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EMBRACING

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## THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD.

‘ And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude; and as the voice of many waters; and as the voice of mighty thunders, saying, Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”  
—REV. xix. 6

THAT there is a God, all nature cries aloud, through all her works; and, the religious rites and ceremonies, which prevail on earth, plainly declare the general belief, that this great Being, has not retired from the scene of his creating power, but, still, as a SOVEREIGN GOD, presides over the worlds and the creatures which He has made. Of the true nature and character of this government, however, little can be gathered from the light of reason, and the researches of the learned. To obtain clear and correct information upon this point, we must look elsewhere: we must have recourse to the sacred volume, and, such are the views which *it* presents of the Divine government, that, in the contemplation of them, we shall find abundant matter for the loud and harmonious shout in the heavenly world:—Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth! According to the Scriptures, the government of God, is *unique*, for, whereas the right of earthly monarchs to reign, is founded, sometimes, in conquest; sometimes, in the elective franchise; and, sometimes, in hereditary claim; the government of God is founded in none of these things, but, in principles, infinitely more sublime. It is founded,

1. IN CREATION. He, who, on earth, has founded an empire, is thought to have a right to rule the empire, which he has founded. Now, God having created all things· having brought all things out of nothing, into existence, has, in the sublimest sense of the term, *founded* the empire of the universe; and, therefore, has an undoubted right to

reign over the empire which he has thus founded. Hence the language of the Psalmist, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof: the world, and they that dwell therein, for he has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods." And again: "O come, let us worship, and bow down; let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker. He made us, and not we ourselves; we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand."

2. IN PRESERVATION. He, who originally created, still sustains all things. The whole universe rests upon his hand, and should this great Being, only for a moment, withdraw his upholding hand, the pillars of the universe would sink; the whole frame of nature would be dissolved; yea, all created existence would immediately vanish away, and leave nothing behind save the throne of God, and a boundless solitude! As all things, then, depend upon God, for their continued, as well as original existence, here of course is another firm foundation upon which the government of God is rightly based.

3. IN THE PERFECTIONS OF GOD. Certainly, it is right and proper that he should hold the reins of government, who is best qualified to rule: especially where such immense interests are at stake. And here we may ask, with the Psalmist: "Who, in the heavens, is like unto the Lord our God? and, who, in all the earth, can be compared unto Him?" Is *wisdom* requisite to manage the complicated affairs of this vast universe? God is infinite in wisdom. Is *goodness* necessary? God is supremely, unchangeably, and everlastingly good. Is *power* requisite? "The thunder of his power who can understand?" But, why speak we of single perfections? God, as one well remarks, is

"A God all o'er consummate, absolute;  
Full orb'd; in his whole round of rays complete."

No wonder then, that the exile of Patmos, caught up, in the visions of God, heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude; and as the voice of many waters; and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying: Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth! The immediate occasion of this great shout in heaven, seems to be the fall of mystical Babylon, or Papal Rome; but, no doubt, every new development of Divine Providence, will renew the shout, through all the ages and cycles of great eternity! That we may better understand

the subject; and, also be better prepared to respond to the loud and rapturous shout in glory, Alleluia, for the Lord God omnipotent, reigneth; let us notice some of the distinguishing features, or characteristics of the government of God. And

1. *It is supreme and universal.* The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens, says the Psalmist, and his kingdom ruleth over all. There are many governments on earth; and, doubtless, there are many thrones and principalities in the other worlds, but the throne of God is high over them all! Alexander the Great was called master of the world, but there were many regions of the earth over which his sceptre was never stretched, and there were many people of whom he had never even heard! And even within the limits of his acknowledged empire—how many kings disdained his control! Not to mention the lions of the forest, and the leviathans of the deep, could Alexander the Great rule the changing seasons? Could he command the lightning? or the rain? or the hail? or the storm? Alexander's kingdom was extensive, but not to be compared with the kingdom of the God of heaven! Alexander ruled over many kings, but God OVER ALL! Yes, God hath prepared his throne in the heavens, and, literally, his kingdom ruleth *over all!* over all men, over all angels, over all worlds, over all creatures, in the broadest, sublimest sense, OVER ALL! But

2. *The government of God is not only supreme and universal, it is particular.* It not only extends to great, but to small objects; not only to the mighty whole, but to every part! Yes, whilst his power and his wisdom are employed in upholding and directing the “hosts of suns, and stars, and adamantine spheres, wheeling unshaken amid the void immense”—his wisdom and his goodness are engaged in directing and controlling all things on earth, from the revolution of an empire to the falling of a sparrow! It is even so! He that garnishes the heavens also beautifies the earth. He that numbers the stars, and calls them all by their names, also numbers the dew-drops of the morning, and the sands upon the sea-shore! That hand which bears up the mighty seraph, sustains the meanest insect, and He who bids the roaring tempest sweep the earth, directs the breathing of the softest zephyr! Stagger not at this! for, “as one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day,” so an atom is with God as a world, and a world

as an atom! As immensity cannot confound him, so minuteness cannot escape him! The fact is, with God there is nothing great! With God there is nothing small! Some persons admit the general government of God, but deny his particular providence. The idea is absurd; for what, if I should say of such a physician, he has a general practice, but no particular patient! or, of such a scholar, he is a man of very general reading, but he never reads any one book! But what says the Saviour upon this subject? It is striking: it is conclusive. "Are not two sparrows sold for one farthing? and not one of them shall fall without your Father! Fear not, the very hairs of your head are all numbered!" How small is the sparrow in the lone wilderness! and how insignificant is the single hair which has fallen from your head! And yet, according to the Saviour, even such things are not overlooked in the providence of God! And what is taught as true, in the word of God, is shown to be necessarily true also by reason—for we find that in the world of nature, providence, and of grace; in all the departments of the Divine government, we find that great matters and little matters are oftentimes linked together, and who does not know that in a chain stretched across a river, the breaking of a small link may prove as serious a matter as the breaking of a great link! How many striking illustrations of this fact have we in *history*, in *observation*, and *experience*! The cackling of geese once saved the city of Rome from the power of the Gauls. Joseph's coat of many colours was one link in a chain of most surprising events! A single playful remark of Francis the First, occasioned a bloody war between France and England. The carving of a few letters in the bark of a tree led to the noble invention of printing! And, to the apparently accidental falling of an apple, we are indebted for some of Sir Isaac Newton's sublimest demonstrations in natural science; and who, of us, need to be reminded of the tremendous consequences of our first parents' eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree?

"—— her rash hand, in evil hour,  
 Forth reaching to the fruit; she plucked; she eat;  
 Earth felt the wound, and nature from her seat,  
 Sighing through all her works, gave signs of woe,  
 That all was lost!"

And cannot every one of us, recollect some little remark,

or incident, which has led to most important changes in our lives and circumstances? In the case of Joseph—his coat of many colours—his dreams—the envy of his brethren—his being sold into Egypt—his being falsely accused—his being cast into prison—the king’s prison—his interpreting the dreams of the chief baker and butler—and also the dreams of Pharaoh, and Joseph’s interpretation of them—and the advancement of Joseph to be governor over all the land of Egypt—and finally, the settlement of Jacob and all his family in the land of Goshen—here are many things, some small, some great, linked together. Each event seemed to be casual, each actor free; and had the narrative been given by one of that age, he would very naturally have said: “It happened so;” and “it happened so”—and yet, if one of these things which “happened,” had not happened, then, perhaps, the grand result would not have taken place! But this leads me to speak of another distinguishing feature, a characteristic of the Divine government.

3. *The government of God extends, not only to all things, but to all events; not only to all creatures, but to all their actions.* I am aware that we are here launching into the deep; but the Bible is our chart. It is a good chart, and we need fear nothing.

Reader, I am a Calvinist, so called; not that I embrace all the dogmas of the great Genevan divine, but certainly those that are embraced in the standards of our Church, and the longer I live, and the more carefully I examine the subject, the more thoroughly convinced am I, that the system, usually termed Calvinistic, is firmly based upon the Bible, *and will stand the “test of scrutiny, of talents, and of time.”* Nay, I will go further, and say that the system needs only to be correctly understood by all the true people of God to be received and loved. I repeat it, I am a *Calvinist*, but I am no *fatalist*! I hold to the sovereignty of God, and also to the free-agency of man, and whilst I believe that God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, yet it is in such a way as “thereby neither is God the author of sin; nor is violence done to the freedom of the creature; nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.” It may not be possible for me to discriminate between the human and the divine agency; nor can I tell where one colour in the rainbow terminates, and where another begins; yet do I know

that these colours are different, and both in the rainbow! I may not be able to reconcile the free-agency of man with the *fixed purposes* of God which I believe; nor can I reconcile the free-agency of man with the *foreknowledge* of God, which all must believe; suffice it to know that both doctrines are taught in the Bible, and I know that the Bible is true. Do I trample upon reason? I deny it—I have a syllogism. It is this. My heavenly Father says that these doctrines are all true. My heavenly Father never tells lies, and therefore these doctrines are all true! But can they ever be reconciled or explained? I believe they both can, and will be, *when God gives the key!* Suppose, for a moment, that you were utterly unacquainted with your twofold existence, as consisting of soul and body. Now, whilst believing yourself to be a simple, and not a compound being, suppose I should say: “You are a *mortal* man, and must soon die;” and the next moment should pronounce you an *immortal* being, and affirm that you can never die, but must live for ever! Would you not say, that I spoke very absurdly, and used very contradictory language? But, should I add, wait a little, and you will have the key, and then all will be plain, and you will see that all is true, and there is no absurdity, no contradiction whatever; methinks you would reply, “No, sir, no key will answer, none can reconcile things so perfectly contradictory, ‘*mortal,*’ and yet at the same time ‘*immortal!*’ *must die!* and yet, will not, *cannot die!* the thing is absurd. It cannot be! But when you are let into the secret of your twofold nature—O, now! there is no difficulty at all! Even so, in relation to the sovereignty of God, and the free-agency of man, we find it difficult to reconcile these things *now, because the key is wanting.* In a future state the key will be given, and then there will be no difficulty at all. In the mean time let us remember, that the Bible is suited to our probationary state. We need our faith tried, as well as any other grace, or virtue. And now our grand inquiry is, What does the Bible teach? for

“This is the judge that ends the strife,  
Where wit and reason fail;  
My guide to everlasting life,  
Through all this gloomy vale.”

That the government of God extends, not only to all things but to all events; not only to all creatures, but to all their

actions. In other words, that the providence of God is, in some way or other, concerned with all that is done or transpires on earth, is manifest from very many passages of Scripture. The strongest, I think, are those which asser' the providence of God in cases where, least of all, it might have been expected.

Thus, in the 127th Psalm, we find it thus written: "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it. Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain." And again, "The lot is cast into the lap, but the whole disposing thereof, is of the Lord." But there is another passage of Scripture, perhaps, yet more remarkable; inasmuch as it asserts the providence and purpose of God in a case *involving sin*, dreadful sin! The passage referred to is found in Acts ii. 23: "Him being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain." The crucifixion of Christ, by envious and wicked Jews, was certainly a crime of great magnitude; and yet the apostle Peter tells us expressly that it was "*according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God.*" The explanation of the matter is simply this: God knowing all things, foreknew what evil passions would be waked up in the bosom of the Jews by the life, and doctrines, and reproofs of our Saviour, and he also knew full well to what a murderous deed those evil passions would lead, *if not restrained*. For wise and benevolent purposes towards our race, God determined, not to restrain those evil passions, but to leave the Jews, (as of course he justly might) to the freedom of their own will—leave them to act out their own depravity; purposing, as I have said, to overrule the whole matter to the accomplishment of great ends. God was certainly under no obligation to exercise a restraining influence upon those wicked Jews; and if He foreknew what crime they unrestrained would commit, his "foreknowledge had no influence on their fault, which had proved no less certain unforeknown;" hence the apostle Peter, at the very time that he speaks of the crucifixion of Christ as being according to the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, nevertheless, charges home all the guilt thereof, upon the wicked Jews. Observe his language! "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, *ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.*" The case of Joseph also,

is precisely in point. He was hated by his brethren, and by them sold into Egypt. This was a great sin; and afterwards, when in trouble, they freely confessed it. "And they said, one to another, we are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear, therefore is this distress upon us. And Reuben answered, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child, and ye would not hear, therefore, behold also, his blood is required." Thus, all who had a hand in selling Joseph, acknowledged, and *felt* that they had acted freely, and they writhed under the stings of an accusing conscience. Yet, when Joseph made himself known unto them, and they were greatly troubled at his presence, what said Joseph unto them? "I am Joseph, your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now, therefore, be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither; for God did send me before you to preserve life. Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to save much people alive." There needs be no difficulty. The case is simply this. God being infinitely wise, knows how, in perfect consistency with the perfections of his character, to make use of all instrumentalities, good and bad, for the accomplishment of his wise and benevolent purposes. Certain things God *brings to pass* by a positive agency. Other things he *simply permits* to come to pass. And, let it be remarked, permission and approbation do not, by any means, mean the same thing. Napoleon Bonaparte, when a child, wished to go to a certain place, but was forbidden by his mother. Being headstrong, he persisted in going. "Well, my son," said his mother, "you may go, but remember! it is not with your mother's approbation." And thus God oftentimes *permits* things which, so far from commanding, he forbids, and highly disapproves. He permits sometimes because he would not interfere with the free-agency of the creature. He permits, sometimes, because he purposes (as in the cases already mentioned) to overrule the evil intended for good; and sometimes he permits, in a judicial way as a punishment for sins previously committed. Hence the language of Paul in reference to the heathen and their abominations: "Even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God *gave them over* to do things which are not convenient." And now let it not be forgotten, this is all that is meant by a certain passage in our Shorter Catechism, which has been

much caviled at, viz. "The decrees of God are his eternal purpose, according to the counsel of his will, whereby, for his own glory he hath foreordained whatsoever comes to pass." In other words it may be stated thus: By the decrees of God, we mean no formal legislative enactment, (as, "Thus it shall be," and "thus it shall not be,") but, simply *the calm and settled purpose of an infinitely wise and gracious God, to bring to pass; or permit to come to pass whatsoever does come to pass, for the glory of his name.* Does any one ask, what is the difference between *bringing* to pass and *permitting* to come to pass? I answer, God brought to pass the incarnation of his Son; He permitted to come to pass his crucifixion. The difference is as wide as the east is from the west. Our doctrine, then, is simply this: By positive and permissive decrees, God, in wisdom and in love, manages the affairs of the universe, directs and controls all things, and all events, all creatures, and all their actions. It must be so, for suppose an event to take place without the divine permission; for example, then, it must be either because God is not aware of it, or cannot prevent it. If not aware of it, He cannot be omniscient; if He cannot prevent it, then he is not omnipotent; and then, of course, in the last case, "there must be a power behind the throne greater than the throne itself," which thought would be frightful! No, our doctrine is true, that the government of God extends not only to all things, but to all *events*, not only to all creatures, but to all their actions. In other words, that a Divine providence is concerned, in some way or other, concerned "in all the good and ill that checker human life." Is further proof demanded? Permit me to quote a very remarkable passage found in Isaiah xlv. 7: "I form the light, and I create darkness; I make peace and create evil; I, the Lord, do all these things." What! the Lord create *evil*? Yes! but in such a way as casts no stain upon his moral perfections; but, on the contrary, will furnish new matter for admiration and praise. Hence, the language of joy and gratulation which immediately follows. "Drop down ye heavens from above! and let the skies pour down righteousness. Let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation. Let righteousness spring up together; I, the Lord, have created it." But *how* does God create evil. As he does darkness. The *first* sentence explains the *last*. Observe the language: I form the light, and I create darkness. How does God form the

light? By a positive influence, pouring radiance around How does God create darkness? By withholding this radiance. Even so, by a positive influence, God makes peace, and by withholding that influence, creates evil, that is, *permits* it. In this, is God the author of sin? No more than the sun is the source of darkness, although its absence occasions that darkness. But this leads me to notice another distinguishing feature, or characteristic of the government of God.

4. *It is absolute.* There is no doctrine more plainly taught in the Scriptures than this. "Our God is in the heavens," says the Psalmist, "he hath done whatsoever he pleased." And again: "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that did he, in heaven and in earth; in the seas and in all deep places." Paul confirming the doctrine, positively asserts that God worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. And Elihu, knowing that some would be disposed to contend against the doctrine, says: "Why dost thou strive against him? for he giveth not account of any of his matters." As God is indebted to none for his crown, He is amenable to none for his government. Being the Creator and Preserver of all things, he is in the sublimest sense of the term, the Proprietor of all things; and, therefore, has a right to do all his pleasure, in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth; and being infinitely perfect, it should be a matter of boundless joy and gratulation, that he is, and ever will be, **THE REIGNING GOD!** He giveth not account of any of his matters, and why? Because the policy of his government, and his reasons of state cannot be comprehended by any finite mind. Sufficient for us to know, that He is infinitely wise and good, and does all things well. As a sovereign God he gives and withholds the fruits of the earth, and the rains of heaven. As a sovereign God he commands the hail and the tempest; the lightning and the storm; and, at his command, also fierce diseases go and come. Yes, when it seems good in his sight,

"—— He involves the heaven  
 In tempest! quits his grasp upon the winds,  
 And gives them all their fury, bids the plague  
 Kindle a fiery boil upon the skin,  
 And putrefy the breath of blooming youth!  
 He calls for famine, and the meagre fiend  
 Blows mildew from between his shrivelled lips,  
 And taints the golden ear!"

The Lord, says Hannah, in her song of thankfulness, "the Lord maketh poor, and maketh rich. He bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth the poor up out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dung-hill to set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory! for the pillars of the earth are the Lord's, and he hath set the world upon them." The idea is this. The Lord is the proprietor of all things, and therefore a sovereign God! Yes, my reader, as a sovereign God, he has not only fixed the bounds of the sea, but he has also fixed the bounds of our habitations; the bounds of our possessions, and the bounds of our lives. ALL things are under the full control of a wise and powerful God! If, then, some are rich and some are poor, some are honoured and some despised; if some have great prosperity, and some have great affliction; if this child is an idiot, and that has good sense; if this child is born a cripple, and that in the full exercise of all its limbs, it is, "*Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.*" And this reminds me of the case of a poor little mute in one of our Institutions for the Deaf and Dumb: "Child," said a visitor, (the conversation was in writing,) "child, can you tell me who made the world?" "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth," replied the mute. "Very well, and can you tell me who Jesus Christ is?" "In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God," was another beautiful answer of the mute. "All very good," said the gentleman, "and now, one question more. Can you tell me, child, how it comes to pass that you are deaf and dumb when others can both hear and speak?" "*Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight,*" replied the child with great meekness! Where did this child of affliction learn this lesson? At the feet of the blessed Jesus. You recollect the Saviour had sent out his disciples, two and two, to preach the gospel, and when they returned with joy, and said, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name," it is added, "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit, and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, because thou hast hidden these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." Our Saviour, when on earth, often wept, but so far as I can recollect, only on this occasion, is he said to have rejoiced! And in what did he rejoice? IN THE SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD! I thank

thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because *thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.* Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight. This is the more remarkable as it has reference to the sovereignty of God exercised in *spiritual* matters, in giving to some what was hidden from others. And we find the same spirit animating Paul, and in relation to the same matter. Hear his own words: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy, and without blame before him in love, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." The doctrine of God's sovereign and electing love is here plainly taught. And observe! It is not a *national* election that is spoken of, for Paul says, who hath chosen us? Not *us Gentiles*, for Paul was not a Gentile, nor *us Jews*, for the Ephesians were not Jews. If we were addressing a company of Africans, we would not say, *us Africans!* We are not Africans, nor could we say *us Americans*, for they are not Americans. No *national* election can then be here intended, nor the *election of characters*, for those said to be chosen in Christ, were not said to be chosen in Christ, *because* they were holy, but *that they should be holy.* And this reminds me of a passage in the Acts. Luke says, "And as many as were ordained unto eternal life believed." If the election of characters and not persons be intended, Luke made a slip of the pen, and should have said, As many as *believed* were *ordained* unto eternal life. But no! this is the way it is written, AND AS MANY AS WERE ORDAINED UNTO ETERNAL LIFE BELIEVED. But, as Paul, in the passage quoted, has no reference to a national, nor election of characters; neither does he here offer reference to the *apostleship* or any thing of the kind, for the persons to whom the epistle was addressed, were simply "the saints at Ephesus," and "the faithful in Christ Jesus;" besides, it is expressly stated that they were chosen, not to the apostleship nor any thing of the kind, but *to the adoption of children.* Some object to the doctrine of election. It is the *word?* It is in

the Bible, in numerous places, and cannot be expunged. Is it the *principle*? You elect your Governors, your Presidents, your generals, your judges, your sheriffs, your pastors, your partners in love and trade. No principle more common amongst men; we should not marvel, therefore, if it be common with God. Do men set a value upon the exercise of the principle? Go to the ballot-box, and tell that free-born American, that he shall not exercise the elective franchise! He will surrender his life, before he surrenders that right! If, then, *man* sets a value upon the *principle*, why may not his *Maker*? But, is the *doctrine of personal election* objected to? And what is this doctrine? I would define it thus: *It is God's plan of securing the salvation of some, of a great multitude which no man can number!* Now, why should we object to a plan for *securing* the salvation of a great multitude of the human family, which no man can number, when, without it, the salvation of *all* would be in jeopardy? And here I am reminded of the remark of a certain very pious old lady. When asked whether she believed in the doctrine of election, "Certainly," replied she, "for it is in the Bible." "What!" said the inquirer, "do you believe that you were elected before you were born?" "Yes," said she promptly, "*I have been such a poor vile sinner, if God had not elected me before I was born, he never would afterwards.*" This remark, if I mistake not, must be understood and appreciated by all who know any thing of their own hearts, and have felt the power of God's victorious grace. And here permit me to remark, that the doctrine of election was designed for the consolation of God's children; and I would appeal to the feelings of every real Christian. Is it not more delightful to think that God set his love upon us from all eternity, than that he began to love us the other day? And what is so cheering to the child of God, need not be discouraging to the unconverted, for they have the same encouragement to seek salvation now, that the Christian had before he was converted. And the fact is, the grand inquiry is, not whether we can understand every part of the scheme of redemption, but whether there is such a scheme whereby the sinner may be saved. Not whether two or three doctrines in the Bible are hard to be understood, but whether the Bible itself which contains these doctrines be the word of God. Not whether we are of the elect or reprobate, but whether we are sinners and need the

salvation of Christ; for it is very remarkable, the same Bible which tells us that "whom God foreknew, them he also predestinated;" also says, "Whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely." And again: "It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." *Thus there are two classes of Scripture passages, and we believe them both.* And as I have said before, so say I again, there is no more difficulty in reconciling the *fore-ordination*, than the *foreknowledge of God* with the free-agency of man, so that Christians of different persuasions should be very kind and charitable towards each other, inasmuch as (so far as regards the matter of difficulty) they are all in the same condemnation; and one thing is certain; if the system called "*Calvinistic*," be not scriptural, it looks very much like it. To prove this matter let us try it in this way. Suppose that the apostle Paul should enter the sacred desk, *disguised as a preacher*, and looking over the congregation should break out in these words: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, according as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love; having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will." Would you not suspect that this stranger was a *Calvinistic* preacher? And suppose, waxing a little warmer, he should go on and say: "Moreover, whom he predestinated, them he also called; and whom he called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who also maketh intercession for us." Would you not think the preacher *strongly Calvinistic*? And suppose, waxing still warmer, and rising with the grandeur of the theme, he should add: "The Lord hath made all things to himself, even the wicked for the day of evil: therefore, hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy; and whom he will he hardeneth. Thou wilt, then, say unto me, Wherefore doth he yet find fault? for who hath resisted his will? Nay, but O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed, say to him that formed it, why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over

the clay, of the same lump, to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?" Suppose, I say, the apostle Paul, disguised as a preacher, should utter these "hard sayings," would you not pronounce him a *Calvinistic preacher of the "straitest sect?"* Ah! my reader, the case is clear. According to the Scriptures, God is a sovereign God, and doth his pleasure in the armies of heaven, and amongst the inhabitants of the earth, and there is none that can stay his hand, or say unto him, What dost thou? As an absolute sovereign, he rules over all the worlds of nature, and of grace; and if one person is prospered, and another afflicted; if one is born in a gospel, and another in a pagan land; if one lives to an old age, and another is cut down in youth, or early childhood; and if one is converted and made the trophy of victorious grace, and another is permitted to go on in sin and perish in sin, it is, "Even so Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

"Nor Gabriel asks the reason why,  
Nor God the reason gives!"

But, 5. *The last distinguishing feature or characteristic of the Divine government, is this: IT IS WISE AND GOOD.* Infinitely wise and good! If a being clothed with such tremendous power, O! if a being invested with such absolute dominion over all things, were capricious or malignant, if he took pleasure in inflicting pain, or delighted in the death of any of his creatures, how frightful would be the condition of the universe! But joy, joy to creation; this great Being, **THIS SOVEREIGN GOD**, is no less *wise* than he is *powerful*; no less *good* than he is *great*! It is true that there are mysteries in the Divine government; and not unfrequently the paths of the Almighty are in the deep waters, and his ways past finding out. It is because God works upon a large pattern. His schemes embrace all time, and all eternity. Of course, we can see only a part, and how can we judge of the whole? Some cavil and object, because sin and sorrow have been permitted to enter our world; but who can tell, whether by the wise and overruling providence of God, these may not be made use of as the *shading of some great moral picture?* One thing we know, a dark ground is best for gilding, and precious stones set in ebony, shine with more brilliancy! There are, moreover, providences in relation to *nations, families, and individuals*

which, to such short-sighted creatures as we are, appear very mysterious, but, in the *winding up*, we shall, no doubt, all have to say, He has done all things well. You recollect the case of Jacob. In a dark hour he said, "Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Benjamin away also. All these things are against me, and ye will bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave." But mark the winding up! Joseph is taken away, it is true, but it is only for a season; and lo! Joseph's wagons are come! Joseph is made Governor over all the land of Egypt; he has provided corn for the patriarch and all his household; and lo! Joseph's wagons are come to take them all down into Egypt, to nourish them, and keep them well provided for in a time of famine! And see, too, those silvery locks of his which the patriarch, in a dark hour, said, should go down with sorrow to the grave. Only see how they fall upon the neck of his beloved son, Joseph!

"Shall little haughty ignorance pronounce  
His works unwise? the smallest part of which  
Exceeds the narrow vision of her mind?  
As if upon a full proportioned dome,  
With swelling columns heaved, the pride of art,  
A critic fly, whose feeble ray scarce spreads,  
An inch around, with blind presumption bold,  
Should dare to tax the structure of the whole!"

"A thing, says Eliphaz, was secretly brought unto me, and mine ear received a little thereof. In thoughts, from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon man, fear came upon me, and trembling which made all my bones to shake! Then a spirit passed before my face! The hair of my flesh stood up! It stood still, but I could not discern the form thereof. An image was before mine eyes! There was silence, and I heard a voice saying, 'Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker? Behold, he put no trust in his servants, and he charged his angels with folly.' Child of the dust, enter into thy nothingness! Creature of yesterday, put thine hands to thy mouth, and listen to the loud and harmonious shout of the heavenly world: Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!" Now, my reader, we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now, we know in part, but then shall we know, even as also we are known. O when all darkness

shall be removed, and the plans of heaven shall be fully developed, we shall then see that every thing permitted and done on earth, was permitted and done in wisdom and in love. *Here is a piece of embroidery.* It is some great master-piece of art. You look upon the wrong side. You see nothing beautiful or distinct! Turn the right side, and you exclaim, "O what a beautiful piece of embroidery this is! The colours, how brilliant! The figures, how distinct!" *Here is a celebrated painting stretched over the wall.* It has many figures, and they are so arranged that, to the eye, that takes in the whole design of the artist, it appears most admirable; but there is a curtain hanging over a part of it, and you are perplexed! Remove the curtain; then comes admiration, and you laud the artist, and pronounce the painting the most beautiful and perfect that you have ever seen. So it is with all the plans and providential dispensations of heaven. When the curtain is removed, then will they appear in beauty and glory far transcending all our conceptions now! "What I do, says the Saviour, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter." Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!

Christians! here is matter of joy for you! O how delightful to think that it is *your God and heavenly Father* who fills the throne and sways the sceptre, and rules *over all!* And joy upon joy! He will never abdicate the government, but will reign for ever! In what rapid succession do the kings of the earth succeed each other! but **OUR KING** is one, and there is no other! The alone monarch of the universe. None before him! None after him! Through all the ages of time, through all the cycles of eternity, One and alone! The Lord shall reign for ever and ever, says the Psalmist, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the Lord. *He reigns over the world,* and, although wickedness abounds, and sorrows now prevail, yet the world is in good hands, and all its affairs are under the control of a wise and powerful God. Aye, and the time is coming, when great voices shall be heard in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world *are* become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ!" *Moreover, Christian, your God reigns over the Church.* Aye, and "Zion enjoys her Monarch's love." God is in the midst of her. God will help her, and that right early. "Look upon Zion! the city of our solemnities. Thine eyes shall see Jerusalem a quiet habitation, a taber-

nacle that shall not be taken down. Not one of the stakes thereof, shall ever be removed; neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken; but there the GLORIOUS LORD will be unto us a place of broad rivers and streams, wherein shall go no galley with oars, neither shall gallant ship pass thereby!" But God not only reigns over the *world* and the *church*. He *reigns over all things!* Then, believer, remember, He reigns over you and yours! All your interests are safely lodged in his hands! Has sorrow entered your dwelling? Has deep affliction come upon you? O, remember! He who notices the falling sparrow will not forget the children of his love. Fear not, in the sight of your heavenly Father you are of more value than many sparrows. All your trials are known to him. Your sighs are heard. Your tears are in his bottle; and the promise is, All things shall work together, for good to them that love God. Yes, thank God!

"There is a day of sunny rest,  
For every dark and stormy night;  
And grief may hide an evening guest,  
But joy shall come at morning light!"

Alleluia! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth! Amen.  
Alleluia!