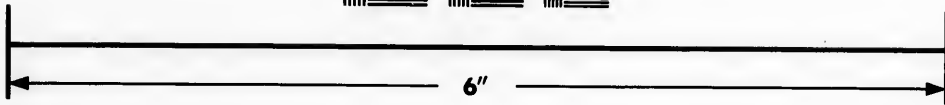
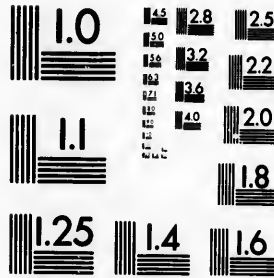


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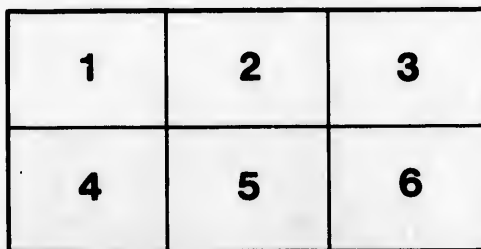
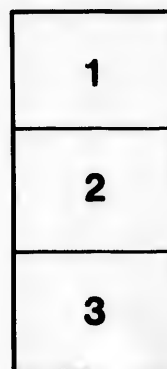
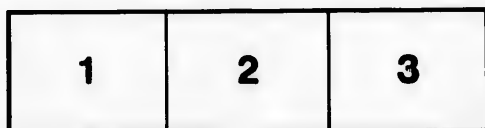
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DISCOURSE.

PSALM 28—5. "Because they regard not the works of the Lord nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them and not build them up."

It must have occurred to every diligent and intelligent student of the Scriptures, that God is there repeatedly represented as a *μαρτυρον*. It is he that lays the foundation; it is he that builds up the edifice, and it is he that beautifies it. "Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands." "Mine hand also has laid the foundations of the earth, and my right hand hath spanned the heavens." "Where wast thou," says God, "when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof? Who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened, and who hath laid the corner-stone thereof? When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy." It is said of Abraham, "that he looked for a city which *hath foundations*, whose builder and maker is God." He laid the foundation and completed the superstructure. "And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man, made he (builted he) a woman." "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." "In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David, that is fallen; and I will raise up his ruins; and I will *build* it, as in the days of old." You will observe the same idea in almost every expression of the divine procedure, in every representation of the things operated by the hand of God. The creation is his work—the providence that governs and orders all things is his work—and *redemption* from the power of sin

and the woe of death is his work. What is thus represented as proper to God, you will likewise find to be ascribed to the godlike among men. They worked constructively. They were co workers with God—at once the workmanship and day-labourers of the divinity. Jacob built an altar; Moses and Aaron built an altar to the Lord; Joshua, and Gideon, and Samuel, and Saul, David, Solomon, and Elisha, built “altars to the Lord.” In the long memorials of recorded days, these works of theirs still shine brightly, still endure in “the sphere of fame.” But God is said to beautify, as well as to build. For what says the Holy One of Israel, “the glory of Lebanon shall come unto thee, to beautify the place of my sanctuary; and I will make the place of my feet glorious.” And “by his Spirit he hath garnished the heavens.” These three operations are ascribed to God—to lay the foundation, to build, and to beautify.

The above passages may serve to shew that the mighty and glorious being which men call God, may be regarded with all the decency and veneration of religion as the great architect of the universe. There is a scriptural propriety and a most unexceptionable ground of reason, as we may yet see, to regard him in that light through which he has chosen most conspicuously to manifest himself; whether the case be physical or whether it be moral, he may be contemplated as the great master-builder under whose care the *κοσμος* or earth in its beauty, and under whose care the universe in its immensity, are advancing to perfection in strict accordance to his plan and calculations, according to the wise design and construction of an unsearchable and unchangeable God.

The same language is employed and the same idea expressed in the text. “Because they regard not the works of the Lord nor the operation of his hands, he will destroy

them and not build them up." Here is the assertion of a duty; here the obligation upon us is established of viewing the divine character in the light which the above passages represent it in. Let us then, in acknowledgment of the obligation which this passage of the sacred scriptures imposes, and consistently with the practice of that order of "free and accepted masons" to which we belong, turn the eye of our minds to some few of those works, some few of the operations of the hands of the Lord, in order that we may acquire some idea of his exalted character as the divine constructor, the supreme architect of the universe.

The prime qualities of every good piece of architecture are its commodiousness, its durability, and its beauty. Its commodiousness consists in the proper extent and distribution of the spaces enclosed; its durability, in the strength, the right position, and adjustment of the materials; its beauty, in the perception of fitness, together with a graceful combination of order and variety in the whole construction. Now with regard to this great building of nature in which the hand of the Almighty has placed us for a time, we can judge of it very imperfectly; the design of it is too vast for the reach of our thoughts; we can only see it through a glass darkly, and even then we can behold but a little speck or atom of it at a time. Laying together, however, all the observations we can make and collect, we may see evidence enough to warrant the conclusion that this round world is a commodious structure, that it is adapted to the ends which it was intended to serve. One of these ends was evidently the production and preservation of life in various forms, and in degrees more or less calculated to excite admiration. Look then into every room of the mighty house which the hand of God has made—behold it filled with the guests which he has invited to dwell in it. See how they revel in the enjoyment of life. The mountains for some and the valleys for others—the open plain, the woods—the rivers, the ocean

stream, are the spacious and commodious habitations prepared for others. "The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats, and the rocks for the conies—as for the stork, the fir trees are her house." There is a crevice or a leaf—a hut or a hive, a house or a city of habitation for all—a palace for the prince and a hole for the fox. All have room and suitable lodgings in this commodious edifice of God's.

We may remember too that this is but a small part of the handywork of God. Could we lift up our eyes from the lesser to the greater, and behold the many mansions which he has erected above. Had we senses fine enough and instruments perfect enough to discover the innumerable worlds and systems of worlds which he has already constructed, and may be constructing still, in the distant borders of space, which has no borders at all, our thoughts no doubt would wander like sheep that have no shepherd, in the view of his vast incomprehensible works; but this impression would certainly remain—how wonderful the works, how wonderful the constructive power of God. Let us suppose that a human or angelic spirit were called by its Creator to witness the operation of his hands from some high and commanding point in the field of space. Suppose him to be instructed in his view and comprehension of the vast architecture that has proceeded and still proceeds from the supreme builder of all things. Come and behold how I lay the foundations of these mansions, that seem to fill like rays of light the immensity of space. See how I fashion, out of the thin and nebulous material that floats unformed in the empty ether, a glorious orb whose eye of light shall declare my glory to other orbs far away in the unfathomable depths. See how I draw together and build up the rough ashlar of a habitation that shall endure for the honour of my name, and for the residence of such a multitude of bright and breathing creatures as you can have no calculus to number. Behold how it rises in

strength and beauty, a commodious dwelling-place for the tenantry I shall send it. I ask again, in the witnessing of such a work of God's, what would be the conviction most penetrating? what would be the impression most permanent? Would it not be a conviction most profound—a persuasion against which no temptation could prevail, that his attribute of construction is marvelously displayed. When we speak of God we are sure to be involved in a series of infinities—infinite when he creates, infinite when he redeems—but no property of his nature is more manifest and more intelligible than this which describes him as the supreme and the sole architect of all things.

Another property of a good piece of architecture is its durability. What is the worth of it if it have no fitness to endure. The work of a good mason is always durable. It will stand the test of time as well as the test of criticism. All human works, whose materials are physical, will perish; but the last works that will perish are those which were best constructed at first. They were well *designed*, they were laid on a good foundation, they were built with evenness, and were therefore durable. They were built by those who regarded the works of the Lord and the operation of his hands, who studied with watchful anxiety the mode of his procedure, and who were therefore rewarded with a godlike power. It is true that the most elaborate monuments of human masonry are in ruins—but they are ruins which have resisted the malice of time; the rage of the elements, and the foolish hatred of wild and barbarous men. Go to the valley of Edom; and although the curse of God descended on its dwellers, and made it desolate, unknown, and quite forgotten in the lapse of ages, the works of some good mason still remain to indicate the ancient scene of the merry but sinful activity of the throng. Go to the valley of the Nile, there is durable masonry in the broad-based

pyramids; and if you travel westward from that memorable stream of water, towards the desert of Lybia, there are works of masonry there that have not been buried in their grave by the sandy storms of thousands of years. Look even to South America; had there been no mason there, how should we have known of the existence of a happy and prosperous people at an end of the world with respect to which we had neither knowledge nor concern. But there were masons there. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Their temples, their pyramids, their canals, shall convince you. Even there there were good masons who regarded the works of the Lord. There will always be some to build, how many soever there may be *intent* to destroy. It is true, nevertheless, that the works of man are perishable, because they partake of the nature of their builders.

If the good works of man are durable, far more durable are the works of God. The agencies that cause the works of man to decay and moulder into dust, are the ministers God employs, the labourers of his pleasure. The air, the rain, the lightning of his thunder and the hidden power that causes the earthquake, act at his bidding and work to his hand. We have no sufficient data, and no power to calculate, how long the terrestrial globe, one among the countless structures of his hand, has existed. We have no intimation nor assurance how long it shall continue. It is given us, indeed, to understand that the day will come when its present system of colonization shall be utterly changed, when all life shall depart from it, with every green and flourishing thing that grows in the garden of earth; but then we are assured that this event is only an intentional effect, subservient to a new and better construction; that when the surface of the globe shall be covered with a robe of fire, drawn from its unknown and sunless centre, that only another application shall be made towards the perfection of the house, its additional repairment and decoration, for the better

accommodation of happier souls than we. It shall be a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. But that is a far prospect of the future. When we look back to the past we see that the works of God have stood on a foundation sure and stedfast. What is it to us if there was a time, in the ancient date of things, when the Megatherium grazed on the meadow of the world, and the Megalosaurus wallowed in its oceans, when the trees were like mountains and the shrubs like trees. We are men and not gods, and our works are to be judged of according to the measure of men. For any thing that we know, ever since our race became the tenants of this house, the same sun has measured the days and the years, and the same moon paid us her monthly visits. The Euphrates still rolls its waters into the gulph of Persia: the garden of Eden, which it encompassed, is the province of the Turk. The Indus leaves the land of Cashmere, to pursue its wonted course. The Nile and the Danube still run on in their familiar bed; and even the same flowers bloom on the borders of their parent streams, an immortal species. They are durable enough—they were works completed by the hand of the Lord, and the buildings of that architect remain firm and fast.

Again, there is the beauty of architecture. No matter what the principle or principles are which, in simple and organized forms, give the perfection of beauty, no piece of architecture is reckoned perfect without it. It would be difficult to analyze the various sentiments with which one regards the pillar-propped edifices of the acropolis of Athens, a pyramid in the desert, a gothic cathedral in the Holy Island, or the Abbey of Melrose. The ideas are various with which we associate the various objects. But if they are not beautiful, they impress us with the apprehension of lameness and incongruity. We consider them as the work of a blundering mason.

Such are never the feelings with which an intelligent witness contemplates the works of God: and if in any case it be difficult to see that all nature is beauty to the eye and music to the ear, the defect may be thought to lie in the imperfectness of our own instruments of perception. Such a witness will always ascribe to a constructive power, such as can be supposed to reside in God alone, the wonderful variety of ingenious contrivances with which the world abounds. He will associate them with every image of wisdom and beauty. He will always derive from them the sense of order and gracefulness. The whole countenance of creation, instead of a blank and speechless expanse, will be regarded as a *temple* filled with the glory of God, whose walls are hung around with the symbols of his perfections, with pictures of beauty, and inscriptions of wisdom. He will see in every object of nature what speaks forth the name and sounds the praises of the Almighty. Even in this terrestrial work, which his hands have raised, it is given us to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple.

These observations respect the physical masonry or architecture of God, but there remains his *moral* workmanship. The compound is always superior to the simple—the organized is always better than the mass it was made of. There is more order in it, more harmony, more construction. It is true in the moral universe, as it is true in the physical, God does every thing but what the wicked do. He builds up—they pull down. He always constructs—they always destroy. God inspires a man with power to build a palace, a barbarian comes and levels it with the dust. God gives a poor man bread, a wicked man comes and snatches it from his mouth. God builds up the soul of man, for a holy place in which himself may dwell; the wicked destroy it, and then the stones of that sanctuary cleave to the clods of the valley—they die, they lie an everlasting ruin.

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Be sensible that there is a moral as well as a physical masonry of the deity. Witness it in the strong instinct of self-preservation which God has implanted in the human soul, in the recoil and shrinking with which it shuns dissolution, in its unconquerable desire of durability, even its yearning after immortality. Witness the number and force of its social affections, those great sources of civilization and happiness, the powers of fortitude and forethought with which it is endowed, to prop up the roof of the spiritual building. Behold the instruments of observation with which it is furnished, its nice idea of proportion, its measurement and appreciation of forms and figures, its pleasurable discernment of the combinations of colours. Behold the commanding power that produces harmonious numbers, the faculty of music, "the friend of pleasure and the aid of wisdom," once so efficacious in the production of peace and lonely musing, and alone thought sufficient to reward illustrious worth and ratify the voice of fame; and, above all, contemplate the wonderful power of construction with which a human soul is endowed. This, after all, has been the prometheus of happy change in the civilization of mankind, and the schoolmaster of knowledge. To what rather than this are we to ascribe the change from the savage to the civilized? What taught men to emerge from caves and holes scooped in the earth, to build the walls of finer masonry? What made them dig for hidden ore, and taught them to work in brass and iron? What instructed them to lay together and fasten the ribs of a ship, and square her sails to the wind? From the most remote periods—the building of the tower of Babel, or the days of the πολυδαιδαλοι σιδωνες, until now, almost every age gives some memorials of this wonder-working power. But to trace the moral architecture of God, as exemplified in the formation of the human mind, is a field far too large for our present range. It may suffice merely to indicate some of its distinguishing powers, with a

view to show that, morally as well as physically, the work of God appears to us in the light of construction—to shew that the perfection of every moral constitution consists, like the perfection of every material structure, in the degree of wisdom with which it was planned, or its commodiousness and adaptation, in the provision made for its durability or strength, and in its beauty. In short, that it is true architecture—that it is real construction. Nor is it needed to trace the exemplification of this same principle in the consolidation and improvement of human society—in the different departments of active life—the various employments, trades, and professions—in all which, *whatever is really and truly beneficial* is in the way of social construction.

In the phenomena of external nature, in the intellectual and moral constitution of mankind, and in those social affections which bind men together in families and nations, we behold a contriving and constructing power, of which no other account can be given but that it is the power of an architect divine and supreme. Nor is the operation of this power limited to these. Beyond all that is natural, we may trace it in every prospect which has been given us of the spiritual. Were our views of the works of God and the operation of his hand confined to what is observable in *any* department of nature, it might be difficult to account for a circumstance in which we all have so profound an interest—that decree which said “thou shalt surely die.” How is every generation of men consumed by death; and it may be relevantly asked, is that constructive power to be regarded as perfect, whose noblest piece of building is so soon destroyed. Yes, it is. “I know that my redeemer liveth and that after worms have destroyed this body, yet in my *flesh* shall I see God.” “We shall all be changed.” There is change, but no absolute death, to such as regard the works and operation of the hand of the Lord. Out of the ashes of the urn are extracted the

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materials for the building up of an everlasting tabernacle. "Out of the eater comes forth meat;" in the jaws of the destroyer are found the elements of a new and immortal construction.

Moreover, there is the soul's life as well as the body's re-construction. The soul disordered already, (for we are assured that *its change* has already passed upon it) disordered by sinful compliances and the voluntary perversion of its powers, and incapable of recovering itself from the hereditary evil which threatens its destruction, unless he who fashioned it had undertaken to restore it, is to be redeemed and sanctified by an operation that commands the admiration of angels—they desire to look into it, but cannot comprehend the mystery of godliness. We are assured that "in Christ shall all be made alive," and that such are the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. The soul's redemption and sanctification are thus the works of God, by which it is restored and regenerated, by which it moves joyfully and easily to a better land than this—to a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

I shall not say that good masonry is the very principle of virtue, but may safely declare that it has a necessary affinity with every principle that is good. It is an imitation of the method which God takes in working. It is the proper and dutiful regarding of the operation of his hand. And let us remember that penalty that attends the neglect of such duty—"because they regarded not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hand, he will destroy them and not build them up." Let us remember that *destruction* is just the opposite of *construction*; and *because* it is so, let us therefore use our utmost exertion to avoid it. Let us hate it with a perfect hatred, because it is an impediment to the design of the supreme architect of the universe, because it is a spoiling of his work. Is it the part of a good mason, to make ruin where

there is a proper building, to made deformity where there is beauty, to disorder a pavilion which the wisdom of God has planned. No! Let us demonstrate that we are worthy of the honour of masonry. Let temperance govern our actions, and govern our appetites, and govern our desires. Let it teach us to preserve and duly guard the lower as well as the higher part of our being—to do nothing to destroy or injure that work of God—that organic house of existence which he has made for us to dwell in. May it be in our eyes a sacred temple, well worthy of being saved from distemper and violence. May our higher nature also be under the government of temperance, to control and regulate the passions—to accustom the heart to brook the yoke of salutary laws, so that no instrument of destruction shall be lifted up in *heedless* violence against another. To your temperance add fortitude. It is a necessary virtue for the mason, who often has to work on impracticable materials. Fortitude to encounter danger with resolution—fortitude to resist the temptation that would make him a destroyer. It will strengthen his hands for every good work, and give him the constancy and perseverance of the good Hezekiah—"the God of heaven," he said, "he will prosper us, therefore we his servants will arise and build." Again, to your fortitude add prudence, that you may build with order, forethought, and design. An imprudent builder may raise up the walls with marble and porphyry, but bears in his hand a fire ever ready to burn and destroy the edifice he has built. Let him never leave his actions without connecting order. Let him remember that fortitude without prudence is vanity. There is truth and justice--there is faith and hope. The want of truth is a lie, and a lie is a deception, and a deception is a snare, and the meaning of a snare is a purpose of destroying. The want of justice is the removing of another man's landmark—it is the taking away of the ground of his building, an undermining of the foundation of his house. Injustice, there-

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fore, is a work of destruction, i. e. it is not a work, it is a spoliation of something, a dissolution of something, a ruin or a death of something.

Follow truth and honesty
 Even to thy long home,
 And never by a finger's breadth
 The ways of God go from.
 Then shall be thy life on earth
 A walk on some green path;
 Then mayst thou with no quaking dread
 Look in the eyes of death.*

There is faith,—the want of faith, is ignorance of the work and operation of the hands of the Lord, and the text assures us that such as are ignorant of these shall be destroyed and not built up; and hope, the want of which is blank despair—no motion, no life, and is therefore destruction also. But let truth and justice be the rule of your words and actions; let faith and hope support your spirits, like columns of marble; and let charity sit by your side, like a shining angel, advising and persuading you to rise up and build. If a brother ask me for meat, do I build him up if I offer him a serpent. Let charity teach us to bear one another's burdens. The children of the same God, let us live as brethren. In the days of our pilgrimage, there is no numbering the pains and miseries, the regrets, and sorrows, and losses, that encompass us. The number of our pleasures is small, and they fly away like a shadow. It therefore remains for us, as brethren, to make light the weight of one another's chains. Let kindness to the craft in general, and a universal benevolence prove us, to be worthy of the honour of masonry; and may the Right Worshipful Master, by the assistance of you who are his office bearers, support with becoming dignity the office which he sustains. May he illustrate by his example, and recommend

* Translated from the German of Holty.

by his precepts, the virtuous principles of the noble mystery of free masonry; and may all who have a part in it, prove themselves indeed to be the workmanship of God, and hear at length the happy sentence pronounced upon them—"good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

AMEN.

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