

# SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

A JUST CHALLENGE.

JULY 1965

A Sermon

BY MR. JAMES WELLS,

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“Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are lords; we will come no more unto thee?”—JEREMIAH ii. 31.

How clearly in all parts of the Scriptures do the workings of the great enemy of our souls appear,—working after that manner that shall if possible keep the gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, from shining into the souls of men. And there is always a tendency to fall back upon something that is seen, something that is manageable by the creature, something that is temporal, to make up religion; whereas it is a truth that nothing but that which is eternal can carry us with safety into eternity. Therefore it is that we needed an eternal salvation to save us, we needed an eternal love to be made the basis and ground of that salvation; we needed eternal righteousness, we needed a Saviour that was the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Nothing but those eternal truths which are in Christ Jesus can either fit us for eternity or bring us with safety and victory there. Hence the apostle saith, “We look not at the things which are seen, for they are temporal.” Even the ordinances of God’s house are temporal. Baptism is a command of the Lord, it is right we should obey, but still it is only temporal, it will pass away; the Lord’s supper it is right we should attend to, but it is temporal, and will pass away; the preaching and the hearing of the gospel are but temporal, and will pass away; and even the Saviour himself sojourned on earth only temporarily, he came not to stay here permanently; he came here, it is true, to do a permanent work, and to become by that work the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him. “But the things that are not seen,” saith the apostle, “are eternal.” In olden time, as we see from the Scriptures, there was a constant tendency to go away from the eternal of the gospel to something invented by man. And I am sure you cannot hear such a text

as this without feeling greatly, solemnised, that the Lord should show so many favours to the Israelites and yet that they should use such language as this, that they should deal with the Lord as though he had been to them a wilderness, and a land of darkness; and therefore they said, "We are lords." I do not suppose they exactly said these words literally—I suppose it does not mean that; but that they said it practically;—"We are lords; we will come no more unto thee." Also, how the words impress us with the necessity of a better dispensation,—in other words, of a better covenant, of a better religion, that should take a saving hold of the people, and make them all that which the Lord himself would approve. When we look, then, at the world at large, and see the millions that are not only content, but are rather glorying in the thought of being without God and without godliness;—then, when we look at the millions of professors, that were mere professors, all living and dying in enmity against God's truth; and when we look in the present day at the great tendency there is to glide off, and to put something into the place of God's blessed truth and vital godliness, what emphasis it gives to those words that "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." It will therefore be important that I should deal very simply, plainly, and closely with these words in their meaning. In so doing I will notice first *the just challenge*;—"Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness?" Secondly, *the self-exaltation*;—"wherefore say my people, We are lords?" Thirdly, *the blind decision*;—"We will come no more unto thee."

First, *the just challenge*; "Have I been a wilderness unto Israel?, a land of darkness?" Of course the answer is to be in the negative,—certainly he was not. I shall therefore in this part show what he was to them, in order to get at what, if we are true Israelites, he will be to us; and then secondly we will show how it was they failed. First, then, what the Lord was to them; that is, in his interposition for them, as typical of what he will be to those that shall be saved. We have it represented in this chapter, that the Lord brought them out of Egypt; therefore he was, in the first place, unto them salvation. But you observe that this salvation was only external, only temporal, and therefore it did not take a lasting hold of those who were not spiritually minded. But those who among them were spiritually minded, and were taught of God, they saw, in the Paschal lamb, Christ Jesus; they saw in the salvation from Egypt, Christ Jesus; they saw in the victory that was wrought for them, Christ Jesus. That clause upon this point in Hebrews xi. is very instructive, and throws a light upon all the preceding verses of that chapter;—it is there said of Moses, "Esteeming the reproach of

Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward." Moses therefore was acquainted with Christ, and Moses is the representative of the right-minded among the Israelites. Moses would see, therefore, in the Paschal lamb, the great atonement, the great sacrifice, the great and wondrous exemption from ultimate penalty, from hell and wrath—by Christ Jesus the Lord. Now those that saw that, would cleave to the temporal, as the representative of that which is eternal. And so in the deliverance from Egypt they would see Christ Jesus, they would see God in the victory that he should achieve; and as not a dog was to move his tongue against any of the children of Israel, that that victory put their enemies to entire silence, so the victory that Christ hath wrought hath put our sins to entire silence. It is true our sins speak now, but the time will come when they will be hushed. Even the very sins, infidelities, atheisms, and rebellions, that speak now and alarm us, weaken our faith, and make sad havoc in our souls, and imprison and discourage us, the time will come when not one of these evils will be able to say a word—hushed in universal and everlasting silence. We have never any difficulty now in hearing our sins speak, but they are all legally silenced, and the time will come when they shall be actually silenced, yea, as silent as the body lying in the grave;—the body shall be raised again, but the sin shall not be raised, for the body is to be raised up without sin. Now to them that were right-minded God was salvation temporally, and they saw that this exemption by the Paschal lamb was a figure of that eternal salvation that is by Jesus Christ. Let us stop here a moment to show how this spiritual and antitypical salvation by Christ Jesus takes hold of the saved. The Lord discovers to a poor sinner that he is a lost sinner, and makes him feel that he is poor and helpless. He then sees, in the Lord's own time, the kind of salvation that Christ has wrought. And God would never promise to any sinner a salvation that he did not possess to bestow; God never promised what he has not in possession to bestow; God never promises that which he is not prepared to give, and he never promises to do what he is not prepared to do. What is the kind of salvation that God has to bestow? The only kind of salvation I mean is eternal salvation, typified by the temporal salvation from Egypt. The only salvation he hath to bestow is this;—"Israel shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation;" and they, thus saved, "shall not be ashamed," because that salvation takes away everything that could by any possibility make them ashamed: "nor confounded," because all their enemies are found liars, and put to eternal silence; "no weapon formed against them can prosper; every tongue that shall rise in judgment they shall con-

demn; this is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of me, saith the Lord;" "they shall be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end." Here you have the eternity of this salvation, carrying with it the unchangeability of the blessed God. What an unspeakably precious truth is the unchangeability, the immutability of God! he thinks just the same of you at all times—all through time, in death, and to all eternity. "I know the thoughts I think towards you: thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." Ah then, is he a wilderness to us? Is he a land of darkness to us? Verily no; anything but that. But here again I must make a remark to bring forward an apparent exception to this; for, notwithstanding the adaptability, certainty, completeness, and blessedness of this salvation, yet the Lord doth so deal with his people that the gospel is to them very often like a wilderness and like a land of darkness; the means of grace are to them very often like a wilderness and like a land of darkness. "Ah," they often say, "if there is such a great salvation, how is it I get so little of the joy of it? and if there be so much blessedness in Christ and in God, how is it I get so little of the joy of it? how is it I realise so little of the happy consequences of it?" Well, the answer is, "Even so, Father, for so it seemeth good, in thy sight." The chief lesson we have to learn here is our need of the things, in order to make way for the coming in of this great salvation, wherein the Lord is indeed, to us a Paradise of infinite and eternal delights, wherein the Lord is unto us what he hath said—"The Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and thy God thy glory. Thy sun shall no more go down, nor thy moon withdraw its brightness, for the Lord shall be unto thee an everlasting light, and the days of thy mourning shall be ended."

Now passing by the wilderness, through which the Lord led the people, he brought them into a plentiful country. "I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof, but when ye entered, ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination." I am sure we feel with the prophet Jeremiah upon this matter. When he looked around, and saw the heathen so devoted to their gods, so immovably decided for their gods, and reject everything that was contrary to their gods, the prophet might well exclaim, "Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid; be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can

hold no water." How some divines can suppose for one moment that these were God's people otherwise than nationally, externally, according to that temporal covenant, I am at a loss to know; for the conduct there described is what Moses never did;—he did not forsake the fountain of living waters and adopt another gospel; it is what the prophets never did; they never forsook the fountain of living waters, and hewed out cisterns, adopted other doctrines, and so changed the Lord away for that which after all is not God; the apostles never did so; they abode by the truth, they never forsook the fountain of living waters, and hewed out to themselves broken cisterns that could hold no water. And yet many ministers will say, "Ah, this is what we all do." Well, if I were going to die to-day I could say, "I have known the Lord for forty years, and I have never forsaken him as my hope, I have never had any other hope from that day to this; I have never hewed out any cisterns, I have never looked to any earthly source for salvation, and I have no desire to do so." Here it is, then, that the old covenant people and the new covenant people are made to differ. I cannot include everything in one sermon, or else I could trace out many causes and things by which the people then changed the true God away for others, by which they apostatized from the true God, and adopted something contrary to his order of things. Now how did they defile the Lord's land? Why, the first opportunity they brought other gods in. The Lord says, "Ye defiled my land, and made mine heritage an abomination." "Oh dear, dear," say they, "defiled the land?—why, we have increased the holiness of the land." "There was a time when we had only one altar, and now we have one in every street in Jerusalem. There was a time when there was but one God among us, and now we have seventeen or eighteen gods; there was a time when hardly anything pious and religious was done; but now we are dancing, some round one god and some round another every day. Why, that one God, his religion would never lead to all this piety, to all these good works. You see, the Lord saith in this chapter, "What iniquity have your fathers found in me, that they are gone far from me?" Therefore they thought they had very much improved the land, and not defiled it,—that things were wonderfully improved. And some one seems to have said to Sennacherib,—Now, mind what you are at; you know what those Jews are—they have a great many altars. And they were all set up in the name of the one God, and yet they all belonged to the devil, every one of those religions and gods, from first to last. That is how they defiled the land. And so now. You know when the tabernacle was built, not a tack or a loop was left to human device, for that would have marred the whole; when the temple was built, nothing was left to human device; the

plan was given by the Spirit of God to David, and he handed over the same to Solomon, and Solomon worked by it, and never deviated from it. So with Zerubbabel—the plan was handed to him, there was no human device in it; his hands laid the foundation, his hands finished it. Just so with salvation—there is not one human device or human doing in the whole of it; all is of God from first to last, or else it would be defiled. But the Lord says, “I brought you into a plentiful country, to eat the fruit thereof and the goodness thereof.” We will pass by that, and look at the antitypical plentiful country, into which the salvation of Christ brings the soul; and while they despised this salvation, we, if we are true Israelites, shall see and feel too much of the value of that salvation to part for one moment with the testimony of what it is. And while they were brought into a plentiful country, but defiled it by bringing other gods in, we, if we are brought spiritually into the plentiful country, how we shall bless God for that plenty! I will point out that plenty, and see whether it is not our happy lot to prize the promised land, and to bear testimony that the Lord is unto us by that plenty a Paradise of delights, all that we can desire. The land of Canaan was a plentiful country temporarily; but the gospel, antitypical land into which we are brought is a plentiful country spiritually. Psalm lxxxvi.,—“For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy.” Are my sins innumerable; have they abounded, and do they abound? My sins and sinfulness cannot blot out the words, “plenteous in mercy.” Why, there is more mercy than I shall ever be able to receive. When all my sins are forgiven, which they are in Christ, and all my diseases are healed, and all my needs supplied, still there is plenteous mercy. A plentiful country, plenteous mercy. The people are afflicted and poor, but there is plenteous mercy. And how is it there is plenteous mercy? Because it is by Christ Jesus, and because it is by the great love of the everlasting God. Then go to Psalm ciii.,—“The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.” A plentiful country, plenty of mercy. I had almost said, and I should be scriptural if I were to say, what fools we are to indulge our doubts and fears on account of our being such poor creatures as we feel ourselves to be, as though God’s mercy was the mercy merely of a fellow creature. Why, it is the mercy of the great Creator, it is the mercy that is by our Lord Jesus Christ. Ah, saith one, you do not know what a rebellious, atheistical, impenitent wretch I am; I am the blackest sinner out of hell. Well, for you there is plenteous mercy, and he delighteth in mercy. It is a plentiful country; and if we bring any creature work in, we defile the land. Let an angel from heaven be accursed if he should bring in any creature work; it must be entirely according to

his mercy that he saveth us. Salvation has brought us into this gospel land, and there is plenteous mercy. Then go to Psalm cxxx.,—"Let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption." I wish to speak of these solemn matters with all the sobriety their importance demands, but I fear not to say that if there were an individual in this assembly that embodied in himself all the sins of all the assembly, there is plenteous redemption to reach them all, to blot them all out. You only want a grain of faith in God by Christ Jesus, believing in Christ's ability, in God's willingness. There it is,—it is God's own blessed word—plenteous redemption,—plenteous in mercy. Ah, what silly things we are. O fools and slow of heart to believe in these blessed things. It is hard work to believe, but see what contradictory creatures we are. If the old man within us is pretty still, and the fountains of the great deep do not bubble up, if we could manifest in no shape or form any weakness at all, but could take the provocations of life with as much majesty and dignity as did the Saviour, and not be moved by anything, but demonstrate thus our superiority, and turn round to enemies, men and devils, and say, "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" then we should think we were Christians. Ah, what hard work it is to be a Christian simply by believing in the mercy of God in Christ Jesus! what hard work it is to be a Christian by believing in the plenteous redemption that is in Christ! And yet that is the only way you can be a Christian; it is them that be of faith that are blessed with faithful Abraham, and without faith it is impossible to please God. As a good man said some years ago, almost his last words,—“Tell Mr. Wells that I die a sinner saved by grace.” I should have known that if he had not said so, but still I was glad that he sent word, because being a voice thus from Jordan I knew where the man was. Plenteous mercy and plenteous redemption. What have I come for this morning? What in the world is the good of a man going into the pulpit if he has not boundless mercy to preach, if he has not an infinite salvation to preach, if he has not infinite love to preach, if he has not the positive decisions of the most high God to preach? I never, with all my faults, will be a hypocrite. I am nothing but a sinner, and if saved it must be by the plenteousness of God's mercy and redemption. Nothing will bind our souls so much to God as this precious faith in his plenteous mercy and redemption. Then again, the Lord saith, when speaking of this plentiful country, “Ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied.” What can satisfy me? Only one gospel, only God's gospel. Some tell us that Christ came to save the greatest of sinners, and after making that admission insist upon an amount of holiness, and upon an amount of fleshly goodness, and upon an accu-

racy of consistency which I defy any man or any woman under the whole canopy of heaven to show in their own personal spirit, and temper, and conduct; so that it is all a farce together. Jesus came to save sinners; they will tell you that liberally, and then make out after that, that if you have any faults of any kind, why, you are not Christians. So they say and unsay—say and unsay; and therefore such gospels I hate, detest, and abhor; I repudiate them, I trample them under foot; I stand in the promised land, where there is plenteous mercy, plenteous redemption. “Ye shall eat in plenty and be satisfied.” If these were the last words I had to utter on earth, I could truly say that God has fulfilled in my soul what he there saith, “Ye shall eat in plenty and be satisfied.” So I am; I am satisfied with the kind of food; I am satisfied with the provision that is made, because there is such an infinite plenty. “Ye shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and shall praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you, and my people shall never be ashamed.” Why not? Because of the completeness and eternity of this salvation, because of the plenteousness of this mercy, and because of the plenteousness of this redemption, and because of the amplitude of the provision. That is the reason they are not to be ashamed. There is plenty in themselves to make them ashamed.

“The sins of one most righteous day  
Might plunge us in despair,  
But all the crimes of numerous years  
Shall our great Surety clear.”

And his brow shall be crowned with the honours of having done so mighty a work; it will indeed be a song like mighty thundering, and as the noise of many waters, when we shall be blessed with eloquence that an archangel cannot reach, to speak forth the deep, the broad, the lofty and ever-enduring wonders of God's everlasting mercy, and salvation and glory in this revelation he has made of himself to us.

These people failed, and went away from the Lord. From one thing—that they did not recognise God himself in delivering them from Egypt. They mysteriously partly attributed it to something else—to Moses. “Moses brought us out.” They did not recognise God in the manna; they did not recognise God in taking them through the Jordan, and bringing them into the promised land; they did not recognise the true God in any of these things. Now if I can explain what I want to say, it stands thus:—they did not think that was God's way, in their being brought out of Egypt, and they did not think that the manna and the rock were God's way; and they came into the promised land, but they did not think it was God's way. “This people have erred in their heart, for they have not



known my ways;" that is, they have not known that these ways were my ways. Is it not just so now? Does the professing world recognise eternal election as being one part of God's way of saving a sinner? They do not. It is true the word so flashes it into the minds of some that they preach it and confess it, but they contradict it in another part of their discourse;—just as if you took me in at the door, and then threw me out of the window. I would not give a rush for such friendship as that; or if you do not throw me out of the window, you put me into a back room, and say, Don't speak—mustn't let anybody know you are there; you are election, you must be quiet; don't speak—mustn't hear your voice. Now they do not know that election is God's way. Then again, eternal perfection by the atonement of Christ. I feel more and more desirous to avoid reducing the atonement of Christ to a mere fag end something; let us admit it in its eternal reality. That atonement, in eternity, before time began, constituted the people in God's purpose as holy as Christ is holy; that atonement at Calvary's Cross constituted the people relatively as holy as Christ is holy; and regeneration brings this great truth to the light of eternal perfection by his atonement. The resurrection of the body at the last great day is called the redemption of the body; the atonement reaches there, and brings the body up, and they are to be like him, and see him as he is. This is another of God's ways,—choosing the people, and making them thus eternally perfect, calling them by his grace, guiding them by his counsel, and keeping them with himself in these great truths. Now the reason men fail is because they do not recognise these ways as God's ways. I used to wonder at that scripture, but I do not wonder at it now, in Psalm lxxvii., "God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and cause his face to shine upon us." There are three things;—here must be mercy, here must be blessing, and here must be light. What for? "That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations." "They have not known my ways." How few professors you meet with now that really know the way in which God saves a sinner. "They have not known my ways;" and if they do not, know his spiritual ways; which none but a spiritual people can know or understand; they fail; and we see the result here, that they went away from the Lord; and said, "We are lords, we will come no more unto thee." Thus, then, the Lord was not a wilderness or a land of darkness to the right-minded Israelite, but the reverse; and so now; and the others failed, and went away from the Lord, because they did not recognise those things as his ways. See how many millions now think that human inventions are God's ways, and they think those inventions are of divine authority.

I must now notice, secondly, *the self-exaltation*. "Wherefore say my people, We are lords?" "My people." Let us bless God for a better covenant. This is not God's true Israel, this is God's national Israel, Israel after the flesh;—my people," but not "my people" in the sense where the Lord saith, "They shall be my people, and I will be their God." They were God's people in the old covenant and in the temporal sense, but his people in the spiritual sense never did and never will use such language as this. Nevertheless, this is a very instructive point, "We are lords,"—what does it mean? It means that they set their authority above the truth of God. Now it becomes us to see that all the parts of our religion are of divine authority. "We are lords." So that you see from our text, Popery is very ancient indeed. They set up their authority over the consciences of men. I am not sure that they used this language verbally, but they did practically, in setting aside God's truth. I know not why it is, but so it is,—human nature seems mad in this determination,—go wherever you may, you find that God's truth is set aside, divine sovereignty is set aside, and human sovereignty put in the place of it. But let us see that our religion is of divine authority from first to last. Now as regards salvation itself, our salvation originated entirely with God, and it was complete in its origin; it was achieved by mediation, and it was complete in its achievement; and it is manifested by regeneration, convincing us of our state and bringing us to see how God saves a sinner. So that we have nothing but divine authority for our religion. Oh, my hearer, beware of this,—do not own any human authority connected with any grace of the Spirit any more than connected with the counsels of heaven! If I pray, I want to pray in my soul by the spirit of grace and supplication. You make a prayer-book for me, and tell me, There is a nice prayer-book. That is human, sir, I dare not accept it. God hath promised that he will pour upon the house of David the spirit of grace and supplication; therefore, unless my prayers to God are inward from my spirit, by the spirit of grace and supplication, they are an abomination to God, and will be reckoned among the worst part of my sins. Then, again, my faith must be entirely of God. No man can make a creed for me. They make certain ecclesiastical establishments,—whether the Church of England or the Church of Rome,—they are all human: I speak of them simply as establishments,—they are all human. You must have no man's authority for your creed. Talk about the Athanasian Creed, and the Apostles' Creed, and all such rubbish!—what had the apostles to do with these creeds? Why, they did not then exist, but are the inventions of uninspired men. Your faith stands in the power of God. Do not believe anything that you cannot see in the Bible for yourself;

let your faith rest entirely in and upon the power of the eternal God, and then I am sure you will allow no man to lord it over your conscience. You will then say, "Other lords have had dominion over us, but by thee only will we make mention of thy name." Just so it is in the ministry. I knew nothing about the ministry when I first entered into it, and had no desire to enter into it. What I did, then, the very first time I ever read a chapter out of doors, and spoke, I have been doing exactly the same ever since,—I told my fellow-creatures how I was saved, and I knew I was saved, and how a sinner must be saved, and I have been doing the same ever since; so that I look to no man for a creed, or anything else. When you hear or read my sermon, you are to test it by the word of the Lord; and if it is not, in your judgment, in accordance therewith, reject it; and when you join in a hymn, if you are not convinced in your mind it is in accordance with the mind of the Lord, then reject it. Let no man, but Christ himself, be the keeper of your conscience. "Call no man on earth master: for one is your master which is in heaven. Call no man on earth father: for one is your father, which is in heaven." I hardly know what to say here, when I look at that poor fellow at Rome, going to proclaim his infallibility; and then the priests, pretending to give absolution, and to turn the elements of the Lord's Supper into the body and blood, and soul and deity of Jesus Christ;—and we are to come, hat in hand, and there are the women, and the men too; but the women go first; and then the woman worries her husband, till the husband, for the sake of peace, goes too, and a pretty fool he looks! So it is they bow and scrape to these locusts—these frogs! I am not unscriptural; for "there came three unclean spirits, like frogs, out of the mouth of the dragon,"—there is their tyranny,— "and out of the mouth of the beast,"—there is their alienation from God's truth,— "and out of the mouth of the false prophet,"—there is their falsehood. The word of God calls them frogs and unclean; and, notwithstanding that, we are to bow to them, and pay them reverence, and I don't know what all. "We are lords," say they;—they are something else; and if you ask what the word of God calls them, I might answer as the Scotchman did,—he says, "I know the word of God calls them *deevils*;"—that's about it,— "sons of perdition." "We are lords;"—of course they are; but they shall not be our lords, they shall not be our masters, they shall not be our objects of reverence. We pity their persons and souls, but we hate their usurpations and blasphemies as we hate the devil himself. Lords, indeed! Can anything under heaven be more contrary to true experience? So far from the Christian as he goes on finding that he is lord over his own self, and lord over this, and that, and the other, he finds out, as

he goes along, more and more of his poverty; he decreases and sinks more and more. Ah! he says, If I were black in my own eyes a few years ago, I am blacker now; if vile in my own estimation a few years ago, I am viler now. And thus as we sink the Saviour rises, grace reigns, mercy prevails, and we glory in being poor sinners at the feet of Jesus, indebted to God from first to last for our eternal salvation.

Lastly, *the blind decision*: "We will come no more unto thee." I think we ought to notice what this does not mean. I do not apprehend that this means that they would give up the supreme God or give up his name, but it means that they would come no more unto him in that representation of him which his truth gave, in that representation of him which his prophets gave. We will thus come no more unto thee—not in that way. We must have another sermon upon this subject, for I cannot leave it exactly as it is, though your time is gone. Let us have one word upon this point. In Isaiah xxix. you have these instructive words,—“This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me.” They are not conscious of that. You say to the Pharisee in the Saviour’s day,—Do you love God? Of course I do. But is not your heart removed from him? No;—they were not conscious of it. The Roman Catholic says he loves God, and so does every erroneous seeker; what, then, is the sense in which their hearts were removed from God? what is the sense in which they would come no more to him? “Their fear,” saith Isaiah (xxix.), “toward me is taught by the precept of men.” There is the secret. It is like saying, “No more Calvinism for me; no more of that sovereign, free grace gospel for me.” The Saviour comes to the same point when he says, “Ye will not come unto me that ye might have life.” And when he had opened up the beauties of the everlasting gospel in John vi., it was not the supreme God abstractedly, but it was God in his own way of saving a sinner that they hated, and they went back and walked no more with him.

Your time is gone, and I must say no more; but I must have another sermon on this important subject.