

**THE DAY OF DOOM; OR, A
POETICAL DESCRIPTION OF THE
GREAT AND LAST JUDGMENT:
WITH OTHER POEMS**

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by Michael Wigglesworth

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MICHAEL WIGGLESWORTH

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THE
DAY of DOOM;

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With Other Poems.

BY
MICHAEL WIGGLESWORTH, A. M.,

Teacher of the Church at Malden in New England,

1862.

ALSO A MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR, AUTOBIOGRAPHY, AND SKETCH OF HIS FUNERAL SERMON BY REV. COTTON MATHER.

ACTS 17: 31. Because he hath appointed a Day in the which he will judge the World in Righteousness by that Man whom he hath ordained.

MAT. 24: 30. And then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven, and then shall all the tribes of the Earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven with power and great glory.

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MEMOIR OF THE AUTHOR.

THE following is the substance of an article published in the "New England Historical and Genealogical Register," for April, 1863, written by JOHN WARD DEAN, Esq., of Boston:

A century ago no poetry was more popular in New England than Wigglesworth's *Day of Doom*. Francis Jenks, Esq., in an article in the *Christian Examiner* for Nov., 1828, speaks of it as "a work which was taught our fathers with their catechisms, and which many an aged person with whom we are acquainted can still repeat, though they may not have met with a copy since they were in leading strings; a work that was hawked about the country, printed on sheets like common ballads; and, in fine, a work which fairly represents the prevailing theology of New England at the time it was written, and which Mather thought might, 'perhaps, find our children till the Day itself arrives.'"

The popularity of Wigglesworth dated from the appearance of his poem, and continued for more than a century. Expressing in earnest words the theology which they believed, and picturing in lively colors the terrors of the judgment day and the awful wrath of an offended God, it commended itself to those zealous Puritans, who had little taste for lofty rhyme or literary excellence. The imaginative youth devoured its horrors with avidity, and shuddered at its fierce denunciation of sin. In the darkness of night he saw its frightful forms arise, and was thus driven to seek the "ark of safety" from the

wrath of Jehovah. For the last century, however, the reputation of the *Day of Doom* has waned, and few at the present day know it except by reputation.

The author of this book, whose wand had summoned up such images of terror, was neither a cynic nor a misanthrope, though sickness, which generally brings out these dispositions where they exist, had long been his doom. His attenuated frame and feeble health were joined to genial manners; and, though subject to fits of despondency, he seems generally to have maintained a cheerful temper, so much so that some of his friends believed his ills to be imaginary.

Rev. Michael Wigglesworth was born October 28, 1631, probably in Yorkshire, England. He was brought to this country in 1638, being then seven years old, but in what ship we are not informed. His father, Edward Wigglesworth, was one of those resolute Puritans who, with their families, found an asylum where they could enjoy their religion without molestation in our then New England wilderness, the distance of which from their English homes can hardly be appreciated now. Here they suffered the severe hardships of a rigorous climate, and the fearful dangers from savage tribes around them, while uniting to build up villages which are now cities, and which still retain some of the characteristics of their Puritan founders. The determined purpose and strength of principle that conquered every obstacle was a school of severe training for the children of that period. It was natural that a father who had endured so much for conscience' sake should desire to see his only son a clergyman; and, although the father's means were not large, the son was devoted to the ministry and given a thorough education. Michael, after nearly three years of preparatory studies, entered Harvard College in 1647. Here he had the good fortune to have for a

tutor the excellent Jonathan Mitchell, "the glory of the college," and famous as a preacher. The friendship here begun appears to have continued after both had left the college walls. Probably the eight stanzas "on the following work and its author," signed J. Mitchel, were written by that tutor and preacher, who was a native of Yorkshire, the county in which Wigglesworth is believed to have been born.

In 1651 Mr. Wigglesworth graduated, and was soon after appointed a tutor in the College. Some of his pupils were men of note in their day. Among them were, Rev. Shubael Dummer, of York, Me.; Rev. John Elliot, of Newton; and Rev. Samuel Torrey, of Weymouth; but the chief of them, it will be admitted, was Rev. Increase Mather, D.D., pastor of the second church in Boston, and for sixteen years president of Harvard College. That the tutor was faithful to his trust, we have evidence from the sketch of the funeral sermon appended to this work, preached by Rev. Cotton Mather, D.D., son of Increase, who probably derived his information from his father.

While a tutor, he prepared himself for the ministry, and before his father's death he had preached several times. He was invited, probably in the autumn of 1654, to settle at Malden, as the successor of Rev. Marmaduke Matthews, but owing to long-continued sickness was not ordained there till 1656. The precise date of his ordination is not known, but it must have been subsequent to August 25, 1656, for his letter of dismissal from the church at Cambridge bears that date. This letter, addressing the "Church of Christ at Maldon," states that "the good hand of Divine Providence hath so disposed that our beloved and highly esteemed brother, Mr. Wigglesworth, hath his residence and is employed in the good work of y^r Lord amongst

you, and hath cause to desire of us Letters Dismissive to your church, in order to his joining as a member with you."

The ill health which had delayed his ordination at Malden returned soon after his settlement there, and interrupted his ministry several years. He took a voyage to Bermuda, sailing Sept. 23, 1663, and being absent about seven months and a half. But the tedious and stormy voyage seems to have impaired his health so much that the change of climate afforded him little relief, and he returned much discouraged. He met with a very cordial welcome from his friends and parishioners.

While he was thus withheld from his ministry, he employed his time in literary labors. His *Day of Doom* was published about 1662, the year before his voyage to Bermuda. The first edition consisting of 1,800 copies, was sold, with some profit to the author, within a year, which considering the population and wealth of New England at that time, shows almost as remarkable a popularity as that of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

While absent on his voyage in search of health, Dec. 9, 1663, Rev. Benjamin Bunker was ordained pastor of the church at Malden. It seems that a distinction was observed at this time in New England between pastor and teacher. Wigglesworth calls Bunker "pastor" in some verses composed on his death, while on the title-page of this work he calls himself "teacher." After Wigglesworth became sole minister, he was probably considered the pastor. Bunker held this office over six years, till his death, Feb. 3, 1669-70. In the elegy on the death of his colleague, Wigglesworth highly extols Bunker's piety and usefulness. The next colleague of our author was Rev. Benjamin Blackman, settled about 1674. He supplied the desk four years and upward,

and left in the year 1679. His next colleague was Rev. Thomas Cheever, son of his early teacher, the celebrated New England schoolmaster, Ezekiel Cheever, author of *Latin Accidence*. These three ministers were all educated at Harvard College, Bunker having graduated in 1658, Blackman in 1663, and Cheever in 1677. Mr. Cheever began to preach at Malden Feb. 14, 1679-80, was ordained July 27, 1681, and was dismissed May 20, 1686.

Wigglesworth, though long prevented by sickness from officiating, never resigned his ministerial charge, as appears from a letter which he addressed to Samuel Sprague, July 22, 1687. He was now left alone as minister of the church. He had, however, recovered his health in a measure about this time, which had suffered for nearly twenty years, and for the remainder of his life he continued in public usefulness.

He died on Sunday morning, June 10, 1705, in the 74th year of his age. The epitaph on the last page of this work is believed to have been written by Cotton Mather, as it appears in the appendix to his funeral sermon as by "one that had been gratified by his *Meat out of the Eater and Day of Doom*."

Mr. Wigglesworth had at least three wives: Mary, daughter of Humphrey Reyner, of Rowley; Martha, whose maiden name was probably Mudge; and Sybil, widow of Dr. Jonathan Avery, of Dedham, and daughter of Nathaniel Sparhawk, of Cambridge.

By his first wife he had (1) *Mercy*, b. Feb., 1655-6; m. 1st, [Samuel?] Brackenbury, by whom she had at least one son, William; m. 2d, [Rev. Samuel?] Belcher.

By his second wife, Martha, who d. 11th Sept., 1690, a. 28, he had:—(2) *Abigail*, b. 20th March, 1681; m. Samuel Tappan, 23d Dec., 1700;—(3) *Mary*, b. 21st Sept., 1682; unm. in 1708;—(4) *Martha*, b. 21st Dec., 1683; m. ——— Wheeler;—(5) *Esther*, b. 16th April, 1685; m. 1st, John Sewall, June 8, 1708, who d. 1711; m. 2d, Abraham Tappan, Oct. 21, 1713;—(6) *Dorothy*, b. 22d Feb., 1687-88; m. 2d June, 1709, James Upham;—(7) Rev. *Samuel*, b. 4th Feb., 1689-90, d. 3d Sept., 1768.