

# God's Plan of Restoration

**MEMORY VERSE: "O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me. For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants" (Micah 6:3, 4, first part).**

"No earthly parent ever pleaded so earnestly with an erring child as He who made us pleads with the transgressor."—Testimonies for the Church, vol. 8, p. 275.

**Suggested Reading: The Great Controversy, pp. 253-264. (At the bottom of this page)**

## 1. A CRISIS IN JUDAH

Sun, Feb 15

**a. What kind of things were going on in Judah when Ahaz ascended to the throne? 2 Kings 16:2-4.**

### 2 Kings 16:2-4

Twenty years old was Ahaz when he began to reign, and reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem, and did not that which was right in the sight of the LORD his God, like David his father. 3 But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, yea, and made his son to pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out from before the children of Israel. 4 And he sacrificed and burnt incense in the high places, and on the hills, and under every green tree.

"The accession of Ahaz to the throne brought Isaiah and his associates face to face with conditions more appalling than any that had hitherto existed in the realm of Judah. Many who had formerly withstood the seductive influence of idolatrous practices were now being persuaded to take part in the worship of heathen deities. Princes in Israel were proving untrue to their trust; false prophets were arising with messages to lead astray; even some of the priests were teaching

for hire. Yet the leaders in apostasy still kept up the forms of divine worship and claimed to be numbered among the people of God.”—Prophets and Kings, p. 322.

**b. How did God respond to these abominations? Jeremiah 7:30-34.**

**Jeremiah 7:30-34**

For the children of Judah have done evil in my sight, saith the LORD: they have set their abominations in the house which is called by my name, to pollute it. **31** And they have built the high places of Tophet, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, to burn their sons and their daughters in the fire; which I commanded them not, neither came it into my heart. **32** Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that it shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place. **33** And the carcases of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none shall fray them away. **34** Then will I cause to cease from the cities of Judah, and from the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of mirth, and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride: for the land shall be desolate.

“By perverted conceptions of divine attributes, heathen nations were led to believe human sacrifices necessary to secure the favor of their deities; and the most horrible cruelties have been perpetrated under the various forms of idolatry. Among these was the practice of causing their children to pass through the fire before their idols. . . . In times of great apostasy these abominations prevailed, to some extent, among the Israelites.”—Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 337.

**2. WARNINGS FOR TODAY**

**Mon, Feb 16**

**a. Besides Isaiah and Jeremiah, whom else did God call to prophesy to Judah—and why? Micah 1:1-5; 2:1, 2, 7.**

**Micah 1:1-5**

The word of the LORD that came to Micah the Morasthite in the days of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, which he saw concerning Samaria and Jerusalem. **2** Hear, all ye people; hearken, O earth, and all that therein is: and let the Lord GOD be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple. **3** For, behold, the LORD cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. **4** And the mountains shall be molten under him,

and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place. **5** For the transgression of Jacob is all this, and for the sins of the house of Israel. What is the transgression of Jacob? is it not Samaria? and what are the high places of Judah? are they not Jerusalem?

### **Micah 2:1, 2**

Woe to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand. **2** And they covet fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage.

### **Micah 2:7**

O thou that art named the house of Jacob, is the spirit of the LORD straitened? are these his doings? do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly?

**b. In the reign of Hezekiah, son of Ahaz, how was Micah to confront the false prophets—and why is this also needed today? Micah 3:5-8; 2 Timothy 4:3, 4.**

### **Micah 3:5-8**

Thus saith the LORD concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him. **6** 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. **7** Then shall the seers be ashamed, and the diviners confounded: yea, they shall all cover their lips; for there is no answer of God. **8** But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin.

### **2 Timothy 4:3, 4**

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; **4** And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables.

“When God sends to men warnings so important that they are represented as proclaimed by holy angels flying in the midst of heaven, He requires every person endowed with reasoning powers to heed the message. The fearful judgments denounced against the worship of the beast and his image (Revelation

14:9–11), should lead all to a diligent study of the prophecies to learn what the mark of the beast is, and how they are to avoid receiving it. But the masses of the people turn away their ears from hearing the truth and are turned unto fables. The apostle Paul declared, looking down to the last days: ‘The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.’ 2 Timothy 4:3. That time has fully come. The multitudes do not want Bible truth, because it interferes with the desires of the sinful, world-loving heart; and Satan supplies the deceptions which they love.

“But God will have a people upon the earth to maintain the Bible, and the Bible only, as the standard of all doctrines and the basis of all reforms. The opinions of learned men, the deductions of science, the creeds or decisions of ecclesiastical councils, as numerous and discordant as are the churches which they represent, the voice of the majority—not one nor all of these should be regarded as evidence for or against any point of religious faith. Before accepting any doctrine or precept, we should demand a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord’ in its support.”—The Great Controversy, pp. 594, 595.

**c. Describe the danger of self-righteous exclusiveness. Micah 3:9–12.**

**Micah 3:9–12**

Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity. **10** They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. **11** The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us. **12** Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest.

“[Micah 3:9–11 quoted.] These words faithfully described the corrupt and self-righteous inhabitants of Jerusalem. While claiming to observe rigidly the precepts of God’s law, they were transgressing all its principles. . . . While they slew their Saviour because He reproved their sins, such was their self-righteousness that they regarded themselves as God’s favored people and expected the Lord to deliver them from their enemies.”—Ibid., p. 27.

- a. What delayed the judgment foretold by Micah—and how does this reflect God's mercy? Jeremiah 26:18, 19.**

**Jeremiah 26:18, 19**

Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest. 19 Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the LORD, and besought the LORD, and the LORD repented him of the evil which he had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls.

- b. What promise does God give to those who overcome—and how does this point to the restoration of Eden? Micah 4:1, 2, 6-8.**

**Micah 4:1, 2**

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. 2 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 4:6-8**

In that day, saith the LORD, will I assemble her that halteth, and I will gather her that is driven out, and her that I have afflicted; 7 And I will make her that halted a remnant, and her that was cast far off a strong nation: and the LORD shall reign over them in mount Zion from henceforth, even for ever. 8 And thou, O tower of the flock, the strong hold of the daughter of Zion, unto thee shall it come, even the first dominion; the kingdom shall come to the daughter of Jerusalem.

“Satan, by means of his success in turning man aside from the path of obedience, became ‘the god of this world.’ 2 Corinthians 4:4. The dominion that once was Adam’s passed to the usurper. But the Son of God proposed to come to this earth to pay the penalty of sin, and thus not only redeem man, but recover the dominion forfeited. It is of this restoration that Micah prophesied when he said, ‘O Tower of the flock, the stronghold of the daughter of Zion, unto Thee shall it come, even the first dominion.’ Micah 4:8.”—Prophets and Kings, p. 682.

“The deepest interest manifested among men in the decisions of earthly tribunals but faintly represents the interest evinced in the heavenly courts when the names entered in the book of life come up in review before the Judge of all the earth. The divine Intercessor presents the plea that all who have overcome through faith in His blood be forgiven their transgressions, that they be restored to their Eden home, and crowned as joint heirs with Himself to ‘the first dominion.’ Micah 4:8. Satan in his efforts to deceive and tempt our race had thought to frustrate the divine plan in man’s creation; but Christ now asks that this plan be carried into effect as if man had never fallen. He asks for His people not only pardon and justification, full and complete, but a share in His glory and a seat upon His throne.”—The Great Controversy, pp. 483, 484.

**c. How did Micah and others prophesy of this final victory? Micah 4:10-12.**

**Micah 4:10-12**

Be in pain, and labour to bring forth, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in travail: for now shalt thou go forth out of the city, and thou shalt dwell in the field, and thou shalt go even to Babylon; there shalt thou be delivered; there the LORD shall redeem thee from the hand of thine enemies. 11 Now also many nations are gathered against thee, that say, Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion. 12 But they know not the thoughts of the LORD, neither understand they his counsel: for he shall gather them as the sheaves into the floor.

“The prophets to whom these great scenes were revealed longed to understand their import. . . .

“To us who are standing on the very verge of their fulfillment, of what deep moment, what living interest, are these delineations of the things to come—events for which, since our first parents turned their steps from Eden, God’s children have watched and waited, longed and prayed!”—Education, p. 183.

**4. OUTPOURING FROM HEAVEN**

**Wed, Feb 18**

**a. In an abundant outpouring of God’s mercy, how was the prophecy of Micah 5:1, 2 revealing the eternal divine nature of Christ fulfilled—yet how was its beauty overlooked? Matthew 2:3-6.**

**Micah 5:1, 2**

Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us: they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek. 2 But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting.

### **Matthew 2:3-6**

When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. 4 And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. 5 And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, 6 And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.

“Through patriarchs and prophets, as well as through types and symbols, God spoke to the world concerning the coming of a Deliverer from sin. A long line of inspired prophecy pointed to the advent of ‘the Desire of all nations.’ Haggai 2:7. Even the very place of His birth and the time of His appearance were minutely specified. The Son of David must be born in David’s city.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 697.

“At the time of Christ’s first advent the priests and scribes of the Holy City, to whom were entrusted the oracles of God, might have discerned the signs of the times and proclaimed the coming of the Promised One. The prophecy of Micah designated His birthplace; Daniel specified the time of His advent. Micah 5:2; Daniel 9:25. God committed these prophecies to the Jewish leaders; they were without excuse if they did not know and declare to the people that the Messiah’s coming was at hand. Their ignorance was the result of sinful neglect. The Jews were building monuments for the slain prophets of God, while by their deference to the great men of earth they were paying homage to the servants of Satan. Absorbed in their ambitious strife for place and power among men, they lost sight of the divine honors proffered them by the King of heaven.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 313.

### **b. What was revealed as God’s plan for the remnant of Israel? Micah 5:7.**

### **Micah 5:7**

And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the LORD, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.

“He who is at peace with God and his fellow men cannot be made miserable. Envy will not be in his heart; evil surmisings will find no room there; hatred cannot exist. The heart that is in harmony with God is a partaker of the peace of heaven and will diffuse its blessed influence on all around. The spirit of peace will rest like dew upon hearts weary and troubled with worldly strife.

“Christ’s followers are sent to the world with the message of peace. Whoever, by the quiet, unconscious influence of a holy life, shall reveal the love of Christ; whoever, by word or deed, shall lead another to renounce sin and yield his heart to God, is a peacemaker....

“The sweet savor of Christ surrounds them. The fragrance of the life, the loveliness of the character, reveal to the world the fact that they are children of God.”—Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, pp. 27–28.

## 5. THE LORD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS

Thu, Feb 19

**a. What wonderful appeal did Micah make during the reign of Ahaz, inviting erring Israel to return to their allegiance to God? Micah 6:2–5.**

### **Micah 6:2–5**

Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD’S controversy, and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the LORD hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel. 3 O my people, what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me. 4 For I brought thee up out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed thee out of the house of servants; and I sent before thee Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. 5 O my people, remember now what Balak king of Moab consulted, and what Balaam the son of Beor answered him from Shittim unto Gilgal; that ye may know the righteousness of the LORD.

“God has a controversy with all who practice the least injustice; for in so doing they reject the authority of God and imperil their interest in the atonement, the redemption which Christ has undertaken for every son and daughter of Adam. Will it pay to take a course abhorrent to God? Will it pay to put upon your censers strange fire to offer before God, and say it makes no difference?”—Testimonies to Ministers, p. 373.

**b. What heart-longing plea of many people does God desire to answer? Micah 6:6, 7; Jeremiah 8:22; John 1:29.**

**Micah 6:6, 7**

Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? 7 Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

**Jeremiah 8:22**

Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?

**John 1:29**

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

“It is impossible for us, of ourselves, to escape from the pit of sin in which we are sunken. Our hearts are evil, and we cannot change them. . . .

“It is not enough to perceive the loving-kindness of God, to see the benevolence, the fatherly tenderness, of His character. It is not enough to discern the wisdom and justice of His law, to see that it is founded upon the eternal principle of love. Paul the apostle saw all this when he exclaimed, ‘I consent unto the law that it is good.’ ‘The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.’ But he added, in the bitterness of his soul-anguish and despair, ‘I am carnal, sold under sin.’ Romans 7:16, 12, 14. He longed for the purity, the righteousness, to which in himself he was powerless to attain, and cried out, ‘O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?’ Romans 7:24, margin. Such is the cry that has gone up from burdened hearts in all lands and in all ages. To all, there is but one answer, ‘Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ John 1:29.”—Steps to Christ, pp. 18, 19.

**PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS**

**Fri, Feb 20**

- 1. Of what history should we be aware when planning our worship?**
- 2. What is to characterize the doctrines of God's church in the last days?**

- 3. Why was Micah able to be filled with hope for the future?**
- 4. Explain the contrast between the Jews in Christ's day and the final remnant.**
- 5. What makes it possible for God to reach the heart of His erring children?**

**Suggested Reading: The Great Controversy, pp. 253-264.**

A hundred years later, in a day of great spiritual darkness, Whitefield and the Wesleys appeared as light bearers for God. Under the rule of the established church the people of England had lapsed into a state of religious declension hardly to be distinguished from heathenism. Natural religion was the favorite study of the clergy, and included most of their theology. The higher classes sneered at piety, and prided themselves on being above what they called its fanaticism. The lower classes were grossly ignorant and abandoned to vice, while the church had no courage or faith any longer to support the downfallen cause of truth. (GC 253.1)

The great doctrine of justification by faith, so clearly taught by Luther, had been almost wholly lost sight of; and the Romish principle of trusting to good works for salvation, had taken its place. Whitefield and the Wesleys, who were members of the established church, were sincere seekers for the favor of God, and this they had been taught was to be secured by a virtuous life and an observance of the ordinances of religion. (GC 253.2)

When Charles Wesley at one time fell ill, and anticipated that death was approaching, he was asked upon what he rested his hope of eternal life. His answer was: "I have used my best endeavors to serve God." As the friend who had put the question seemed not to be fully satisfied with his answer, Wesley thought: "What! are not my endeavors a sufficient ground of hope? Would he rob me of my endeavors? I have nothing else to trust to."—John Whitehead, Life of the Rev. Charles Wesley, page 102. Such was the dense darkness that had settled down on the church, hiding the atonement, robbing Christ of His glory, and turning the minds of men from their only hope of salvation—the blood of the crucified Redeemer. (GC 253.3)

Wesley and his associates were led to see that true religion is seated in the heart, and that God's law extends to the thoughts as well as to the words and actions. Convinced of the necessity of holiness of heart, as well as correctness of outward deportment, they set out in earnest upon a new life. By the most diligent and

prayerful efforts they endeavored to subdue the evils of the natural heart. They lived a life of self-denial, charity, and humiliation, observing with great rigor and exactness every measure which they thought could be helpful to them in obtaining what they most desired—that holiness which could secure the favor of God. But they did not obtain the object which they sought. In vain were their endeavors to free themselves from the condemnation of sin or to break its power. It was the same struggle which Luther had experienced in his cell at Erfurt. It was the same question which had tortured his soul—“How should man be just before God?” Job 9:2. (GC 254.1)

The fires of divine truth, well-nigh extinguished upon the altars of Protestantism, were to be rekindled from the ancient torch handed down the ages by the Bohemian Christians. After the Reformation, Protestantism in Bohemia had been trampled out by the hordes of Rome. All who refused to renounce the truth were forced to flee. Some of these, finding refuge in Saxony, there maintained the ancient faith. It was from the descendants of these Christians that light came to Wesley and his associates. (GC 254.2)

John and Charles Wesley, after being ordained to the ministry, were sent on a mission to America. On board the ship was a company of Moravians. Violent storms were encountered on the passage, and John Wesley, brought face to face with death, felt that he had not the assurance of peace with God. The Germans, on the contrary, manifested a calmness and trust to which he was a stranger. (GC 254.3)

“I had long before,” he says, “observed the great seriousness of their behavior. Of their humility they had given a continual proof, by performing those servile offices for the other passengers which none of the English would undertake; for which they desired and would receive no pay, saying it was good for their proud hearts, and their loving Saviour had done more for them. And every day had given them occasion of showing a meekness which no injury could move. If they were pushed, struck, or thrown about, they rose again and went away; but no complaint was found in their mouth. There was now an opportunity of trying whether they were delivered from the spirit of fear, as well as from that of pride, anger, and revenge. In the midst of the psalm wherewith their service began, the sea broke over, split the mainsail in pieces, covered the ship, and poured in between the decks as if the great deep had already swallowed us up. A terrible screaming began among the English. The Germans calmly sang on. I asked one of them afterwards, ‘Were you

not afraid?’ He answered, ‘I thank God, no.’ I asked, ‘But were not your women and children afraid?’ He replied mildly, ‘No; our women and children are not afraid to die.’”—Whitehead, Life of the Rev. John Wesley, page 10. (GC 255.1)

Upon arriving in Savannah, Wesley for a short time abode with the Moravians, and was deeply impressed with their Christian deportment. Of one of their religious services, in striking contrast to the lifeless formalism of the Church of England, he wrote: “The great simplicity as well as solemnity of the whole almost made me forget the seventeen hundred years between, and imagine myself in one of those assemblies where form and state were not; but Paul, the tentmaker, or Peter, the fisherman, presided; yet with the demonstration of the Spirit and of power.”—Ibid., pages 11, 12. (GC 255.2)

On his return to England, Wesley, under the instruction of a Moravian preacher, arrived at a clearer understanding of Bible faith. He was convinced that he must renounce all dependence upon his own works for salvation and must trust wholly to “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” At a meeting of the Moravian society in London a statement was read from Luther, describing the change which the Spirit of God works in the heart of the believer. As Wesley listened, faith was kindled in his soul. “I felt my heart strangely warmed,” he says. “I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation: and an assurance was given me, that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.”—Ibid., page 52. (GC 255.3)

Through long years of wearisome and comfortless striving—years of rigorous self-denial, of reproach and humiliation—Wesley had steadfastly adhered to his one purpose of seeking God. Now he had found Him; and he found that the grace which he had toiled to win by prayers and fasts, by almsdeeds and self-abnegation, was a gift, “without money and without price.” (GC 256.1)

Once established in the faith of Christ, his whole soul burned with the desire to spread everywhere a knowledge of the glorious gospel of God’s free grace. “I look upon all the world as my parish,” he said; “in whatever part of it I am, I judge it meet, right, and my bounden duty, to declare unto all that are willing to hear, the glad tidings of salvation.”—Ibid., page 74. (GC 256.2)

He continued his strict and self-denying life, not now as the ground, but the result of faith; not the root, but the fruit of holiness. The grace of God in Christ

is the foundation of the Christian's hope, and that grace will be manifested in obedience. Wesley's life was devoted to the preaching of the great truths which he had received—justification through faith in the atoning blood of Christ, and the renewing power of the Holy Spirit upon the heart, bringing forth fruit in a life conformed to the example of Christ. (GC 256.3)

Whitefield and the Wesleys had been prepared for their work by long and sharp personal convictions of their own lost condition; and that they might be able to endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ, they had been subjected to the fiery ordeal of scorn, derision, and persecution, both in the university and as they were entering the ministry. They and a few others who sympathized with them were contemptuously called Methodists by their ungodly fellow students—a name which is at the present time regarded as honorable by one of the largest denominations in England and America. (GC 256.4)

As members of the Church of England they were strongly attached to her forms of worship, but the Lord had presented before them in His word a higher standard. The Holy Spirit urged them to preach Christ and Him crucified. The power of the Highest attended their labors. Thousands were convicted and truly converted. It was necessary that these sheep be protected from ravening wolves. Wesley had no thought of forming a new denomination, but he organized them under what was called the Methodist Connection. (GC 257.1)

Mysterious and trying was the opposition which these preachers encountered from the established church; yet God, in His wisdom, had overruled events to cause the reform to begin within the church itself. Had it come wholly from without, it would not have penetrated where it was so much needed. But as the revival preachers were churchmen, and labored within the pale of the church wherever they could find opportunity, the truth had an entrance where the doors would otherwise have remained closed. Some of the clergy were roused from their moral stupor and became zealous preachers in their own parishes. Churches that had been petrified by formalism were quickened into life. (GC 257.2)

In Wesley's time, as in all ages of the church's history, men of different gifts performed their appointed work. They did not harmonize upon every point of doctrine, but all were moved by the Spirit of God, and united in the absorbing aim to win souls to Christ. The differences between Whitefield and the Wesleys threatened at one time to create alienation; but as they learned meekness in the

school of Christ, mutual forbearance and charity reconciled them. They had no time to dispute, while error and iniquity were teeming everywhere, and sinners were going down to ruin. (GC 257.3)

The servants of God trod a rugged path. Men of influence and learning employed their powers against them. After a time many of the clergy manifested determined hostility, and the doors of the churches were closed against a pure faith and those who proclaimed it. The course of the clergy in denouncing them from the pulpit aroused the elements of darkness, ignorance, and iniquity. Again and again did John Wesley escape death by a miracle of God's mercy. When the rage of the mob was excited against him, and there seemed no way of escape, an angel in human form came to his side, the mob fell back, and the servant of Christ passed in safety from the place of danger. (GC 258.1)

Of his deliverance from the enraged mob on one of these occasions, Wesley said: "Many endeavored to throw me down while we were going down hill on a slippery path to the town; as well judging that if I was once on the ground, I should hardly rise any more. But I made no stumble at all, nor the least slip, till I was entirely out of their hands.... Although many strove to lay hold on my collar or clothes, to pull me down, they could not fasten at all: only one got fast hold of the flap of my waistcoat, which was soon left in his hand; the other flap, in the pocket of which was a bank note, was torn but half off.... A lusty man just behind, struck at me several times, with a large oaken stick; with which if he had struck me once on the back part of my head, it would have saved him all further trouble. But every time, the blow was turned aside, I know not how; for I could not move to the right hand or left.... Another came rushing through the press, and raising his arm to strike, on a sudden let it drop, and only stroked my head, saying, 'What soft hair he has!' ... The very first men whose hearts were turned were the heroes of the town, the captains of the rabble on all occasions, one of them having been a prize fighter at the bear gardens...." (GC 258.2)

"By how gentle degrees does God prepare us for His will! Two years ago, a piece of brick grazed my shoulders. It was a year after that the stone struck me between the eyes. Last month I received one blow, and this evening two, one before we came into the town, and one after we were gone out; but both were as nothing: for though one man struck me on the breast with all his might, and the other on the mouth with such force that the blood gushed out immediately, I felt no more pain

from either of the blows than if they had touched me with a straw.”—John Wesley, Works, vol. 3, pp. 297, 298. (GC 259.1)

The Methodists of those early days—people as well as preachers—endured ridicule and persecution, alike from church members and from the openly irreligious who were inflamed by their misrepresentations. They were arraigned before courts of justice—such only in name, for justice was rare in the courts of that time. Often they suffered violence from their persecutors. Mobs went from house to house, destroying furniture and goods, plundering whatever they chose, and brutally abusing men, women, and children. In some instances, public notices were posted, calling upon those who desired to assist in breaking the windows and robbing the houses of the Methodists, to assemble at a given time and place. These open violations of both human and divine law were allowed to pass without a reprimand. A systematic persecution was carried on against a people whose only fault was that of seeking to turn the feet of sinners from the path of destruction to the path of holiness. (GC 259.2)

Said John Wesley, referring to the charges against himself and his associates: “Some allege that the doctrines of these men are false, erroneous, and enthusiastic; that they are new and unheard-of till of late; that they are Quakerism, fanaticism, popery. This whole pretense has been already cut up by the roots, it having been shown at large that every branch of this doctrine is the plain doctrine of Scripture interpreted by our own church. Therefore it cannot be either false or erroneous, provided the Scripture be true.” “Others allege, ‘Their doctrine is too strict; they make the way to heaven too narrow.’ And this is in truth the original objection, (as it was almost the only one for some time,) and is secretly at the bottom of a thousand more, which appear in various forms. But do they make the way to heaven any narrower than our Lord and His apostles made it? Is their doctrine stricter than that of the Bible? Consider only a few plain texts: ‘Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy mind, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength.’ ‘For every idle word which men shall speak, they shall give an account in the day of judgment.’ ‘Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.’” (GC 259.3)

“If their doctrine is stricter than this, they are to blame; but you know in your conscience it is not. And who can be one jot less strict without corrupting the word of God? Can any steward of the mysteries of God be found faithful if he change any part of that sacred depositum? No. He can abate nothing, he can soften

nothing; he is constrained to declare to all men, ‘I may not bring down the Scripture to your taste. You must come up to it, or perish forever.’ This is the real ground of that other popular cry concerning ‘the uncharitableness of these men.’ Uncharitable, are they? In what respect? Do they not feed the hungry and clothe the naked? ‘No; that is not the thing: they are not wanting in this: but they are so uncharitable in judging! they think none can be saved but those of their own way.’”—Ibid., vol. 3, pp. 152, 153. (GC 260.1)

The spiritual declension which had been manifest in England just before the time of Wesley was in great degree the result of antinomian teaching. Many affirmed that Christ had abolished the moral law and that Christians are therefore under no obligation to observe it; that a believer is freed from the “bondage of good works.” Others, though admitting the perpetuity of the law, declared that it was unnecessary for ministers to exhort the people to obedience of its precepts, since those whom God had elected to salvation would, “by the irresistible impulse of divine grace, be led to the practice of piety and virtue,” while those who were doomed to eternal reprobation “did not have power to obey the divine law.” (GC 260.2)

Others, also holding that “the elect cannot fall from grace nor forfeit the divine favor,” arrived at the still more hideous conclusion that “the wicked actions they commit are not really sinful, nor to be considered as instances of their violation of the divine law, and that, consequently, they have no occasion either to confess their sins or to break them off by repentance.”—McClintock and Strong, Cyclopaedia, art. “Antinomians.” Therefore, they declared that even one of the vilest of sins, “considered universally an enormous violation of the divine law, is not a sin in the sight of God,” if committed by one of the elect, “because it is one of the essential and distinctive characteristics of the elect, that they cannot do anything that is either displeasing to God or prohibited by the law.” (GC 261.1)

These monstrous doctrines are essentially the same as the later teaching of popular educators and theologians—that there is no unchangeable divine law as the standard of right, but that the standard of morality is indicated by society itself, and has constantly been subject to change. All these ideas are inspired by the same master spirit—by him who, even among the sinless inhabitants of heaven, began his work of seeking to break down the righteous restraints of the law of God. (GC 261.2)

The doctrine of the divine decrees, unalterably fixing the character of men, had led many to a virtual rejection of the law of God. Wesley steadfastly opposed the errors of the antinomian teachers and showed that this doctrine which led to antinomianism was contrary to the Scriptures. “The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.” “This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; who gave Himself a ransom for all.” Titus 2:11; 1 Timothy 2:3-6. The Spirit of God is freely bestowed to enable every man to lay hold upon the means of salvation. Thus Christ, “the true Light,” “lighteth every man that cometh into the world.” John 1:9. Men fail of salvation through their own willful refusal of the gift of life. (GC 261.3)

In answer to the claim that at the death of Christ the precepts of the Decalogue had been abolished with the ceremonial law, Wesley said: “The moral law, contained in the Ten Commandments and enforced by the prophets, He did not take away. It was not the design of His coming to revoke any part of this. This is a law which never can be broken, which ‘stands fast as the faithful witness in heaven.’ ... This was from the beginning of the world, being ‘written not on tables of stone,’ but on the hearts of all the children of men, when they came out of the hands of the Creator. And however the letters once wrote by the finger of God are now in a great measure defaced by sin, yet can they not wholly be blotted out, while we have any consciousness of good and evil. Every part of this law must remain in force upon all mankind, and in all ages; as not depending either on time or place, or any other circumstances liable to change, but on the nature of God, and the nature of man, and their unchangeable relation to each other.” (GC 262.1)

“I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.’ ... Without question, His meaning in this place is (consistently with all that goes before and follows after),—I am come to establish it in its fullness, in spite of all the glosses of men: I am come to place in a full and clear view whatsoever was dark or obscure therein: I am come to declare the true and full import of every part of it; to show the length and breadth, the entire extent, of every commandment contained therein, and the height and depth, the inconceivable purity and spirituality of it in all its branches.”—Wesley, sermon 25. (GC 262.2)

Wesley declared the perfect harmony of the law and the gospel. “There is, therefore, the closest connection that can be conceived, between the law and the

gospel. On the one hand, the law continually makes way for, and points us to, the gospel; on the other, the gospel continually leads us to a more exact fulfilling of the law. The law, for instance, requires us to love God, to love our neighbor, to be meek, humble, or holy. We feel that we are not sufficient for these things; yea, that 'with man this is impossible;' but we see a promise of God to give us that love, and to make us humble, meek, and holy: we lay hold of this gospel, of these glad tidings; it is done unto us according to our faith; and 'the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us,' through faith which is in Christ Jesus.... (GC 263.1)

"In the highest rank of the enemies of the gospel of Christ," said Wesley, "are they who openly and explicitly 'judge the law' itself, and 'speak evil of the law;' who teach men to break (to dissolve, to loose, to untie the obligation of) not one only, whether of the least or of the greatest, but all the commandments at a stroke.... The most surprising of all the circumstances that attend this strong delusion, is that they who are given up to it, really believe that they honor Christ by overthrowing His law, and that they are magnifying His office while they are destroying His doctrine! Yea, they honor Him just as Judas did when he said, 'Hail, Master, and kissed Him.' And He may as justly say to every one of them, 'Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?' It is no other than betraying Him with a kiss, to talk of His blood, and take away His crown; to set light by any part of His law, under pretense of advancing His gospel. Nor indeed can anyone escape this charge, who preaches faith in any such a manner as either directly or indirectly tends to set aside any branch of obedience: who preaches Christ so as to disannul, or weaken in any wise, the least of the commandments of God."—Ibid. (GC 263.2)

To those who urged that "the preaching of the gospel answers all the ends of the law," Wesley replied: "This we utterly deny. It does not answer the very first end of the law, namely, the convincing men of sin, the awakening those who are still asleep on the brink of hell." The apostle Paul declares that "by the law is the knowledge of sin;" "and not until man is convicted of sin, will he truly feel his need of the atoning blood of Christ.... 'They that be whole,' as our Lord Himself observes, 'need not a physician, but they that are sick.' It is absurd, therefore, to offer a physician to them that are whole, or that at least imagine themselves so to be. You are first to convince them that they are sick; otherwise they will not thank you for your labor. It is equally absurd to offer Christ to them whose heart is whole, having never yet been broken."—Ibid., sermon 35. (GC 264.1)

Thus while preaching the gospel of the grace of God, Wesley, like his Master, sought to “magnify the law, and make it honorable.” Faithfully did he accomplish the work given him of God, and glorious were the results which he was permitted to behold. At the close of his long life of more than fourscore years—above half a century spent in itinerant ministry—his avowed adherents numbered more than half a million souls. But the multitude that through his labors had been lifted from the ruin and degradation of sin to a higher and a purer life, and the number who by his teaching had attained to a deeper and richer experience, will never be known till the whole family of the redeemed shall be gathered into the kingdom of God. His life presents a lesson of priceless worth to every Christian. Would that the faith and humility, the untiring zeal, self-sacrifice, and devotion of this servant of Christ might be reflected in the churches of today! (GC 264.2)