

# Religious Liberty



*The Biblical Standpoint*

# Liberty before Sin



*Freedom of the Will*

# Liberty after Sin



*Freedom of the Will*

For all have sinned, and come short of  
the glory of God; (Romans 3:23)

. . . Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. (John 8:34)

While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. (2 Peter 2:19)

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?  
(Romans 6:16)

I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?

(Romans 7:21–24)



And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. (Matthew 1:21)

Paul knew that his warfare against evil would not end so long as life should last. Ever he realized the need of putting a strict guard upon himself, that earthly desires might not overcome spiritual zeal. With all his power he continued to strive against natural inclinations. Ever he kept before him the ideal to be attained, and this ideal he strove to reach by willing obedience to the law of God. His words, his practices, his passions—all were brought under the control of the Spirit of God.

*(AA 314.3)*

It was this singlehearted purpose to win the race for eternal life that Paul longed to see revealed in the lives of the Corinthian believers. He knew that in order to reach Christ's ideal for them, they had before them a life struggle from which there would be no release. He entreated them to strive lawfully, day by day seeking for piety and moral excellence.

He pleaded with them to lay aside every weight and to press forward to the goal of perfection in

Christ. (*AA 315.1*)

Paul pointed the Corinthians to the experience of ancient Israel, to the blessings that rewarded their obedience, and to the judgments that followed their transgressions. He reminded them of the miraculous way in which the Hebrews were led from Egypt under the protection of the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night. Thus they were safely conducted through the Red Sea, while the Egyptians, essaying to cross in like manner, were all drowned. By these acts God had acknowledged Israel as His church. They “did all eat the same spiritual meat; and did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.” The Hebrews, in all their travels, had Christ as a leader. The smitten rock typified Christ, who was to be wounded for men’s transgressions, that the stream of salvation might flow to all. (*AA* 315.2)

Notwithstanding the favor that God showed to the Hebrews, yet because of their lust for the luxuries left behind in Egypt, and because of their sin and rebellion, the judgments of God came upon them. The apostle enjoined the Corinthian believers to heed the lesson contained in Israel's experience. "Now these things were our examples," he declared, "to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted." He showed how **love of ease and pleasure had prepared the way for sins** that called forth the signal vengeance of God. It was when the children of Israel sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play, that they threw off the fear of God, which they had felt as they listened to the giving of the law; and, making a golden calf to represent God, they worshiped it. And it was after enjoying a luxurious feast connected with the worship of Baalpeor, that many of the Hebrews fell through licentiousness. The anger of God was aroused, and at His command "three and twenty thousand" were slain by the plague in one day. (AA 315.3)

The apostle adjured the Corinthians, “Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” Should they become boastful and self-confident, neglecting to watch and pray, they would fall into grievous sin, calling down upon themselves the wrath of God. Yet Paul would not have them yield to despondency or discouragement. He gave them the assurance: “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”

*(AA 316.1)*

The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me,  
because he hath anointed me to preach  
the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to  
heal the brokenhearted, to preach  
deliverance to the captives, and recovering  
of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them  
that are bruised, To preach the acceptable  
year of the Lord. (Luke 4:18–19)

Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and  
shew thee great and mighty things, which  
thou knowest not. (Jeremiah 33:3)



And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. (2 Corinthians 12:9)

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear *it*. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; And  
lean not unto thine own understanding. In all  
thy ways acknowledge him, And he shall  
direct thy paths. (Proverbs 3:5–6)

A man's heart deviseth his way: But the Lord directeth his steps. (Proverbs 16:9)

And they overcame him by the blood of the  
Lamb, and by the word of their testimony;  
and they loved not their lives unto the death.

(Revelation 12:11)

I saw that some expected to overcome alone by the blood of the Lamb, without making any special effort of their own. I saw that God had been merciful in giving us the power of speech. He has given us tongue and utterance; and we are accountable to Him for it, and we should glorify God with our mouths, speaking in favor of Him and His truth. We should overcome by the word of our testimony through the blood of the Lamb. (*EGWLM*, vol. 1, p. 372.5)

*Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to  
loose the bands of wickedness, to undo  
the heavy burdens, and to let the  
oppressed go free, and that ye break  
every yoke? (Isaiah 58:6)*

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, *then* are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:31–32)



Luke 7:36–50

# Ephesians 2:7–22

- ❖ To addictions
- ❖ To appetite
- ❖ To despots or to rulers—Patrick Henry—Give me liberty or give me death.
- ❖ To money, to power
- ❖ Of what people think—John 12:42, 43; 7:13
- ❖ Of fear, debt, disease, death.
- ❖ Israelites were in bondage in Egypt.

In their bondage the Israelites had to some extent lost the knowledge of God's law, and they had departed from its precepts. The **Sabbath** had been generally disregarded, and the exactions of their taskmasters made its observance apparently impossible. But Moses had shown his people that obedience to God was the first condition of deliverance; and the efforts made to restore the observance of the Sabbath had come to the notice of their oppressors. (*PP* 258.1)

If thou buy an Hebrew servant, six years he shall serve: and in the seventh he shall go out free for nothing. (Exodus 21:2)

And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout *all* the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubile unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family.  
(Leviticus 25:10)

And if thy brother *that dwelleth* by thee be waxen poor, and be sold unto thee; thou shalt not compel him to serve as a bondservant: *But* as an hired servant, *and* as a sojourner, he shall be with thee, *and* shall serve thee unto the year of jubile:  
(Leviticus 25:39–40)

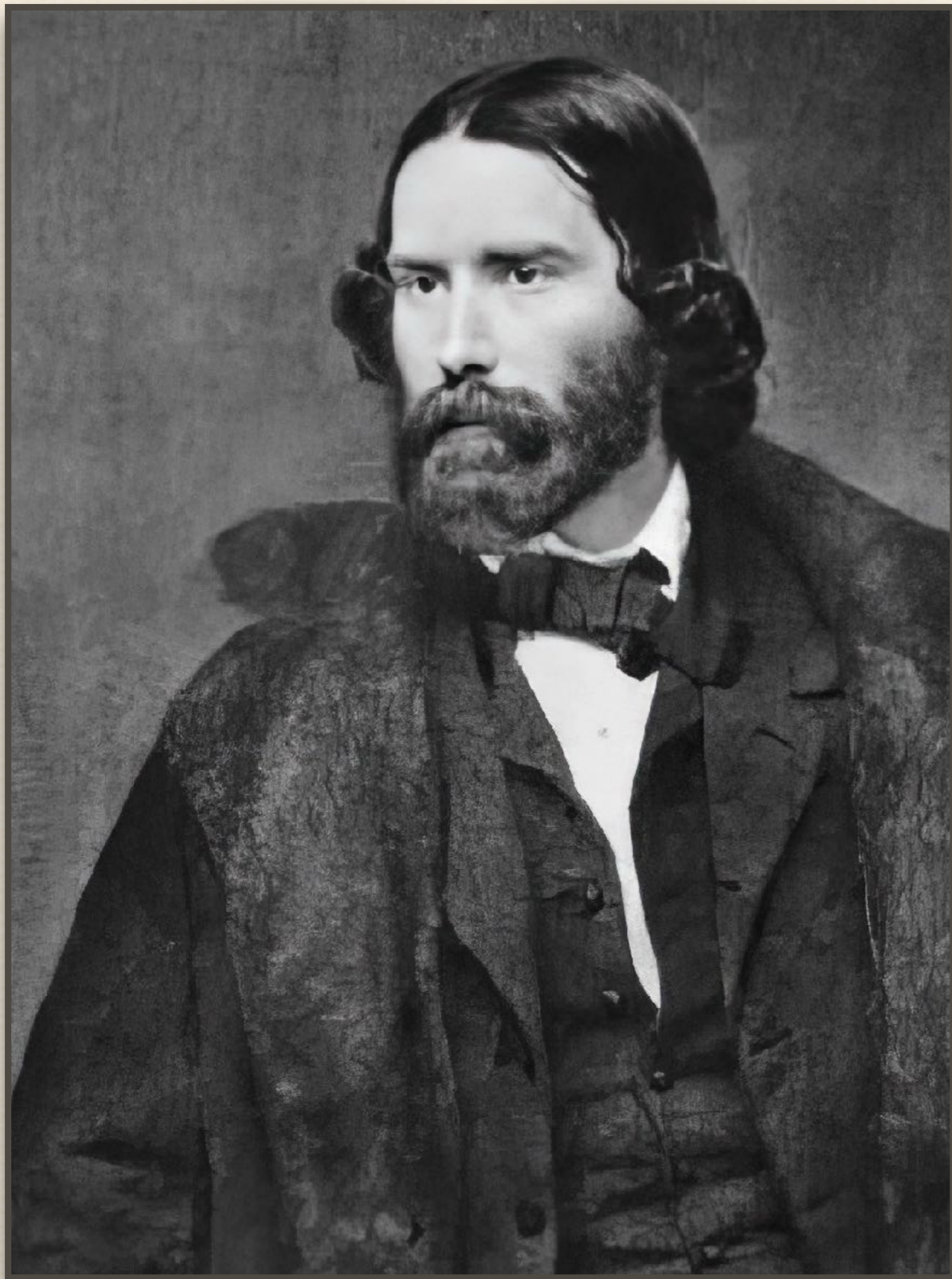
Thou shalt not follow a multitude to *do* evil . . .  
(Exodus 23:2)

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that **all men are created equal**, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness. (Declaration of Independence)

But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, *even* Christ; and all ye are **brethren**. (Matthew 23:8)

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, **do ye even so to them**: for this is the law and the prophets. (Matthew 7:12)

Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy **neighbour** as thyself: I *am* the Lord. (Leviticus 19:18)



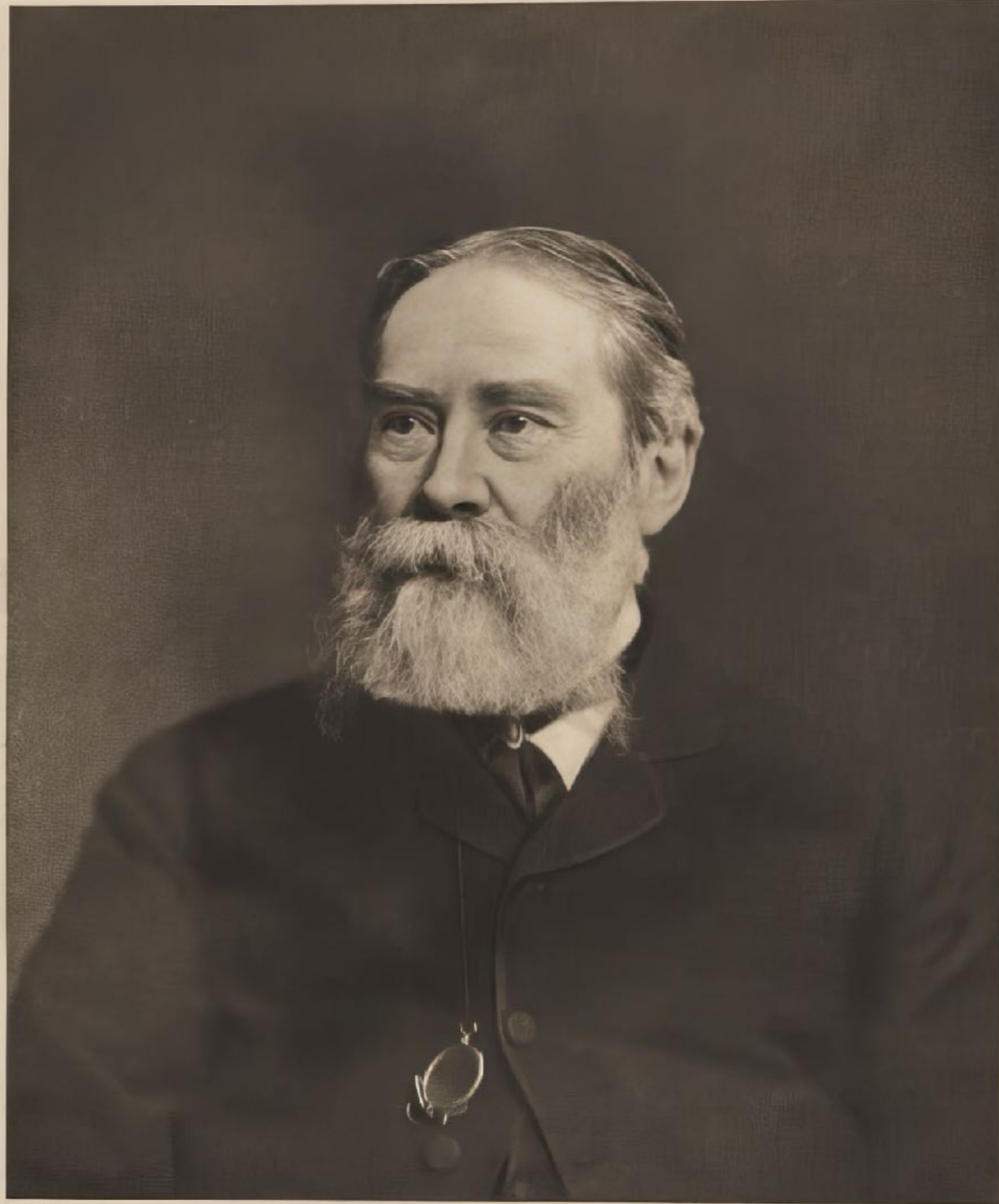
They are slaves who fear to speak  
For the fallen and the weak;  
They are slaves who will not choose  
Hatred, scoffing, and abuse,  
Rather than in silence shrink  
From the truth they needs must think;  
They are slaves who dare not be  
In the right with two or three.  
—“Stanzas on Freedom” (1843)

James Russell Lowell, 1819–1891





Once to every man and nation  
Comes the moment to decide,  
In the strife of Truth with Falsehood,  
For the good or evil side;  
Some great cause, God's new Messiah,  
Offering each the bloom or blight,  
And the choice goes by forever  
Twixt that darkness and that light.  
Then to side with Truth is noble,  
When we share her wretched crust,  
Ere her cause bring fame and profit,  
And 'tis prosperous to be just;  
Then it is the brave man chooses  
While the coward stands aside,  
Till the multitude make virtue  
Of the faith they had denied.



*J. Lowell*

By the light of burning martyrs,  
Christ, Thy bleeding feet we track,  
    Toiling up new Calvaries ever  
With the cross that turns not back;  
    New occasions teach new duties,  
Time makes ancient good uncouth;  
They must upward still and onward,  
Who would keep abreast of Truth.  
    Though the cause of evil prosper,  
    Yet 'tis Truth alone is strong;  
Though her portion be the scaffold,  
    And upon the throne be wrong:  
Yet that scaffold sways the future,  
    And, behind the dim unknown,  
Standeth God within the shadow  
    Keeping watch above His own.  
—Selected from “Present Crisis” (1845)

But whoso looketh into the perfect law of **liberty**, and continueth *therein*,  
he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall  
be blessed in his deed. (James 1:25)

So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of  
**liberty**. (James 2:12)

If ye fulfil the **royal** law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy  
neighbour as thyself, ye do well: (James 2:8)

**Blessed** *are* they that do his commandments, that they may have right to  
the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.  
(Revelation 22:14)

Great **peace** have they which love thy law: And nothing shall offend  
them. (Psalm 119:165)

Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above **fine gold**.  
(Psalm 119:127)

And I will walk at liberty: For I seek thy precepts. (Psalm 119:45)

*There is* therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace. (Romans 8:1–6)

The first step in reconciliation to God is the conviction of sin. “Sin is the transgression of the law.” “By the law is the knowledge of sin.” 1 John 3:4; Romans 3:20. In order to see his guilt, the sinner must test his character by God’s great standard of righteousness. It is a **mirror** which shows the perfection of a righteous character and enables him to discern the defects in his own. (*GC 467.3*)

The law reveals to man his sins, but it provides no remedy. While it promises life to the obedient, it declares that death is the portion of the transgressor. The gospel of Christ alone can free him from the condemnation or the defilement of sin. He must exercise repentance toward God, whose law has been transgressed; and faith in Christ, his atoning sacrifice. Thus he obtains “remission of sins that are past” and becomes a partaker of the divine nature. He is a child of God, having received the spirit of adoption, whereby he cries: “Abba, Father!” (*GC 467.4*)

“The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.” Psalm 19:7. Without the law, men have no **just conception** of the purity and holiness of God or of their own guilt and uncleanness. They have no true conviction of sin and feel no need of repentance. Not seeing their lost condition as violators of God’s law, they do not realize their need of the atoning blood of Christ. The hope of salvation is accepted without a radical change of heart or reformation of life. Thus superficial conversions abound, and multitudes are joined to the church who have never been united to Christ.

(GC 468.2)

This work can be accomplished only through **faith** in Christ, by the power of the indwelling Spirit of God.

Paul admonishes believers: “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure.” Philippians 2:12, 13. The Christian will feel the promptings of sin, but he will maintain a constant warfare against it. Here is where Christ's help is needed. Human weakness becomes united to divine strength, and faith exclaims: “Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Corinthians 15:57. (*GC* 469.3)



- ❖ God's law is the perfect law of liberty, and part of that law is the Sabbath.
- ❖ What would be the result of worshipping false gods and keeping a false sabbath?

When in 1529 the German princes assembled at the Diet of Spires, there was presented the emperor's decree restricting religious liberty, and prohibiting all further dissemination of the reformed doctrines. It seemed that the hope of the world was about to be crushed out. Would the princes accept the decree? Should the light of the gospel be shut out from the multitudes still in darkness? Mighty issues for the world were at stake. Those who had accepted the reformed faith met together, and their unanimous decision was, "Let us reject this decree. In matters of conscience the majority has no power."—Merle d'Aubigné, *History of the Reformation*, b. 13, ch. 5. (AA 68.1)

In a loathsome dungeon [1677?] crowded with profligates and felons, John Bunyan breathed the very atmosphere of Heaven, and there he wrote his wonderful allegory of the pilgrim's journey from the land of destruction to the celestial city. For two hundred years that voice from Bedford jail has spoken with thrilling power to the hearts of men. Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" and "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners" have guided many feet into the path of life. (GC88 252.2)

[https://archive.org/details/pilgrimsprogress00buny\\_16/page/n47/mode/2up](https://archive.org/details/pilgrimsprogress00buny_16/page/n47/mode/2up)

<https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/654>

*The American Sentinel* (1886–1901) was a weekly devoted to the propagation of the principles of religious liberty. It was followed in 1901–1904 by the monthly *Sentinel of Christian Liberty*.

Among earth's inhabitants, scattered in every land, there are those who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Like the stars of heaven, which appear only at night, these faithful ones will shine forth when darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people. In . . . Africa, in the Catholic lands of Europe and of South America, in China, in India, in the islands of the sea, and in all the dark corners of the earth, God has in reserve a firmament of chosen ones that will yet shine forth amidst the darkness, revealing clearly to an apostate world the transforming power of obedience to His law. Even now they are appearing in every nation, among every tongue and people; and in the hour of deepest apostasy, when Satan's supreme effort is made to cause "all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond," to receive, under penalty of death, the sign of allegiance to a false rest day, these faithful ones, "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke," will "shine as lights in the world." Revelation 13:16; Philippians 2:15. The darker the night, the more brilliantly will they shine. (*PK* 188.2)