

THE LORD'S HOUSE ESTABLISHED

by Rev. Donald Macfarlane 1834 - 1926

“But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills; and people shall flow unto it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” - Micah 4: 1, 2.

THE preceding chapter closes with a gloomy view of the Church. Zion was to be ploughed as a field; Jerusalem was to become heaps; and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest. There was to be a desolation; and the prophet tells the procuring cause of this desolation, namely, the sins of the people, and the sin of idolatry in particular. The priests and the princes - the leaders of the people - led them astray and made them to err. It is observable that in every time of declension in the Church, the evil begins with the teachers, whether they be prophets or priests. And as a rule, the practice of the people will be according to the teaching they receive; and here the teaching and the practice were sinful. But the Lord threatened the people for their sins, and He threatened in particular the leaders of the people. The people were to be deprived of seers or prophets. “Therefore, night shall be unto you, that ye shall not have a vision: and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine: and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them. Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips, for there is no answer of God.”

The leaders of the people professed to build up Zion, but it was in the wrong way - it was by blood, by persecuting to death those who would not comply with their own corrupt teaching. This is always the case when there is a great forsaking of the faith, and those persecuted are God's people. Such are persecuted because they will not turn from the truth to believe a lie. It is no new thing. History repeats itself. It was the case in the days of Micah, and for the sake of these false teachers Zion was to be ploughed, Jerusalem to become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.

But is not God to have a Church in the world? Is it to become extinct? No. Although He punishes people for their sins, and although the Church is brought low because of them, yet the Lord will have a Church in the earth. He destroyed the old world, and swept off from the face of the earth the workers of iniquity - almost all that generation except eight persons - but He provided for His Church; He raised up Zion again. The chapter in which we have our text begins with a "But," indicating that better things were to take place. In endeavouring to speak from these words, as the Lord may enable me, I shall direct your attention to three things: -

- I. - The Church as it is spoken of here - as the mountain of the house of the Lord.
- II. - The promise concerning the Church.
- III. - The means to accomplish the promise.

I. - The Church is spoken of here under the emblem of a mountain. You know it was on a mountain that the temple was built by Solomon - Mount Zion; and not only that, the Old Testament Church is sometimes called in Scripture a mountain. The New Testament Church is also so called, as you find the Apostle Paul saying in Hebrews 12: 18, "For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched ... but ye are come unto Mount Zion." Now this term "mountain," as applied to the Church of God, is suggestive of several things.

It suggests, first, to our mind the idea of creation. A mountain is the work of God. Man can do many things, but he cannot create a mountain. He cannot create the least atom of matter. When you see a house, you know that it was built by man; but when you see a mountain, you say instinctively, within yourself, "This is the work of God," though there are indeed many who deny God Himself; and when they see a mountain, never think of it as the work of God. Well, as a mountain is part of the creation of God, so is the Church, whether we take the Church to mean the members of the Church or the outward organization thereof, the means of grace, and the ordinances of God's house. We find believers themselves acknowledging this: "We are His workmanship, created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works." Believers, then, who are true members of the Church, are created by God, who created the whole world. Man cannot change himself in a saving way: that is the work of God. And God creates them anew in Christ Jesus by the effectual working of His Spirit through the Word. Christ taught the necessity of

this change to Nicodemus: “Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” As a mountain is the creation of God, so are the means of grace and the ordinances of His house. They are not the invention of man, but they have been divinely appointed, and they are, we may say, His creation, for before He instituted them, they had no existence. God gave existence to them, and set them up in His Church, and such things as have no divine authority - the inventions of men - do not belong to the Church of God at all. People are better without them, and they should have no place in the worship of God.

The second idea suggested by a mountain is stability and durability. A mountain is a stable, firm, and lasting thing, and so we read of “the everlasting hills.” Not that any hills are, in the absolute sense, everlasting, but, relatively, they stand firm and sure from the creation till this earth shall be destroyed. In the midst of all the changes that have taken place during past ages, there is no change on the mountains. Many generations have passed from time to eternity, but the present generation looks at the very same mountains and hills that the first generation in the world saw. The Church, however, is more stable than the “everlasting hills”: “for the mountains shall depart and the hills shall be removed,” but the Church built on the Rock Christ shall not be overthrown or removed. The foundation of the Church was laid in the divine purpose before the foundation of the world, and it is more durable than the mountains. Notwithstanding all the efforts made by enemies to throw it off its foundation, the Church is still in the world, and that is a great wonder; but all the works of God are works of wonder. Satan and all his hosts are unable to overthrow the Church of God: “the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” No man ever thought of going to Ben Wyvis with the intention of throwing it off its foundations; it would be madness to think of such a thing, for it is impossible; and yet many try to put their shoulders to the Church of God to overthrow it, but even the gates of hell can not prevail against it. This is an encouragement to God's people in all ages: the Church cannot be overthrown by the power of enemies; however strong and however numerous they may be. Greater is He that is with the Church than all they that be against it. This is as true to-day as it was in the past, and we ought to derive comfort from it, if we take upon ourselves the burden of Christ's cause, and we cannot but take that burden upon us, because God laid it on our shoulders, and we dare not throw it off till He

takes it off Himself, and that may not be long in the case of some. If saved, it would be better to be taken away from this burden in an evil age. I was at one time so concerned about the declension of the Church, and the evils that were coming in upon her, that I was desirous, if prepared, that God would take me home; but I was rebuked for that, and was made to see that such a desire was selfish and arose from a desire for self-preservation, and not from a desire for His glory; and from that day I have been endeavouring to say, "Thy will be done." I would not like to go from the midst of trouble to the rest of heaven merely to escape my share of the afflictions of the Church.

Another idea suggested by the term mountain is visibility. The Church is a visible institution. Many lesser objects may escape your view when travelling through the country, but you cannot avoid seeing a mountain, if you have eyes to see. The Church is like a mountain that rises high and must be seen; and so, Christ says to His disciples that they are like a city built upon a hill cannot be hid. The Church means both God's people and those institutions which He has set up in it. There is a Church that claims visibility, but it is not like a city set upon a hill, for they do most of their work in secret, and that is a bad sign. There is nothing in the Church of God that requires to be hid. Everything in it stands the light of day; and everything in a Church that cannot stand the light of day belongs to the works of darkness. Remember this, my friends. For instance, in the Ritualistic section of the Protestant Church of England there are seven secret societies, and they try to hide everything they do from the sight of the world, and especially from Protestants. Why is that? Ah, my friends, it is because they do not belong to the visible Church of God. The true Church of God can stand the gaze of enemies as well as of friends; it can stand the light of day; it has nothing to hide; but a Church that has many things to hide belongs rather to the kingdom of darkness than to the true Church of God.

But although a mountain is visible, as a rule, yet sometimes it is made invisible by mist, and under that cloud of mist it is out of sight for a time, so that no creature can see it. And so, it has sometimes been with the Church. It has sometimes been covered from view by the mist of error, and error has its degrees in the Church just as natural mist has its degrees. Sometimes only the top of the mountain is covered with mist, while the rest of it is quite visible. At other times the mist may descend half-way down the mountain. But occasionally you find the entire

mountain covered with mist from top to base, so that it is entirely hid from view. So it is with the Church. For more than one thousand years before the glorious Reformation of the sixteenth century, the Church was covered from the very top to the bottom with the mist of error, and no mist is so injurious and so dangerous as the mist of error. You may walk many miles in a natural mist and be nothing the worse for it, but not so in the mist of error. It is hurtful and destructive to a high degree, and many have lost their souls in it. During that long period the light of the Bible was not seen. There was no such thing as family worship, or reading the Bible, at least in the Church. What, then? Fables and traditions of the elders, with superstitions of the heathen and Jewish ceremonies, made up all the teaching given during that long period to immortal souls. When the Reformers began to teach the people from the Bible the priests denounced them as heretics, and charged them with introducing innovations into the Church. What do you think of such false teachers of the people? Today we see foolish people going with the stream - the stream that is flowing toward the dark ages again - and there are very few to warn them. Paul says, "Preach the word," and if we do not preach the Scriptures to the people, we have nothing else to give them; but these priests said that it was the devil's work to teach the people from the Scriptures, and instead of preaching Christ and His atoning sacrifice and forgiveness through His blood, they sent agents through the different countries of Europe with indulgences and promises to the people that, if they paid so much, all their sins would be forgiven - not only their past sins but their future sins - and they were promised God would not punish them! Was it not a fearful thing to be selling such things? Well, instead of this, the Gospel began to be preached; and, as when the wind blows, the mist covering the mountains is dispelled, so when the Holy Spirit blew upon the Church, through His own Word, the mist of error vanished away. Ah, my friends, what a blessing came to the countries of Europe at the Reformation when that mist was dispelled! There is nothing that can dispel the lie but the truth. Though the mist covered the Church for so many years, yet the Church was not extinct. There still was a remnant in France, in Switzerland, and in other parts of the world. There was a witness for God left on the earth. When the mist vanishes, the same old mountain appears again, and so when the mist of error was dispelled the Church re-appeared in all its beauty.

Alas, that in our own day the mist should be coming down heavily upon the mountain of the house of the Lord. I am not going to say much upon this, but is the mist not coming down when in the Protestant Church of England there are 9,600 priests celebrating mass, hearing confession, and teaching all manner of Romish doctrines? Again, Mr Walter Walsh, author of "The Secret History of the Oxford Movement." who searched into the matter, assures us that of the 300 clergymen in the Scottish Episcopal Church, no fewer than 250 are Romanisers; and the way he came to know this was that he found their names as members of Romanising secret societies! The late Bishop of Argyle and the Isles, who lived at Ballachulish, was a member of a Romanising society, and yet he pretended to be a Protestant. The way in which these Ritualists introduce the mass (they do not call it mass) is a very cunning one. They changed the hour of communion from the evening to the morning, as they knew people would not be fasting in the evening - and mass must be celebrated fasting. I have seen myself, in passing through the country, and even in the Highlands, a placard, "Holy Communion at 8 o'clock a.m.," placed outside the doors of Scottish Episcopal churches. Whenever I see that, I say to myself, "That is suspicious: I suspect that Church is a Roman Catholic Church": and I judge from the way they are going on in England. That is how they introduced the mass into the English Church. In the mass they profess to offer up Christ as a sacrifice, not only for the living, but also for the dead; that is, they profess to bring the dead out of purgatory; but, as there is no such place, they must mean hell, and they cannot take them out of hell. Now, I wish to impress this upon you, as I may not have the opportunity of warning you much longer. The intention of the Ritualists is to have the Protestant Churches united with the Romish Church, and so to bring these under the Papacy again. That is the aim. Take warning, my friends; the day may come, and little children here today may see it, if they live to be 40 years of age, or even less, when people will be put to death if they refuse to burn their Bibles, or if they refuse to kneel down before the image of the Virgin Mary to worship her. We are fast hurrying on to this. The King on the throne encourages it, and the Queen is an idolatress. She has, we are told, images of the Virgin Mary and other saints in her room, and once a year, at least, she goes to make confession to a priest. Ah, my friends, that is what it has come to. Ah! take warning.

Another idea suggested by a mountain is height. The mountain is the highest part of the earth. God, in His infinite wisdom, saw it proper, in creating the world, that all the earth should not be of the same level. He ordained that some parts of the earth should be higher than other parts, and so He made hillocks and hills higher than the plains, and mountains highest of all. The Church, then, is the highest and most glorious institution that God has set up in the world. He has set up kingdoms and other powers, but the Church is above them all. I do not mean that in civil matters the Church is not to obey the civil magistrate, but in religious matters the Church is the highest institution in the world. The Church and the State have co-ordinate jurisdictions; the one is not to encroach on the other. The Roman Catholic Church, so far as they can carry that out, say that they are not subject to the law of the kingdom; that is, if a priest commits any crime, he claims the right of exemption from punishment. Is not that extraordinary? Well, that is the view we Protestants take of it. If a minister breaks the law of the kingdom, he is to be dealt with according to the law of the kingdom, and to be punished. We keep the rule of God's Word, while those who claim to be the only true Church do not accept God's Word as their rule at all.

Well, from the top of the mountain a more extensive view can be had than from the other parts of the earth. We see yearly a large number of people visiting the Highlands, who climb the high hills to get a more extensive view. What views, then, are to be had from the top of the mountain of the house of the Lord? You can see upwards, downwards, and around you. Looking upwards you can see to the third heaven; you can see within the veil; you can see God; you can see on His right-hand Christ the Mediator, ever living to make intercession for His people; you can see the holy angels; you can see the spirits of just men made perfect. You can see all these from the top of the mountain; you cannot see them from the plain ground where the unconverted are. Looking downwards, how far can you see? You can see to the lowest hell. You can see the old enemy, Satan, there; you can see fallen angels there; and you can see there the spirits of wicked men that died. You can see them there in hell. John Bunyan had a sight of hell, but you also may have a sight of hell if you come to the top of the mountain of the house of the Lord. Then, looking around you, what do you see? You see the state of the human race in their sinful and lost condition; "for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." It is only in the Church; you can see this - in the Church

where God has given us the revelation of His Word. You remember that David was tempted on a certain occasion to envy the wicked because of their prosperity, but when he entered the sanctuary - or, in other words, when he ascended this mountain - he saw that their end was destruction, and then he ceased to envy them.

These ideas, then, are suggested to us by the term "mountain," but as it would keep you too long to take up the other heads, we must leave them till the evening or some future occasion, if the Lord will. May God bless His Word!

When speaking from these words in the afternoon we stopped at considering the height of the mountain and the views to be seen from the top of it. Before leaving this point, I may say that one looking down from the top of this mountain will see the things of this world very small. Houses and castles, and other things that appeared so big to him when standing on the low ground, now appear to be very little indeed; and men who looked so great in the eyes of their fellows now appear to be just like little children. As this is true naturally, so it is true spiritually. Before conversion, and before ascending this mountain of the house of the Lord, the sinner looked upon this world as the greatest thing in existence; but now, being changed himself by the Spirit of God, he views things in the light of eternity and in the light of God's Word, and, like Paul, he counts all things loss - yea, he reckons them as dung- compared with the knowledge of Christ Jesus, his Lord. Before conversion he sought his happiness in the pleasures and amusements of this earth - labouring to draw happiness from broken cisterns which can hold no water; but now, being savingly changed, he views the pleasures of this life from the top of the mountain as nothing compared with the pleasures that the Holy Spirit imparts to his soul - the joy that is unspeakable and full of glory. If you ask those who seek happiness in amusements - "innocent amusements" they call the theatre, concerts, and dances - why they do not give up such things, "Ah," they will say, "we shall be dull and without happiness if we give up all our amusements." That is their answer. But the Christian would not exchange his joy in the Lord for one moment for all the pleasures derived by the people of the world from their amusements. The Psalmist says: -

"For in Thy courts one day excels

a thousand; rather in
My God's house will I keep a door
than dwell in tents of sin."

I am not going to dwell upon this, but it gives pain to my heart - knowing the things of eternity and the preciousness of immortal souls - when I see and read of young boys and girls, and even their fathers and mothers, going to the dance and to the theatre at our very doors.

II. - I now proceed to the second head, viz., the promise concerning the Church, and you will observe that this promise is twofold. It has respect (1) to what God promises to do concerning the Church itself, and (2) concerning the flowing of people and nations into the Church.

(1) Well, the promise as it relates to the Church itself is this, "It shall be established on the top of the mountains and exalted above the hills," and this was to take place "in the last days." Though God had a Church in the world during the Old Testament dispensation, yet it was not so established as not to give place to a Church in a new form, for you remember that the Apostle Paul quoted from Old Testament prophecy - "I will shake not the earth only, but the heavens also." Here the earth means the political state, and the heavens the ecclesiastical state: and Paul quotes this Scripture as an argument why the old dispensation should pass away to give place to the new. The Church state under the old economy was changed, but the Church state under the new is established in such a way that it shall never be moved till Christ comes to shake the heavens and the earth, and to judge the world. This was accomplished when the canon of Scripture was completed, and when the doctrines of the Church were fixed and the mode of worship settled; so that the state of the Church now, with regard to doctrine and mode of worship, is the best that can be on this side of glory. People who desire change in these matters ought to give good heed to this.

The Apostle Paul, in the same epistle to the Hebrews, brings forward another argument in the seventh chapter. "The law," that is, the ceremonial law, "made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did," That is, the Gospel made things perfect. Perfection came not by the Levitical priesthood, but

perfection came by the Priesthood of Christ. The sacrifice He offered up was perfect; the satisfaction He rendered to divine justice was perfect; and the mode of worship He has appointed in the New Testament Church is so perfect that it is finally fixed, established, and can never be removed to give place to a third dispensation. It is remarkable that any changes that are made by people in the way of worship are backward movements. The change from the Old Testament to the New Testament was a forward one. Why is it that, when people make any change at all, it is a change for the worse? Ah, just because it is impossible to improve upon the mode of worship and doctrine appointed by Christ, and any move from that must necessarily be a retrograde and not a progressive one. People ought to have their eyes opened. It is to be feared that this generation is blindfolded. They shut their eyes willingly, and do not try to think of spiritual things at all according to Scripture. They act like children. When changes are proposed, people ought to ask themselves if what is proposed is a new thing, and if it ever existed in the world before. If people exercised their reason and knowledge in this way they would find that the so-called "new" ideas are nothing but a backward movement to modes and doctrines that existed during a previous dispensation which is abolished. Christ not only gives His people a spiritual understanding, but even in natural things God's people are more intelligent than those that are still in a state of nature.

Well, then, it was promised that the Church should be rooted in the earth, and fixed in regard to doctrine and mode of worship. It was to be established on the top of the mountains and exalted above the hills. Not on the top of one mountain, as it was of old - on Mount Zion - but in Gospel times the Church was to be established on the top of all the mountains of the earth and exalted above all the hills. Mountains and hills are here spoken of figuratively. As mountains are greater than hills, so mountains here may mean kingdoms; and this means, as far as we understand it, that the kingdoms of the world shall give its proper place to the kingdom of Christ. Instead of lifting their heads above it and despising it, they now submit themselves willingly to the government of Christ, and give the highest place in their minds to the cause of Christ. Oh, what a glorious day! This is the promise, 'then, and faithful is He that promised, who also will perform. The promise is absolute. It does not say, "It may be," or "It will be on such and such conditions." No; there are no conditions or qualifications. It is an absolute

promise, and as sure as God gave the promise it shall be fulfilled. The Church of Christ shall be acknowledged by all the kingdoms of this world, and they will consider themselves under the law of Christ and not above it. The great majority of the kingdoms of the earth have raised their heads above the cause of Christ, and despised it, and persecuted it; but ah! in the last days (and we are, in a sense, living already in the last days, which began when Christ rose from the dead, and shall continue till He comes again to judge the world) the promise is to be fulfilled concerning the mountain of the house of the Lord. Christianity will be embraced then not only by the mountains, or kingdoms, but also by the hills, or all other parts of the earth. All the kingdoms of the world shall be made the kingdoms of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The prophet Micah had to deliver this comforting message at a time when it was much needed. When the mountain of the house of the Lord was a ploughed field and made heaps and a desolation, Micah was commissioned by God to declare this message, and we declare it at second hand. It is not the less divine, it is not of less authority because we deliver it at second hand. It is the truth of God that never changes. The promise was far from being accomplished in the time of the prophet Micah, and although it is partially fulfilled in our day, yet it is far from being completely fulfilled; but it is our privilege to declare it; and it is indeed a consolation to ourselves that there is such a promise in the Scriptures. As mountains may represent kingdoms, hills, which are less than mountains, may represent smaller communities, such as the inhabitants of our large cities. It cannot be said that there is a city in the world of which all the inhabitants have submitted to Christ and His government, and have given the place to His cause that it ought to have in their hearts. No doubt there are kingdoms and cities that profess to submit themselves to Christ's government, and one of our large cities, i.e., Glasgow, adopted as its municipal motto, "Let Glasgow flourish by the preaching of the Word"; and Glasgow did flourish. But now there is a change, and what do you think of the action of the Glasgow magistrates? They held a meeting concerning the motto of their city, when it was proposed, put to the vote, and carried, that part of the motto should in future be dropped. That part was "by the preaching of the Word"; so that the official motto is now the bare "Let Glasgow flourish!" Ah! those councillors were very foolish, because, apart from God's Word, Glasgow will not flourish. This kingdom is nominally a Christian kingdom,

but are we not coming again under the mist of error to which I referred in the earlier part of the day? Ah, my friends, those magistrates of Glasgow who dropped that part of the motto are the enemies of Christ, and Glasgow cannot prosper while they are opposing Him. There is the promise of this life and that which is to come given to godliness, and when people put off godliness there is no promise of prosperity. If you are made godly by God Himself, and cast all your cares upon Him for everything you require during your time in this world, depend upon it you will never lack; but those who cast off the fear and authority of God make themselves liable to be deprived of the temporal blessings they need during their time in this world. "Godliness is profitable in all things, having the promise of this life and that which is to come."

(2) The next part of the promise is the coming of people and nations into the Church. It begins thus: - "The people shall flow into it," and then "many nations shall come." That is the order. People first - perhaps the people of one nation - and then many nations, till all nations of the world shall flow into the Church. But, you say, "It is far from being so in this age, though the Gospel has been preached for nearly two thousand years now." Ah! but I have already pointed out that the promise was absolute and sure, and God will fulfil His own Word in His own time. But this is our time; we are passing on swiftly to eternity, and it is now that God is dealing with us with His Gospel, now He is inviting us into His Church. Well, the manner they come is that they flow, and this implies that they come willingly. Not that by nature they are willing to come into the Church or to accept of Christ, but they shall be made willing in the day of God's power, as David says, "A willing people in Thy day of power shall come to Thee." None are willing by nature. Those taught of God found out that they would require to have their will renewed as well as their mind enlightened. An ancient heresy has been revived in our age - that man is willing to repent and to believe in Christ. One of these free-willers was arguing with me on the subject, and holding that man had perfect power of will to receive Christ, but I asked him how it was that although ministers were preaching the Gospel and pressing their fellow-sinners to believe in Christ, yet there are so few that do believe, and, of course, he could not answer. One argument these people have is that if you deny freewill you discourage the sinner to make any effort to be saved. But there are duties enjoined by God which do not mean that man is able by nature to obey any of the commands of God. We are commanded

in Scripture to make us a new heart. Can we do that? No; but God means that we should go to Himself to work in us the new heart we need. The free-willers do not understand the Word of God at all. They twist Scripture to their own destruction. They ask, "Would God command so many duties if man were unable to obey?" But though man, by sin, lost his ability to obey, surely that does not mean that God lost His right to demand obedience! That is the manner in which the subject should be understood. A bankrupt cannot pay his creditors, but surely that does not mean that the demands of his creditors are unjust.

Well, the nations shall come willingly into the Church, and it is very likely that during the millennium this shall be fulfilled with respect to all the nations of the world. Comparatively few nations of the earth have received Christ yet, but during the millennium it will probably be true that all kings and queens of the earth shall be submissive to Him. With the probable exception of one sovereign, as far as we know, there is not a godly king or a godly queen in the world today, and the noble exception, we trust, is Gustavus of Sweden. Read his speech to his subjects. Ah! how different from the speeches of the other sovereigns and rulers of Europe, and how different from the speeches of our own king! Indeed, it ought to put us to shame to read such a speech that contains so much of the glorious Gospel. I think everyone should read that speech, and preserve it as a memorial of that king. It is to be found in a recent issue of the English Churchman or the Protestant Observer. It is more like a sermon from the pulpit by a Gospel minister than a speech from the throne by an earthly sovereign. Long may the Christian king of Sweden live!

There is only one mountain spoken of here, and as all nations shall flow into this one mountain, there shall only be one Church. Now we speak of many Churches. What has been the cause of so many denominations existing in the world? Just a departure from the one doctrine and mode of worship which God set up on earth. There are now many branches of the Christian Church, and so far as these adhere to the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, they are to be recognised as such; but there are other branches that, although holding by some doctrines about the person of Christ, and even about His sacrifice, yet by their own inventions they overthrow these doctrines, and such cannot be called branches of the visible Church. If there be anything of the Word of God in such Churches, there may be individual Christians there: but so far as a testimony for the truth is concerned, we

are assured by those who have made enquiry into the state of matters that, for example, the Episcopal Church of Scotland cannot be regarded as a branch of the visible Church, and yet we see people flocking to that Church.

We feel as Micah did in his own day. He had to testify against error, against the priests and the princes and the leaders of the people who were leading them astray. There is much need in our day of warning people against error. I do not see many being brought to Christ through my ministry, but I think I recognise that a great part of the work God has assigned to me is to warn people of the dangerous tendency of this age towards error in religion. I endeavour to show you the way of salvation, but I feel impelled to speak of the mist of error that is coming down upon us, not from any ill-will towards my fellow-creatures, but because of my love to God, to His truth, and to His cause, and of my desire that His kingdom should be advanced, and that the kingdom of Satan should be destroyed. For these reasons I speak so often of these errors.

When you go home you would do well to read the whole of the prophecy of Micah. It is not long, having but seven chapters, and on Sabbath night you will not be long in reading them. You will see how great are his denunciations of those things that destroy souls and that make desolate the Church of God, and then how he turns round to comfort the people of God by telling them what great things God is to do for His Church in the last days. The people flow into it like water. You do not need to ask water to flow; it flows naturally and of its own accord quite freely, and this will be the case when the Spirit is poured out from on high, and when the Gospel is preached: sinners will be made willing, nations will be made willing, in the day of His power. A nation shall be born in one day! We would rejoice over one sinner repenting: yea, there is joy in heaven over one sinner that repenteth. But what joy will that be when a whole nation shall be born in one day? Not only do they come willingly, but they exhort one another, saying, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the house of the Lord." It is not of individuals merely, but of nations, that this is spoken. The nations will be exhorting one another. Britain will be exhorting France, France will be exhorting Italy, Italy will be exhorting Spain, and so on from one kingdom to another. No kingdom will refuse to comply with the exhortation. Ah, what a glorious day! This is promised, and the promise is sure, for God is faithful. We shall not see it, my

friends, but in the midst of many discouragements we rejoice to proclaim this message in your ears.

We are told the object for which they come to the mountain of the house of the Lord. They come for instruction, and that not about the things of this life, but regarding the things of eternity - the things that belong to their peace. When the sinner is awakened, he begins anew to attend the means of grace. He went before because others went, not because he felt his need; but when awakened he goes to church for the first time for instruction. Now his ears are open, he will not lose a word of what he hears; he watches all the time to see if there is any hope for such a sinner as he is. Well, my friends, it will not be one here and there throughout a kingdom of which this will be true, but it will be true of whole nations that they come for instruction. And who is the teacher? It is God. Not but that there will be men employed as His instruments. Ministers were never so numerous as they will be when this promise is fulfilled. - "And they shall all be taught of God." It is not likely that there will be even one unconverted minister throughout the world during the millennium. And what is our warrant for that? Read the thirteenth chapter of Zechariah, about the man that was asked to act as a minister. He replies, "I am not a minister. I am an unconverted man. I will not take upon myself to preach. I am no prophet; I am a husbandman." In our day hundreds of unconverted men boldly come forward to the ministry, while those whom God Himself has chosen are often afraid to come forward to that holy office. Ministers are earthen vessels. It is God alone who supports them. The Psalmist says, "Were it not that I believed to see the goodness of the Lord, I would have fainted." Ministers are weak, earthen vessels, but when God speaks through them, they are like the box that contained the ointment with which Mary anointed the head of Jesus. When it was broken "the house was filled with the odour of the ointment," and it is when God's messengers are broken in heart that the savour of the Gospel flows forth from the pulpit.

We will now observe the purpose for which they seek instruction. What do they purpose to do? They purpose, if God will teach them of His ways, through grace, to obey Him. "He will teach us of His ways and we will walk in His paths." What a fine congregation that will be! How desirable for a minister to be ordained over such a congregation! He would be a happy man. He would find it easy to preach, and he would be supported by their prayers. If the fervent prayer of a righteous

man availeth much, how much more the prayers of hundreds and thousands of God's praying people!

III. - The third thing in our text is the means to accomplish the promise, and what are the means? It is the gospel. "The law shall go forth of Zion and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." The prophecy looked forward to New Testament times, and to the times in which the gospel was to go forth among all the nations after the middle wall of partition had been broken down by the death of Christ. It began at Jerusalem, but it did not stop there. The field was the world: "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." "Make disciples," Christ said, "of all nations, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." So that Christ's commandment was to be the rule of preaching and the rule of obedience; and what was not done in accordance with that rule was not acceptable to God. Nothing should be done in the worship of God that is not in accordance with that rule. At the time of the Reformation there were many efforts made to put down that glorious movement by the enemies of the gospel. Among them was one great man, called Dr Eck. At a Council the Protestants were required to make known their views and the doctrines which they professed, and so they formulated a kind of Confession of Faith. There were many Roman Catholic dukes and princes present, and the reading of this Confession had such an effect upon them that they confessed they would not have missed being present for anything in the world. One young prince, the Prince of Bavaria, met Dr Eck after the meeting and asked him: "Can you now confute the doctrines contained in that Confession?" Dr Eck answered: "According to the Scriptures, no; but, according to the Fathers and the Councils, yes!" "Oh," said the Duke, "I now see where we stand in the Church of Rome: the Lutherans are in the Scriptures, but we are out of the Scriptures." And the Duke left the Church of Rome and left Dr Eck. Many more of the leading princes and dukes of Germany also left the Church of Rome and joined the Reformation, after having heard the Confession read at the Council.

The Gospel, then, is the means for the accomplishing of the promise. The Word of the Lord - this book, the Bible - is the means. It is the preaching of the Gospel that the Spirit of God blesses. The Word, of itself, cannot change any sinner, but it is the means in the hands of the Holy Spirit. It has this power, and so the Apostle says, "It is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth." It is made

effectual by the Spirit in convincing and converting sinners, and in building up believers in the faith. Ah, my friends, let us prize this Book - the Bible. There is great enmity against the Bible in our day, but it is the powerful means by which the kingdom of Satan is destroyed and the kingdom of Christ is advanced; and hence the enmity and hatred of Satan to the blessed Word of God. If he had his way there would not be a Bible in the world, and as he is a spirit he cannot destroy the Bible, so he uses as instruments men who can handle material things, and he keeps the Bible from the people, or tears it in pieces, or destroys it in every way he can. Satan is afraid of the Bible. Ah, then, my friends, if you got any good from the Bible, take good care of it. When you find it in leaves you ought to bind it up. Why? Ah, it was the means of bringing you to see your need of Christ, and of leading you to the Saviour. Ah, make good use of your Bibles. If you seek for salvation in the Bible, do not say "There is no hope." It is the means of salvation. Read in it the threatenings against sinners that are under the law, that you may be convinced of your sins. When you have got that length, do not despair, for there is mercy in God. That mercy flows to sinners through the blood of His Son, and as long as the invitation of the Gospel is to you, do not despair. Ah, is there even one poor soul in my congregation brought to conviction of sin, brought to cry to God for mercy? After preaching to you for some years now, is my labour in vain? If you find out your miserable condition do not despair; remember there is mercy in God for the chief of sinners.

The glorious subject we have been considering is full of hope, and warrants us to sing with the Psalmist:

"His name for ever shall endure;
 Last like the sun it shall:
 Men shall be bless'd in Him, and bless'd
 All nations shall Him call.

Now blessed be the Lord our God,
 The God of Israel,

For He alone doth wondrous works,
In glory that excel.

And blessed be His glorious name
To all eternity:
The whole earth let His glory fill.
Amen, so let it be.”

- Psalm 72: 17-19 (Metrical Version).