

Bridgeton Mead<sup>56</sup>  
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The Fullness of Time consisted in these three things, which we will take for the divisions of our thought:

The exposure of men's need for a Saviour;

the dissemination of God's promises, awaking an expectation;

and the <sup>development</sup> ~~construction~~ creation of facilities for spreading the Gospel, ~~of the Messiah when he ~~had~~ should come.~~

## I

The exposure of men's need for a Saviour.

The question is sometimes asked why the coming of X. is

2  
Earth was so long delayed; as tho' that delay indicated that God had no intention, until the ~~X<sup>c</sup>~~ ~~was~~ ~~born~~ ~~of~~ the Virgin, of giving men salvation by a Redeemer. The question becomes its own answer. We who may ask it, have <sup>been</sup> made aware by every kind of proof that God had such a purpose of grace, from the very first: we know that He has sent X<sup>c</sup>, that X<sup>c</sup> was long prophesied, that God <sup>showed that He had</sup> a love for men too deep to leave them without grace; & yet we ask in despite of all this: Why such a delay? as tho' it justified some doubt that Jesus was

3/ a true Messiah, sent from God & able to save.

be thus stumbled, who  
If we can ~~so doubt~~ in the  
have beheld something of the accom-  
~~plished~~ ~~glory of His Kingdom~~ rather than  
~~the~~ ~~glory of His Kingdom~~ rather than  
~~the~~ ~~glory of His Kingdom~~ rather than  
His humble & afflicted life:

~~the~~ ~~glory of His Kingdom~~ rather than  
His humble & afflicted life:  
Sup to the ~~glory of His Kingdom~~ rather than  
His humble & afflicted life:  
Evident that men would not have  
received Jesus as God's Son & their  
Savior, had not God graciously left  
them first awhile to see their  
need of a Savior & their own inability  
to obtain salvation; ~~except He~~  
~~should send them a sign; & had He~~

not, also, prepared sure proofs be-  
forehand to attest the mission  
of Jesus when He should appear.

To this work of preparation, <sup>of men's minds</sup> let us  
give attention for a while.

It was no time to send X<sup>2</sup>  
to men, until they could appreci-  
ate in some ~~considerable~~ <sup>considerable</sup> degree ~~of~~  
~~permeated~~ ~~the~~ features of His  
that God should make that atonement efficacious for the  
atoning work. ~~Assess that they~~  
salvation of souls before Him, we shall observe for  
~~could not do~~ until they had re-  
alized their need of Him suf-  
ficiently to have tried, in His delay,  
to atone for their sins them-  
selves, & <sup>so</sup> understood its impossi-  
bility. It is one of the most  
beautiful features of history,  
~~as we shall~~ that men were  
~~not~~ straining their eyes to look  
for the Lord from Heaven, <sup>as we shall observe,</sup> when

5/ He did come, ~~as we shall see~~. It  
will impress the fact upon us if  
we consider the steps by which  
they came to that desire.

The consciousness of the infi-  
nite evil of sin grew up but slowly  
in the world. Eve, ~~plainly~~, caught  
at Eve's promise that ~~she~~ a  
child of her race should destroy  
her tempter; but had that prom-  
ised Messiah been given at once,  
the whole history of our foolish  
race demonstrates that He would  
have been misapprehended at the  
time & <sup>in ~~the~~ after</sup> <sup>ages</sup> deemed mythical, ~~and~~  
~~after~~ <sup>would have</sup> ~~ages~~, & so, <sup>vastly</sup> changed the  
story of His work. We may say  
that the supposition is impossible;

6  
Let us remember that it ~~is~~ the  
wisdom of God in appointing a  
fulness of time which made it  
impossible.

So God gave men time to learn  
the enormity of their turning away  
from Him. He suffered Adam to  
realize that a sinful disposition  
may become a hereditary <sup>trait</sup>, in  
the character of his son Cain. He  
showed the antediluvian people that  
sin, obstinate & deaf, is intolerable  
to the end of life. He retracted  
~~the law~~ the precepts of righteousness,  
which the children of Adam &  
again of Noah had forgotten, in  
the <sup>law</sup> ~~law~~ <sup>which He gave</sup> to Israel; & kept  
them sternly in the world, not to  
save men, but to show them ~~the~~

7/ their disobedient character in the constant difference between their acts & the Law's commands. The law was a schoolmaster to bring them to X!

Will it be said that this was destroying some, that after generations might have the benefit? I think it will not continue to be said, if <sup>we</sup> recall the scriptural assurances that God did especially anticipate the efficiency of X's atonement to the salvation of some. God did predestinate those whom He foreknew, who conformed to the image of His Son. The Gospel was preached by the Spirit in the days of Noah, even to souls that are now in prison of hell. And the Scripture, foreseeing that it is by faith that God justifieth,

preached beforehand the Gospel 18  
to Abraham. On potent a work  
did the Spirit of God do in the an-  
te-X<sup>th</sup> ages, that even in the dark  
days of Ahab's & Israel's vile idol-  
atry, seven thousand believers existed,  
tho' too obscure to be known even  
by the prophet Elijah. The atone-  
ment of X<sup>c</sup> reaches backward as  
well as forward, & was never lim-  
ited otherwise than as it is now,  
namely, to them only that believe.  
That ~~belief~~ that saving belief  
was not impossible even before  
X<sup>c</sup>, the passages of Scripture I have  
quoted clearly show. But that  
belief ~~was~~ is somewhat distinct  
from the general public confid-  
ence in the Divinity ~~as well as~~



9/ of ~~the~~ Jesus, which needed to be prepared, as he ~~had~~ ~~before~~ began to observe.

The need of a Savior ~~was~~ was created by men's turning away from their original relations with God. They ~~realized~~ ~~yearn~~ yearn to realize it as, while they turned further & further away from God, they found themselves in increasing darkness & misery. Empire after empire rose, & sought with all the earnestness of man to devise laws & religions which should restrain crime, promote prosperity & establish peace, but in vain. In the corrupted state of the human heart, no government could

Equal but by tyranny; power corrupted to  
the rulers, & poverty to the people, until  
the struggle after food was abandoned,  
& the whole multitude gave themselves  
up to the forgetfulness of sensual pleas-  
ures. In the vilest despair, thus one  
after another Egypt, Assyria, Persia,  
Greece, succumbed to their own weak-  
ness, & fell, to rise no more. Upon their  
ruins, at last arose the Roman Em-  
pire: the mightiest, the most extensive,  
& the most cultured, of all. In its day  
was the fullness of the development of  
human need; & of that fullness it has  
pleased God to preserve records for us.  
In their history we may read the  
history of their predecessors. Their liter-  
ature remains to testify; & corrobora-  
ting evidence has been given to this

11/ Skeptical century in a remarkable  
manner, in the ~~monumental~~ ~~mind~~ &  
~~discovery~~ of rediscovery of the ~~man~~  
cities buried in X's own century beneath  
Vesuvius.

What are the testimonies of that  
literature?

First, that paganism had lost all  
power & comfort for the conscience.  
Whittier has ~~adequately~~ pictured it in his  
lines on "Worship":

The Pagan myths thro' marble forms are spoken,  
And ghosts of old beliefs still flit & moan  
Round fane & altar, overthrown & broken,  
O'er tree-grown barren & graying of stone.  
Blind faith had martyrs in those old high places,  
The Syrian hill-fane & the Druid wood,  
With mother's offering, to the fiend's embraces,  
Blood of her bone, & blood of her own blood.  
Red altars, kindling thro' that night of error,  
Smoked with man's blood beneath the cruel eye

12

Of lawless Power & sanguinary Terror,  
Throned on the circle of a pitiless sky,  
Beneath whose baleful shadow, overcasting  
All Heaven above, & blighting Earth below,  
The scourge served, the lip grew pale with  
fasting,

And man's oblation was his fear & no!  
Religion had become in the Ro-  
man world what it had been long  
before in the days of Jezebel of Sidon,  
a mere cover for the lowest vices. Plato  
says (qu. in Barnes' on Ephesians v. p. 117) that  
while the abominable ceremonies in the  
worship of Bacchus continued, it  
was difficult to find in all Attica a  
single sober man. Cicero declared  
(Scheff's Apost. Ch., p. 158) that one sooth-  
sayer could not look his fellow in the  
face without laughing at their common  
hypocrisy. "I have sacrificed," said a  
Roman, "to gods in whom I have no con-  
cern." ~~As a consequence of such~~

13/ ~~a state of the~~ the ignorant masses alone retained any religious feeling, and to them superstition was all that remained.

As a consequence of such a state of the public conscience, morality & virtue had ceased to be thought of save by a few, whose own lives were little the better for their isolated speculations. Seneca, the Roman philosopher of our Saviour's day, says: (De Ira, qu. in Schaff's Apost. Ch., p. 159, & Lange's Romans, p. 89): "All is full of crime and vice; there is more con-

<sup>13</sup>  
A/ mitted than can be healed by  
punishment. A monstrous ~~prize~~  
contest of wickedness is going on.  
The desire to sin increases, & shame  
decreases day by day... Vice is no  
longer practised secretly, but in open  
view. Vileness gains in every street &  
in every breast to such an extent, that  
innocence has not only become rare,  
but has ceased to exist."

When thus religion & morality  
had departed from ~~the~~ men, we  
are not surprised to find them  
giving way to despair. These high-  
col sentiments that the Roman  
empires ~~could~~ not ~~before~~ X<sup>c</sup> ever reached,  
are found in the philosophy  
of the Greeks; but even that is full

14  
of gloom. When one (Midas)

(the foll<sup>r</sup> instances are from art. "Fullness of Times", Presb. Quar. & Pr. Rev., Jan. 1873, Prof. Joseph Milikine)

asked the heathen oracle: "What is the happiest lot for man?" This answer was returned, & the popular mind showed its fitness by making it a proverb: "O children of a day, why make me utter what were best concealed? It were best to hide life from its own evil; never to have been born were the happiest lot for man." So says (the elder? as apparent Schaff, Ap. Ch., p. 159) Pliny, <sup>who perished under Vesuvius</sup> ~~discouraged~~ even while he mused at the glories of nature: "Every one should grieve his heart with the thought that the best gift

15/ which nature affords is an early death, & the best of it is, every man can procure it for himself. "Even Socrates is reported by Plato said the 'even if death ~~makes unknown~~ is a dreamless, eternal sleep, it is preferable to the most fortunate life'."

Such was the ~~experience~~ perception of the miseries of a world left to itself, which the ancients had reached when the ~~fullest~~ time appointed of God to send forth His Son had about arrived.

They had learned to despair of themselves; & <sup>this</sup> ~~it~~ ~~an~~ awoke, as in God's providential plan it was meant to awaken, a yearning cry for a Saviour out of Heaven. However all the false religions had contrived to



preserve, in one or another ~~form~~ ✓6  
~~form~~ form, more or less distorted,  
God's promise to Eve & the patri-  
archs of a Savior. The Persians  
(these qu. fr. Schaff's Ap. Ch., pp. 112-3.)  
were looking for their Sosiosch, who  
should conquer Abimans & his  
Kingdom of darkness. Confucius  
~~had~~ pointed the Chinese to a Holy  
One who should appear in the  
West. "The wise astrologers who  
came to Jerusalem to worship the  
new-born King of the Jews" / I  
am using the words of Dr. Schaff,  
from whom I have obtained many  
of my quotations. "we must look  
upon as the noblest representatives  
of the Messianic hopes of the Orien-  
tal heathens. ~~The western nations,~~

17/ ~~on the contrary, looked~~  
Expectations of the coming of a Mes-  
siah, in various forms & degrees of  
clearness, were at that time, ~~by~~ ~~polit~~  
(by intercommunication among the  
nations, of which I have to speak  
further on) spread over the whole  
world & like the first red streaks upon  
the horizon, announced the approach  
of day. The western nations were  
looking toward the east (as the  
Orientals were turning toward the  
west), for the Messiah. The Ro-  
man historians ~~Suetonius~~ Tacitus &  
Suetonius, writing about the time of  
the destruction of Jerusalem (for  
they refer the saying to Vespasian),  
~~to the~~ say in almost identical language  
that ~~there~~ an ancient & constant opin-

ion was spread abroad throughout 18  
the <sup>whole</sup> East, that about this period  
one would come from Judaea who  
should subdue the world. The  
opinion has been expressed (Scheff,  
as above qu.) that it was probably  
the same blind instinctive im-  
pulse toward the East, that brought  
the Galatians from Germany & Gaul  
into Asia Minor." But the most  
remarkable expression of the "desire  
of nations" is found in these words  
of Plato (qu. in "Fullness of Time" art. already  
referred to): "He will wait till one  
shall come, be he a god or an in-  
spired man, to teach us in holy things  
& take the darkness from our eyes."  
"Nay (Prof. Milikín, as above qu.), this  
marvelous Greek & peerless well-nigh  
peerless man, portrays a coming helper

19/ & teacher, who shall be guilty of  
no wrong, tempted in vain, & who, be-  
cause proof against the spirit of an  
age in which such holiness would  
be an offense, would be scourged,  
tortured, crucified by the people!

Thus had men learned the  
need of a savior, & ~~stretched out~~  
~~anxious~~ <sup>their hands</sup> ~~hands~~ (here by strange  
instructions & intuitions, peering  
out of their darkness toward  
the Holy Land, to look for him.

## II

the dissemination of God's  
promises, awaking an expecta-  
tion.

We have thus far examined  
the subject by the light of ~~the~~

uninspired history alone. He <sup>120</sup>  
~~has seemed to~~ should imagine,  
did we stop here, that God had  
altogether left ~~man to~~ the world  
to itself in the long period before  
x<sup>th</sup>, & that without aid from Him  
they had learned to cry out for  
the mercy of His Son.

But in truth, while as we  
have seen men were running down  
the broad way to their distress  
& despair, God was watching  
over them, & preparing the means  
for their redemption. As we have  
casually observed already, He guard-  
ed them against a ~~hopeless~~  
perfect despair by His promise  
to the first sinners. That promise

21/ He repeated, over & over again —  
to Noah, to Abraham, to Isaac, to  
Jacob — until finally He gathered  
one family from among men, &  
~~gave them that promise~~ made  
them the casket in which that  
promise, as a pearl of great price,  
should be kept safely until the  
world should want it. ~~It survived~~  
~~the Flood, kept in the ark with~~  
~~the family of Noah; so~~ He let  
~~that family~~ He made  
of the family a nation, & of the  
nation a mighty empire, & of  
the empire a commercial agency,  
which in the time of Solomon  
carried some knowledge of the  
~~divine religion~~ to Jew & heathen

22  
faith, ~~to the~~ with its precious  
secret, to the farthest boundaries  
of the then known world. The  
men of far-away Sheba heard  
in these days enough, to make  
it easy <sup>to explain</sup> ~~to believe~~ ~~that~~ the popu-  
lar expectation that Tacitus re-  
peats. And later, in the age of  
the Babylonian captivity, the  
treasures of that promise were  
scattered abroad as at a later  
date the early X<sup>th</sup> were, who  
preached the word. In the time  
of when X<sup>c</sup> was about to appear,  
the ~~same~~ same chosen people  
had spread over the known world.  
It is a matter of historical know-  
ledge (Lange's Matthew, p. 57 $\frac{1}{2}$ , also p.

23 / Gieseler, i, 46) that their temple of  
Jerusalem was famed all over the  
East; so that it becomes no  
difficult task to account for  
the origin of the hope with which  
Israel & the perishing Gentiles looked  
for Christ. God had kept watch  
of them; & ~~before~~ while they  
were yet sinners, before they had  
learned to want His promise, He  
had put a message of grace into  
the world, devised means for its  
careful preservation, & sent it  
out into all the world & into the  
ends of the earth ~~where~~ ~~at least~~  
over & over again to persuade  
them to look up to Him & be  
saved.



the development of facilities for spreading the Gospel.

There remains <sup>only to consider</sup> — not of the subject, but of that ~~for~~ small portion of it for which I am able to speak at this time — ~~the~~

— the development of facilities for spreading the Gospel.

The dissemination of so much of the Jewish religion as was needful to answer the great purposes of God, in times before  $X^c$ , it may well be believed, involuntary as it was & unconscious, could not have been very great; a heaven only. But in the time when  $X^c$  came, there was a remarkable advantage in the condition of

25/ the world. The greater part of  
the known ~~surface of the globe~~  
world was under a single juris-  
diction. The Roman Empire, seven  
hundred & fifty years old, had  
gathered within its domain the  
whole of ~~Europe~~ what is now Europe  
south of Germany, ~~& extended as far~~  
the northern portions of the African  
continent, & so much of Asia as  
is now included under the Turk-  
ish rule (Gibbon, i, 21). It was a  
great advantage to these lands - an  
advantage which our nation en-  
joys but can hardly appreciate -  
to be under one Government. A sys-  
tem of paved <sup>highways</sup> ~~highways~~, ~~inferior~~ hardly  
inferior to any modern roads, ex-

tended in all directions through-  
out the empire. The Greek lan-  
guage was ~~spoken~~, as the French  
~~is now~~, by the intelligent in all

~~every person~~ as universal a  
medium of speech as the French  
is now. *The terror of the Roman*  
*army made Roman citizenship*

a safeguard to the traveler in  
any province. The empire  
was at peace throughout all  
its borders, for the second time  
in all its history. What time

had there ever been when such  
facilities had cost up a high-  
way for the glad messengers of  
salvation? The X<sup>th</sup>, anxiously

*of a flexible structure most perfectly adapted*  
*to express abstract ideas, it was provided by a wonderful divine*  
*wisdom to be ready to promulgate the truths of Xity.*

27/ desired, expected by a dying  
world, could be born in Judaea  
& become known everywhere.

~~But it was the period of the  
greatest intelligence that the world  
had yet seen. It was the famous  
Augustan age~~

Bethlehem & Nazareth, Capernaum & Jerusalem, where the  
was born & lived, were cities in  
~~the~~ one of the lands lying  
about the Mediterranean sea.

It has been forcibly said, that  
the history of that sea is the  
history of the world; so great  
a part has that huge lake,  
surrounded by the chief lands  
of the ~~old~~ ancient world, played

in time. Jerusalem was now (28  
at the height of its glory, &  
in the most necessary relations  
with ~~the Roman world~~ <sup>all the empire</sup>. ~~Thirty~~

When the <sup>earthly</sup> life of X<sup>c</sup> had been  
& his followers <sup>^</sup> fitted to carry forward his  
completed, <sup>^</sup> the city was blotted  
<sup>work</sup> out of existence. How perfect a  
combination of conditions rel-  
conced the birth of X<sup>c</sup>!

Furthermore, it was the peri-  
od of the greatest intelligence  
which the world had yet seen.

It was the famed Augustan  
age; that period in Rome which  
answers to the age of Elizabeth  
in English history; when Virgil  
& Horace & Livy sang, when Livy  
wrote history, when Strabo traveled,

29/ when Philo & Josephus note  
Jewish philosophy & annals. The  
light of the human intellect was  
prepared to make a searching  
investigation into the claims of  
a Messiah; it was the eye ~~most~~  
best adapted to furnish reliable  
testimonies to later times. "This  
thing was not done in a corner!"

At such a juncture, God sent  
forth His Son. "In the fullness  
of time; when the fairest flowers  
of science & art had withered,  
& the world was on the verge of  
despair, the Virgin's Son was born  
to heal the infirmities of mankind.  
He entered a dying world as the  
author of a new & imperishable life."  
(Schaff, X<sup>th</sup> Ch., i, 52.)

My heart, I have sought to  
 reproduce to your view, this Xmas  
 Sabbath, the carefulness of love  
 with which God has glorified  
 the memorable day. Shall not  
 the magnificence of this preparation  
 lead us to a stronger apprehen-  
 sion of ~~the value of our savior?~~ <sup>His gift.</sup>  
 If God gathered together the  
 glory of all the ages to usher in  
 His Son into the world; if He  
 has shown to us the desperate  
 need that we have for His grace,  
 if He has lighted up the way to  
 Him with signs & testimonies that  
 he who runs may read: shall we  
 neglect so great salvation? The full-

31/ ness of ~~the~~ times has come; the  
great event of the world has oc-  
curred, fraught with infinite import-  
ance to every soul of man. It has  
been ordained, ~~as~~ because nothing  
else could save you from falling  
~~into~~ Hell. The greatness of its prep-  
aration is exceeded by the ~~great~~ sac-  
rifice of the Holy One which fol-  
lowed. The sorrows of Him upon  
Whom the eyes of a world were  
turned, were endured to redeem  
you from the guilt & the power of  
sin. ~~They~~ Neither the preparation,  
nor the sacrifice, had any other  
object. Shall they be in vain? Shall  
a universe see the Son of God  
coming upon the earth, heralded  
by such mighty providences, with



32  
His eyes turned upon you; shall  
they see Him advancing to the  
hall of Pilate, to Golgotha, to the  
cross, still looking, yearning upon  
you; shall they hear Him cry  
in accents of mingled agony &  
love, for you: Father, forgive  
him, he knows not what he does!  
shall they see the sun veil his  
face in the skies, & earth rent  
asunder her tombs, while ~~the~~  
He cries: It is finished! shall  
they see Him bursting forth from  
the grave, to send His ministers  
to warn & to entreat you; shall  
they see Him returning again into  
Heaven, but with lingering gaze still  
looking, yearning in unutterable love

33/ for you; stretching out his poor  
pierced hands toward you as he  
disappears from earth to the univ-  
ersal throne above; shall men &  
angels, & God the Father, see all  
this for you, & yet see you turning  
away to the beggarly elements of  
this world again, forgetful, un-  
humbled, ungrateful?

No, no, no! They shall see  
you with streaming eyes bewailing  
the sins that pierced that dear  
heart; low on the ground acknow-  
ledging ~~the~~ your need of his face;  
lifting up your face, thro' bedewed  
with tears of repentance, to the  
light above the midday sun;  
asking earnestly: Lord, what wilt

34  
Thou have me do? welcoming  
His sweet permission to tell others  
of that love; emulating His example,  
wherever your soul can work; join-  
ing hands with all ~~His~~ ~~Israel~~  
who ~~can~~ serve Him, & ~~cries~~ ~~striv-~~  
ing, & crying, with all saints & angels:  
"Let the whole ~~world~~ <sup>earth</sup> be filled with  
His glory! Amen, & Amen!"

