

**NATIONAL DESTINY  
AND OUR COUNTRY:  
A DISCOURSE**

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National Destiny and Our Country: A Discourse by D. F. Robertson

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1851.

## ADVERTISEMENT.

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THE following Discourse was first delivered in Rev. Dr. Spring's Church, and, subsequently, in the Broadway Tabernacle, and in the R. D. Church on Lafayette Place.

Several persons, then, desired its publication; but aside from hesitations as to its general utility, other callings then more important, and more imperative, prevented its issue.

Some paragraphs here and there, have been added—some of which will be readily distinguished as not appropriate to the pulpit. In publishing it now, with many imperfections, the writer is yielding to the opinions of others—especially to the requests of a gentleman who now desires to have it, at some trouble and expense to himself.

He would be laying himself liable to be placed in a false position, if he failed to state here, that a person who borrowed the manuscript has published some portions of it over his own name; and has thereby manifested a great failing in matters of taste (not to mention things ethical), in appropriating from another that which—as in the present instance—is inferior to what he could have produced himself.

*Note.*—The intelligent reader will perceive that the *certain* dissolution of our Government and Institutions, or their *certain* perpetuity, is not asserted in this Discourse.



## D I S C O U R S E .

ISAIAH LXIV. 6.

WE ALL DO FADE AS A LEAF; AND OUR INIQUITIES, LIKE THE WIND,  
HAVE TAKEN US AWAY.

THE Prophet Isaiah, looking down the course of time, beholds, afar off, in the visions of prophecy, the terrible ruin of the kingdom of Judah, the forlorn and desperate condition of the guilty inhabitants.

The startling events described, were not to take place till many years after he should be gathered to his fathers; yet they are mentioned, here, in the *present* tense—in the simple, sententious, glowing style often assumed in prophetic composition. The predicted scenery, in all its dismal detail, passes before his eyes; and the deep, intense emotion, kindled at the sight, bursts forth in this simplest form of the verb, portraying most vividly the dread impending desolation.

It is pertinent, here, to observe that this mode of expression—employing the present tense to indicate *future* events—is of frequent occurrence in the prophetic Scriptures. Would the holy prophet foretell that Messiah would suffer in innocence, patience and silence? He speaks of the event as *present* to his mind, and exclaims, “He *is led* as a lamb to the slaughter”—not *shall be led*; though the event was, as yet, some seven hundred years in the future.

This species of style, which is an excellence rather than a de-

fect, is not peculiar to the sacred poets. It often obtains in the finest periods of secular poetry ; and the most erudite historians often throw a past or a future tense into the *present* to give life and force to their narratives.

Unhappily, we have, just now, amongst us, a very injurious order of Biblical critics—cold, captious and minute—who are ever in trouble about these and similar passages in the Word of God ; who spend their days in frivolous and bewildering solicitude over the most inconsiderable distinctions pertaining to the mere “letter” or incidents of Revelation. They would clip the wings of inspired Genius and bid her creep upon the dust at their own dull, plodding pace. They would silence her voice, did she decline to announce her oracles in their own little, precise phraseology. To such the *whole* destiny of Christianity often seems to turn upon the specific rendering of some small phrase—some philological point or accent (important in itself and as an incident), or perchance, on some appalling discrepancy between the inches of lava at the base of a volcano, and the very minute of time when the human race arose into being and dwelt in shady borders in the garden of Paradise !

To such idle and absurd calculations and criticisms, such vain, petty puerility, the celestial muses deign not to condescend. Though every passage in the sacred canon, when cautiously and fully interpreted, will *ever* be found to coincide with every sober and faithful generalization of new facts, whether these facts pertain to the discoveries of natural science, to the proper interpretation of language, or to any subject—mental or material—within the limits of things created—the remotest points of space, or periods of time to which the human mind could ever rise even in its conceptions.

The passage now before us cannot be perceived in its full intent, until the mind is set free from these puerilities of small critics, and brought back to its natural position, where, alone, the beauty and grandeur of this prophecy may meet the eye and arouse the soul.

If you would, then, approach the startling import of the text, attend simply to the simple figure here introduced: "We all do fade"—we, the kingdom of Judah, do fade—"as a leaf, and our (national) iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away." The leaf of a tree or plant is presented as the emblem of his country. It is a fading leaf, trembling in the chilling winds. The air of autumn has breathed decay upon its verdant beauty. No more it drinks the evening dews; no more it greets the smiling beams of early, joyous light. The frosts and the snows of winter—the storm and the tempest are bent upon its ruin. See that leaf, as it struggles in vain on the verge of dissolution, grasping faintly in its frail fibres the shrinking stem that gave it birth, till the last fatal blast *sweeps it "away."* Then, behold the kingdom of Judah soaring high far above all the nations of the earth, smiling with upward bent in the noontide of Jehovah's love, till, at last, cankered and curst, turning its face from God, it is torn away in violence, and drifted into Babylon in a whirlwind of the Divine indignation.

Following, then, this the strict sense of these words, we shall,

I. BRIEFLY CONTEMPLATE THE PROSPERITY, THE POPULAR VICES, AND THE FADING AWAY OF THE HEBREW NATION.

II. ILLUSTRATE, SOMewhat, THE IDENTITY OF THE GREAT GENERAL LAWS WHICH CONTROLLED THE HEBREW DESTINY, WITH THOSE THAT HAVE EVER OPERATED VITALLY IN THE REAL RISE AND DECAY OF OTHER NATIONS.

III. ENDEAVOR TO INDICATE SEVERAL ELEMENTS OF DECAY IN THE EXISTING INSTITUTIONS OF OUR OWN COUNTRY, WITH CERTAIN LEADING REMEDIES.

I. BRIEFLY CONTEMPLATE THE PROSPERITY, THE POPULAR VICES, AND THE FADING AWAY OF THE HEBREW NATION.

In reaching the true idea of national prosperity, it must be assumed that a people are really prosperous in proportion to their knowledge and sense of the true God, and to their constant