

SERMON XIII.

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HOW MAY OUR BELIEF OF GOD'S GOVERNING THE WORLD
SUPPORT US IN ALL WORLDLY DISTRACTIONS?

The Lord reigneth ; let the earth rejoice ; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about him : righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.—Psalm xcvi. 1, 2.

THE state of affairs is oftentimes (and so it is at this day) so involved and confused, that we need not wonder if we see men of wisdom greatly perplexed in their spirits, and almost sunk into discouragement. The best of saints, whose hearts are most furnished and fortified with grace, would be of all others most subject to discomposure, were it not that they feel peace and comfort flowing into them from the remembrance and sweet consideration of a God above. What good man could possibly have any tolerable enjoyment of himself, or possess his soul in patience, while he observes the eccentric and irregular motions of things below?—the restlessness, tumblings, and tossings of the world; desirable comforts and delights blasted in a moment; afflictions and troubles breaking in with a sudden surprise; order quite subverted, laws violated, and the edge of them turned against those that are faithful and peaceable in a land, and all things indeed turned upside down; wickedness rampant, and religion oppressed; the spurious brood of Babylon clothed in scarlet, and prospering in the world, when at the same time the precious sons of Zion, comparable to the finest gold, are esteemed as earthen pitchers, yea, broken potsherds, and so thrown upon dunghills, or cast into prisons, and filled full “with the contempt of them that are at ease:” these things, I say, would soon break his heart,—did he not see Him who is invisible, and firmly believe a wheel within a wheel, an unseen hand, which steadily and prudently guides and directs all things, keeping up a beautiful order where reason can discern nothing but ataxy and confusion. Those that are conversant in the sacred scriptures do find, that the flourishing state of ungodly men, and the afflicted condition of gracious persons, have proved to some of the saints so hard a knot, as they have gone to God for the untying of it; and to others it hath been the occasion of so furious and violent temptations, as had almost tripped up their heels, and broken the neck of their religion. Upon that very score holy Asaph was almost ready to conclude, he had “in vain cleansed his heart, and washed his hands in innocency.” (Psalm lxxiii. 13.)

But if we will repair unto the sanctuary, and consult the divine oracles, and believe them when they tell us that the eternal God, our God, is the Rector and Governor of the world, it will revive our spirits, reduce our souls into their right frame, and preserve them in a due composure, when the scene of affairs is most ruffled. To entertain you with a discourse upon this choice and seasonable subject is the work allotted me at this time; and the question now to be discussed and answered is this:—

QUESTION.

How may our belief of God's governing the world support us in all worldly distractions?

The text which I have now read is the precious and sure foundation on which I am to build. In that we find these things observable:—

1. *A comfortable assertion*: “The Lord reigneth;” that is, Jehovah, God, or, if you please, our Lord Jesus Christ, unto whom all power is given both in heaven and in earth; for, that he is particularly intended in this psalm, may be gathered from verse 7: “Confound be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols: worship him, all ye gods.” Which last words relate to Christ, as the apostle Paul assures us: “When he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.” (Heb. i. 6.)

2. Here is *an exhortation to joy and gladness upon account of the Lord's reigning*: “Let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof.” That is, Let all the world rejoice, at least all those that are the subjects of this mighty Lord, who have bowed to his sceptre, and submitted themselves to his government, as “a willing people in the day of his power.” Christ was “the desire of all nations,” and there is reason why he and his government should be the delight and satisfaction of all nations; both those in “the earth,” by which some understand the continent; and those in “the isles,” England, Scotland, and Ireland among the rest; or, if you please, you may understand the Gentiles, because that passage of the prophet, “The isles shall wait for his law,” (Isai. xlii. 4,) is by the evangelist rendered thus: “In his name shall the Gentiles trust.” (Matt. xii. 21.)

3. We have here *the manner how the Lord administers his kingdoms, and manageth his government*: and that is laid down in two things:—

(1.) First. *With terrible majesty and mysteriousness*.—This you have in the former part of the second verse: “Clouds and darkness are round about him.” Which words do intimate to us the tremendous majesty of the Lord, which may well strike an awe upon his subjects and friends, and much more fill his enemies with dread and horror. He was terrible at his giving forth the fiery law upon Mount Sinai; as we read, Deut. iv. 11: “The mountain burned with fire unto the midst of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness.” So he is and

will be still in his present and future appearances and dispensations : "Who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth?" (Mal. iii. 2.) Well may that question be propounded; for his "fan in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." (Matt. iii. 12.)

And as these clouds and darkness do signify the terrible majesty, so [do they signify] the mysteriousness of his proceedings. He often goeth so much out of our sight, that we are unable to give an account of what he doeth, or what he is about to do. Frequently the pillar of Divine Providence is dark throughout, to Israelites as well as Egyptians; so that his own people understand not the riddles, till he is pleased to be his own interpreter, and so lead them into his secrets. His "way is in the sea, and his path in the great waters, and his footsteps are not known," &c. (Psalm lxxvii. 19.)

(2.) The Lord manageth his kingdom and government *with perfect equity and unspotted justice*.—"Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." *Righteousness*, whereby he preserves, saves, and rewards the good; *judgment*, whereby he punishes, confounds, and destroys the wicked: these are *the habitation of his throne*, his tribunal, his seat of judicature. These are the basis or foundation, which give unto his throne *rectitudinem et stabilitatem*, "rectitude and establishment." His "throne is established in righteousness, and the sceptre of his kingdom is a right sceptre." Though there be clouds, yet no blemishes; though darkness, yet no deformities: "The Lord is upright: he is our Rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him." (Psalm xcii. 15.) The doctrine I shall speak to is this:—

DOCTRINE.

In the midst of all outward distractions and confusions, God's governing the world may and should be the support and joy of his saints.—In the handling thereof I shall observe this method:—

I. *Inquire what government is.*

II. *Prove that God doth govern the world.*

III. *Show why this should support and comfort his people.*

IV. *Improve the whole in a way of use.*

I. I begin with the first of these:—

QUESTION. *What is government?*

ANSWER. I answer, *Government is the exerting or putting forth of that power which any one is justly clothed with, for the ordering and directing of persons and things to their right and proper ends.*—In this description of government are three things to be considered and spoken to:—

1. *In all government there is an end fixed and aimed at.*—Thus it is in domestic or family-government, which parents have over their children by nature, and masters over their servants by virtue of contract. The end of that government is the good of the family, and every one that is a member thereof. The parent or master ought not

to be wholly addicted to himself, nor to aim solely at his own honour, pleasure, and advantage; but to desire, study, and, by all lawful means, to promote the good and welfare of the whole. And just so it is with political government, both in cities and provinces, and kingdoms or empires. When people did at first excogitate and constitute such or such a form of government, and place one or more at the helm, and submitted themselves to him or them, no rational man can doubt but it was for some wise end. Government and governors are not set up for nothing, but for an end; which end is either *supreme and ultimate*, or *inferior and subordinate*.

The *supreme and ultimate* end is, and ought and deserves to be, the glory of God, the exalting of his name, the preserving, securing, and enlarging of his interest, the maintaining and promoting of religion and godliness. None can shoot at a fairer mark, nor drive a nobler design; this is worthy of men, of the best and greatest men. It is the great end which God himself aims at in all the works of his hands: he both made all things for himself, and for himself likewise he doth uphold and order them. And unto this end all magistrates are in duty bound to have an eye, and direct their rule and all their actions: this is the great work of their place, the main and principal business of their office. The good Lord give them all a heart to consider it, and to act accordingly! As they rule *by* God, so they are obliged to rule *for* him: they ought not so much to design the lifting up of themselves, as the lifting up [of] the name of God and Christ in the world, especially in their own dominions. That magistrate who doth not make the glory of God his principal end, is himself degenerated into a beast.

The *inferior and subordinate* end is the good of the communities, the happiness and welfare of the whole country, the peace, comfort, and prosperity of all the people, over whom governors are set. The supreme magistrate is to his dominions what the head is to the body natural; and so influence belongs to him as well as pre-eminence: he is engaged to think, contrive, study, care, order, and provide for the comfort of the body and all the members of it. Paul saith, "He is the minister of God to thee for good:" (Rom. xiii. 4:) for a fourfold good, as learned Pareus saith:—

(1.) *In bonum naturale*, "for natural good:" that he may secure thy person and life from danger, and thy outward liberty, comforts, and enjoyments from the sons of violence.

(2.) *In bonum morale*, "for moral good:" that he may curb thy unruly passions and base lusts, and restrain or hinder them from breaking out into vicious and enormous practices.

(3.) *In bonum civile*, "for civil good:" that he may preserve public society, and keep up common honesty and justice.

(4.) *In bonum spirituale*, "for spiritual good:" that he may defend the true religion, that which is "pure and undefiled before God and the Father;" and keep up and encourage the worship of God, which is warranted by the scripture. And all this is according to the word, which doth direct and command that we should pray "for kings and

all that are in authority, that under them we might lead peaceable and quiet lives in all godliness and honesty." (1 Tim. ii. 2.) So that the end of government is the securing [of] peace and quietness, and the encouraging of honesty and godliness.

2. *In all government there is supposed a power sufficient for the ordering of things unto these ends.*—Not only natural power, but also moral authority, lawfully come-by; for, without that, there can be no just, right, and good government. Magistrates therefore are called *powers*: "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God." (Rom. xiii. 1.) Lawful governors are invested with authority and power; there are put into their hands the sceptre to rule, and the sword to protect and punish as there is cause. They have a legislative power, to make laws and issue out commands which shall oblige their subjects; they have a right to do this, so they use their power rightly; and obedience is due from their people, obedience to all their just and lawful commands. They ought to rule in the fear of God, and their subjects ought to obey in the fear of God: "Ye must needs be subject," and that "not only for wrath, but also for conscience' sake;" (Rom. xiii. 5;) as knowing that "this is the will of God concerning you;" and when any wilfully fail herein, they contract guilt, and break their own peace. And as there is an authority to enact laws, so a power to suppress the rebellious, and animadvert on those that are refractory and stubborn; and also to defend, reward, and encourage all persons studious and careful of performing their duty. Where all this power is not, there is a miserable defect in the government, which will in time dwindle and come to nothing, and confusion and every evil work step up in its place.

3. *In government this power is reduced into act: there is a prudent, seasonable exerting and putting forth of the power in order to the attaining of these ends.*—This is the complement of all; for it is folly for any to make that his end which is quite out of his reach; and that power is in vain which always lies dormant. Power is not put into the ruler's hand merely for ornament, but for use: it is no other than a trust committed to him. Therefore, though he be a magistrate over men, yet he is a "minister of God," and is obliged to serve his great Lord according to the best of his skill, and to act toward the end formerly mentioned. As he is advanced to high and honourable places, so he is engaged to great and excellent work. He is not to "bear the sword in vain;" (Rom. xiii. 4;) and it may be said, "He weareth not the crown in vain; he holdeth not the sceptre in vain;" not for nothing, not for a mere show, an empty pageantry, but for a good end, for excellent and noble purposes. The crown and sceptre are not so glorious as that for which he is advanced: the sword committed to him must be drawn against the enemies of God and truth and holiness; he must be an avenger "to execute wrath," not upon the pious and peaceable,—that would be an abuse of his power,—but "upon them that do evil." Thus have I showed you

what government is; namely, using of lawful power for excellent ends.

II. The second thing propounded was to *prove and evidence to you that God doth govern the world.*—As he made it at first, so he doth still uphold and order it. In a nation, you know, there are many inferior magistrates and under-officers; yet it followeth not but the king is supreme, who authorizeth, influences, directs, and limits them by his laws. There are upon earth many governors, various forms of government; yea, the angels in heaven are “ministering spirits,” employed in special and weighty matters: but all of them are set up and set forth by God, and fulfil his pleasure. God himself sits at the helm, and steers the course; he over-rules and orders all, from the highest to the lowest. For the evidencing hereof take these following particulars:—

1. *The light of nature hath discovered this.*—And by the glimmering thereof, though it burn dimly as a candle in the socket, many among the Heathens have been led to the knowledge of it, and constrained to acknowledge it. It must be granted that they groped, and were exceedingly in the dark, differing much one from another in their sentiments about the Deity and his providence. Some plainly denied a God: some owned and asserted the being of a God, but denied the creating of the world; but that it was from everlasting, or rose up through a fortuitous concourse [concurrence] of atoms. Some granted that the world was of God, as of the First Cause; yet He did not see nor observe what is done in it among men. Some held [that] he doth indeed see all things that are and be done in the world, but he is only an insignificant, idle spectator, who minds and regards nothing. Some were of opinion, that God doth not attend to the meaner and inferior creatures, nor take any cognizance of small, inconsiderable matters, but only superintended the affairs and concernments of mankind: “Doth God take care for oxen?” Some did again assert, that God did look after and care for all things, yet he acted only in a way of common general influences and by second causes, doing nothing immediately and by himself. Others, again, on the contrary side, did affirm, that God doth immediately and by himself so work all in all, as that they left almost no place for second causes. Thus, poor creatures! were they divided among themselves, having their understandings miserably darkened. But many among the Heathens, yea, their most learned men, and of their most famous sects,—Platonists, Stoics, Pythagoreans,—did own the Divine Providence and government; and so did the poets also: and, for particular persons, the learned Plato, Seneca, Tully, with many others, subscribe thereunto. Hence it is that they call God “the Rector and Keeper of the world,” “the Soul and Spirit of the world,” and do expressly compare him to the soul in the body, and to the master in a ship, who doth command, rule, direct, steer, and turn it what way and to what port he himself thinks good. But so much may suffice for that: I pass on.

2. *The sacred scriptures do abound with testimonies which may*

afford us full satisfaction in the point.—When He was about to punish the world for the wickedness of them that dwelt therein, and to sweep away the inhabitants of it with a flood, He took care that all mankind should not be destroyed; but Noah and his family were preserved, yea, and some of all the general species of animals too; that so seed might be continued upon earth, and *that* in the ordinary way of generation; which was a famous and eminent instance of Divine Providence, and its ordering and governing the world. Besides that, attend to these passages of scripture: God “doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number: he giveth rain, sendeth waters, setteth up on high those that be low, disappointeth the devices of the crafty, taking them in their own craftiness, and carrying the counsel of the froward headlong.” (Job v. 9—13.) “I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.” (Isai. xlv. 5—7.) “The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.” (Psalm xxxiv. 16, 17.) He “worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will.” (Eph. i. 11.) Not only *some* things,—those which are momentous and stupendous, such as strike men with wonder and amazement; but “*all* things,”—all is of God; and all, not according to the will and pleasure of others, but according to his own eternal counsel. His “dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth,” who are counted as nothing: “and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?” (Dan. iv. 34, 35.) “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your” heavenly “Father.” (Matt. x. 29.) Scriptures to this purpose might be multiplied; I will add but one more: “The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.” (Psalm ciii. 19.) But further consider,

3. *God hath a most unquestionable right to order and govern the world.*—It doth properly appertain unto him. The belief and acknowledgment hereof do necessarily follow upon the owning of a God; to own such a being as God, and yet to deny or question his right to govern, is a gross absurdity.

That Being which we call “God” is the first, highest, noblest, and incomparably the most excellent, Being of all, infinite and unchangeable in all perfections; and therefore he hath a right to order others that are not so. Man is endued with reason and understanding, and so is the most noble and excellent creature in this lower world; therefore it pleased his great Creator to put the lordship into his hand, and to give him dominion over the fish and fowl, and every living thing that moveth upon the earth. The Psalmist tells us, “He hath put all things under his feet.” (Psalm viii. 6.) How much more,

then, is an absolute and universal rule due to God, whose understanding is infinite, and in whom are all the inexhaustible, unfathomable treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Beside that, consider God as the Fountain of being, the First Cause and Original of all being. The world and all things in it are the works of his hands; he made them, and fashioned them: and seeing He made all, seeing by his power and for his pleasure all things are and were created, it is highly reasonable that all things should be ordered, directed, and disposed of according to his pleasure. Hath the potter power over the clay, so as to make of it a vessel of honour or dishonour? and hath not God much more power over his creatures? If a father hath an undoubted right to rule his own children, and a master to order his own family; it cannot rationally be questioned but God hath a right to rule all the persons and creatures in the world; for "we are all his offspring," and of him "the whole family both in heaven and earth is named;" of him it was made, and by him it doth consist. Who can be so impudent and brutish, so much sunk below man, and run so cross to the principles and dictates of right reason, as to deny him a right to give laws to *them* unto *whom* he gave life? It is highly decorous, every way fit, that He from whom all things had their being, and unto whose power and goodness they owe their continuance, should appoint them all their ends, and direct their steps, and cast their lines, and cut out their works, and over-rule all their actions.

4. *For God to govern the world is no dishonour to him.*—It doth not unhandsomely reflect upon his divine majesty, nor cause the least eclipse or diminution of his most excellent glory. It is true, as I before hinted unto you, though some men cheerfully acknowledged a governing and over-ruling Providence over human actions and affairs, yet they conceived [that] it extended not itself to more vile and contemptible creatures, or to minute and inconsiderable things. Jerome, though a learned and holy man, seemed to be of this opinion: for he grants a general order and disposal, how such an innumerable multitude of fishes should breed and live in the sea, and how brutes and creeping things should gender upon the earth, and with what they should be maintained; but he fancieth it a solecism to debase and bring down the majesty of the ever-blessed God so low, as to mind and order the breeding and death of gnats, or to concern himself about the number of flies and fleas that are upon the earth, or how many fishes swim in the sea and rivers, or which among the smaller ones should become a prey to the greater. For they did fancy this to be altogether unworthy and unbecoming of God: judging of him by earthly potentates, who take state upon them, and trouble not themselves with any but the more weighty and momentous affairs of their dominions, and leave things of smaller importance to their inferior officers.

But this is not the manner of the God of Jacob, nor doth he count his care of the meanest and most minute beings to be any reflection upon him, unless it be of honour and glory. Therefore he expressly

tells us in his word, that the young lions seek their meat of God; that he giveth to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens when they cry; he clothes the lilies; and sparrows are not forgotten by him; not one of them falls to the ground without him: the very hairs of our head are numbered: he knoweth our wanderings, counteth our steps, and puts our tears into his bottle. And what dishonour can all or any of this be to him? Is it possible, that his doing so should render him cheap to the children of men? Nay, is it not enough to commend him to all wise and thinking persons, that he is so great a God as that he can extend his care to so many millions of objects, and so graciously condescending as to look after the lowest of the works of his hands?

Surely, since it was not unworthy of his divine power to make the meanest creature, it cannot be unworthy of his goodness to maintain and order it. If "his eternal power and Godhead are clearly seen in the things that are made," then his goodness doth likewise display itself in providing for them, and his wisdom in governing and directing them. It is true, he humbles himself, when he beholds those things which are above; much more, when he regards those that are here below: but that humbling of himself is a glorifying of himself, and it doth deservedly commend and endear him to his people: "O Lord, thou preservest man and beast. How excellent is thy loving-kindness!" (Psalm xxxvi. 6, 7.)

5. Lastly. *Our God is abundant in mercy and goodness.*—He is "the Father of mercies, and a God of compassions;" and as that doth render him fit to govern the world, so it may work in us an assurance that he doth and will do it. Shall we fancy him like unto the ostrich? concerning which it is said, that she "leaveth her eggs in the earth, and warmeth them in dust, and forgetteth that the foot may crush them, or that the wild beast may break them. She is hardened against her young ones, as though they were not hers." (Job xxxix. 14—16.) Thus to do is utterly inconsistent with the divine goodness; to fancy such a thing of God would be to blaspheme him. He hath a love and kindness for the works of his hands, as such; and that will carry him out to a caring for them, and ordering of them. "The world will love its own;" and doth not God much more? A good prince, who is the father of his country, and deserves that name, will to the best of his skill guide and rule his kingdom, at the helm whereof Providence hath placed him, that his own honour and his people's welfare might be secured and promoted. That man deserves not the place nor name of a master, who neglects to make provision for his own family, and keep up order in it. That is an unnatural father, unworthy indeed to be called "man," who doth not, according to his best knowledge and ability, mind his children and govern them.

Now, *tam pius nemo, tam pater nemo*; "none is so good as God, none such a father as God;" no love comparable to his love. All that love which may be found in the creatures is but a drop from his ocean, a spark from his flame; and, as I have said, all the world is

his own, and all that is therein the works of his hands. He built this huge and stately fabric, and he furnished it with all its inhabitants, from the highest and most glorious angel to the meanest and most contemptible insect. And how can we possibly think otherwise, but that the pity and love which he hath for the works of his own hands, will draw out his wisdom and power and care for the ruling and directing of them? For any one to deny this care, nay, to hesitate about it, would be an unworthy, base disparagement, dishonour, and affront to Him.

III. The third thing we have to do is to *show how our belief of God's governing the world may support us in all worldly distractions.*

—This is a great question, very seasonable, and of singular use; and that we may draw out the sweetness of this truth, and fetch comfort from it, we must consider these following particulars:—

1. *God's accomplishment for the work.*
2. *The extent of his government.*
3. *The properties thereof.*
4. *Several things relating to the church and its living members.*

1. *First. God is most fit and accomplished for this great work.*—It is indeed a business too hard for a creature's hand to dispatch, and a burden too heavy for a created shoulder to bear up under. Some ambitious princes have been, and are said to be, aspiring after an universal monarchy, which they never did, nor ever shall, attain; it is bigger than their grasp, a thing too high and too hard for them. And indeed those princes who rule well, and mind their work and duty, find [that] the crowns which they have are lined with cares enough to make their heads ache, and their hearts too sometimes. But to govern the world is a thing utterly impossible to a created being; not only to the wisest man on earth, but also to the highest angel in heaven. None can govern the whole world, but He that did create it. Creation is peculiar to God: the greatest angel cannot create the smallest spire of grass, nor a contemptible flea, no, not the least atom. The most minute drop of being can proceed only from Him who is the Original and Fountain of all being. So the government of the whole world is peculiar to God, because there is so much contrariety in it, so many antipathies; things lie so cross. Men have unruly passions; they interfere in their several interests, and, while they are carrying them on, quarrel and jostle one another: and who but God can order all, and direct them to most noble and excellent ends? Who but God can take these several scattered shreds, and unite them together in one curious and amiable piece of workmanship? Who but God can take these jarring discords, and turn them into an admirable and delightful harmony? That God is perfectly accomplished for the work, so that he can not only do it, but the doing thereof will be no pain nor trouble to him, may thus appear:—

(1.) *He is an immense Being.*—"Heaven is" his "throne, and the earth" his "footstool." Those that have many irons in the fire,—business scattered up and down,—must needs suffer some of those irons to cool, some of that business to lie by neglected, because they

themselves are confined and limited creatures. Some things may be amiss and out of order under the government of the most prudent and pious prince, because he cannot be at once in all parts of his dominions; but God is omnipresent, filling heaven and earth: "If thou goest up to heaven, he is there: if thou makest thy bed in hell, behold, he is there. If thou dwellest in the uttermost parts of the sea, there shall his hand lead thee, and his right hand shall guide thee." (Psalm cxxxix. 8—10.) All things are within his reach; wheresoever any thing is doing or to be done, there God is, who is present in every place and with every person. He stands at our right hands, and so may well guide them; so to do, will cost him no travail nor trouble. "In him we live and move and have our being;" (Acts xvii. 28;) not "at a distance from him," not "out of him," but "in him."

(2.) God can easily govern the world, because of his *almighty power*.—He is stronger than all; his word is enough to accomplish all his will. The wisest of men are foolish creatures, and the strongest are weak. Kingdoms and nations have frequently proved ungovernable to potent princes: such breaches have been made as they could not heal, and such tempests have risen as they could not lay. Nay, that man is not found in the world, who hath power sufficient to govern himself. How often doth his will rebel against his reason!

*Video meliora, proboque:
Deteriora sequor.**—OVIDII *Metamor.* lib. vii. 20.

His "judgment sees and votes for that which is good, but his will chooseth what is worse:" his sensual appetite longs for it; and that must be gratified, whatever the cost be. We sometimes see that wise men, gracious and holy men, cannot curb their own passions; but they take head, and hurry them into great and uncomely extravagancies. But now God is of infinite power: as he hath an arm long enough to reach, so strong enough to rule, all things. He binds the sea with a girdle, and stays its proud waves, saying, "Hither shall ye go, and no further." He makes "the wrath of man to praise him," though it be more boisterous than the sea; "and the remainder thereof he shall restrain." Job hath sundry passages to this purpose, worthy of our remark, in chap. xxvi. Take some of them thus: "He hangeth the earth upon nothing. He hath compassed the waters with bounds. He divideth the sea with his power. The pillars of heaven tremble and are astonished at his reproof." (Verses 7, 10—12.) And then he closeth thus in verse 14: "Lo, these are parts of his ways: but how little a portion is heard of him? but the thunder of his power who can understand?" The power of his thunder is great, which "discovereth the forest, and makes the hinds to calve;" what, then, is "the thunder of his power?" When God doth but whisper a rebuke into the ear of a man, *that* "maketh his beauty to consume like a moth;" what, then, can he do, nay, what can he not

* "Affection *this*, discretion *that* persuades.
I see the better, I approve it too:
The worse I follow."—SANDYS'S Translation.

do, when he thunders from heaven? In short: his power is irresistible, and his will in all things efficacious. He can master all difficulties, and conquer all enemies, and overcome all opposition; when he hath a mind to work, who shall let him? He asks no leave, he needs no help, he knows no impediment; mountains in his way become plains: his "counsel shall stand for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations." (Psalm xxxiii. 11.)

(3.) God is fit to govern the world upon the account of his *wisdom and knowledge*.—His "eyes run to and fro throughout the whole earth." He observes all the motions and ways of men. He understands what hath been, is, and shall be. "Hell is naked before him;" (Job xxvi. 6;) how much more, earth! His eye is upon the conclave of Rome, the cabals of princes, and the closets of particular persons. Excellently doth David set forth the divine omniscience: "Thou knowest my down-sitting and mine up-rising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before." (Psalm cxxxix. 2—5.) He knows not only what is done by man, but also what is in man; all his goodness, and all his wickedness; all his contrivances, purposes, and designs. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jer. xvii. 9.) Do you ask, "Who?" The answer is ready,—"Jehovah." He "searcheth the heart;" he "trieth and possesseth the reins." Those are dark places, far removed from the eyes of all the world: but God's "eyes are like a flame of fire;" they carry their own light with them, and discover those recesses, run through all the labyrinths of the heart; they look into each nook and corner of it, and see what lurks there, what is doing there. O, what manner of persons should we be! with what diligence should we keep our hearts, since God observes them with so much exactness! Men may take a view of the practices of others; but God sees their principles, and to what they do incline them. Yea, he knows how to order and command the heart; not only how to affright it with terrors, and to allure it with kindnesses, and persuade it with arguments, but likewise how to change and alter and mend it by his power. He can not only debilitate and enfeeble it, when set upon evil; but also confirm and fix and fortify it, when carried out to that which is good. "The hearts of kings are in the hands of the Lord, and he turneth them as the rivers of water." (Prov. xxi. 1.)

(4.) God is fit to govern the world upon the score of his *long-suffering and forbearance*.—Those that have the reins of government put into their hands, had need be persons of excellent and cool spirits; for if they have a great deal of power, and but a small stock of patience, they will soon put all into a flame. That man who hath but a little family to manage, will in that meet with trials and exercises enough: how much more he that is set over a kingdom! and unspeakably more yet he that is to govern the world! especially considering the present state of the degenerate world, and how things

have been ever since sin made an entry into it. "The whole world" now "lieth in wickedness;" there is not a man in it, but doth every day offer a thousand affronts to God, and provokes him to his face. Angelical patience would soon tire and be spent, and turn into such fury as would quickly reduce all into a chaos. There is not an angel in heaven but, if there were a commission given him, he would do immediate execution, and sheathe the sword of vengeance in the bowels of malefactors. But now, to his glory be it spoken! God is infinite in patience, "slow to anger, and of great kindness." Though he be disobeyed, abused, grieved, vexed, pressed with the sins of men, even as a cart is pressed that is laden with sheaves; yet he spares and bears and waits. How loath is he to stir up all his wrath, and to pour out the vials thereof! He counts that his "strange work;" when he goeth about it, his bowels do often yearn, and his "repentings are kindled together." In Hosea xi. 8, 9, he seemed to stand with his hand stretched out, as one resolved to give a consuming blow; but he laid aside his weapons of indignation, and in the greatness of his compassion cried out, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within me. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man." Thus we see, God is accomplished for the government of the world.

2. In the second place, let us inquire concerning *the extent of God's governing providence; how far and unto what it reaches.*—And take this in general: the whole world, and whatsoever is contained within the compass of heaven and earth, are ordered by him as his family; the church is regarded and cared for by him as his endeared spouse, and all the saints as his children. All men, even the worst and vilest, with all their actions, and all creatures, even the meanest, are ordered by God, and directed to their appointed ends. But we will descend to particulars.

(1.) The governing providence of God extends itself to *all creatures, whatsoever have being, both animate and inanimate, the greatest and the least.*—He rules the stars; "the influences of Pleiades and the bands of Orion" are from him. He causeth the sun to shine, sets him daily and annual journeys, and, when he pleaseth, stops him in his course, and turns him back, when he comes out of his chamber as a bridegroom, or a giant refreshed with wine. He makes small the drops of rain; and causeth them to fall upon one city, and not upon another. He feeds the fowls; and musters caterpillars, locusts, flies, as his armies. Angels are his servants, absolutely at his beck, ready to execute his will; and by him they are sent forth to minister unto his children, and to punish his enemies. He hath enraged devils in a chain, and both confines them and employs them as he himself thinks good. He suffered one to be a lying spirit in the mouth of Ahab's prophets. He permitted Satan to do much against Job, yet kept him from touching his life. He cast devils out of the possessed, and gave them leave to enter into a herd of swine. He governs men, too,

keeping Abimelech from violating Sarah's chastity; and Laban from touching Jacob's liberty or goods, and Esau from offering violence to his life. The meanest creatures are the objects of his care, and the noblest are over-ruled by his power.

(2.) The governing providence of God extends itself to *all motions and actions*.—"Without" him we "can do nothing." As a special assistance is necessary to gracious acts, so is a general concurrence [concurrency] to natural ones. Unless he support, we cannot stir a step, nor strike a stroke, nor speak a word, nor form a thought. God suspends the creatures' actions, when he pleaseth. Thus he kept the fire from burning the three children that were thrown into it, when put into its greatest rage. He stopped the mouths of lions, and kept them from preying upon Daniel, when hunger was feeding upon them. And it was he that taught and commanded the rapacious raven to forget itself, that it might carry food to a prophet. God orders and directs actions to ends never designed by the doer; yea, he makes the most vile and wicked actions subservient to most excellent and most noble ends. Adam's sin issued in the glorifying of God's name in a mixed way of justice and mercy. Pharaoh's cruelty made Israel multiply; so that, the more they were depressed, the more they flourished. Rome's persecutions have been Sion's enlargements, and "the blood of the martyrs the seed of the church." Joseph's brethren's selling him was a step to his preferment in the court of Pharaoh, and a sending him before to preserve the life of his father and of his family. The crucifying of our dear Jesus was the saving of believers; and by his most precious blood, which the Jews and Romans most wickedly spilt, were all the elect of God redeemed from hell and everlasting destruction. The king of Assyria thought of nothing else but to destroy and cut off nations not a few; but God sent him as an executioner of his justice to punish a hypocritical nation and the people of his wrath. Thus God doth not only uphold his creatures in their beings, and assist and strengthen them in their actions, but he doth also direct, order, and over-rule those actions, so that their product and issue shall be admirable. Wicked men have base and sordid ends in the commission of sin; but God hath holy ends in his permission thereof: while they gratify their lusts, he fulfils his pleasure: and while they act like devils, he acts like God, that is, like himself.

(3.) This governing and over-ruling providence of God extends itself to *all issues and results of things both good and evil*.—"The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord." (Prov. xvi. 33.) He is the fountain of all the good and comforts which we enjoy; for which we are under everlasting obligations to praise his name, and not to "sacrifice to our own net." That the house is built, we owe more to God than to the workmen; and in the preservation of the city, God is more to be thanked and acknowledged than the watchman. It is unquestionably men's duty to follow their callings, and mind their business, and study good husbandry; for the sluggard shall be clothed with rags, and the prodigal will be glad of husks: but if, after all endeavour and care, an estate comes in, it is

more of God's sending than of man's fetching. "The blessing of God makes rich," and not man's diligence without it. When you are sick, it is your wisdom and duty to send for the most able, skilful, and faithful physicians, and to follow the method and use the means which they prescribe; but when your distempers are removed, and your health is restored, you are beholden more to God than to men and means; for, notwithstanding them, your souls would "dwell in silence, if the Lord himself were not your help." (Psalm xciv. 17.) "The battle is not to the strong, nor the race to the swift;" (Eccles. ix. 11;) nor doth "promotion come from the east or the west; but the Lord putteth down one, and setteth up another." (Psalm lxxv. 6, 7.)

So, for evil things, we are too prone to rest in second causes, and care not to look so high as God; but whether we take notice of him or no, there is no rod under which we smart, but God's hand lays it on. Eliphaz tells us, "Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground;" (Job v. 6;) that is, they do not come by chance. Though many things be contingencies, yet all things have a cause; to us, indeed, they are casual, but to God they are certain. He himself foresaw and fore-appointed them: there is nothing of fortune, but all is of counsel. "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" (Amos iii. 6;) that is, any penal evil, any afflictive evil. There is not a sickness nor pain [that] thou groanest under, not a loss [which] thou meetest with, not a cross that pinches thee, but thou mayest write the name of God upon it. He "creates darkness," as well as "forms the light." (Isai. xlv. 7.) When things run cross to men's desires and interest and expectations, they grow tetchy [testy] and froward, and quarrel at this and that; but let this silence them, and work them to an humble and patient submission,—that all is of God. Israel rebelled against the house of David: thereupon Rehoboam armed Judah and Benjamin to bring the kingdom again to him. "Stay," said God; "'ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren,' the children of Israel: 'return every man to his house: for this thing is done of me.'" (2 Chron. xi. 4.) All good is of God; *that* obligeth us to thankfulness and grateful acknowledgments: all evil is of God; and *that* should teach us humbly, patiently, and silently to submit. "I was dumb," said David, "I opened not my mouth; because," Lord, "thou didst it." (Psalm xxxix. 9.)

3. In the third place we shall inquire after *the properties of God's government, or the manner how he orders and governs all things.*—Take that in these few particulars:—

(1.) God doth govern the world *mysteriously*.—So the text tells us: "Clouds and darkness are round about him." As there are mysteries in the word, so in the works, of God; *δυσνοητα*, "things hard to be understood," (2 Peter iii. 16,) many riddles, which nonplus and puzzle men of the largest and most piercing intellects: "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold

him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: but he knoweth the way that I take." (Job xxiii. 8—10.) God knoweth our ways, and counteth our steps; but the wisest of men do not know all God's ways. His way is frequently in the sea, and his chariot in the clouds; so that he is invisible, not only in his essence, but also in the design and tendency of his operations. Those that behold him with an eye of faith, do not yet see him with an eye of understanding, so as to discern his way, and whither he is going. Paul assures us, "His judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out." (Rom. xi. 33.) Some of them, indeed, are obvious, plain, and easy; we may upon the first view give a satisfactory account of them; we may read righteousness, equity, mercy, goodness, love, in them, because written in capital letters, and with such beams of light as he that runs may read them. But others of God's ways are dark and obscure, so that they are out of our reach and above our sight. He that goes about in them to trace God, may quickly lose himself. They are like that hand-writing upon the wall, which none of Belshazzar's wise men could read or give the interpretation of. (Dan. v. 8.) There are *arcana imperii*, "secrets of state and government," which are not fit to be made common. But this may be our comfort:—though God doth not now give any account of his matters, nor is he obliged thereunto, yet he can give a very good and satisfactory account; and one day his people shall be led into the mystery; and, though many things which God doeth they know not now, yet they shall know them afterward; and when they know, they shall approve and admire both the things and the reason and the end. They shall then be perfectly reconciled to all providences, and see that all were worthy of God, and that in all he acted *θεοπρεπως*, "as did highly become himself."

(2.) God doth govern the world *wisely*.—He did indeed threaten it as a dreadful judgment upon Judah and Jerusalem, that He would "give children to be their princes, and babes should rule over them;" (Isai. iii. 4;) not meaning children in years, (for Josiah, a child, was one of the best of their kings,) but children in understanding; such as had no prudence nor skill nor conduct, knew not how to hold the rein, nor use the rod, nor direct the course. It is certainly fatal to the world, when a young, heady, and foolish Phaëton is got into the chariot of the sun. Whither will fiery steeds carry an ass and others with him, but into destruction? When an ignorant, unskilful pilot sits at helm, the passengers of the ship will soon be brought to their last prayers. But God is wise in heart, yea, infinite in wisdom: all the treasures of wisdom are in him; and no wisdom is to be found in angels or men but what came from him; and all *that*, were it united in one, would not be comparable to what is in him: "The" very "foolishness of God is wiser than men." (1 Cor. i. 25.)

There are two things of which wisdom consists; and both are in God most eminently:—knowledge of the nature of things, and prudence to dispose and order them. God knows all things perfectly, and orders them all exactly. "All things are naked and opened"

before him, (Heb. iv. 13,) and all most curiously and accurately managed by him. Men in place of authority and power do sometimes mistake and miscarry, doing many things amiss. David was so ingenuous as to acknowledge it: "I have sinned greatly in that I have done: I have done very foolishly." (2 Sam. xxiv. 10.) But in all things God acts very wisely: he is "not a man that he should" err or "repent." Ever since the creation, all things have been done with that unreprouable exactness, that if the world were to begin again, and the affairs of it to be acted over again, there should not be an alteration in a tittle. All hath been so well, that nothing can be mended. Those dark and obscure passages of Providence, at which good men are startled, and by which all men are posed, are most excellent and curious strokes, and as so many well-placed shades, which commend the work and admirably set off the beauty of Providence. That is a great scripture, most worthy of our very particular notices: He "worketh all things according to the counsel of his own will." (Eph. i. 11.) Which words plainly speak these two things: (i.) *The independency* of God in his operations: he asketh not leave of any, neither men nor angels. He is not beholden to them; he doth not advise with them; he cannot be forced nor hindered by them. He acts not according to their will, but his own, and fulfils all his pleasure. (ii.) *The wisdom* of God in his working: he doth all according to his counsel. He is "a God of judgment," a most judicious God; and all his works are done "in judgment,"—the whole plot was laid aforehand.

It is said of God, that he "is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." (Isai. xxviii. 29.) This latter necessarily follows upon the former: he must needs be "excellent in working," because he is "wonderful in counsel." All that he doth is the result of a most admirable judgment and mature counsel. The holy prophet therefore was ravished in his spirit upon the consideration of God's works, both for their number and for their wisdom: "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all." (Psalm civ. 24.) They are very many, yet all very good. Notwithstanding their multitude and variety, God miscarried in none; there is an impress of wisdom upon them all.

(3.) God governs all things *powerfully*.—"Where the word of a king is," Solomon tells us, "there is power." (Eccles. viii. 4.) What power then doth the word of God carry along with it? He orders and rules, turns and overturns, things, as he thinks good. That is a notable and very comfortable place which we have, Psalm xxxiii. 11: "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations." The counsel of the Lord doth so stand, as that all things shall certainly fall before it that rise up in opposition to it. "The counsel of the Heathen," when contrary thereunto, is brought "to nought; and the devices of the people" are made "of none effect." (Verse 10.) As the rod of Moses prevailed against the rods of the magicians, so do the thoughts and counsels of God against all other thoughts and counsels that run

counter and bid defiance to them: "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places." (Psalm cxxxv. 6.) God's will obtains and hath the upper hand every where. Down man, down Pope, down devil; you must yield; things shall not be as you will, but as God will! We may well say, "Who hath resisted his will?" (Rom. ix. 19.) Many, indeed, disobey and sin against the will of his precept; but none ever did, none ever shall, frustrate or obstruct the will of his purpose; for he will do all his pleasure, and in his way mountains shall become a plain.

Many men think, and some say, they will do what they will; especially great men, who are advanced in place, and armed with power,—they love to be arbitrary; *stat pro ratione voluntas*, "their will is their own reason," and shall be other men's law. But to say, "I will have my will," is a speech too lofty for a creature. When they exalt their wills, God can bind their hands, and break their necks. How resolved was Pharaoh he would do this and that; ay, that he would! "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them." (Exod. xv. 9.) But God was full-out as much resolved, that as high and great and proud as Pharaoh was, yet he should not have his will; and God was too hard for him: "Thou didst blow with thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters." (Verse 10.) "By the blast of God they perished, and by the breath of his nostrils were they consumed." (Job iv. 9.) God did easily scatter and consume them, as if they had been but dust or chaff; the breath of God's nostrils stopped the breath of their nostrils. Nay, God need not send forth a blast: when he did but give a look, the host of the Egyptians was troubled. When God hides his face from his people, he troubles them; and when he looks upon his enemies, he can trouble them.

Nay, more: God can not only bind the hands of men, but he likewise can bind their wills, yea, and turn their hearts, too, "as the rivers of water." He can make enemies to be at peace, and lions to lie down with lambs, and leopards with kids, and Egyptians to lend their jewels unto Israelites; yea, he can not only pacify them, but reconcile them, turning their enmity into friendship, and their hatred into love. Esau resolved to kill his brother Jacob; but he "embraced him, and fell on his neck, and kissed him." (Gen. xxxiii. 4.) Observe that passage, which plainly speaks God's power over the spirits and wills of men,—Exod. xxxiv. 23, 24. God's command there was this: "Thrice in the year shall all your men-children appear before the Lord God, the God of Israel." And his promise was this: "No man shall desire thy land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God thrice in the year." The Jews were envied with enemies, and those enemies might very well desire their land, because it was a good and pleasant land, flowing with milk and honey; and when all the males were gone up to Jerusalem, and so the borders of the country were left naked, that was a fit opportunity for an invasion. "But," saith God, "trouble

not yourselves: do your duty; go up when I bid you; and I will take care and over-rule in the case. Look you to your duty, and I will look to your borders: I will so order the spirits of your enemies, that not a man among them shall have any mind to give you a disturbance, or to make an inroad into your country." And this may afford strong consolation to us in the very worst of times, and when things are darkest,—that God, whom we own and serve, hath such a mighty and effectual influence upon the hearts and wills of men, even of those that are his people's most desperate and enraged enemies.

(4.) God doth govern the world *most righteously*.—So the text tells us: "Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." It is true, many times affairs are so managed, and things at such a pass,—good men depressed so low, and wicked men advanced so high; vice encouraged, and virtue frowned upon; godliness trampled under foot, and profaneness rampant and triumphing,—that thereby some have been induced to question and deny a Providence, and even good men have been stumbled, as we may see in several precious and eminent saints,—Job, Jeremy, Habakkuk, Asaph,—whose names stand upon record in the sacred scripture. But it doth not become any of us to call the great and glorious God down to the bar of our reason, nor to measure his dealings with our line. It is not for us to be his counsellors nor his judges. Rather, where we cannot comprehend him, let us adore him, and give him the justification of faith; still resolving, with Jeremy, to hold fast this conclusion, "Righteous art thou, O Lord." (Jer. xii. 1.) And this is certain:—whatsoever advantages some wicked men may have as to temporal, outward enjoyments, yet even here good men have the better of them; their "lines are cast in" more "pleasant places," so that they have no cause of envy nor complaint.

Have wicked men at any time the smiles of the world, the favour of great ones, waters of a cup full wrung out to them? Do they ruffle in silks, and glisten with jewels, and abound with sensitive comforts? The saints, though they be poor and afflicted and despised, and counted the offscouring of the world, have the love of God's heart, which is most cordial, better than wine; and the graces of his Spirit, which do outworth the gold of Ophir; and oftentimes the light of his countenance and beams of his favour, which make the most lightsome and comfortable day. They are arrayed with the robe of righteousness and garment of salvation, which adorn them more than garments of wrought gold. Christ leads them into his banqueting-house, and there spreads over them the banner of his love, which affords the surest protection and the sweetest shade. Who but themselves are able to tell or conceive what unspeakable and glorious joy they have, what triumphs and exultings of soul, when their best-beloved Jesus kisseth them with the kisses of his lips, and by his own Spirit witnesseth with theirs that they are the children of God, and with his most ravishing consolations doth delight their souls? What are mines of gold and rocks of diamonds, what are

lordships and manors, what are crowns and sceptres, what kingdoms and empires, to one dram of grace, one smile from heaven, one whisper of divine love, one embrace of a Saviour? "Cursed," said noble Galeacius, "be that man, who counteth all the world worth one hour's communion with Jesus Christ." And if one hour of communion be so precious, what, O, what is a life of communion?

But then, stay till the winding-up of the bottom; till that last and great day shall dawn, in which there will be a revelation of the righteous judgment of God, and of the marvellous goodness of God; wherein the wicked shall be stripped of all their honour and power, of all their riches and pleasures, and turned into hell, for the wrath of God and the worm of conscience eternally to feed upon them; and those who have believingly closed with Christ, and bowed to his sceptre, and walked closely with God, and studied the power of godliness and strictness of religion, shall enter into peace, and be clothed with glory, and sit upon thrones, possessed of a "fulness of joy," and sporting themselves in "rivers of pleasure," under the brightest and warmest beams of Divine Love, and in the most endearing embraces of the Lord Jesus, and in the plenary, uninterrupted enjoyment of those things "which eye hath not seen nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man," without any disquieting apprehensions or fears of being ejected out of that possession, or disturbed in it. Then all the world, the most stupid and unteachable part of it, will be thoroughly convinced, that "there is a reward for the righteous, a God that judgeth in the earth," and that true "godliness is profitable unto all things," both for "the life that now is, and for that which is to come;" (1 Tim. iv. 8;) and that, however things go now, yet it was not in vain to serve God. And therefore, in the mean time, though "clouds and darkness are round about the throne," yet let us rejoice in the firm belief of what the prophet tells us: "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works." (Psalm cxlv. 17.)

4. The last thing promised for the proof of the point,—that God's governing the world may well support us in the midst of all distractions,—is to present to your consideration *several things more particularly relating to the church and people of this God*. And they are these:—

(1.) *The nearness, dearness, and intimacy of that relation, in which the church and saints stand to God*.—What may not the wife and children of a loving and mighty king promise themselves from his government? Certainly, they may well be assured, so long as he keeps his throne and hath power in his hand, they shall want neither defence nor comfort. The church is God's vineyard; and will he not water it, and keep it every moment, lest any hurt it? She is the spouse of Christ; and will he not be tender over her and kind to her? He is a Father to his people; and will he not look after them, and afford them maintenance and necessary supplies? He is more than a mother to them; and will he not draw out his "breasts

of consolation," that they may suck and be satisfied, milk out and be delighted? Doubtless, they may believingly expect all good from him, all kindness, all comforts from him, who hath been graciously pleased to put himself into all relations unto them. In Psalm xxiii. 1, holy David looked with an eye of faith but to one relation in which God stood to him: "The Lord is my Shepherd;" and from thence he saw sufficient encouragement to conclude that he should "not want." What mayest thou, then, O believer, argue from *all* God's relations? "He is my God, my King, my Master, my Father, my Husband; therefore surely I shall not want." He "is a Sun and Shield;" a Sun for comfort, and a Shield for security. In his beams, then, his children shall rejoice, and in his shadow shall they sit safely; and "no good thing shall he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Jerusalem is "the city of the great King;" and if she be God's city, God will be her security. Never fear that, O saints; for he "is known," famously "known, in her palaces for a refuge." (Psalm xlviii. 2, 3.)

(2.) *The special interest which God hath in his church and people.*—They are his "portion and inheritance;" and no one will, if he can help it, lose his portion. Naboth would not part with his inheritance upon any terms,—neither sell nor change it; much less will Christ with his, who is so greatly taken with it, as to count "the lines fallen to him in a pleasant place," and that he hath "a goodly heritage." (Psalm xvi. 5, 6.) His people are his jewels; and will he suffer them to be lost? They are his treasure; and, what! shall his enemies rob him of that? No, no; "where" his "treasure is, there" his "heart is also;" and where his heart is, there shall his eye be watching, and his hand of power shall be stretched out, and his wings of protection shall be spread abroad, and "salvation" itself shall be "for walls and bulwarks." (Isai. xxvi. 1.) The interest which God hath in all the world is not comparable to that interest which God hath in the church. The rest are but his slaves; these are his children: the rest are but the rude wilderness, the devil's waste; these are his gardens enclosed. In others he sees his power, but in these his image and his Son: others are the work of his hands, but these are the workmanship of his Spirit.

(3.) *That most endearing and entire affection which he beareth unto his church and people.*—As he stands in all relations to them, so he hath all affections for them. You that understand what love is, do feel within yourselves what a noble, active, liberal principle it is, and what a mighty power and vigour there is in it. Now there is no love in the world comparable to the love of God. He hath a flame to our spark, an ocean to our drop. The dearest of God's love is placed upon Christ; and in and for Christ's sake the same love is placed upon the church and people of Christ: "Thou hast loved them as thou hast loved me." (John xvii. 23.) And what will not such love do? It will awaken care, and call forth power, and engage wisdom, and open the exchequer, and stick at no pains, no expense: "Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I

have loved thee : therefore will I give men for thee, and people for thy life." (Isai. xliii. 4.) God "loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob," and "the dwellings of Jacob" more than all the tents and palaces of wickedness, and more than all "the thrones of iniquity, which frame mischief by a law ;" for these shall have no "fellowship with" him. (Psalm lxxxvii. 2 ; xciv. 20.) He loves one saint more than he doth ten thousand ungodly wretches, (with whom he is "angry every day,") and his poor church more than all the world. Christ prefers his "little flock" before the huge herds and droves which the devil will have fall to his share. And since this God, who is so much your Friend, governs the world, sit down and think how much you may expect from him ; nay, what good is there which you may not expect ?

(4.) *God hath especially charged himself with his church and people.*—As a good king looks upon it as his duty to study and promote the weal and comfort of all his dominions and all his subjects, but in a more particular manner the happiness of his consort and children and favourites.

There is, as I have shown you, a general providence of God, which extends itself to the whole world, and for which all things fare the better ; but, beside that, there is a special providence, exercised about the saints, of whom he is as tender as the apple of his eye. Next to his own interest, that of his people lies closest to his heart, and doth most engage his thoughts. Others are under his eye, which "runs to and fro through the earth ;" but these are under his wing. "Doth God take care of oxen ?" Yes, that he doth ; and of asses too, and of young lions, and wolves and bears and tigers, and all the beasts of prey : but he takes another manner of care for his lambs, and his "dove in the clefts of the rock, and in the secret places of the stairs." (Canticles ii. 14.) You read, and rejoice when you read, that he is "the Saviour of all men," but "specially of those that believe." (1 Tim. iv. 10.) They are his "peculiar people," and so the objects of his peculiar care : whatsoever God doeth, he minds *them* : and whoever are neglected and left to shift for themselves, to be sure, *they* shall not. What ! Noah drowned in the waters of deluge, or Lot burnt with Sodom and Gomorrhah and the cities of the plain ! No, no ; it could not possibly be : Noah must be secured in the ark, before "the windows of heaven were opened, and the fountains of the great deep were broken up ;" and Lot must be arrived at Zoar, the city of his refuge, before the storm of fire and brimstone could fall. Zion is "graven upon the palms of God's hand, and her walls are continually before him." (Isai. xlix. 16.)

(5.) *God hath already done great and marvellous things for his church and people.*—Not only being at charge upon them in the ordinary way of his common providence, but likewise putting forth extraordinary and magnificent acts, whensoever their case did call for them. Miracles have been nothing to him at such a time ; he hath not only wrought one or two, but multiplied them ; there hath been a series of them, as if he counted them cheap. His arm hath "awakened and

put *on* strength," and also put *forth* strength. No less than ten wonderful plagues did he send upon that proud king Pharaoh, Israel's cruel oppressor; and rather than he should not have let them go, I question not but he would have sent a thousand more. And if, after they were gone, Pharaoh would pursue them, God would make for Israel a way through the sea, and for Pharaoh and his host a grave in it. The course of nature was for a while stopped, and the sun made to "stand still upon Gibeon, and the moon in the valley of Ajalon," that his people might "avenge themselves upon their enemies." Clouds have showered down manna upon them; and flinty rocks, as hard and dry as they are, have poured out water. And though such kind of works have not been performed in the latter days, yet God in them hath not left himself without witness, neither is his arm shortened, nor hath he lost his old wont: miracles are as easy to him now as they were formerly; and if need were, he would do them. But, beside them, consider these three things which God hath done all along:—

(i.) *He hath in all times preserved and kept up a church in the world.*—Though Christ hath but a little flock, and that is encompassed with ravenous wolves, yet he hath always had a flock. When "all flesh had corrupted their way," there was a church in Noah's family. When Israel had generally perverted their way, and turned aside to abominable idolatry, there were still reserved seven thousand faithful worshippers, that had not bowed the knee to Baal. In the thickest darkness and most furious rage of Popery, there were those that owned and pleaded and suffered for the truths of the gospel. The four mighty monarchies of the world have been shaken down and broken into shivers; but "the kingdom of the Lord is an everlasting kingdom, and his dominion endureth throughout all generations." (Psalm cxlv. 13.) The church, indeed, hath not been always alike conspicuous, nor hath it always been in the same state of purity, peace, and prosperity; but it hath always had a being. Christ was never without some militant subjects, nor his truth without some faithful witnesses,—two, at least.

(ii.) *God hath employed angels for his church's comfort and advantage.*—Who, knowing it to be the will and pleasure of their great Creator, do most readily comply and cheerfully obey. As the gates of hell set themselves against it, so doth the host of heaven engage for it: "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. i. 14.) When the prophet Elisha was in some danger from envying enemies, the mountain was immediately garrisoned with horses and fiery chariots, that came in to be his guard. (2 Kings vi. 17.) They have it given them in express charge to bear the saints up in their hands, and to encamp round about them; and may not this be a singular comfort to believers? What, though they be the objects of hell's envy and earth's malice? yet they are God's darlings and angels' charge. And whatsoever work angels have to do for them, they not only dispatch it faithfully, but delight to do so.

(iii.) *God hath turned all things to the church's advantage, so that it hath not been a loser in the upshot.*—From what corner soever the wind hath blown, it hath done Christ's garden a real and sensible kindness: both the north and the south wind have made spices to flow forth. (Canticles iv. 16.) You know what Paul saith: "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." (Rom. viii. 28.) Comforts and crosses too, mercies and judgments too, sunshine and storms, ordinances and afflictions, every thing, "all things" are employed, all busy, all at "work," and all at "work for good." Take a wicked man, and all things are against him. Take a child of God, and all things are for him; all are sent upon a gracious, excellent design, and shall prosper in it. More particularly: oppositions, persecutions, and fiery trials have issued in these three things, which are choice advantages:—

First. *By these things God makes a discrimination, and separates between the good and the bad, the precious and the vile.*—In those fields where there is care taken to sow the best and cleanest corn, the envious one will come and scatter tares. Churches do contract filth and corruption, as well as other bodies; and though they were very pure in their first erecting and constitution, yet afterward they do degenerate, and ill humours flow and abound in them. Some among them leave their first love and their first works, and are drawn aside from the simplicity of the gospel, and live not according to the rules of the gospel. Yea, there are not only decaying professors; but also false, hypocritical pretenders creep into churches. Afflictions, now, are the physic [which] God gives for the purging them out: these are the fan of Christ, with which he clears his floor: they are his fire, for the refining of his gold, and severing it from the dross. When storms arise, the rotten and unsound fruit falls off. When persecution ariseth, stony-ground hearers are offended: then away go formalists, hypocrites, and all such as were strangers to the power of godliness. And it is a good riddance; for God and his church need them not. What loss is it, when greedy wolves and filthy swine in sheep's clothing forsake the fold? They never did good in it, and never will.

Secondly. *By troubles and persecutions the good are bettered.*—In such times and by such means their corruptions are mortified, and their graces are brightened. The trees of righteousness which are planted in God's courts, do root the faster for being shaken with tempests, and flourish the more for their pruning. Their fierce trials do refine their souls, and heat them into a greater zeal for God and holiness. The very rage and malice of their enemies do strengthen their care, and raise their resolution; so that they grow stronger and stronger. Michal jeered and flouted at David for his zeal; but he plainly and bravely told her, [that] if that was to be vile, he would be yet more so. (2 Sam. vi. 20—22.) Upon these two accounts, when times are saddest and persecution hottest, whatever may be said of the actings of men, there is no cause to complain of mal-administration.

on God's part, so long as the church is made purer, and the saints are made better. But I will add this further:—

Thirdly. *By these persecutions the church is enlarged, and the number of her children is increased.*—The oppressing of the Israelites by hardened Pharaoh issued in their multiplying. When the church at Jerusalem was scattered, the kingdom of Christ was amplified the more by it. Those afflictions and bonds which happened to Paul, tended to and ended in “the furtherance of the gospel.” The blood of the martyrs hath all along been the seed of the church. Persecutors are fools as well as madmen: they lose what they do; Christ and the gospel gain. So doth God outshoot his enemies in their own bow, and makes their very wrath to praise him. And let trials and persecutions come to never so great a height, I know no reason why the joy of believers should not be increased, when the nation of saints is multiplied. Do you, all you that profess religion and godliness, look to it, that the number of Christians be not diminished and lessened through your wretched apostasy; and then it shall be augmented through your firmness and holy constancy. That is the fifth thing by which we may support and comfort ourselves, namely, the great things which God hath done for his people.

(6.) *There are very great and glorious things which God hath further to do.*—If all were accomplished which God hath in his heart and purpose to do for his church, none of us should be here: the world would have an end, and time would be no more. The world doth upon some account owe its continuance to the church. The world is but the stage upon which God is acting for his name and for his church; and when the act is finished, the stage shall be pulled down. When “wicked” and ungodly men are plotting against the church, and persecuting her children, they act indeed like “unreasonable men,” in digging up those very foundations on which themselves stand, and pulling down the pillars that uphold them. And as God continues the world for the sake of the church, so he hath great things yet in his purpose and promise, which must by no means fail for their accomplishment. Such as these:—the giving great peace to her children; the bringing down her proud and insulting enemies, especially that grand and implacable one,—Babylon; the bringing-in both “his ancient people the Jews,” and “the fulness of the Gentiles;” the making the place of his feet glorious, and setting-up “the mountain of his house in the top of the mountains,” and causing the kings of the earth to bring their glory and the honour of the nations into it.

(7.) *God hath laid upon himself strong obligations to do these and such-like things; and therefore we are on the surer hand.*—God hath bound himself by promise; and that is as good security as heart can desire. God's word is better than man's bond: it is settled in heaven; it is “Yea and Amen.” God can as soon cease to be, as falsify his word: whatsoever thou hast a promise for, O believer, thou mayest be as sure of, as if thou hadst the thing in thine own possession. And how dark soever and cross soever providences may seem to be, do not

you fear them; for there always is a sweet harmony and perfect agreement between providences and promises; yea, the great work and business of Providence is to give accomplishment to the promises. Divine Providence is the midwife of promise, and is to give birth to those blessed and admirable mercies which it travails with. And though sometimes Providence acts somewhat roughly, yet it always proceeds very safely, so that there never is a miscarriage.

(8.) *God is greatly concerned in the good and welfare of his church and people.*—He is more concerned than we are, and all the men in the world. It is very true, we are nearly concerned in the prosperity of the church and true religion; in the church's peace it is that we shall have peace. Our all is indeed embarked in this ship; if that should be cast away, we are ruined; you may reckon upon that. Let religion be lost, and we are lost; farewell, prosperity and all that you can call "good." And therefore none of us should be careless, or wanting to prayer or duty. But know, God is more concerned than we are. The church is much concerned in the present motions and commotions; antichrist and his Jesuits are fishing in these troubled waters: but let us be comforted; God is concerned in the church, and that more than we all are. Who should speak his glory, and live his praise, and load his altars, if the gates of hell and endeavours of Rome should prevail against the church? Would atheists, Papists, or profane persons exalt and advance his honour? As to this lower world, God's stock of glory lies in the hands of his church and people, and his revenue is brought-in by them; and will He not look after them? Let us not fear where no fear is; let us not fear in the midst of fears. We may be confident that God will wisely steer the course, and carry the ship of the church safe into its harbour, in which he hath his name and honour embarked. He will never "give his glory to another, neither his praise to graven images;" (Isai. xlii. 8;) and if not to graven images, then not to Papists. Suppose those cursed Philistines should take the ark; yet know assuredly, the captivated ark will be too hard for Dagon; graven images and all idolatry shall fall before it.

(9.) Lastly. Let us comfort ourselves with this,—that *the government is laid upon Christ's shoulder, and the sceptre put into his hand, and all power, both in heaven and earth, is committed to him.*—God the Father hath set him up for his King upon his holy hill of Zion; and hath so established and fixed his throne, that he looks with scorn and contempt upon all the attempts of his enemies. And all that power which he hath was committed to him, and is to be employed by him, for the continuance and comfort of his church. He is made "Head over all things to the church:" (Eph. i. 22:) whatsoever he hath as Head, is for the advantage of that his mystical body. And what may we not expect from such a Father as God, from such a King as Jesus? And with what peace and delight may we sit under his shadow! Well might the holy Psalmist say, "Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King." (Psalm cxlix. 2.) From what Christ hath done, we may strongly argue to

340 SERMON XIII. HOW THE BELIEF OF GOD'S GOVERNMENT that which he will do. He was incarnate for his church; he was made under the law for her; he became poor for her; he humbled himself for her; he laid down his life for her; he bare the rage of man and the wrath of God for her; he "endured the cross, and despised the shame," because it was for her: and therefore question not but he will rule and govern her. Read, and rejoice while you read, that account given of him, Isai. ix. 7: "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever." And that you may not in the least doubt hereof, it is added, "The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this."

USE.

IV. Having thus finished the doctrinal part, I come to the application; and I shall only speak to an USE OF EXHORTATION, in two particulars:—

1. First. I exhort and advise you that are the people of God, to *fetch support and consolation from this sweet and precious truth.*—The times in which we live are indeed very dark and tempestuous. God is shaking all nations: specially it is a day of perplexity and casting down in "the valley of vision," the church of God; after all our prayers and endeavours and hopeful expectations, things are come to a sad pass, and Israel is brought back to the Red Sea. We may now take up that complaint: "Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in thy sight, O Lord. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind." (Isai. xxvi. 17, 18.) The people of the Most High in all places are in sore trouble; "a cup of trembling," full of "the wine of astonishment," is put into their hands; and God carries [it] as if he were resolved to give up the dearly beloved of his soul for a time into the hand of her enemies. The antichristian Popish party is rampant, and think they have the ball at their foot, and shall now carry all before them. But at such a time as this, let this support and quiet and comfort you,—that, however things go, God still governs the world. And, that this may be sweet to you, follow these directions:—

(1.) *Make sure that you be in the number of Christ's subjects.*—Such as have bowed to his sceptre, submitted to his government, and are devoted to his fear. If you have once "kissed the Son" with a kiss of love and homage, you shall not "perish in the way." *Then* you may rejoice at the thoughts of God's governing the world, *when* you feel and are assured of his ruling and governing in your hearts. *Then* may the remembrance and consideration of his universal kingdom be cordial to you, *when* you find that he hath erected a kingdom within you, and that you are members of the kingdom of his grace. This is firm ground of "strong consolation" and of "quietness and assurance for ever." If you have been made willing in the day of God's power, and are the loyal subjects of Christ's kingdom, then you

are the favourites of God's court, yea, the children of his family, and you may promise yourselves that he will carefully look after you, and graciously provide for you. He hath a peculiar respect to his "peculiar people:" for them he hath his "chambers," a strong tower, in which they shall be safe, when he "cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity." (Isai. xxvi. 20, 21.) Judgment begins at the house of God; and that is to make way for mercy: those judgments prepare for deliverances here, and glory hereafter; for victories here, and triumphs hereafter. But, O the dreadful storms of wrath that shall fall upon the wicked and incorrigible of the world! What thunder-bolts will God assail them with, that shall strike them down into that lake which burns with fire and brimstone, and shall never be quenched! Come, Christians; make it out that you trust in the Lord, and have given up yourselves unto the Lord; and then you may be sure that when enemies threaten you, and dangers face you, and fear is on every side, even then mercy shall compass you about.

(2.) *Heedfully look to it, that you govern yourselves according to the will and law of God.*—Then may you take the comfort of God's governing the world, when you are a well-governed people. When you wisely rule your own spirits, and order your own affections and your lives and conversations, there is a promise, that unto such God "will show his salvation." (Psalm l. 23.) The laws of a land protect the subjects, so long as they keep them: a transgression of the law is the endangering of a subject. "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways." (Psalm xci. 11.) Their commission, as large as it is, reaches no further: when you leave that, you lose your guard; but while you keep your way, angels, yea, the God of angels, will keep you. Do not so much fear losing your estate or your liberty or your lives, as losing your way, and leaving your way: fear that more than any thing; nothing but sin exposeth you to misery. So long as you keep your way, you shall keep other things; or if you lose any of them, you shall get that which is better: though you may be sufferers for Christ, you shall not be losers by him. "Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and walked with God;" (Gen. vi. 9;) and he was secured in the ark, before the world was drowned with the flood. Let the worst come that can, it is not so bad as carnal reason represents it: if a good man should be deprived of his temporal comforts, it will commend spiritual ones the more to him, so that he shall the better relish and taste them. God's voice is never so sweet, as when he speaks comfortably in a wilderness. If a child of God should be cut off by a violent stroke, he is thereby brought the sooner to his Father; such a death is the shortest way home. If enraged persecutors add to his sufferings, in so doing they add to his crown; and by making his burden heavy, they make his "glory the more exceeding weighty." (2 Cor. iv. 17.)

(3.) *Let God's governing the world be the matter of your faith.*—No truth will be a staff of support, unless you carry it in a believing hand: precepts will not prevail, threatenings will not awe you, and

promises will not comfort you, and the most precious scripture-revelations will not cheer you, any farther than as they are believed. Let a minister of the gospel present you with never so precious a cordial, made up of the most choice and excellent ingredients; it will do you no good, unless it be mingled by you with faith. Therefore, believe that the management and ordering of all things is in the hand of God, and pray that you may have a well-confirmed and improved faith hereof. When the faith is weak, it affords but weak comfort; do you strengthen your faith, and that will greaten your peace, and raise your joy.

To this end, be careful of this,—that you do nothing to the prejudice of your faith. Do not you weaken that which must support you. What a madness was it for Samson to let his locks be cut, when he knew he should lose his strength together with them! Now, there is nothing in the world so prejudicial to faith as sin is. A guilty conscience doth always make a palsy-hand, which is tremulous and shaking, whensoever it goes about to lay hold upon God and Christ and the covenant or any promise. Rebukes of conscience are severe checks to faith. “O,” saith the poor soul, when snibbed from within, “What! shall I look upon God as my God? Alas! I have disobeyed and dishonoured him. Shall I trust in Christ as my Saviour? I have crucified him afresh, and put him to an open shame. Shall I rejoice in the covenant? I have broken it, and dealt falsely in it. Shall I delight in the promise, and live upon it? Where is the condition? I cannot find it in myself.” Such reflections as these produce inward troubles and disquiets and fears; so that the very sweetmeats of the gospel are embittered to such an one. He cannot relish them, because he questions his interest in them. What is all God to one that cannot say, “My God?” Guilt makes faith and comfort run low: whereas, “great peace have they which love the law: and nothing shall offend them.” (Psalm cxix. 165.) They have peace in trouble, joy in sorrow, calms in storms, inward sedateness in the midst of outward commotions. “If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God;” (1 John iii. 21;) and if so, then comfort comes in from every prospect which we have of God. Let us then look upon him which way we will, we shall see smiles and delights: that very appearance which is dark to others, will give light to us.

(4.) Lastly. *Be very serious and frequent in your meditations upon God's governing the world.*—Transient and fleeting thoughts make either none, or but little and slight and short impressions. The burning-glass will not fire any combustible matter, unless it be held some considerable time with a steady hand in the beams of the sun: so it is here. Dwell, therefore, in your thoughts upon this subject; consider it, and return to consider; repeat the work again and again. “Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord;” that is, often and often, at all times, and upon all occasions. Was he in straits? he looked to God. Was he in danger? he looked to God. Was he in fears? he still looked to God. And that supported him, as you

may gather from the next words: "He shall pluck my feet out of the net." (Psalm xxv. 15.) "Though mine enemies have got me in their net, and I am so entangled in it, that I cannot make my own escape; yet God shall pluck me out; from him I shall have my deliverance and a song." And in such cases and conditions we should specially look to God, under the notion of Supreme Rector and Governor of the world. Are there confusions and distresses up and down in the world? are foundations out of course? Yet comfort yourselves with this,—that God sits at the helm, and he "is our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble." (Psalm xlv. 1.) You will find, serious reiterated meditation will be exceeding influential upon you. David remembered God upon his bed, and meditated upon him in the night-watches, and called to mind his former mercies,—how he had been his help; and this greatly supported and comforted him. "Therefore," saith he, "in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." (Psalm lxiii. 6, 7.) He would both hide under it and rejoice; God's shadow should be both his shelter and his Paradise: and so it may well be; for his name is not only "a strong tower," but likewise an "ointment poured forth," having in it strength and sweetness.

2. In the second use, I exhort and beseech you to *evidence it unto the world, that your belief of God's governing the world doth really support and cheer you in the midst of the present distractions, when many men's hearts are failing for fear of those things which may come to pass.*—The truth is, the day in which Providence hath cast us is a day of distraction: the world is stark mad; wicked men are mad upon sin and vanity, and superstition and idolatry, and mad against religion and godliness. Well, Christians, if they will be mad, let them be so: God knows how to tame them, and how to chain and fetter them, too; he hath hooks for their noses, and bridles for their jaws. (Isai. xxxvii. 29.) Only, be you sober, and "in patience possess your souls." (Luke xxi. 19.) O that, when it may be said, "Here is the cursed, hellish rage and Bedlam, frantic fury of atheists and Papists," it may also be said, "Here is the patience and faith of the saints!" (Rev. xiii. 10.)

When there are those that make it their design and business to destroy and confound all things, do you rejoice in this,—that God governs all wisely, powerfully, graciously; so that those things which have the most frightful aspect, the most amazing passages which we hear of or meet with, are the products of an eternal counsel, and shall at last (it may be, ere long) issue in a happy close. However affairs go now, God hath bid us, "Say to the righteous, that it shall be well with him." (Isai. iii. 10.) Do you evidence the powerful and comfortable influence that God's government hath upon your spirits, by these three things:—

(1.) First. *By the keeping up your spirits.*—Ye "have need of patience." (Heb. x. 36.) Ye may find, a little will not serve your turn: lay up, therefore, good store of it; and then fetch out of that store; and "let patience have her perfect work." (James i. 4.) But withal "cast not away your confidence;" for it "hath great recom-

pence of reward." (Heb. x. 35.) "We will not fear," saith the church, "though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." (Psalm xli. 2.) Let "the wicked fear where no fear is;" but let the saints be fearless in the midst of fears. "Why are ye fearful?" said Christ to his disciples, when the ship was almost covered with waves. (Matt. viii. 26.) *He* sets men above God in his thoughts, *whose* fear of man prevails against his faith in God: that man either is altogether forgetful of God, or his thoughts of him are low and unbecoming; for certain, he doth not sanctify the Lord of hosts in his heart. Let your faith be preserved in vigour and exercise. What, though the beast have seven heads and ten horns, great subtilty and no less power? Yet the Lamb shall overcome.

(2.) Evidence it *by your perseverance in godliness*.—Hold on your way; make not use of any sinful means, neglect not any part of your duty, to secure yourselves and avoid danger. Do not offend God; be not beholden to the devil for your liberty and peace. What, though there be lions in the way? Go on, and proceed boldly, so long as it is the way of God. You may live by faith, while you walk by rule; you may walk believably and cheerfully, while you walk regularly. The wound that a man gets by sin, will put him to far greater smart and pain, than all his sufferings for God and godliness would have done. He that purchases the favour of men with the frowns of conscience, will find he hath made a very hard bargain. Every step from God is a step to ruin: "If any man draw back," God's "soul will have no pleasure in him." (Heb. x. 38.) Whereas he that walks uprightly, walketh safely.

(3.) Make it to appear *by the raisedness of your expectations*.—So the church did in her low condition: "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me." (Micah vii.-8.) At midnight she looked for the dawning of a glorious day; and so do you. That is a very sweet place which you have in Joel ii. 20, 21; where the prophet, speaking of the northern army, saith: "His stink shall come up, and his ill savour shall come up, because he hath done great things." And then he adds: "Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice: for the Lord will do great things." And so we may say at this day: "God will do great things, such as shall outdo all that his enemies have done." God's last works in the world will be his greatest works, and by them he will get himself a glorious name; and I hope he will speed it. "He that shall come will come, and will not tarry." (Heb. x. 37.) Therefore "encourage yourselves in the Lord your God;" do your duty, and quietly wait; for your "expectation shall not be cut off." (Prov. xxiii. 18.)