

What I have said, therefore, was simply in explanation and illustration of some of those hidden laws which lie beneath the ken of the sciolist. I wish you to think of principles more than of men, and of the equity of the Divine government more than of states, amidst "the tumults of the people;" for you may rely upon it, that men are but the exponents of principles stronger than sceptres, and mightier than armies. The conflicts of nations are not between thrones and republics. Revolutions are the battle-cries of invisible combatants. They are the sounds which shake the nations, when right and wrong, truth and error, grapple for the mastery. The stake at issue—though man may be ignorant of the fact—is neither the symbol of royalty nor that of democracy, but the triumph or defeat of principles older than the world, and immortal as mind. Man acts in the great drama of humanity with all the freedom of an intelligent agent, but he is unconscious of the dignity of his mission, and of the part which he is playing in the history of glorious principles. "He may remove the diadem and take off the crown" from royalty, because powerful motives impel him; and he may "exalt him that is low, and abase him that is high," because the change appears to him an act of homage to justice; but, though he heard not the voice, and saw no vision, these actions may have been preceded by a "Thus saith the Lord."

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For a long period, the Gentile world was allowed to try the experiment of finding out God by its own wisdom. Literature, science, philosophy, threw their combined influence into the common stock. Experience was summoned. Tradition was laid under contribution. The power of the priesthood was invoked. Charms, omens, and signs were consulted. The flight of the bird was

watched. The voice of the oracle was besought. The stars of heaven were read. Reason laboured in the fires. But the great experiment failed.—The goal receded: the race was vain. Darkness covered the earth, and thick darkness the people. The veil that hung over all nations thickened. The mental gloom increased. The moral disorder gained power. The temples of religion became theatres of the grossest immorality. The shrines of the gods were the sources of weltering pollution. The distinction between right and wrong, virtue and vice, was scarcely known except as the theme of subtle controversy on the part of the philosophers. Isaiah and Jeremiah had predicted the result of the protracted experiment, and the apostles of the Gentiles announced it thus: "The world by wisdom knew not God."

A revolution was needed, and a great revolution took place. God shook all nations, and the desire of all nations came; but he came in unexpected form—in lowly guise, in veiled glory. Nevertheless the mean exterior prevented not him, whose "right it was" to revolutionize society, from "setting up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed." So far from it, his unimposing appearance was itself a declaration of hostility against the universal error of rendering homage to the symbols of material power. It was a protest against the wondering worship which mankind were offering at the shrine of hollow splendour. It was a revelation to men that the great doctrines with which he intended to "turn the world upside down" were not dependent on tinsel and glare—on cabinet or crown—on sceptre or army. From the visible to the unseen, from the gross to the spiritual, from the perishable to the permanent, he called the minds of the multitude. He withdrew attention from the sensible to fix it on the objects of faith. For