

HD WIDENER



HW JNGX B

C

1112

9.45

Beecher. The Government of God Desirable

1827

C 1112.9, 45

HARVARD COLLEGE  
LIBRARY



FROM THE  
WINSLOW LEWIS  
COLLECTION OF TRACTS



Gift of the  
New England  
Historic Genealogical Society

November 26, 1917

o  
Cover  
**The Government of God desirable.**

---

A

# **SERMON**

**DELIVERED AT NEWARK, N. J. OCTOBER, 1808,**

**DURING THE SESSION OF**

**THE SYNOD OF NEW-YORK AND NEW-JERSEY.**

---

**By LYMAN BEECHER, A. M.**

*Pastor of the Church of Christ in East-Hampton, Long-Island.*

---

**SEVENTH EDITION.**



**Boston :**

**T. R. MARVIN, PRINTER, CONGRESS STREET.**

**1827.**

C 1112.9.45  
✓

**HARVARD COLLEGE LIBRARY  
WINSLOW LEWIS TRACTS  
GIFT OF THE  
NEW ENGLAND  
HISTORIC, GENEALOGICAL SOCIETY  
NOVEMBER 26, 1917**

## SERMON.



Matthew, vi. 10.

THY WILL BE DONE IN EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.

IN this passage we are instructed to pray, that the world may be *governed*, and not abandoned to the miseries of unrestrained sin : that God himself would govern, and not another ; and that God would administer the government of the world, in all respects according to his own pleasure. The passage is a formal surrendry to God, of power and dominion over the earth, as entire as his dominion is in heaven. The petition, therefore, " thy will be done," contains the doctrine,

**THAT IT IS GREATLY TO BE DESIRED THAT GOD SHOULD GOVERN THE WORLD, AND DISPOSE OF MEN, IN ALL RESPECTS, ENTIRELY ACCORDING TO HIS OWN PLEASURE.**

The truth of this doctrine is so manifest, that it would seem to rank itself in the number of self-evident propositions, incapable of proof clearer than its own light, had not experience taught, that of all truths, it is the most universally and bitterly controverted. Plain as it is, it has occasioned more argument than any other doctrine, and by argument *merely*, has gained fewer proselytes : for, it is one of those controversies in which the heart decides wholly, and argument, strong or feeble, is alike ineffectual.

This consideration would present, in the threshold, a hopeless impediment to further progress, did we not know also,

that arguments a thousand times repeated, and as often resisted, may at length become mighty through God, to the casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God. I shall, therefore, suggest several considerations to confirm this most obvious truth, that it is desirable that God should govern the world entirely according to his own good pleasure.

First. It is desirable that God should govern the world, and dispose of all events, according to his pleasure, because *he knows perfectly in what manner it is best that the world should be governed.*

The best way of disposing of men and their concerns, is that which will most effectually illustrate the glory of God. The glory of God is the sun of the moral universe, the light and life of his kingdom. All the blessedness of the intelligent creation arises, and ever will arise, from the manifestation and apprehension of the glory of God. It was to manifest this glory, that the worlds were created. It was, that there might be creatures to behold and enjoy God, that his dominions were peopled with intelligent beings. And it is, that his holy subjects may see and enjoy him, that he upholds and governs the universe. The entire importance of our world, therefore, and of men and their concerns, is relative, and is great or small, only, as we are made to illustrate the glory of God. How this important end shall be most effectually accomplished, none but himself is able to determine. He, only, knows *how* so to order things, as that the existence of every being, and every event, shall answer the purpose of its creation, and from the rolling of a world, to the fall of a sparrow, shall conspire to increase the exhibitions of the divine character, and expand the joy of the holy universe.

An inferior intelligence at the helm of government, might conceive very desirable purposes of benevolence, and still be at a loss as to the means most fit and effectual to accomplish them. But with God, there is no such deficiency. In him, the knowledge which discovered the end, discovers also, with

unerring wisdom, the most appropriate means to bring it to pass. He is wise in heart ; he hath established the world by his wisdom, and stretched out the heavens by his discretion. And is he not wise enough to be entrusted with the government of the world ? Who then shall be his counsellor ? Who shall supply the deficiencies of his skill ? Oh the presumption of vain man ! and oh the depths both of the wisdom and knowledge of God !

Secondly. It is desirable that God should govern the world according to his own pleasure, *because he is entirely able to execute his purposes.*

A wise politician perceives, often, both the end and the means, and is still unable to bring to pass his counsels, because the means, though wise, are beyond his control. But God is as able to execute, as he is to plan. Having chosen the end, and selected the means, his counsels stand. He is the Lord God omnipotent. The whole universe is a storehouse of means, and when he speaks, every intelligence and every atom flies to execute his pleasure. The omnipotence of God in giving efficacy to his government, inspires and perpetuates the ecstasy of heaven. "And a voice came out from the throne, saying, Praise our 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 many thunderings, saying, Alleluia, the Lord God omnipotent reigneth." What will that man do in heaven, who is afraid and reluctant to commit to God the government of the earth ? And what will become of those who, unable to frustrate his counsels, murmur and rebel against his providence ?

Thirdly. It is desirable that God should govern the world according to his pleasure, *because the pleasure of God is always good.*

The angels who kept not their first estate, and many wicked men, have great knowledge, and skill, and power : and yet, on these accounts, are only the more terrible ; because they employ these mighty faculties to do evil. And

the government of God, were he a being of malevolence, armed as he is with skill and power, would justly fill the universe with dismay. But as it is, brethren, "let not your hearts be troubled." With God there is no perversion of attributes. He is as good, as he is wise and powerful. God is love! Love is that glory of God which he has undertaken to express to his intelligent creation in his works. The sole object of the government of God, from beginning to end, is, to express his benevolence. His eternal decrees, of which so many are afraid, are nothing but the plan which God has devised, to express his benevolence, and to make his kingdom as vast and as blessed as his own infinite goodness desires. It was to show his glory, to express, in action, his benevolence, that he created all the worlds that roll, and rejoice, and speak his name, through the regions of space. It is to accomplish the same blessed design, that he upholds and governs every being, and directs every event, causing every movement, in every world, to fall in, in its appointed time and place, and to unite in promoting the grand result—the glory of God, and the highest good of his kingdom. And is there a mortal, who, from this great system of blessed government, would wish this earth to be an exception? What sort of beings must those be, who are afraid of a government, administered by infinite benevolence to express, so far as it can be expressed, the infinite goodness of God. I repeat the question—What kind of characters must those be, who feel as if they had good reason to fear a government, the sole object of which is, to express the immeasurable goodness of God!

Fourthly. It is greatly to be desired that God should govern the world according to his pleasure, *because it is his pleasure to rule as a moral governor.*

A moral government, is a government exercised over accountable beings; a government of laws, and administered by motives.

The importance of such a government below, is manifest

from the consideration, that it is in his moral government, chiefly, that the glory of God is displayed.

The superintendence of an empty world, or a world of mere animals, would not exhibit, at all, the moral character of God. The glory of God, shining in his law, could never be made manifest, and the brighter glory of God, as displayed in the Gospel, must remain forever hid. And all that happiness of which we are capable, as moral beings, the joys of religion below, and the boundless joys of heaven above, would be extinguished, in a moment, by the suspension of the divine moral government.

Will any pretend that the Almighty cannot maintain a moral government on earth, if he governs according to his own pleasure? Can he wield the elements, and control, at his pleasure, every work of his hands but just the mind of man? Is the most noble work of God, that which is the most worthy of attention, and in reference to which, all beside is upheld and governed, itself wholly unmanageable?

Has omnipotence framed minds, which, the moment they are made, escape from his hands, and defy the control of their maker? Has the Almighty erected a moral kingdom which he cannot govern, without destroying its moral nature? Can he only watch, and mend, and rectify, the lawless wanderings of mind? Has he filled the earth with untamed and untamable spirits, whose wickedness and rebellion he can merely remedy, but cannot control? Does he superintend a world of madmen, full of darkness and disorder, cheered and blessed by no internal pervading government of his own? Are we bound to submit to all events, as parts of the holy providence of God; and yet, is there actually no hand of God controlling the movements of the moral world? But if the Almighty can, and if he does, govern the earth as a part of his moral kingdom, is there any method of government more safe and wise, than that which pleases God? Can there be a better government? We may safely pray, then, "Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven," without

fearing at all, the loss of moral agency ; for all the glory of God, in his Law and Gospel, and all the eternal manifestations of glory to principalities and powers in heavenly places, depend wholly upon the *fact, that men, though living under the government of God, and controlled according to his pleasure, are still, entirely free, and accountable for all the deeds done in the body.* There could be no justice in punishment, no condescension, no wisdom, no mercy in the glorious Gospel, did not the government of God, though administered according to his pleasure, include and insure the accountable agency of the creature.

Seeing, therefore, that all the glory of God which he ever proposes to manifest to the intelligent creation, is to be made known by the church, and is to shine in the face of Jesus Christ, and is to depend upon the perfect consistency of the moral government of God with human freedom, we have boundless assurance, that, among his absolute, immutable, eternal purposes, one, and a leading one, is, so to govern the world according to his counsels, that, if men sin, there shall be complete desert of punishment, and boundless mercy in their redemption.

Fifthly. It is greatly to be desired that God should rule in the earth according to his pleasure, *because it is his pleasure to govern the world in mercy, by Jesus Christ.*

The government is in the hand of a Mediator, by whom God is reconciling the world to himself, not imputing their trespasses to them that believe. Mercy is the bestowment of pardon and favour upon the sinful and undeserving. Now mankind are so eminently sinful, that no government, but one administered in infinite mercy, could afford the least consolation. Had any being, but the God of mercy, sat upon the throne, or any will but his will prevailed, there would have been no plan of redemption, and no purposes of election, to perplex and alarm the wicked. There would have been but one decree, and that would have been destruction to the whole race of man. Are any reluctant, to

be entirely in the hands of God? Are they afraid to trust him to dispose of soul and body, for time and for eternity? Let them surrender their mercies then, and go out naked, from that government which feeds, protects, and comforts them. Let them give up their Bibles, and relinquish the means of grace, and the hopes of glory, and descend and make their bed in hell, where they have, long since, deserved to be, and where they long since would have been, if God had not governed the world according to his own good pleasure. If they would escape the evils which they fear from the hand of God, let them abandon the blessings they receive from it, and they will soon discover, whether the absolute dominion of God, and their dependence upon him, be, in reality, a ground of murmuring and alarm. Our only hope of heaven, arises from being entirely in the hands of God. Our destruction could not be made more certain than it would be, were we to be given up to our own disposal, or to the disposal of any being but God. Would sinful mortals change their own hearts? Could the combined universe, without God, change the depraved affections of men? Surely then, we have cause for unceasing joy, that we are in the hands of God, seeing he is a God of mercy, and has decreed to rule in mercy, and actually is administering the government of the world, in mercy by Jesus Christ.

We have nothing to fear from the entire dominion of God, which we should not have cause equally to fear, as outcasts from the divine government; but we have every thing to hope, while he rules the earth according to his most merciful pleasure. The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice, let the multitude of the isles be glad. It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.

Sixthly. It is greatly to be desired that God should dispose of mankind according to his pleasure, *because, if he does so, it is certain that there will be no injustice done to any one.*

He will do no injustice to his holy kingdom, by any whom he saves. He will bring none to heaven, who are not holy

and prepared for heaven. He will bring none there, in any way not consistent with his perfections, and the best good of his kingdom : none, in any way but that prescribed in the Gospel, the way of faith in Jesus Christ, of repentance for sin, and of good works as the constituted fruit and evidence of faith.

Earthly monarchs have their favorites, whom, if guilty of a violation of the laws, they will, often, interpose to save, although the welfare of the kingdom requires their punishment. But God has no such favorites : he is no respecter of persons : he spared not the angels : and upon the earth, distinctions of intellect, or wealth, or honor, will have no effect ; he only that believeth, shall be saved.

The great and the learned, shall not be obtruded upon heaven without holiness, because they are great or learned ; and the humble and contrite, shall not be excluded, because they are poor, or ignorant, or obscure. God has provided a way for all men to return to him. He has opened the door of their prison, and set open before them a door of admission into the kingdom of his dear Son ; and commanded, and entreated them to abandon their dreary abode, and come into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. But all, with one consent, refuse to comply. Each prefers his own loathsome dwelling, to the building of God, and chooses, steadfastly, the darkness of his own dungeon, to the light of God's kingdom. But, as God has determined that the redemption of his Son shall not be unavailing through human obstinacy ; so he hath chosen, in Christ, multitudes which no man can number, that they should be holy and without blame before him in love. And, in bringing these sons and daughters to glory, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth, he will introduce not one, whom all the inhabitants of heaven will not hail joyfully, as the companion of their glory. And if God does in the earth just as he pleases, he will make willing, and obedient, and bring to heaven, just those persons whom it was most desirable should come. And he will bring

just as many obstinate rebels to abandon their prison, and enter cheerfully his kingdom, as infinite wisdom, goodness, and mercy, sees fit and desires. He will not mar his glory, or the happiness of his kingdom, by bringing in too many, nor by shutting out too many. His redeemed kingdom, as to the number and the persons who compose it, and the happiness included in it, will be such as shall be wholly satisfactory to God, and to every subject of his kingdom.

And if God governs according to his pleasure, he will do no injustice to his impenitent enemies. He will send to misery, no harmless animals without souls; no mere machines: none who have done, or even attempted to do, as well as they could. He will leave to walk in their own way, none who do not deserve to be left; and punish none for walking in it, who did not walk therein knowingly, deliberately, and with wilful obstinacy. He will give up to death none who did not choose death, and choose it with as entire freedom as himself chooses holiness; and who did not deserve eternal punishment, as truly as himself deserves eternal praise. He will send to hell none who are not opposed to him, and to holiness, and to heaven. None who are not, by voluntary sin and rebellion, unfitted for heaven and fitted for destruction, as eminently as saints are prepared for glory. He will consign to perdition no poor, feeble, inoffensive beings, sacrificing one innocent creature to increase the happiness of another. He will cause the punishment of the wicked to illustrate his glory, and thus, indirectly, to promote the happiness of heaven. But God will not illumine heaven with his glory, and fill it with praise, by sacrificing helpless, unoffending creatures to eternal torment; nor will he doom to hell, one whom he will not convince also, that he deserves to go thither. The justice of God, in the condemnation of the impenitent, will be as unquestionable, as his infinite mercy will be, in the salvation of the redeemed.

If the will of God is done on earth, among men, there will be no more injustice done to the inhabitants of the earth, than

there is done to the blessed in heaven. Was it ever known—Did any ever complain—Was it ever conceived, that, God was a tyrant, in heaven? Why then should we question the justice of his government on earth? Is he not the same God below, as above? Are not all his attributes equally employed? Does he not govern for the same end, and will not his government below conspire to promote the same joyful end, as his government above?

Finally. It is greatly to be desired, that God should govern the world according to his pleasure, *because his own infinite blessedness, as well as the happiness of his kingdom, depends upon his working all things according to the counsel of his own will.*

Could the Almighty be prevented from expressing the benevolence of his nature, according to his purposes, his present boundless blessedness would become the pain of ungratified desire. God is love, and his happiness consists in the exercise and expression of it, according to his own eternal purpose, which he purposed in Christ Jesus before the world began. It is therefore declared, "The Lord hath made all things for himself," that is, to express and gratify his infinite benevolence. The moral excellence of God does not consist in quiescent love, but in love active, bursting forth and abounding. Nor does the divine happiness arise from the contemplation of idle perfections; but from perfections, which comprehend boundless capacity and activity to do good.

From what has been said, we may be led to contemplate with satisfaction, the infinite blessedness of God.

God is love! This is a disposition, of all others, the most happy in its own nature. He is perfect in love; there is, therefore, in his happiness no alloy. His love is infinite; and, of course, his blessedness is unbounded. If the little holiness existing in good men, though balanced by remaining sin, occasions, at times, unutterable joy; how blessed must God be, who is perfectly and infinitely holy? It is to be remem-

bered, also, that the benevolence of God is, at all times, perfectly gratified. The universe which God has created and upholds, including what he has done, and what he will yet do, will be brought into a condition which will satisfy his infinite benevolence. The great plan of government which God has chosen, and which his power and wisdom will execute, will embrace as much good as is in the nature of things possible. He is not, like erring man, straitened or perplexed, through lack of knowledge or power. There is, in his plan, no defect, and in its execution, no failure. God, therefore, is infinitely happy, in his holiness, and in the expression of it which it pleases him to make.

The revolt of angels, the fall of man, and the miseries of sin, do not, for a moment, interrupt the blessedness of God. They were not, to him, unexpected events, starting up suddenly, while the Watchman of Israel slumbered. They were foreseen by God, as clearly as any other events of his government, and have occasioned neither perplexity nor dismay. With infinite complacency, he beholds still, his unshaken counsels, and with almighty hand, rolls on his undisturbed decrees. Surrounded by unnumbered millions, created by his hand, and upheld by his power, and made happy in the contemplation of his glory, he shines forth, God over all blessed forever. What an object of joyful contemplation then, is the blessedness of God! It is infinite: his boundless capacity is full. It is eternal: he is God blessed forever. The happiness of the created universe is but a drop, a drop to the mighty ocean of divine enjoyment. How delightful the thought, that in God there is such an immensity of joy, beyond the reach of vicissitude. When we look around us below, a melancholy sensation pervades the mind. What miserable creatures! What a wretched world! But when, from this scene of darkness and misery, we look up to the throne of God, and behold him, high above the darkness and the miseries of sin, dwelling in light inaccessible and full of glory, the prospect brightens. If a few rebels, who refuse to

love him and participate in his munificence, are groping in darkness on his footstool, God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all.

Secondly. How vast may we conceive to be the sum of created good which is comprehended in the kingdom of God.

It will satisfy infinite benevolence. If all the good might exist, which angels and men could conceive, it would be nothing, compared with the enjoyment which God will actually communicate and uphold. The happiness which God will communicate will be worthy of himself. It will illustrate, so far as a created system can illustrate, the power, and wisdom, and goodness, of God. How vast and blessed then, must that kingdom be, which God erects as an expression of his glory, and in which he dwells and reigns to prove, by experiment, his capacity to govern and to bless the universe.

This kingdom of God, so vast and so full of joy, is still destined to increase. God will never be idle. He will never have communicated, actually, infinite blessedness. His work will continue to grow under his hand, and his kingdom to expand around him in capacity and joy. O how great is God! How glorious will his works be! A fountain, ever flowing, and never exhausted, pouring out streams of blessedness to fill unnumbered fountains around him, each to eternity becoming more capacious, and yet the whole bearing no proportion to the uncreated source!

It seems to be the imagination of some, that the kingdom of darkness will be as populous and as vast, as the kingdom of light, and that happiness and misery, of equal dimensions, will expand, side by side, to all eternity. But, blessed be God, it is a mere imagination, totally unsupported by reason or revelation. Who ever heard of a prison that occupied one half of the territories of a kingdom; and who can believe that the universe, which was called into being, and is upheld and governed, to express the goodness of God, will contain as much misery as happiness? How could the

government of God be celebrated with such raptures in heaven, if it filled with dismay and ruin half the universe ! How vast soever, therefore, the kingdom of darkness may be in itself considered, it is certainly nothing but the prison of the universe, and small, compared to the realms of light and glory. The misery of that unholy community, whose exile from heaven is as voluntary as it is just, when the eye is fixed upon that only, fills the soul with trembling ; but when, from this dreadful exhibition of sin, and display of justice, we raise the adoring eye to God, reigning throughout his boundless dominions, and rejoicing in their joy, the world of misery shrinks to a point, and the wailings of the damned die away, and are lost in the song of praise.\*

Thirdly. From what has been said, we may perceive wherein consists the exceeding sinfulness of sin.

The evil of sin does not consist in overt acts merely, nor in the misery which it actually occasions in time. The evil of sin is to be sought in its own nature ; and is to be estimated, by the effects it would produce, if armed with power to express itself. Considered in this point of view, it is a deliberate, total, and obstinate dissent from the government of God. As a temper of mind, it is enmity against God, and hostility to his law and his entire government. God is the soul of his kingdom, and it is his purpose to make the happiness of every member of that kingdom to consist in love to him, and to his holy family. Sin rejects God as an object of affection, and sets up a separate, and opposite, and unworthy interest. The temper of sin, and the temper of God, are opposite. The plans of sin, and the plans of God, are

\* I am aware that Calvinists are represented as believing, and teaching, the monstrous doctrine that infants are damned, and that hell is doubtless paved with their bones. But having passed the age of fifty, and been conversant for thirty years with the most approved Calvinistic writers, and personally acquainted with many of the most distinguished Calvinistic divines in New-England, and in the middle and southern and western States, I must say, that I have never seen nor heard of any book which contained such a sentiment, nor a man, minister, or layman, who believed or taught it. And I feel authorised to say, that Calvinists, as a body, are as far from teaching the doctrine of infant damnation, as any of those who falsely accuse them. And I would earnestly and affectionately recommend to all persons, who have been accustomed to propagate this slander, that they commit to memory, without delay, the ninth commandment, which is, "Thou shalt not bear false-witness against thy neighbor."

opposite. If the purposes of sin go into operation, the purposes of God are defeated. If sin succeeds, the kingdom of God fails. And, that sin does not succeed, is owing to nothing but want of power and skill. If its malignant nature, as it exists in men and devils, could be fully expressed in action, it would dethrone the God of heaven, abolish his law, overturn his government, extinguish the joy of God and of the universe, and fill the mighty void with everlasting wo. It is a wandering star, which will not obey the impulse of the sun, and which, if able, would blot out the sun, and leave to blackness of darkness every other luminary, that it might roll above the mighty ruin, eclipsed by no superior lustre.

Such is the selfish, malignant enmity to God, which reigns in the hearts of the children of disobedience. Such, by nature, is that carnal mind, which is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. Nothing but its own imbecility, prevents it from being an evil as great, in fact, as it is in nature and tendency. Let benevolence abandon the throne of the universe, and let sin ascend and take possession of the treasures of knowledge and power, and reign to express its own nature in action, as God reigns to express his love, and it would soon dismay the universe with demonstrations of its evil nature.

Fourthly. What has been said concerning the character and government of God, may enable us to perceive wherein consists the glory of the Gospel.

The Gospel is not, as some have imagined, an expedient to set aside a holy, just, and good law, in order to substitute an inferior one, brought down more nearly to the depraved inclinations of men. God did not send his Son, to betray his government, and compromise with rebels, by repealing the law which offended them. He sent his Son, to vindicate and to establish this law, to redeem mankind from the curse, and to bring them back to the obedience of the same law from which they had revolted.

It is the glory of the Gospel that it upholds the moral law and moral government of God, and brings back and reconciles to his holy dominion, millions and millions of apostate creatures.

Fifthly. Those who are opposed to the decrees of God, and to his sovereignty as displayed in the salvation of sinners, are enemies to God.\*

They are unwilling that his will should be done in earth as it is in heaven, for the decrees of God are nothing but his choice, as to the manner in which he will govern his own kingdom. He did not enter upon his government to learn wisdom by experience. Before they were yet formed, his vast dominion lay open to his view, and before he took the reins of created empire, he saw in what manner it became him to govern. His ways are everlasting. Known unto God, are all his works from the beginning. To be opposed to the decrees of God, therefore, is to be unwilling that God should have any choice concerning the government of the world. And can those be willing that God should govern the world entirely according to his pleasure, who object to his having any pleasure upon the subject? To object to the choice of God, with respect to the management of the world, because it is eternal, is to object to the existence of God. A God of eternal knowledge, without an eternal will or choice, would be a God without moral character.

To suppose that God did not know what events would exist in his kingdom, is to divest him of omniscience. To suppose that he did know, and did not care, had no choice, no purpose, is to blot out his benevolence, to nullify his wisdom, and convert his power into infinite indolence. To suppose that he did know, and choose, and decree, and that events do not accord with his purposes, is to suppose that God has made a world which he cannot govern : has under-

\* I do not say that all who *speak* against the universal government of God, and his holy sovereignty in the salvation of men, are in heart opposed to these precious doctrines. God is their judge, and knows perfectly when bitterness and sneer is the result of real enmity, and when also, of ignorance, or prejudice, or simple misapprehension.

taken a work too vast : has begun to build, but is not able to finish. But to suppose that God did, from the beginning, behold all things open and naked before him, and that he did choose, with unerring wisdom and infinite goodness, how to govern his empire, and yet, to find a heart, and head, and tongue, continually employed in opposing this great and blessed truth, is demonstration of enmity to God and his government.

To object to the choice of God because it is immutable, is to cavil against that which constitutes its consummating excellence. Caprice is a most alarming feature in a bad government, but in a government absolutely perfect, none, surely, can object to its immutability but those who, if able, would alter it for the worse.

To say, that if God always knew how to govern so as to display his glory, and bless his kingdom, and always chooses thus to govern, there can be, therefore, no accountable agency in the conduct of his creatures, is to deny the possibility of a moral government, to contradict the express testimony of God, and this, too, at the expense of common sense, and the actual experience of every subject of his moral government on earth.

Sixthly. From the character of God and the nature of his government, as explained in this discourse, may be inferred the nature and necessity of unconditional submission to God.

Unconditional submission is an entire surrender of the soul to God, to be disposed of according to his pleasure, occasioned by confidence in his character as God.

There are many who would trust the Almighty to regulate the rolling of worlds, and to rule in the armies of heaven, just as he pleases ; and devils they would consign to his disposal, without the least hesitation ; and their own nation, if they were sure that God would dispose of it according to their pleasure : even their own temporal concerns they would risk in the hands of God ; could they know that all things would work together for their good : their souls, also, they would

cheerfully trust to his disposal, for the world to come, if God would stipulate, at all events, to make them happy.

And to what does all this amount? Truly, that they care much about their own happiness, and their own will, but nothing at all about the will of God, and the welfare of his kingdom. He may decree, and execute his decrees, in heaven, and may turn its inhabitants into machines, or uphold their freedom as he pleases; and apostate spirits are relinquished to their doom, whether just or unjust. It is only when the government of God descends to particulars, and draws near and enters their own selfish inclosures, and claims a right to dispose of them, and extends its influence to the unseen world, that selfishness and fear take the alarm. Has God determined how to dispose of my soul? Ah! that alters the case. If he can, consistently with freedom, govern angels and devils and nations, how can he govern individuals? How can he dispose of me according to his eternal purpose, and I be free? Here reason, all-penetrating, and all-comprehensive, becomes weak; the clouds begin to collect, and the understanding, veiled by the darkness of the heart, "can find no end, in wandering mazes lost."

But if God has purposes of mercy in reserve for the sinner, he is convinced at length of his sin, and finds himself in an evil case. He reforms, prays, weeps, resolves, and re-resolves, regardless of the righteousness of Christ, and intent only to establish a righteousness of his own. But through all his windings, sin cleaves to him, and the law, with its fearful curse, pursues him. Whither shall he flee? What shall he do? A rebel heart, that will not bow, fills him with despair. An angry God, who will not clear the guilty, fills him with terror. His strength is gone, his resources fail, his mouth is stopped. With restless anxiety, or wild amazement, he surveys the gloomy prospect. At length, amidst the wanderings of despair, the character of God meets his eye. It is new, it is amiable, and full of glory. Forgetful of danger, he turns aside to behold this great sight, and while he gazes,

new affections awake in his soul, inspiring new confidence in God, and in his holy government. Now, God appears qualified to govern, and now, he is willing that he should govern, and willing himself to be in the hands of God, to be disposed of according to his pleasure. What is the occasion of this change? Has the divine character changed? There is no variableness with God. Did he then misapprehend the divine character? Was all this glory visible before? Or has a revelation of new truth been granted? There has been no new revelation. The character now admired, is the same which just before appeared so gloomy and terrible. What then, has produced this alteration? Has a vision of angels appeared, to announce that God is reconciled? Has some sudden light burst upon him, in token of forgiveness? Has Christ been seen upon the cross, beckoning the sinner to come to him? Has heaven been thrown open to his admiring eyes? Have enrapturing sounds of music stolen upon the ear, to entrance the soul? Has some text of scripture been sent to whisper that his sins are forgiven, though no repentance, nor faith, nor love, has dawned in his soul? And does he now submit, because God has given him assurance of personal safety? None of these. Considerations of personal safety, are, at the time, out of the question. It is the uncreated, essential excellence of God, shining in upon the heart, which chains the attention, fixes the adoring eye, and fills the soul with love, and peace, and joy; and the act of submission is past, before the subject begins to reflect upon his altered views, with dawning hope of personal redemption.\*

The change produced then, is the effect of benevolence, raising the affections of the soul from the world, and resting them upon God. Holiness is now most ardently loved. This is seen to dwell in God and his kingdom, and to

\* I pretend not to exhibit, in the above outline of experience, all the varieties of exercise through which the convinced pass; nor to intimate, that every person is attentive always to interpret the language of his heart, or able, in every instance, to specify the exact time when he ceased to contend, and gave up the power and dominion unto God. The act of submission is doubtless, instantaneous, and in nature such as has been described, though the evidence of the change, to the subject of it, may be gradual.

be upheld and perfected by his moral government. It is the treasure of the soul, and all the attributes of God stand pledged to protect it. The solicitude, therefore, is not, merely what will become of me, but what, O Lord, will become of thy glory, and the glory of thy kingdom? And in the character of God, these inquiries are satisfactorily answered. If God be glorified, and his kingdom upheld and made happy, the soul is satisfied. There is nothing else to be anxious about; for individual happiness is included in the general good, as the drop is included in the ocean.

It is by surrounding himself with benevolent intelligences, who find all their joy in love to himself and his kingdom, and by manifesting himself to them, that God upholds the happiness of heaven. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God, with all thy heart, and thy neighbor as thyself, is the sweet attracting power, that draws the holy universe to God, and unites to each other, every member of his great family. But men have rejected God and his kingdom, as objects of supreme love, and contracted and lowered down their affections, to rest solely on selfish and worldly objects, so that in every sinner, we behold God and his kingdom set at nought, and self set up, and loved, and sought, instead of God, and the universal good.

Hence the wicked find no consolation, and can see no security, in the character of God, or in the rectitude of his government, because these secure the happiness of those only who are in the kingdom of God. The multiplication of assurances, therefore, that God will do right, will glorify himself, will bless his holy family, affords no consolation, inspires no confidence, because it insures that which they care nothing about, and leaves awfully exposed the only thing which they do care about.

The character of God insures security and happiness to the repenting sinner, *in* his kingdom, but it affords no security, no happiness, to the impenitent sinner, *out* of his kingdom, and this is the reason why the wicked are so much afraid of God.

It is not because they really think that God will act unworthy of himself; they do not suspect the rectitude of his government. They do not question, whether God will glorify himself, and surround himself with a joyful, holy kingdom. The sole difficulty is, that the character of God affords no guarantee of safety and happiness, to those who are out of his kingdom, and in hostile array against it. Now the only remedy which God proposes, and which can be proposed, is, for the sinner to give up himself, as the object of supreme love, and transfer his perverted affections to God, their proper object. This the sinner refuses to do. He persists in separating himself from God, and still demands that God should give him some pledge of safety, not in his kingdom, but while he continues in opposition to it, and lives in voluntary exile. With such desires, God never complies. All his creatures, who will place their affections on him, and seek happiness in the way which he provides, shall be happy. They shall find in God, all that immortal minds can desire. But God will not extend his favors beyond the limits of his holy kingdom. If the wicked, who have departed from God, will not, by Jesus Christ, return to him, they must die. Benevolence is the only disposition capable of happiness, and selfishness is inherent misery.

But raise your immortal desires, and fix them upon God, and let your contracted souls expand with benevolent affections to his holy kingdom, and you have, in the character of God, infinite security. Is your joy inspired by the perfections of God? They are immutable and eternal. Does your happiness arise from the manifestation of his glory? Behold, he is rearing a kingdom, in which his glory is to shine as the sun forever. All things are working together for your good, because they are all contributing to brighten that glory of God, in which your good consists. Do you rejoice in the happiness of his kingdom? It is everlasting. Do you confide in the government of God, because in his perfections you behold a perfect security of its joyful results?

Your confidence is well placed. The counsel of God shall stand. His kingdom shall rise majestic around him, and shout and rejoice in the blaze of his glory forever.

Seventhly. The sinner who dies in his sins, is the voluntary cause of his own destruction.

The decess of God do not compel him to sin, and election, when he has sinned, does not shut him out of heaven. He is voluntary in his departure from God, he is voluntary in loving the creature more than God, and he is voluntary in refusing to return to God by Jesus Christ. A complete atonement has been made for all his sins, and a free pardon is offered, if he will repent. But he will not repent. Christ is able and willing to save him if he will come to him, but he will not come. Aversion to God and his government caused his departure, and the same aversion prevents his return by Jesus Christ. God has built an eternal prison, and the sinner fits himself for it, and goes there of his own accord, in spite of all the restraints which God has laid upon him, and all the obstructions by which he has blocked up the way to ruin. God has done every thing, but just to exert almighty power, yet he will not turn. He will die!! He shuts his eyes; he stops his ears; and casts behind him Bibles, and Sabbaths, and prayers, and exhortations, and entreaties; he treads under foot, the blood of the covenant, and does despite to the Spirit of grace; and, through a host of opposing means, and while God, and angels, and men, are entreating him to stop, he forces his way down to ruin.

As the conclusion of this discourse, I would therefore expostulate with those of you, who, to this time, have persisted in your alienation from God. As an ambassador of Jesus Christ, and as though God by me did intreat, I pray you, in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. What defect is there in his character, that you should not love him? What odious attribute to justify aversion? What iniquity in his law to occasion revolt? What tyranny in his government to justify insurrection? Why have you rebelled? And,

seeing you may return, why do you refuse to return? What cause have you to distrust and oppose the government of God? Why are you displeased that he should display his power, and wisdom, and goodness, and justice, and mercy, in a plan of government known and approved from eternity? What difference does it make to you whether God chose from eternity how to govern, or chooses from day to day? Would infinite wisdom and goodness choose, at one time, what they would reject at another? Would not the daily counsels of God correspond exactly with his eternal purpose? What right have you to dictate to the Almighty, or to say to him, what doest thou? You know that he will glorify himself and bless his holy kingdom, and will render to you, even should he destroy you, perfect justice according to your deeds. Why then are you so restless in his hands? Why so jealous and fearful, that if a door of escape were opened, you would abandon forever his holy dominion? Did you ever hear that the Almighty erred in judgment? Do the angels of heaven alarm you with complainings? Can you adduce an instance in which God has done you injustice? Whence, then, this opposition? But you say (I know what is in your hearts) 'I am afraid God has determined to send me to hell.' And if he has, do you not think you will deserve to be sent thither? If he has, do you expect to avert the calamity by contending with your Maker? Would you turn back the arm of his power? Would you wrest the sceptre from his hand? Would you tarnish the glory of his name, and extinguish the joy of his kingdom, to rescue yourself from deserved punishment?

But 'is it my duty to be willing to be damned?' It is your duty to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and to confide in his government, and to be willing that he should dispose of you for ever, just as he pleases. Do you think such submission synonymous with damnation? It is as different as heaven is from hell. It is the temper of heaven, and your present rebellious

temper is the temper of those who are lost. But 'is it my duty to be willing to be a sinner, and go to hell, and be sinful and miserable to all eternity?' No; it is your willingness to be a sinner, which is now preparing you for hell, and leading you, step by step, to destruction. And should you ever enter the abodes of darkness, it will be your voluntary wickedness which will perpetuate your misery. God does not compel nor command any of his creatures to sin, or to be willing to sin, either in this world or the world to come. He forbids your choice of sin. He commands you to repent, and by Jesus Christ to return and live. He commands you to choose, not hell, but heaven, swearing by himself that he hath no pleasure in your death, and entreating, "turn ye, turn ye, for why will you die." But if, in the face of prohibitions, and threatenings, and entreaties, you will choose death, and treasure up wrath until you are fitted for destruction, you will then, if sent to hell, have no cause to complain of your allotment, nor any right to dissent from your sentence of condemnation; and your conscience, whatever your heart may say, never will dissent.

This day, then, if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. Repent, immediately; return and worship, and bow down, and kneel before the Lord your Maker. It is not tears, and feigned prayers, and heartless resolutions, that can appease your God. You are alienated from God, and you must be reconciled. It is hopeless to contend with God; you cannot conquer, you cannot escape, you cannot endure his displeasure, and yet you must submit or fall under it forever.—You are opposing that kingdom, by which the glory of God is to be illustrated and his creation blessed. If God were indifferent to his glory, or indifferent to the good of his kingdom, you might hope to profit from his neutrality. But God is not indifferent. His whole immense mind is awake to the subject, and glows with intense desire, and unwavering determination to effect his purpose, and all the resources of his power, and wisdom, and knowledge, stand prepared to

overturn his enemies. The government of God is indeed terrible to you, not because it is unjust, but because it is just, and you oppose it. It is rolled on by the hand of omnipotence, with all the ardor of infinite benevolence, and you have arisen up to stop its progress; and there is no alternative but to submit, and unite, and go on with God, or be crushed by his power, and consumed by the fierceness of his wrath. With such hearts of alienation, are you prepared to meet your God? Is death hastening to overtake you? Is the grave opening to receive you, and will it close forever upon your glory? Is the trump of God preparing to sound, and will it call you forth to the resurrection of damnation? Is there pardon, and will you not accept it? Are there boundless realms of light, and will you live in eternal exile? Is there a glorious God, and will you never love him? Is there but one prison in the universe, and will you make that your everlasting abode? Go, listen to the song of praise.—Go forth, and look upon the miseries of the lost, hear their wailings, and behold the smoke of their torment. Is this the society which you choose instead of heaven, and these the employments in which you would spend the ages of eternity? Is there one of you who has laid aside the hope of heaven, one who has resolved to wage eternal war with God? Why then do you continue the work of ruin? Have you not sins enough to answer for? Have not your souls stood long enough in jeopardy? Every moment you are multiplying provocations against heaven. Every moment you are despising the riches of the goodness of God. Every moment justice pleads, with louder importunity, “cut them down;” and mercy, with feebler voice, “spare them a little longer.”

The voice of mercy will soon be heard no more. The patience of God will not wait forever. His Spirit will not always strive. A hand's breadth only is between you and the grave. If you have any work to do, it must be done quickly, for death is at the door. This day perverted, may be the last you will ever see. This moment, your sun may be casting

its last beams upon the mountains. Or should you live, this day may close the period of divine influence. This discourse neglected, may be the last by which God will ever expostulate with you in mercy.

By all the joys, then, of immortality, and by all the sorrows of eternal death ; by all the mercies of God, and by all the terrors of his wrath, I beseech you, be ye reconciled to God. Submit to him, and he will rule for his own glory, and you shall behold his glory and rejoice in it forever. But rebel, and still he will reign, still he will bless his kingdom, but he will exclude you, forever, from its holy joys.

12-17

This book should be returned to the Library on or before the last date stamped below.

A fine is incurred by retaining it beyond the specified time.

Please return promptly.

SEP 11 1969 H

25 235

CANCELLED

NOV 10 1969 H

NOV

279 534

JAN 30 1970 H

2 CANCELLED 148  
OCT 10 1969 H

JAN 5 1976 H

~~4753~~  
~~50 82703~~



