

to its movements, would, with his finger, make a new path for it in the sand, and guide it to points and purposes of his own. And so in the higher realm. God knows how to guide the perverse man in his way, and to make use of him in that lower life which he chooses, even when he does not know it. Take the case of Judas. He was called to the Ministry and the Apostleship of the Lord Jesus. That was God's eternal decree. That was the path in which He would have had him move on, in dutiful obedience to the Divine will. But he fell from the Apostleship, and voluntarily descended to a lower level; but in that lower level to which he perversely descended, he was anticipated by Him who sees the end from the beginning, and made use of him there, although, like the proud Assyrian, *he did not think so, neither was it in his heart to do so*. God's decree was that he should be an Apostle, and all the outward circumstances of his life were fitted to accomplish this decree, and such as to enable him to finish his God-appointed course with joy. But those very circumstances, which would have lifted him to glory and made him shine like a star—those very circumstances, perverted and misused, proved his ruin and aggravated his fall. Those very winds and waves that would have borne him to a noble destination, unused or misimproved, would drive him, a miserable wreck, upon the shores of an undone eternity! The seaman, cast upon an island, is not to blame the winds and waves for his calamity; they were his best friends. And man is not to blame God for his sins—for his everlasting perdition. He is not to blame the circumstances of his life for his misery—those circumstances were his best friends; and had he only used them aright, they would have made him a noble vessel. God hath no pleasure in the death of the sinner. There are many ships upon the sea this day, and many are the paths which they are pursuing; but on all that broad ocean there is no waif or wanderer. Every one is pursuing some definite path, bound for some desired haven. And there are many millions of human beings this day upon the face of the world, and each one has his own course to run, under the all-encompassing providence of Him who is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working. There is nothing loose or uncertain in the counsels of God. There is no wandering star in the firmament of astronomy; and there is no wandering star in the firmament of mind. Every one has his own appointed orbit, which he is called upon to pursue; but which, as a free agent, he may refuse to pursue, and take to some eccentric course of his own. But even in that eccentric course which he has chosen, he will find ere long, that he has been beset behind and before by Him in whose hands are all his ways; so that whether it be the wild Ishmael, roaming the desert, concerning whom God said, *foreseeing his path: He shall be a wild man*; or the saintly Apostle, going from land to land and shore to shore, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom—we can see how true it is, that every man has his course to run, which has either been appointed of God, or provided for by God, in the counsels of eternity; and how really every man will be made to feel at the close: O Lord! thou hast searched me and known me; Thou knowest my downsitting and uprising, and art perfectly acquainted with all my ways. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and been about my bed and my path, and thou hast spied out all my way.

But it is not with the reprobate or the reviler we have to do this day, but with the Christian. His is eminently a course prescribed by God—a work appointed him to do. Christ, speaking of himself and the special work to which he was called, said: "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world." So with Abraham. He had his course to run, his work to do; and in entering upon it, he went forward,

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