped, it is that he should entertain penitential feeling as long as he lives—not the penitence of guilt, but the penitence of gratitude. The recollection, I am a sinner, will inspire and maintain such penitence; and a blessed end that man will make, who in the full meaning of the words, pours out the prayer at the last, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” We need repentance—we all need it. Let us turn our attention to ourselves, and ascertain how much we have contributed to the existing evils of the nation. How much have we contributed to the present state of things which in the judgment of sober Christian concern may be held to have provoked the anger of God? We may have contributed to these evils, and I dare say we have, in two ways: first, by neglect of duty. There are sinners about you, you need not go far to find them—perhaps there are some ungodly people in your own houses. What have you ever done to make them godly? What effort have you made, what kind of an example have you set them in your words, in your tempers, in your spiritual aspirations? Now tell yourselves honestly. You have been living with them up to this day, living with them during this day. What have you said to them? Do your conduct and your words condemn their sin, and invite them to reconciliation with God? What does conscience say to this? What does the recollection of the past few hours say to this? There are wicked people about you: some of you have leisure; what have you done for your ungodly neighbours? What poor man’s house have you visited? What wretched sinner have you talked to? You have passed along the streets, and have seen sin abounding; have you ever tried to check it? Have you ever thought it worth while to follow some half dozen people deeply immersed in sin, and by patient, earnest, godly admonitions, counsels, and entreaties, have you sought the salvation of their souls? Have you done this? “Oh!” you busy men say, “we have not time.” I know better; you must not tell practical men that; they know that all of us waste a great deal more time than we want for such a purpose. It is not a question of time at all, but a question of inclination. Have we done so? Are evils abating by our instrumentality? Do not say, “I could do very little.” Do what you can! “If I could move a multitude I would do it.” No, that will not do. You good women, are you doing all the good you can in your families? Do you mothers give yourselves to the right training of your children? Fathers, are you practically anxious for the spiritual good of your families? Do you help your wives to bring up a godly family, which shall prove a blessing to the nation; and not such an one as Dr. Paley says, as shall turn out wild beasts upon society. You have little ability; well, if you have not ten talents, do not bury the one talent. Paul did one thing, and that was the secret of all his greatness—he did *his* duty. Do you do *yours*? There was a simplicity of purpose about him, an earnestness of endeavour, a thoroughness in the doing of it that made him what he was, the greatest of all apostles and the greatest man that the Christian Church has known. Take that simple rule, you young people; strive to spread the influence of a godly example among all about you: do what you can, in a way consistent with your position in life, and in a way consistent altogether with modesty, humility, and a deep devotion to God, and you will not labour in vain.

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We are guilty of sins of omission, and we need repentance.

But how have we contributed to the evils of the nation by our activities? Some of you were converted, perhaps, when you had lived to be twenty years of age, some of you thirty or forty, some perhaps were older; what kind of lives had you led before that time? How many of your former companions did you injure by a godless example? perhaps by foolish words, perhaps by ungodly actions. God has rescued you; where are they? What has become of the seed you then planted in their minds? If God drew out the roots of vice by his grace from your hearts, the influence of this evil remains elsewhere. What mischief is often done by men prior to their conversion in their families! When you see there is so much wickedness in the land, then say, "What have I done to increase it?" And I think we shall all find great need to repent; great need to set an example of repentance to all about us.

The first thing, then, is this deep humiliation of heart that shall bring us all to bow before God, and cause us to join in the prayer, "Enter not into judgment with thy servants, O God, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified." But, then, you Christian professors must bestir yourselves. This repentance must not be a passing emotion, not a temporary influence, however powerful; but there must be a correspondent continued effort to promote it amongst your families and neighbours, and to the utmost extent of your power in the world; engaging meanwhile in earnest prayer; and then consecrating yourselves more fully to this work under the influence of two things, a deep sense of personal responsibility and of the constraint of divine love. Submit, then, to this will of God. Know the rod, and Him that hath appointed it. If the multitudes about you do not know it you know it. If God be not recognised, let it be yours to recognise Him amid the surrounding worldliness, and depend upon it your purity of heart shall increase, and you will see God in all things, in all calamities, and in all joys. It is a strange thing that nations and individuals see God more readily in trouble than they do in their joys. Amid the immunities from ill which Christian people often enjoy how little they think of God. Trouble comes, calamity comes, and we owe the quickening of our religious feelings, strangely enough, more to our fears than we to our gratitude. And it will be well if we are so quickened by present calamity.

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Thus let us prepare ourselves to promote that condition of feeling in the nation which shall lead us to meet God not in conflict but in the way of his judgments, to bow to his rule, to abate our ungodliness, and to become as a nation wise and understanding.

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One remark as to the popular interpretation of the text. You will have to meet God speedily in your death. You should prepare to meet Him, for you cannot resist; you cannot flee from Him. Let us prepare to meet Him by embracing the mercy which He offers, receiving the love which He communicates to us, and devoting the rest of our lives to his service and glory. You are called upon, then, and I think for these reasons properly called upon, to contribute to and to promote the humiliation of the nation. Whatever other people do, humble yourselves before God. And let not the impression be a temporary one, but in the future seek that practical love which constitutes the repentance necessary to the nation, and necessary to you that you may prompt the repentance and reformation of those about you, and which can alone save the land of our fathers from calamity and make her more fully what she ought to be, "a praise in the earth." Amen!

THE PROPHETIC THEME. REV. GERVASE SMITH.

p. 119

"Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."—1 PETER i. 10, 11.

There is a peculiar interest attaching to the writer of this epistle. Although it was probably in old age, when a large experience of labour and sorrow had chastened his spirit, and in prospect of martyrdom, that he composed these chapters, they bear unmistakable proofs of his own vigour of thought, and suggest many reminiscences of his remarkable life. Whether you regard him as a man, a Christian, or an apostle, he presents an illustrious subject for the student of these modern times. His history puts before us many and serious defects; but there is much more to approve and admire: and while a feeling of sorrow lingers over the one, the other is so marked and prominent that it secures your sympathy, and you are drawn towards the man with an ineffable affection. There is a candour, and honesty, and generosity, and heroism, which gives to his character a most healthy tone. The qualities of his mind and heart, when sanctified by grace, become really noble; and if it were right, you would like to forget his failings in presence of so much that is both manly and good.

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His two epistles are a precious legacy to the Church. The first is addressed to the "scattered strangers:" but whether this expression refer to Jews, or converted Gentiles, or both, or to the "dispersed" of the ten tribes, there is no satisfactory evidence. We are in similar doubt as to the place from which it was written. The *Church at Babylon* is named in the last chapter; but there was a Babylon in Egypt, and another in Assyria, and Rome itself is thus figuratively designated.

The style of the apostle's writing is just what you would expect from the man himself. Vehemence, majesty, and, at the same time, ease and freedom, are manifest in every page.

The chief design of this epistle is to administer comfort to those already suffering; and to prepare others for the affliction they were about to endure. The first chapter adduces several considerations to uphold their constancy. One is that they are *the chosen of God*; "Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied." Then, as the elect of God, they had a *good hope of heaven*. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." A third consideration is, that though in the midst of trial, their Saviour was with them, and the end of their faith was sure. "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls." And, finally, they were to remember that this subject of their salvation had been matter of earnest enquiry among the prophets, whose labours are now made to contribute to their comfort. "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow."

I.—THE STUDENT, AND

II.—HIS THEME.

I. "The prophets have *enquired and searched diligently*."

The term "prophet" is most properly applied to one who is divinely instructed as to future events, and divinely inspired to make them known. In an accommodated sense it is given to the apostles and public teachers of the primitive Church. And now it is conventionally used to denote a somewhat less honourable class. "The prophets of our day" are many. From the positive style they have adopted, you would suppose that the gift of prescience had come upon them in a far more absolute form than upon the prophets of old. With more dogmatism and less authority do they pronounce upon "the times and seasons." Though failure on failure happens, this seems rather to nerve their confidence; and every successive mistake is followed by another guess with increased assurance.

1. *Who are the prophets referred to in the text?* They are the men to whom the term is strictly applicable. We do not forget such names as Moses and Samuel, and Elijah and Elisha, and others; but their prophecies are not given with the formality of those distinct books to which perhaps St. Peter refers. In point of time Jonah comes just with his message of woe to the city of Nineveh. Amos the herdman and Hosea his contemporary follow. Then Joel with his thunder, and Isaiah with his evangelism; Micah with his earnestness; Nahum with his sublimity; and Zephaniah with his severity, take their place in about equal succession. Jeremiah then appears with all his weightiness of matter and solemnity of manner. Habakkuk in briefer form takes up the same subjects. Daniel with great grandeur of style dwells on the topics of the text. Obadiah stands between him and Ezekiel as though to make them both more prominent. At a later period come Haggai and Zechariah; and then Malachi closes the illustrious train, taking the last pen from the wing of inspiration, or putting the signet upon the scroll of prophecy. Some of these may be especially referred to; but we include them all: for "to Him give all the prophets witness; that in his name whosoever believeth in Him shall have forgiveness of sins."

(i.) They were *men*; not angels, or belonging to some order of being superior to ourselves; but they were members with us of the same human family, and "subject to like passions as we are." They were *sinner*s: born with the old taint of corruption; subject to hereditary guilt, depravity, and death, and exposed to all the evils to which flesh is heir. They were *redeemed sinners*, included in that same covenant of mercy of which we make our boast. They were therefore *personally interested* in those truths which became the subject of their search.

The original promise belonged to them as well as to us. They claimed an interest in the leading facts of patriarchal history, and in the gorgeous ceremonial of the Mosaic Institute. All the events of divine providence which were preparing the way for the Messiah's coming, and the predictions which they themselves uttered, had some personal bearing. They were not uninterested students of past history, of present circumstances, or of future events. Their own destinies were involved in the truths they taught.

(ii.) They were *good men*. That the Divine Being has sometimes made "false prophets" means of carrying out his purposes there can be no doubt. But he is a daring man who would venture from this either to justify or extenuate an impure ministry. Sanctuary services are too pure and solemn to be performed by any but "*clean hands*." The instruments which God ordains are holy. With a miserable exception here and there, even the enemies of truth have not denied to the ancient prophets the crown of a good character. Try them by any recognised standard of virtue, and they will not be found wanting. Trace the minutest circumstances of their private life; their self denial; their exposure to danger; their fearlessness in denouncing sin; their being proof against corruption; their zeal; their sympathy; their benevolence—and they present a startling contrast with the priests of Paganism, or the false prophets among the Jews.

Call to mind the meekness of Moses; the heroism of Elijah; the gratitude of David; the sweetness of Hosea; the fervour of Isaiah; the tenderness of Jeremiah; the constancy of Daniel; the faithfulness of Ezekiel—and you unhesitatingly endorse the inspired oracle, that they were “holy men.” And although some of the prophets are remarkable for particular features of character, they are not wanting in all the others which are requisite to constitute *goodness*.

But what a magnificent portrait could you present to the mind as you review the whole! The characteristics of these different men meet and blend in the photograph; and you look upon a being—human it is true, but sanctified by grace, and fitted to exercise “a more telling influence upon the destinies of the world,” than the mightiest statesman, or the profoundest philosopher, or the noblest warrior of which history can boast. Like the hues of the rainbow, which in all their softness and sweetness and sublimity, rejoice to span the heavens together, and make up one token of the covenant, do the prophets stand before us as one class of men, unfolding the covenant of mercy, and offering light and life to a dying and dark world.

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(iii.) They were *inspired good men*. And here is suggested one of the most formidable dangers of the present day. An attempt is being made to dry up the most fruitful source of confidence which the Christian has in the truth of his Bible:—viz., its plenary inspiration. We know that this is not new; but the lover of “the Book” had charmed himself with the hope that the controversy was over, and the truth triumphant. He is now, however, alarmed on finding that in addition to the old adversaries—the infidel, the sceptic, and the profane—he has to enter the lists with new combatants altogether; and among the rest, the descendants of those glorious Reformers, who, centuries ago, shook the papal power to its centre; melted the Bible’s chain in the martyr’s flame; and liberated the mind of a continent from the most crushing spiritual despotism the world ever knew. It is a distressing sound to hear those academic halls, which have been the greatness and the pride of Germany, resounding with pernicious error, not to say, positive blasphemy. Looking at the subject in the light of heaven we gratefully and confidently say that “the word of the Lord endureth for ever;” but humanly speaking, the Bible is in danger. And we must be prepared to meet it with a zeal, “such as in the martyr’s glowed, dying champions for their God.” The plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, and therefore of the prophets—is our impregnable stronghold, and must never be abandoned. The apostle says, when referring to the Old Testament—“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” And by this inspiration we do not merely mean that some general ideas were poured into their minds, which they clothed in their own language, and then published them to the world as a revelation from heaven. If the Bible be inspired *at all*, it is *fully* inspired. Otherwise, you cannot tell where to make the distinction between what is divine and what is human. You must either maintain the truth of the *whole* book, or abandon your conviction of its supreme authority. We adopt the statement that the prophets “composed their works under so plenary and immediate an influence of the Holy Spirit that God may be said to speak by them to man, and not merely that they spoke to men in the name of God, and by his authority.” Mark the wide distinction which is here suggested. Take the case of an earnest and trustworthy minister. He tells his congregation that he is anxious to give them the truth; and has been to God in his closet asking for light. In answer to prayer he believes that the Holy Spirit has given him light; and, confident that it is the truth, he announces it to the people. But you would not say that that man is inspired. There may be much of what is fallible and human with what is truthful and divine. Suppose, however, that on some Sabbath morning, he could with authority stand up and say that what is now about to be declared is not his, but God’s—that he is in ignorance of what the utterance will really be, and that in simple fact, God is to speak through him, using his lips only as the medium of communication; you have here an instance of what is meant by plenary inspiration. And this we say is the case with the prophets. These “holy men of God spake *as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*. Not in the *words* which man’s wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.”

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2. *Their Conduct*. They “enquired and searched diligently.”

(i.) What is implied in the *search* they made? It would seem as if for the moment the thought of their inspiration was dropped; and like other earnest students of the Bible, they now search to ascertain the meaning of their own, and each other’s prophecies. There is here, however, an incidental, though strong proof of the justice of their claims. The predictions they uttered were not their own conceptions; not the product of their own reasoning; and perhaps not even engraven on their own memory. They gave expression to statements beyond themselves, and the meaning of which at the time, they did not understand. And when (if we may so say) the breath of inspiration had passed from them, they sat down to discover by diligent search the import of those utterances which they had made. They had *written for the world*: they now *enquired for themselves*. Their *predictions* are by the grace of God, the property of the Church: their *search* is for their own personal benefit. The truths they proclaim, become the power of God to their own comfort and purity.

p. 130

The metaphor is taken from the employment of a miner who digs deeply into the caverns of the earth that he may find its treasures; and by their appropriation enrich himself. The prophets were not satisfied with the mere knowledge of the fact that the mine existed, and that its contents were more brilliant than any of Golconda, and beyond the price of rubies. They went to dig for themselves; and seizing the precious pearls of truth, they enriched and beautified and ennobled their own character, until their shining became too glorious for earth: they were then translated to heaven to sparkle amid eternal sunshine, and burn in glory for ever. How solemnly

does the Great Teacher's injunction sound in our ears—"Search the Scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of Me."

(ii.) The *earnestness* of their search. They "enquired and searched *diligently*." This word is forceful and signifies to trace out or explore thoroughly. The idea which the apostle intends to convey is thought to be this: "they perceived that in their communications there were so great and glorious truths which they did not fully comprehend, and they diligently employed their natural faculties to understand that which they were appointed to impart to succeeding generations." There is much of simplicity and power in the account which Daniel gives of his own *search*. "In the first year of" the reign "of Darius"—"I (Daniel) *understood by books* the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah, the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I *set my face* (marking earnestness and diligence and resolve) unto the Lord God to seek by prayer and supplication" the meaning of these things. You are not surprised at the visit of the man Gabriel, who was caused to fly swiftly; and, touching him at the time of the evening oblation, said, "O Daniel I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. I will show thee that which is noted in the Scriptures of truth."

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Now, if the prophets had thus with earnest diligence to search out the meaning of their own predictions, what but our capacity should be the measure of our toil? Nor is this labour to be confined to the pulpit. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him." If you want to know the meaning of your Bible, you must prayerfully study it. "These in Berea were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so."

p. 132

Here then is our Student: himself a study for all who are anxious to comprehend this book. There are only three orders of being by whom God has spoken to the world: Christ; the angels; and *men*. And among these men the prophets hold the first rank. At an early period—the elements of religion being already revealed—a new method of communicating truth was employed; and man rose from the position of an *observer*, to the dignity and majesty of the prophet. In some instances he is removed at once into this office without previous training. But generally God walks among "the schools of the prophets;" and laying his hand upon the chosen one, He bids him go forth. His very call seems to constitute him an extraordinary man. Both his appearance and actions make him singular. He stands alone. The mountain or the sequestered vale is his abode; and he is only seen among men when he has some message from God. Clothed in his sackcloth, he appears at the court, the city, and the village; and having pronounced the coming woe, or stated the imposed duty, or offered pardon, he mysteriously disappears; and is seen no more, till the burden is again upon him, and forces him to come forth and speak. There is a fire in his eye, but it is inspiration, not wildness. There is a majesty in his gait, as though he is either great himself, or is employed by one who is. There is a solemnity of countenance and a nobility of manner, which say that he is not often among mortals, but dwells in a higher sphere. In language which more fully pertains to us as Christians, his "conversation is in heaven." Carried up by the Spirit perhaps to the summit of the mountain which covers his retreat, views of the future break upon his vision. His eye burns; his lips quiver; his bosom heaves. And opening his mouth, he pours forth in more than angelic cadences, the designs of God concerning men, and kingdoms, and the human race. It may be that to himself all this is a mystery. He therefore gathers up every utterance, and carries them to his mountain home. In that consecrated cave he spreads out the panorama; and lifting up his eyes to heaven for light, he traces the picture to see what "the Spirit of Christ which was in" him "did signify."

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"Sweet is the harp of prophecy; too sweet
Not to be wronged by a mere mortal touch,
Nor can the wonders it records be sung
To meaner music, and not suffer loss."

II. THE THEME.—It is here presented in a twofold aspect. First, in its *entirety*: and secondly, in one of its *branches*.

p. 134

1. The great subject of prophetic enquiry is *salvation*. "Of which *salvation* the prophets have enquired and searched diligently."

(i.) In its *nature*. Is there a word in universal language which has as much meaning in it as this word salvation? It takes within its range all time and all eternity. Though specially designed for man, it has its influence upon every order of being God has made, and presents the most glorious manifestations of God himself which the world possesses. It glares upon sin with indignation, but throws its arms of mercy around the sinner; offers to him a deliverance from the guilt and power and pollution and inbeing of evil; gives him the favour and image of his Maker; assures to him victory over his final adversary; introduces him to, and acquits him before the great white throne; and arrays him in all the glories of an everlasting heaven.

To understand it fully comes not within the range of angelic intellect; and yet it demands our highest regard, as it has had the attention of enquiring prophets. 'Tis true they had not the light upon it that a better dispensation has given to us. It is not to be expected that they should be penetrated with its glory as we ought to be; but they were so impressed by its grandeur, that their thoughts were raised above all merely temporal deliverances, and they felt that their own interests were wrapped up in the theme. "And thus," we are told, "did this sweet stream of their doctrine, as the rivers, make its own banks fertile and pleasant as it ran by, and flowed still

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forward to after ages; and by the confluence of more such prophecies, grew greater as it went, till it fell in with the main current of the gospel in the New Testament both acted and preached by the Great Prophet himself whom they foretold as to come, and recorded by his apostles and evangelists, and thus united into one river clear as crystal. This doctrine of salvation in the Scriptures hath refreshed the city of God, his Church under the gospel, and still shall do so till it empty itself into the ocean of eternity."

(ii.) This salvation *in its provision, is of grace*. "Who prophesied *of the grace* that should come unto you." The apostle does not mean to say by this clause, that there is something in the theme *exclusively* adapted to those to whom he wrote. But we understand him to mean, in general terms, that the ancient seers searched diligently into that system of mercy, which should in after times, and under the Christian dispensation, be more fully revealed.

The word "grace" may have reference to *the manner* in which this scheme should be made known; intimating that it was by *divine favour* that the new economy supervened upon the old. But we take it rather to denote *the gospel salvation itself*. It is altogether a system of grace. In its projection; in its development; in its accomplishment; in its application; in its final consummation, it is all of grace. "By grace ye are saved."

p. 136

We are not among the number of those who doubt or deny the entire and absolute fall of man. Whatever good there was in him was then destroyed; whatever evil there is in him, was then induced. He is fallen in mind and soul and body. Physically, morally, spiritually, he is a wreck. But was no vestige left of that divine image in which he was created? Not one. No lingering desire to regain his glory and the position he had lost? None. Was he altogether dead to virtue and his Maker's claims? Yes, altogether. But was his nature so far polluted as that no trace of his original purity could be discovered? Not a trace to be seen even by an Omniscient eye. And was there left to him *no* inherent power to do that which is good? None whatever. "From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment."

p. 137

Then see his position. If his fall, which is so entire, is his own act, he is as much amenable to his Maker as he was before. The fact of his fall will not lessen his obligations: nor will it impose upon God any necessity to show mercy. He therefore stands before his Judge a condemned criminal; and the course which the Judge shall take is entirely within himself. There is nothing which can force Him to show favour. If He say, die, He is as justly glorious as He was before. If then, there is *no* obligation upon God to save: and if He *does* determine to be gracious, the salvation *must be* of grace. Oh, is it possible to conceive the solemnity of that moment when the destinies of untold millions were in the balance? Can you picture the suspense of heaven and hell when waiting Jehovah's fiat? Surely for the moment the pulse of nature throbbed not; heaven's music ceased to flow, and the howl of the pit was hushed. Then God, on his azure throne, holding in one hand the sword, and in the other the sceptre, stretched out the sceptre saying, "Deliver him from going down to the pit; I have found a ransom."

Your salvation is of grace. You are required to *pray*; but you are saved by grace. You are required to *believe*; but you are saved by grace. You are required to *labour*; but you are saved by grace. You are required to *suffer*; but you are saved by grace. You will have to *die*; but when you stand a spirit glorified before the throne, it will be by grace.

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(iii.) Salvation *in its object* is the soul. "Receiving the end of your faith even the salvation of your *souls*." By the soul we understand the immaterial principle or spiritual part of man; which though united with the body, is perfectly distinct from it.

As to its *nature*, it is possessed of intelligence, volition, sensation. It has capacities for enjoyment and suffering: for both good and evil. Its *immortality* is assured to us by the mouth of God. It may be lost. With all its dignity and glory, it may be for ever crushed by the divine hand, but never destroyed. While, however, it may be lost, it may be saved. The grace which can calm its fears, and satisfy its hopes, and purge its impurity, and consummate its bliss is now manifested. How insignificant does everything appear when compared with *its* salvation. The blotting of the sun, the desolation of an universe is a trifle when put in the balance with an immortal spirit. Let the sceptic doubt its immortality, and the atheist deny, and the scoffer jest; but let us look forward to the judgment-seat and beyond it, for "the soul, immortal as its sire, shall never die."

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(iv.) Salvation, *in its attainment, is by faith*. "The end of your faith."

There is no article of our religion more plainly revealed than this—"By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved. Whosoever believeth in Him shall not perish, but hath eternal life. He that believeth shall be saved." Faith is the simplest operation of the mind; and may therefore strictly be said to be incapable of definition. Still it is easy to say what is meant by the term when applied to personal salvation. It means the trust of the heart on the atonement of Christ, as the condition of pardon. "With the heart man believeth unto righteousness." It is however of the highest importance that the thought of its *simplicity* be made prominent. Let us not undervalue religious knowledge; for to some extent it is absolutely necessary. But do not mystify the plan of mercy, and perplex the anxious seeker by requirements which the gospel has not made prominent. Many a poor sinner exercises faith in Christ who cannot give a philosophical disquisition as to its nature. It is not necessary to be thoroughly acquainted with the science of optics in order to see. A man may look through a telescope before he can define the refraction or reflection of light. Now all that is included in the word salvation hangs on this simple condition.

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The question may be regarded perhaps more nice than wise as to *why* such a condition should have been appointed; and yet it will sometimes force itself upon the thoughtful mind. The answer to it must in great measure be conjectural, but may we not suppose that *one* design of it was to do away with the last vestige of self-righteousness in man? If Moses had struck the rock with something more powerful than the little rod, the gushing of the waters might have been attributed to his own strength. If Jericho had been taken by a regular siege, the glory of its conquest would have been ascribed to military science and the prowess of arms. If some heavy conditions had been imposed upon the sinner, he would have *claimed* his pardon.

“But, ‘how unlike the complex works of man,
Heaven’s easy, artless, unencumbered plan,
No meretricious graces to beguile,
No clustering ornaments to clay the pile.
From ostentation as from weakness free,
It stands like the cerulean arch we see,
Majestic in its own simplicity.
Inscribed above the portal from afar,
Conspicuous as the brightness of a star,
Legible only by the light they give,
Stand the soul-quickenings words—Believe and Live.”

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2. The apostle next concentrates attention upon one leading *branch* of this great theme.

Having put the whole subject before us in the word salvation, he now fixes our thought upon *the relation which Christ sustains to it*. “Searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow.” The testimony which is here said to be borne to Christ, is by the Spirit, and the signification of the Spirit in the testimony is that which the prophets sought. He who in the text is called “the Spirit of Christ,” in the following verse is designated the Holy Ghost, so that there can be no doubt as to the person referred to. He is variously spoken of as “the Spirit of God”—“the Spirit of the Father”—“the Spirit of the Son”—“the Holy Spirit,” and He is the third person in the Holy Trinity. “In the entire and undivided unity of the Godhead, there is a Trinity of personal subsistences; consubstantial, co-equal, and co-eternal.” It was this “Spirit of Christ” who inspired the prophets; for these “holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.”

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(i.) They sought the signification of the Spirit as to the *Saviour’s person*. “Searching *what*.” This expression is said to mean either what *time*; or what *people*; or what *person*. But looking at the whole passage it seems most naturally to refer to Him who is the subject of these predictions. They therefore diligently enquired as to who He was, of whom they, under inspiration, had been speaking.

(ii.) They also studied the prophecies as to *the time of his coming*. “What manner of time?” This phrase has a twofold application. It may refer to that particular period of the world’s history when the Saviour should come to endure his sufferings and enter into his glory. So Daniel reckoned up the number of the weeks, and sought to understand the time.

It may also have reference to “the character and condition of the age” when He should become incarnate. “What *manner* of time?”

We are now brought to the testimony itself which the Spirit beforehand gave.

(iii.) *The Saviour’s sufferings*, in their relation to our salvation. “The sufferings of Christ.”

We limit ourselves to two thoughts: these sufferings *were predicted*, and those predictions *were fulfilled*. Nearly the whole of the Old Testament has a connection with them. They are predicted by the very page which records the fall. “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed: it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.” Under the patriarchal economy there was a significant allusion to them in the offering up of Isaac. The Mosaic types were prophecies. The paschal lamb; the smitten rock; the brazen serpent; and the scape-goat on the day of expiation, exhibited this feature of Messiah’s character. Well nigh every page of the prophets is marked by blood and sorrow. The Psalmist, in thrilling tone, enquires, “My God, my God why hast thou forsaken Me?” And in the last struggles of death Jesus quoted the passage in its application to himself. The fifty-third chapter of Isaiah is an unapproachable description of a suffering person. Its reference to Christ has been extorted from the Jew, and is confidently believed by every Christian. The notion of two Messiahs—the one suffering and the other conquering—is an unworthy subterfuge, and stands opposed to both fact and Scripture. Daniel is second only to Isaiah in his minute and powerful description of the Redeemer’s sufferings. Zechariah almost closes the book by the startling cry, “Awake, O sword, against my Shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.”

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That these Scriptures have been fulfilled who can doubt that believes the gospels? Just before the Saviour’s ascension, and while yet partaking of the valedictory feast with his disciples, “He said unto them, these are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms concerning Me. Then opened He their understanding that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise

from the dead the third day." We pass by the pain and hunger and thirst which are the attributes of humanity; but from his very incarnation may it be said that his sufferings began. Mark the meanness of his birth; the poverty of his circumstances; the persecution which drove Him from his infant-home, and think of his manner of life prior to the public announcement of his character, and you say with the prophet—"A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief."

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Now look into Gethsemane's innermost recess and you see an amount of suffering unendurable except under heavenly strengthening; "And, being in an agony, He prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him." Betrayed by a disciple, He is apprehended by the "multitude with swords and staves;" then arraigned before the high priest; then before Pilate: then taken before Herod and clothed in the purple; then bound and dragged again before Pilate: then smitten by the ruffianly attendants, and forsaken by his followers He is condemned to die. After the Roman fashion He is led away bearing his own cross to the fated hill. Here is the consummation of their cruelty, of his suffering, and of heaven's suspense. The leader of an army to the battle-field looks with anxiety to that moment of the day which decides the conflict; and either covers him with a nation's glory, or overwhelms him in a nation's disgrace. The fate of empires has hung on the actions of an hour; and the liberties of a continent have trembled for an instant in the balance. But the salvation of a world was hanging on Calvary till the Sufferer exclaimed: "It is finished."

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You will not suppose that we have exhibited all, or even a principal part of "the sufferings of Christ." We do not wish to underrate this bodily distress; but oh, compare it not with the depth of the soul's agony. The hand of man which smote Him was malignant and painful too; but the hand of God with the sword of justice in it, fell in dreadful weight and pierced his spirit. His being betrayed and forsaken by the disciples was a source of pain; but it was when the Father hid his face that his sufferings were complete. "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken Me?"

In addition to the general scope of prophecy, there are many minute and particular predictions of suffering which were fulfilled. The Psalmist says—"Yea mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." And you call to mind the betrayal of our Saviour. David says again, "They pierced my hands and my feet." And when He was crucified the nails were driven through these parts of the body. Isaiah says, "He was numbered with the transgressors;" and we know that He was crucified between two thieves. Prophecy says, "They part my garments among them, and casts lots upon my vesture." History says, "And they crucified Him, and parted his garments casting lots." Prophecy says, "A bone of Him shall not be broken." History says that when the soldiers "came to Jesus and saw that He was dead already, they brake not his legs." Prophecy says, "They gave me also gall for my meat, and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." History says, "They gave Him vinegar to drink mingled with gall," when He said "I thirst." You are not surprised then, that after the fulfilment of so many and varied predictions, Jesus should have spoken to the two doubting disciples with a somewhat sterner voice than was his wont: "O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken, ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory."

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(iv.) See the connection between this salvation and the Saviour, with regard to *the glory* resulting from his passion and death. "And the glory," or glories, "that should follow." We distract not your mind with the many meanings of the word "*glory*." In the text it signifies the honour accruing to the Redeemer himself, and the benefit resulting to the world from his sufferings. It will apply to *his resurrection*; for even of this the prophets had some knowledge. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption." It has also reference to the Saviour's *exaltation to and session at the right hand of the Father*: for this is the result of his humiliation. "We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man." But it has another meaning. The glory resulting from "the sufferings of Christ," is to be seen in *the carrying out of his own scheme of mercy, and the universal happiness of man*. Nothing short of this can satisfy the scope of the text; the expectation and claims of the Messiah; or the call of the Church. It was no less an object than this—the saving of a whole world—that brought Christ from heaven and raised up the Church on earth. If you look or labour for anything short of this, you degrade your Master and dishonour yourselves. You have got too large a machinery at work for anything less than this. You will cripple the energies and damp the ardour of our Captain's embattled hosts, if you are satisfied with anything short of the conquest of a world. The question therefore is, have we any fair prospect of, and guarantee for, universal glory?

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The text itself affords ground of hope that in the Scriptures we shall find all we desire. An intimation is given that the prophets themselves not only predicted it, but by their diligent search, apprehended and believed it. And let us not suppose that our faith in a happy world rests on a few dark or obscure expressions thinly scattered over the Bible, and requiring more than ordinary penetration to find them at all. Science by gigantic strides seems almost to have reached its perfection. We are told that by its light the philosopher can, from a single bone put into his hands, discover the existence of a "great wingless bird" of another hemisphere, and can construct "its skeleton so exactly, that when all the bones" arrive in this country "the correspondence between them and their conjectural portraits" is complete; that the astronomer is able by his calculations to tell the existence of a planet, which observation proves to be strictly true. But wonderful as is all this, we are not reduced to any such necessity with regard to the

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future of the gospel. We have not to take a few dark sayings, or enigmatical expressions, or hieroglyphic inscriptions, and as we best may spell out the universal spread of truth. As with the light of a sunbeam, or with "the point of a diamond," is it revealed. He that runs may read. Abraham saw it: "And in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Jacob saw it: "The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be." David saw it: "Ask of Me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Isaiah saw it: "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf, and the young lion, and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them." Oh what a state of security and peace!

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"Lift up thine eyes round about, and see; all they gather themselves together, they come to thee; thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side." Let the Church no more hang down her head with grief. Look up, and see what is approaching. "All they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side." A general confluence of the nations is at hand, and all will flow into the church. "Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee." The vast-swelling multitude with their wealth shall come and beg admission. "We have now to beg people to come into the church: the day is coming when they shall ask permission. "Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as the doves to their windows?" Who *are* these myriads making their way to Christ? "And as the doves to their windows?" There is a storm at hand: the people foresee it, and run for refuge. "Thy gates shall be open continually; they shall not be shut day or night; that men may bring unto thee the forces of the Gentiles, and that their kings may be brought." So constant is the pouring in that the doors must be kept open. It is now a rare thing to see a convert approaching; but then the stream will be continuous, and the houses of prayer open night and day.

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"Thou shalt also suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shalt suck the breast of kings: and thou shalt know that I the Lord am thy Saviour and thy Redeemer, the mighty One of Jacob." The very wealth which is now in heathen hands shall be consecrated to the further spread of the gospel. "And thou shalt suck the breast of kings:" for they shall become "nursing fathers and queens nursing mothers;" and the reign of the Messiah shall be one of peace. "Violence shall no more be heard in thy land, wasting nor destruction within thy borders: but thou shalt call thy walls Salvation, and thy gates Praise. The sun shall be no more thy light by day; neither for brightness shall the moon give light unto thee: but the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down; neither shall thy moon withdraw itself: for the Lord shall be thine everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended. Thy people also shall be all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified. A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time." Do not say that this glorious chapter is exceptional. It is only a sample, and the bulk is equal in beauty. If the Bible, then, be true, a redeemed universe is hastening upon us. Paradise created even cannot put before us the glory of paradise restored. All the events which are passing over us—even those which appear the most alarming—are under an influence which will make them tributary to the final issue. "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only doeth wondrous things, and blessed be his glorious name for ever; and let the whole earth be filled with his glory. Amen and Amen."

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1. Let us learn a lesson of *veneration for the Scriptures*. Unless it be the great doctrine of atonement, there is no truth to which the Christian clings, assailed with greater bitterness in our days than the plenary authority of the Bible. Moreover the low views on this question which many professing Christians hold and teach, are most deplorable and damaging. We expect opposition from the avowed adversaries of the Book; but, the source of truth is now imperilled by indifference and treachery. The whole volume has a divine origin. "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past by the prophets hath in these last days spoken to us by his Son."

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2. A lesson of *love to the Saviour*. "He hath died" for us, "the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." Do not forget your personal interest in those sufferings to which the text refers. They are in the strictest sense *vicarious*. He suffered not for his own sins, but for yours. You may realise their saving efficacy, and be "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." How great are his claims upon our affection and service!

3. A lesson of *duty to the world*. The salvation of the whole race is provided by "the sufferings;" and is included in "the glory." A sanctified universe is to be the result of the Saviour's cross: and to a large extent He has made the Churches responsible for the conversion of the world. A weight of obligation rests upon each member which cannot be put into language. The wailings of a dying race call loudly for our zeal. The groans of the lost gather strength as they ascend the pit. The voice of heaven, from angels, saints, and God, urge us onward in the discharge of duty. Oh, the wreck is on the billow; hasten with the means of safety. The plague-spot is in the camp; offer the incense of atonement. And let all your efforts be put forth in faith, and under a deep impression of the truth of Cecil's memorable words: "Faith is the master-spring of a Minister," as well as of every Christian. "Hell is before me, and thousands of lost souls are shut up there in everlasting agony. Jesus Christ stands forth to save men from rushing into this bottomless abyss. He sends me to proclaim His ability and love. I want no fourth idea."

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THE MIND WHICH WAS IN CHRIST JESUS.

REV. GEORGE WOOD.

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“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” PHILIPPIANS ii. 5.

The Saviour left His followers an example that they should tread in His steps; and His example in everything that appertains to His human nature, is not only practicable but essential. We cannot imitate His power, or His wisdom, or His miracles, or His sufferings, or anything in which His Divine nature was manifested or employed; but we can imitate His meekness, His patience, His zeal, His self-denial, His superiority to temptation, His abandonment of the world, His devotion to His Father’s will, in short, all those habits of mind and life which distinguished His earthly career. And with this perfect example before us, we need never be in doubt or perplexity as to what is our duty; we may test our motives and our conduct by the teaching and example of Christ, and if we possess His mind we shall endeavour to copy His life—to “walk as Christ also walked”—to be in this world as Christ also was.

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This Epistle was addressed by the Apostle Paul to a Church which he tenderly loved, and for whose prosperity he constantly prayed. He had suffered much in the establishment of Christianity at Philippi, and the Philippians had suffered much in the maintenance of their profession of faith, chiefly from their fellow-citizens who continued heathen. The Apostle was a prisoner at Rome, with the prospect of martyrdom as the termination of his glorious career. Undaunted by the prospect, he declares his readiness—nay, more—his “desire to depart and be with Christ.” He exhorts the Philippians to steadfastness, fidelity, and patience amid the sufferings to which they were exposed from without; and to simplicity and “lowliness of mind” amongst themselves. He sets before them the conduct of Christ in His condescension, and the glory of Christ in His exaltation; and exhorts them to imitate the Saviour’s humility, that they might share His triumph. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

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This text is of universal application. It applies to us. The highest dignity attainable in this world is conformity to Jesus Christ. In what then does conformity to Jesus Christ consist? In other words, what are those elements of character and conduct which distinguished Him, and which are to be copied by us in our daily life?

I. The first which we mention, and which is prominent throughout the whole of His history is *meekness* or *humility*. Dignified as was His character, high as were His claims, glorious as was His mission, He was never arrogant or boastful, proud or ostentatious. He neither sought the homage of the multitude, nor the society of the rich and the great. He accepted these if offered, but He never sought them. It is a fact that Christ never demanded, yet never declined the worship of men during His earthly sojourn. The Apostles shrunk from it, Angels rebuked it when offered to them, Christ never did. It was sometimes given, it was never declined. He did not obtrude Himself upon the attention of the multitude as the Saviour of the world; but ate, and drank, and slept, and walked, and lived amongst them, and was in every respect a man with men. He sometimes escaped from the society of the rich, that He might mitigate the sorrows, and promote the interests of the poor. He never sought human applause, and frequently retired from the scene of the most astounding miracle, charging the subject of His healing and His blessing to “tell no man” of Him. He might have taken the throne, and reigned “King of the Jews,” in a political and worldly sense, had He been covetous of regal honours, or ambitious for worldly power. But He had a higher mission. His kingdom was “not of this world,” and He came “not to be ministered unto, but to minister.”

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It cannot, however, be asserted that Jesus was insensible, or altogether indifferent, to the temptations to popularity and power to which He was exposed; if so, His example is of no practical utility to us. He did not feel as we feel, and we can gather no instruction, and no motives from His history or experience. But we believe that He “was in all points tempted *like* as we are;” that as a man He was the subject of all the emotions, affections, and impulses which we feel. He could weep, and love, and hate, and fear, and pure as His nature was, He had to battle with the various temptations of the world and the wicked one, all the more perhaps because of the sinlessness of His holy humanity.

Great and frequent were the provocations of His enemies, but He never lost His temper—He never forfeited the claim to be called “the meek and lowly Jesus.” If you follow Him to the house of Caiaphas the high priest, to the judgment hall of Herod or of Pilate, or to the Cross itself—though He was buffeted, accused falsely, condemned, spit upon, crucified—He passed through all the same calm, humble, holy Being. There was no retaliation, no resentment. There was majesty in His very meekness. And this is an important element in the Saviour’s character and conduct, which as Christians we must acquire and exhibit.

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Undue elevation in circumstances of prosperity and fame, is as injurious to our spiritual progress, as irritation and depression are in circumstances of adversity and trial; and both are to be avoided. The Saviour left us an example—a bright and a beautiful example—O how few of us copy it in this respect. When the voice of flattery and praise is heard—when we are raised to posts of influence and honour—when the sun shines brightly upon our daily pathway—how few of us keep our meekness and humility; how few of us carry all our honours back to Him who gave them; how few of us so improve and sanctify our talents as that He shall have the glory. And on

the other hand when fortune frowns upon us—when the world despises us—when our “own familiar friend, in whom we trusted, lifteth up his heel against us,” alas! how few of us “calmly sit on tumult’s wheel,” and leave events to God. It is easier to sing and preach about such a disposition than it is to acquire and exhibit it; but it is attainable and it is essential—“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”

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II. *Simplicity* and *unity* distinguish the character and conduct of Christ. In all His intercourse with friends and foes, His adherence to truth and righteousness is marked and constant. He was criticised and catechised and calumniated, but His transparency of character was never destroyed. His enemies opposed and threatened, but He never hesitated in the path of duty, or in His devotion to His Father’s will. However captious their questions, and whether they related to political or spiritual matters, He invariably turned them against His opponents, and made them minister to the cause of truth and righteousness. Sometimes He stood single-handed against a multitude of foes, they were often vacillating, cowardly, and inconsistent with themselves; but not so the Saviour. With what authority did He rebuke their selfishness, their duplicity, their sin; and yet how confidently could He appeal to His bitterest opponents as to the simplicity and purity of His own character and life—“Which of you convinceth *Me* of sin?” The proud and supercilious Pharisees sought “to entangle Him in His talk;” they charged Him with blasphemy, with disregard for the Sabbath, with breaking the law, and they disputed His authority to act as He did; but their cunning could not ensnare, their threatening could not intimidate. Satan sought by a threefold temptation to turn Him aside; he desired Him to question, in the first place, the providence of God, then to tempt an interposition of Providence by exposing Himself to unnecessary danger, and finally to fall down and worship him; but our Lord indignantly repelled the tempter, and maintained His purity; and “angels came and ministered unto Him.” “I must work the works of Him that sent me,” was the motto of His life—the simple purpose of His mind; nor did He shrink from any portion of that work however hazardous and difficult. “My meat,” said He, “is to do the will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work.”

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In this simple purpose of the Saviour’s mind and conduct we have a beautiful example. Nothing is so difficult, in days like these, as the maintenance of a pure and simple mind. Duplicity, deception, and selfishness pervade all ranks and conditions of men. You find them in the shop, in the market-place, in the family, and alas! in the church itself; and nothing but a resolute resistance, directed and sustained by the grace of God, can make the Christian proof against these evils. O imitate the Saviour. Mark out for yourselves a definite line of conduct, consistent with your Christian profession, and adhere to it firmly, in spite of custom or contempt, and in the prospect of death itself.

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Simplicity produces unity. There is nothing complex in the character and life of Christ. Every part is in perfect keeping with the whole. His teaching, His miracles, His conduct, illustrate each other, and combine to prove His true Messiahship, and exhibit the perfection of His life. If there were glaring inconsistencies in the history of Jesus—if the four Evangelists had written documents which could not be harmonized—if the moral teaching, and the moral conduct of Christ were at variance—if His pretensions were not justified by His works—then we might deny His Messiahship, and disregard Him as our Great Example. But it is not so. What He taught He practised; what He promised he performed; the work He came from heaven to accomplish He actually “finished,” even to the shedding of His blood. “The cup which my Father hath given me to drink,” said He, “shall I not drink it?” Thus the example of Christ forbids all fickleness and falsehood. It condemns all false appearances; and says to all His followers, with an authority and force which even the words themselves do not contain, “Let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.” What a wonderful and glorious change would the observance of such a rule effect in the church, and in the world! “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”

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III. The mind of Christ is distinguished by its *sympathy* and *ceaseless activity*. He could *weep* at the grave of Lazarus, before calling back His friend to life. He could *stop* at the gate of Nain, to cheer the heart of a bereaved widow, by restoring to life her only son. He could condescend to *touch* the loathsome leper, and thus make him clean. He could *stoop to hold a conversation* with a penitent adulteress. He could *work a miracle* to feed a hungry multitude. He could *look* conviction into Peter’s heart, and thus send the faithless Apostle out of His presence weeping bitterly. O there was nothing cold, ungenerous, or selfish in the nature of Christ. He was never too much occupied to listen to the tale of sorrow, nor too dignified to afford relief. He was never unapproachable. The finest sensibilities, the purest affections, the deepest sympathies were exhibited in actions, which, had there been no ultimate purpose in His mission, would have marked Him as a benefactor of our race, and carried down His name and His fame to the latest posterity. And this, in a humbler degree, we are called upon to imitate. How little like the Saviour is the man whose heart is hard, whose temper is irritable, and who has no bowels of compassion for the destitute and afflicted. How little like the Saviour is the man who prides himself upon superior extraction or superior position, and looks down with contempt upon the poor and the penniless. The Son of Man came to seek, and to save the lost: and when John’s disciples asked Him for evidence that He was Christ, His reply was simply this: Go tell your master the things which ye have seen and heard; “the blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached unto them.” What an outline is this of the Redeemer’s daily toil! How He “went about doing good!” How He wandered among the cities and villages of Judæa and Samaria; sharing the rough hospitality of fishermen—the barley-bread of the poorest peasant; working miracles of healing; teaching doctrines of profoundest import; contending with His enemies, the

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Pharisees and Scribes; and conducting the minds and the hearts of His disciples and the multitudes away from their superstitions and their prejudices, to the heart of His Father's love, and the results of His own suffering and sacrifice in their behalf: nor did this sublime and ceaseless activity terminate until He hung upon the cross—and then only to be renewed in ceaseless intercession at His Father's throne. And again He left us an example. This active sympathy is the very genius of our holy religion—the spirit which it breathes—the life which it lives—the pure and blessed element in which it grows and becomes perfect. Happy is the man who thus imitates the Saviour—whose “weariness of life is gone,” by the employment of his talents and his time in “doing and receiving good.”

IV. All these elements of character in Christ were directed and sustained by the *holiness of His nature*. This is undeniable His enemies being judges. Even devils testified to this—“We know Thee, who Thou art, the holy one of God;” they could not resist His Divine authority; they could not impeach His human purity; and in order to secure His condemnation at the last, the chief-priests were compelled to resort to bribery and falsehood. And ever since the bitterest opponents of His religion have been constrained to reiterate Pilate's verdict with regard to Himself—“We find no fault in this man.”

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It is difficult to estimate aright the holiness of Christ as an example to us. It is difficult to discover how far, or whether at all, the Divinity of Christ acted on the humanity in relation to His holiness. We believe, however, that the holiness of His humanity was altogether distinct from His Godhead; and though He “did no sin; neither was guile found in His mouth,” He was none the less exposed to temptation; but amid the vanity and vice which everywhere abounded and surrounded Him, He walked, and worked, and lived in the maintenance of that holiness which we may imitate; not a holiness resulting from the union of the Divine with the human, but a holiness belonging only to the latter. Had He yielded to temptation, the whole of His mission would have failed, His teaching would have had no force, His example would have perished with His fame, and His death would have had no saving merit whatsoever. But His holiness remained inviolate; and now it is the ground and the pattern of ours. It is not enough that you be meek and lowly; it is not enough that you be simple and ingenuous; it is not enough that you be sympathetic and affectionate; you must be *holy*. “Jesu's is a *spotless* mind.”

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Brethren, suffer me to urge the exhortation of the text. O the dignity, the blessedness of this conformity to Christ! Will you seek it for yourselves. You and I are only Christians so far as we resemble Christ, not a bit farther. Jesus is Himself the perfect embodiment of His own teaching, the living, acting example of all those elements of character and conduct which fit intelligent and immortal spirits for the Paradise of God. Therefore, “let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” Seek it! exhibit it!!

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