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SERMON CLXVIII.

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THE GREAT KING.

MALACHI, i. 14. *For I am a great king, saith the Lord of hosts.*

THERE are few truths of greater practical importance than the one here announced; and none perhaps which men are more inclined to forget. Of multitudes it may be said, God is not in all their thoughts; and of others, that though they think of him, it is only as their Creator and Benefactor, *not* as their holy and eternal king. They choose to forget him in this relation, that they may avoid the conviction of their own responsibility. But forgetfulness of God, or of the relations he sustains to us, can never annihilate those relations. He is a king upon his throne, swaying a scepter of universal and uncontrolled authority. He is a great king, whose attributes it behoves us to consider, whose will it deeply concerns us to know and obey. This truth the prophet proclaims to the Israelites in the words before us, and proclaims it for the purpose of showing them the guilt of their hypocritical offerings. They had brought the torn, and the lame, and the sick, for a sacrifice, instead of animals "without blemish," as the law required. But what said the answer of God? "Cursed be the man who hath in his flock a male, and voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing: for I am a great king, saith the Lord of hosts; and my name is dreadful among the heathen." They had forgotten the majesty of Him with whom they had to do, and treated the great Lord of the universe with a species of disrespect which they would not have dared to offer to an earthly governor—a mere mortal like themselves.

To avoid treading in their guilty steps, let us constantly bear in mind the fact, that God is a great king—a fact immediately and emphatically asserted in the text, by God himself—and claiming on this account our special attention. Our object in the following discourse is twofold:—

VOL. IX.—1.

SERMON CLXIX.

BY JAMES RICHARDS, D. D.

PRACTICAL ILLUSTRATION OF GOD'S UNIVERSAL PROVIDENCE.

1 KINGS, xxii. 34, 35. *And a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness; wherefore he said to the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand and carry me out of the host, for I am wounded. And the battle increased that day; and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even, and the blood ran out of the wound into the midst of the chariot.*

I know of no doctrine either more absurd, or more impious, than that of fatalism; a doctrine which shuts out of the universe an intelligent first cause, and makes all events the result of a blind and irresistible necessity. So adverse is this to reason, that it would be difficult to find its parallel, except in the doctrine of Epicurus; the doctrine of chance, which equally excludes an intelligent cause from the government of the world.

But though both of these opinions have been embraced by men calling themselves philosophers, and exerting no little influence among their contemporaries, I have no apprehensions that they will be received by any in this assembly. We are too well fixed in the belief of an all-wise, almighty, and infinitely benevolent Being, to be drawn into errors of so bold and blasphemous a character. There is not one of us, I am persuaded, who does not feel assured that the Lord made the heavens and the earth, and all that is therein; and that he made them for some specific and wise design. There is not one of us who does not believe that He who made all things, must of necessity uphold and govern all, and govern for the same end for which he created. Nor can any man doubt whether the Creator has power sufficient to reach the end which his wisdom and goodness at first designed. Still it may be a question, how far his providential agency is concerned in the government of the world? whether it extend to all things absolutely—to things small, as well as to things great? to things apparently casual, as well as to those which fall out according to some known and settled law; to the *volitions* and *actions* of men, no less than to the winds and storms of heaven, and to the rising and setting of the stars?

There is a doctrine in the world which gives God a general superintendence of his works; but which denies his providential agency in minute occurrences;—a doctrine which supposes it inconsistent with the dignity of the Supreme Majesty to attend to every mote that flies, and to concern himself with all the slighter changes which take place in the natural and moral world. But such an opinion, it is plain, overlooks an important article, in which the greatness of God appears; viz. that he can attend to the minute as well as to the vast; and that without the least labor or confusion; that while he presides over planetary worlds, over suns and systems, scattered throughout the immensity of space, preserving among

them the order which he at first ordained, he can fix his eye on every floating atom, as fully as if no other object engaged his attention. Nay it is this stupendous fact, that God literally takes care of every sparrow, every insect, every particle of dust—that he sees them perfectly, through every moment of their existence; while his hand continually sustains and directs them,—I say it is this stupendous fact, more than any thing else, which shows the immensity of his wisdom and power. For what must his capacity and energy be, whose eye is at the same time in every point of space; and whose almighty hand works throughout his vast dominions, controlling all things, and bringing them to such an issue as he at first intended? Such knowledge and power infinitely surpass our comprehension.

There is, however, another doctrine, which, while it subscribes to a providence thus minute and extensive, in the *natural* world, denies it in the *moral*. It doubts not that every thing in the natural world takes place according to God's holy, wise, and pre-determined counsel. The abettors of this scheme are not only willing, but desirous it should be so.—They think it better that all events in the natural world should be under the control of infinite wisdom and goodness, than that they should be left to chance or necessity. But they cannot admit this with respect to the moral world. I mean with respect to rational beings; their volitions, their actions, and their consequent destinies. To suppose a providence here, extending to every moral being, and to his every action; and extending in such a manner as to give certainty to his conduct, and to his final state, they think would overturn the liberty of the creature, and impeach the holiness of God. Thus they introduce into the moral world a system of chance, and hold that there is no certainty in the actions of the creature, arising out of the nature of his being, and the circumstances which surround him, because this certainty would infringe his liberty, and render him a mere machine. For if it be absolutely certain that he will act in one way, it is equally certain, say they, that he will not act in another way, and morally impossible that he should; which, in their view, is to establish a necessity in his actions, incompatible with freedom and accountability.

Plausible, however, as this appears, it is mere human speculation, and pointedly opposed to the revealed truth of God. With this sacred volume before me, I trust it can be made to appear that God reigns in the *moral* world, no less extensively than in the natural; and though his agency here may be different, because the subjects of it are different, yet it is no less certain in its results; so that nothing does or can take place among men or angels, without being embraced in his counsels, and controlled by his almighty providence. I hope to show from the scriptures, and from the soundest principles of reason, not only that such is the fact—but that it is a fact most consoling and encouraging, and ought to be cherished by every mind.

Let us advert to our text. “A certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness; wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host, for I am wounded. And the battle increased that day, and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even; and the blood ran out of the wound into the midst of the chariot.” But I hear it asked, “What has this to do with providence? A man draws a bow at a venture, not knowing where the king of Israel is—or what cha-

riot he occupies in the opposing host, and the arrow passes between the joints of the harness, (that is, between the joints of the armor with which the king was clad,) and the wound proves mortal; but in this there is nothing miraculous—nothing in which the common laws of nature appear to be suspended, or contravened—nothing, in short, a whit more wonderful than what has a thousand times occurred; the most that can be said, is, it was somewhat remarkable that the arrow from a bow drawn at a venture, should have been pointed towards the king of Israel, while he was in disguise, and of course unknown to the archer; and that this arrow should have passed between the king's armor, and at a place where it would prove mortal;—still there is nothing here which evinces an extraordinary interposition of providence, or which shows that the event might not have happened, allowing the laws of nature to be what they are, though no providence at all were concerned." I admit the leading facts in this statement, and it is on the very ground of what is involved in it, connected with the history of the case, that I build the doctrine of a particular providence, extending to the minutest events of our lives. For if it can be proved that God's hand and counsel were concerned in the death of Ahab, and all the leading circumstances of it were ordered according to his sovereign will, then surely we shall have no cause to doubt that his hand and counsel are equally concerned in all other events relating to his creatures, notwithstanding the concurrence of human volitions and second causes, of whatsoever character they may be.

What, then, are the facts in this case? Is it not certain that God had determined Ahab should fall at Ramoth-Gilead? that he should fall in battle with the Syrians? and that the dogs should lick his blood on the very spot where dogs had licked the blood of Naboth, whose death he had procured, and whose vineyard he had seized upon with violence? All these circumstances, it will be recollected, had been distinctly predicted—and predicted not merely as events which should certainly come to pass, but as judgments which God himself would bring upon Ahab. "Behold I will bring evil upon thee," saith the Lord by Elijah, when he denounced against Ahab his displeasure for the murder of Naboth. And Micahiah assures him, not only that the Lord had spoken evil concerning him, but that he had suffered a lying spirit to enter into the false prophets, for the very purpose of bringing that evil to pass. But though the death of Ahab was fixed upon in the divine purpose, and all the circumstances of it fully determined, yet we see no causes at work for its accomplishment, which at all interfered with the uniformity of the divine administration—none which touched the liberty of the creature, or which differed in any respect, so far as we know, from the ordinary method of God's government.

The first thing which we notice in the history, is the *ambition* of Ahab. After a three year's peace between Syria and Israel, Ahab begins to think of former injuries, and to meditate an attack upon Ramoth-Gilead, with a view to recover it out of the hands of the Syrians. At an interview which he had with Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, he proposed to him to unite in this war, and to go with him to battle to Ramoth-Gilead. Jehoshaphat consented, but feeling more than Ahab his dependence on God, he said, "Enquire, I pray thee, at the word of the Lord to day." Willing to gratify him, Ahab gathered his prophets together, in number about four hundred—all of them, no doubt, the prophets of Baal—and said to them, "Shall I go against Ramoth-Gilead to battle? or shall I forbear?" With one voice,

and with great confidence they answered, "Go up, for the Lord shall deliver it into the hands of the king." Nothing could have been more grateful to the pride and selfishness of Ahab than this answer; nor does he appear to have the least doubt of its being inspired by the God of truth, and the God of battles. But Jehoshaphat was not satisfied, and said, "Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we may inquire of him?" Ahab replies, "There is yet one man, Micaiah, the son of Imlah; but I hate him, for he doth not prophecy good concerning me, but evil." A circumstance, permit me to remark, which in all ages has occasioned the Lord's prophets to be but ungrateful messengers to some. Micaiah, however, was sent for, and after being adjured by Ahab to tell him nothing but was true, in the name of the Lord, he frankly assures him that his four hundred prophets were actuated by a lying spirit, whom God had permitted to go forth for the very purpose of persuading him to his ruin; and that he would eventually fall at Ramoth-Gilead. No other effect was produced upon Ahab by this awful prediction, than to awaken his anger against this prophet, already hated for his former fidelity. He commanded him, therefore, to be put in prison, and to be fed with the bread and water of affliction, till he himself should return in peace. But, poor deluded man, he never returned. Without any constraint upon his faculties, he *voluntarily* marched to the field of conflict, sanguine of success; and like many a warrior, perhaps, was already rioting, in imagination, upon the spoils he should take, and the glory he should win. No precaution on his part was omitted for his personal safety. His royal robes are laid aside, to prevent his being an object of attention to the enemy; and his armor buckled on, the common defence against arrows, and other missive weapons. But all was in vain; God had purposed his fall. The two armies meet; the battle is joined. What see we now? The Syrian captains turn aside to fight with Jehoshaphat, supposing him to be the king of Israel; for their master had charged them to fight neither with great nor small, save only with the king of Israel. But Jehoshaphat is protected amid a thousand arrows. The Syrians discover their mistake, and retire. But where is Ahab? Perhaps in some neighboring chariot, witnessing this disconcerted movement, and felicitating himself upon his policy in entering the field of battle in disguise. Who knows but in the pride of his heart he is smiling at the prediction of the prophet, confidently supposing that his precaution will prove an ample shield against the foe. But lo! "a man draws a bow at a venture"—a man who does not see the king of Israel in the crowd. But there is an eye which sees him; and which, without disturbing the order of providence, directs the arrow to the fatal point. Ahab receives a wound, of which he dies at even. The battle is lost to Israel, and the trumpet blown, requiring every man to return to his country and his city. The king is brought back from the field, and buried. And while his servants washed his blood-stained chariot and armor at the pool of Samaria, the dogs came and licked his blood, on the very spot where dogs had licked the blood of Naboth; thus fulfilling the word of the Lord by the prophet Elijah.

What think we now of providence? Does it not go into events pertaining to the moral world, no less certainly, no less minutely, than into events of the natural world? Look at the train of causes issuing in the death of Ahab; all of which were necessary as means to an end, and just as certainly determined as the end itself. Ahab must needs go up to Ramoth-Gilead, or he could not fall in battle there; he must go up *voluntarily*, or the

order of God's providence would be disturbed, and a part of his counsel defeated; for God had said, "Who shall persuade Ahab?" And if he must go voluntarily, there must be a motive of sufficient strength to determine him; for it is impossible for a free agent to act without such a motive. But what *was* Ahab's motive? It is found in his own ambition to recover Ramoth-Gilead, and in the united voice of his prophets, who bid him go up and prosper. How came these prophets to predict his success, and with such entire unanimity? A wicked spirit was permitted to go forth for the very purpose of becoming a lying spirit in the mouth of these prophets. This is plainly asserted in the history; nor does it create any greater difficulty as to the holiness of God's government, than that Christ should have permitted the demons, at their request, to enter the herd of swine and hurry them down a steep place into the sea; or than that God should suffer wicked men to act out their violence on others around them. In neither case is God the author of the wickedness, but permits it, and overrules it for his glory.

As Ahab must go up to Ramoth-Gilead to battle, that the divine purpose may be accomplished—so must the Syrians come forth to meet him, with a full determination to resist his attack. And if the man who drew a bow at a venture had not been there, one link in the chain of causes appertaining to the king's death would have been wanting; or if he had drawn his bow at another moment, or given the arrow an hair's-breadth different direction, the death of Ahab might not have followed as the result. Here were a thousand agents at work, and for aught we know, millions of volitions concerned in bringing about the predicted event. But they were all in God's hands, and came at length to the issue, which he in his wise and holy counsels had determined. Nor can we say that any one of them was not necessary, and necessary in such a sense, that its absence might, without a miracle, have destroyed the influence of all the rest.

But whatever may be thought of this remark, two things here are certain:—1st, That God had purposed the fall of Ahab at Ramoth-Gilead, and that dogs should lick his blood, where they had licked the blood of Naboth. And 2d, That in the accomplishment of these events, three distinct orders of beings were employed, all of which acted freely, and without constraint. The evil spirit acted freely in becoming a lying spirit, in the mouth of Ahab's prophets; and whatever of wrong there was in this, it was all his own. The prophets of Ahab, and Ahab himself acted freely, in the part which they took in this affair, as did also the man who drew a bow at a venture. And the very dogs acted freely, though not as accountable agents, in licking the blood of Ahab at the pool of Samaria. No constraint appears any where. Every one acts according to his nature and circumstances; and the whole series of events embraced in this little portion of history, may be regarded as an illustration of that unsearchable providence which governs the world. True it is, that these events took place in an age of miracles, and that Micaiah, was employed to tell what was passing among the spirits in the invisible state; and both he and Elijah predicted the death of Ahab; but in the causes, chiefly concerned in the fulfillment of this prediction, there seems to be nothing aside from the ordinary course of providence, nothing more remarkable than what occurs in every period of the world.

Now, then, is it not manifest, that the free actions of creatures go as much into God's plan of operation, and are as much under his control,

as any events in the natural world? Does He not use them as second causes to bring about his purposes, as really and as extensively, as he employs the most insensible things in creation? I do not ask *how* this is done, or, whether you can comprehend the *manner* of it. My question is simply about the fact. Is not the fact certain? and is it not clearly revealed? Was not the volition of the man, who drew a bow at a venture, as really concerned in the death of Ahab, as the elastic power of the bow or the weight and sharpness of the arrow? Were not each of these embraced in God's plan, as means to an end, and alike under his control?

And farther, do we not perceive that the natural and moral world are intimately conjoined, so that events in the one depend on events in the other? The death of Ahab was a natural event, immediately produced by a natural cause—the arrow passing between the joints of his armor. But were there no moral causes inseparably connected with it? Where was the volition of the man that drew the bow, and where the volitions of Ahab, which brought him to the field of battle, and the volitions of other agents more immediately or remotely concerned? All these were included as parts of a series in the arrangement of Providence. If it were not so, it is perfectly obvious, that God could have no fixed plan of operation, even with respect to the natural world. Yonder is a city in flames, and hundreds and thousands are thrown as beggars upon the world. Had God's providence no concern in the event? Whose were those flames which burnt with such remorseless fury? Those winds which fanned them till they bid defiance to all human effort? Dare we say that this calamity did not take place according to the design of providence—especially when we read what Jehovah claims for himself as the supreme disposer of events? "Is there evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it? Who is he that saith and it cometh to pass, and the Lord commandeth it not?" But allow that this calamity fell out according to the divine purpose—that it came as a righteous judgment upon the inhabitants of a guilty city, and I ask, when was this purpose formed? If God be unchangeable, "and all his works are known unto him from the foundation of the world," this purpose must have existed from eternity, and existed in view of the sins which this awful judgment was intended to chastise. The sin and the punishment were equally certain in the divine mind. But how came the city to be on fire? It was the work of an incendiary, who did it for the sake of reeking his vengeance on some hated individual, or perhaps for the single purpose of plunder. Did he then, or did he not, fulfill the purpose of God? Most assuredly God saw him and did not resist him. Nay, He knew from all eternity that he would perpetrate this deed, and he knew also the consequences. *These* we have admitted were a part of God's plan; for they were appointed as a punishment of the guilty. Can we then separate this calamitous result from the cause, and say that one made an item in God's counsel and the other did not? that one was previously fixed and determined, and the other left uncertain? You cannot, I am persuaded, reason in this way. Receive it then as a truth, that God governs both the moral and the natural world—the *free actions* of his creatures, whether good or evil, no less than events which occur in the material creation. Were it necessary to add farther proof, I might point to the history of Joseph and his brethren—where the wickedness of the latter in selling their brother into Egypt, is seen to be a part of God's counsel, in bringing about an important good. "Ye thought evil against *me*," says the forgiving patriarch, when his brethren

were humbled for their sin, "but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive."

I might also refer to the Assyrian king, whom God sent against the Israelites for their sins—but the fruit of whose stout heart he afterwards punished, because, though he fulfilled the divine purpose, in the calamities he inflicted, "*he did not mean so, neither did his heart think so.*" "It was in his heart to destroy, and to cut off nations not a few."

I might, especially, insist upon the facts connected with our Lord's crucifixion—by which it appears that his enemies acted freely in doing those very things, which "God's hand and counsel had afore determined to be done;"—facts which settle the question, if the Bible can settle it, that the free and responsible actions of men are embraced in God's counsel, and are under the control of his providence. But, it may be asked, how can these things be? How can an action be free and yet predetermined? Our answer is, The *nature* of an action is not altered by its being predetermined or otherwise. Every action is to be judged of by its nature, and this is to be ascertained by comparing it with the rule of duty. An action which is predetermined, is supposed to be made certain; and this certainty is often regarded as inconsistent with freedom. But is the fact so? It was previously certain that our Lord would persevere in a course of spotless obedience, notwithstanding the temptations which assailed him; nay, this was a matter firmly settled in the counsels of heaven. But did this certainty of obedience impair *his* freedom? or render his virtue less the subject of admiration? It is impossible, we are assured, for God to lie. But is he not therefore *free*, infinitely *free*, in his adherence to truth? And is not his unchangeable veracity one of the glories of his character? The mere certainty of action can surely never destroy the freedom of action. Were it so, there could be no sin in Satan, and no holiness in God. With regard to the former, it is not doubted that he will always continue unchangeably inclined to evil, and will do nothing but evil. Does this destroy his freedom, and render him henceforth only a mischievous machine? God and holy angels will doubtless retain their perfect rectitude forever; but do they therefore cease to be free? In our apprehension there was never a greater mistake than to suppose that uncertainty of action is necessary to freedom. For was not Ahab *free* when he determined to go up to Ramoth-Gilead, and to join in battle there, though the event of his going was made certain by the voice of prophecy and the purpose of God? Was not Judas free, when he deliberately betrayed his master, though this perfidious act was predicted by the Savior, and was one of the causes which led to his crucifixion—an event which God's hand and counsel had afore determined? (Acts ii: 23—iv: 27, 28.)

What is it to be free, but to act spontaneously, or from choice?—which is in no degree incompatible with the divine purpose, or with the most perfect antecedent knowledge in the case. But if the subject cannot be explained to our satisfaction, let it remain unexplained till the light of eternity shall beam upon us. Let us not, however, on this account, call in question either the fact that man is free, or that all his actions are subject to the divine control. Both propositions may be true, though we should be unable to reconcile them. They may stand firm on their own separate basis, supported by proof which is clear and unquestionable. What we know not, we should never suffer to invalidate what we do know. We know that we are *free*, because we are conscious of freedom, and because God treats us as accountable beings. We know that he presides

over all his creatures and all their actions, because he has plainly revealed this truth, and because reason itself teaches us that creatures must necessarily be dependent on their Creator, and their agency be limited and controlled by his. Now what if it be so that we cannot fully understand how these two propositions agree; must it follow that either of them is false? We cannot fully understand the mysterious relations involved in the Trinity; yet we do not hesitate to admit the fact of such relations. We know not how matter acts upon mind, or mind upon matter; yet we have no doubt, as in the case of soul and body, that they mutually affect each other. Instead of boldly questioning, therefore, what we cannot clearly understand, let us remember the weakness of our faculties, and humbly sit at the feet of Jehovah to learn. I deplore the rashness of the man who denies his responsibility, because he cannot reconcile it with his dependence on God, and in the language of ancient infidelity exclaims, "Why doth he yet find fault, for who hath resisted his will?" I deplore no less the error of him, who because he is free and accountable, denies his immediate and absolute dependence on his Creator, and makes the government of God over his creatures, but a government of expedients—a government of chance. Let us rather believe, what God has so distinctly declared, That he "worketh all things after the counsel of his own will"—that "the wrath of man shall praise him, and the remainder of wrath he will restrain;" while at the same time, he "will bring every work into judgment," and "render to every man according to that which he hath done."

The subject now presented lays a foundation for several important inferences. I shall close, however, with very briefly touching upon some of them.

1. While we admit that the providence of God is a great deep, not to be measured by the short line of the human understanding, one truth is certain, that the universe is in his hands, with all its numberless movements, and every event, great or small, is under his control. Can any doctrine be more consoling to a reflecting and pious mind?

Who should have the government of the world if not its Creator? And where can all events be lodged so safely as in the hand of infinite wisdom? Is it not better that God should control the events of the moral universe—reigning throughout heaven, earth, and hell, with an energy which nothing can defeat, than that concerns of such infinite moment, should be left at uncertainties, and neither God nor creatures know what the final issue shall be? Without God on the throne, and a dominion absolute and universal, who could tell, but that "final ruin would drive her plowshare o'er creation?" But while he reigns, ye who love him have nothing to fear. You may be certain that there is no more sin, no more suffering in the world, than what he has wisely permitted and will overrule for his glory, that all the jarring opinions of men, and all the changes which occur in society, will be made to subserve the purposes of his government and to advance the holy and happy kingdom of his dear Son. In the language of David you may triumphantly say, "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice. Let the multitude of the isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about him, righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne."

2. The belief that God's government is universal, extending to all the actions of his creatures, furnishes special ground for submission under those painful dispensations in which wicked men are the immediate instru-

ments of our sufferings. David seems to have understood this, and to draw a powerful argument for submission under some of his heaviest trials, from the fact that they were appointed of God, though immediately inflicted by men. See him at that interesting moment, when he was driven out of Jerusalem by his son Absalom, and when Shimei on the opposite side of the valley cursed him to his face, and said, "Come out, come out thou bloody man, thou man of Belial." Abishai who stood by felt his anger kindle, and said, "Why should this dead dog curse my Lord the king? Let me go over I pray thee and take off his head." But David answered, "Behold my son, which came forth of my bowels seeketh my life—how much more may this *Benjamite* seek it? Let him alone, and let him curse, for the Lord hath bidden him." Such is the spirit we should feel when others injure us, whether by word or by deed—and the view we have taken of divine providence not only lays a foundation, but presents a powerful motive for the cultivation of this spirit.

3. Since all events are in God's hands, and he can order them as he will, we find ample encouragement for prayer. We perceive at once that there is nothing within the wide range of creatures or events, which he does not superintend, and which he cannot make subservient to his pleasure: of course, that we can ask or desire nothing which he is not competent to bestow—provided it accord with the purposes of infinite wisdom and love; and if it does not thus accord, we should most cheerfully relinquish it. But were the facts otherwise, and God's government did not extend to all the actions of his creatures, or did not extend to them with decisive and controlling influence—we might well fear that many of our petitions would be in vain, not because unseasonable or unimportant, but because beyond the reach of divine power.

Finally; If God reigns in the moral no less than in the natural world, and every creature in the universe is but an instrument of his power; how inconceivably important is his friendship, and how dreadful must be his displeasure? *There is no enchantment against Jacob, nor divination against Israel—because there is no wisdom, nor counsel, nor might against the Lord. Those whom he blesses shall be blessed, and those whom he curses shall be cursed.* Fly then to him, ye children of men, as your security; take refuge under the shadow of his wings. This is a safe hiding place. No storms of earth or hell can reach you here—nothing can befall you, which an infinitely wise and gracious God will not overrule for your good. *For as the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so is the Lord round about them that fear him, and he will show them his covenant.*

But as to you, who will not embrace this shelter, what must be your end? God will move on the affairs of his kingdom without taking counsel of you. He will fulfill all his purposes: one of which he has declared to be, to destroy the enemies of his throne. You may complain that you cannot understand the principles of his government;—you may call in question his power and his right absolutely to control the events of his moral kingdom; but if you do not submit to his authority, trust in his mercy, and obey his will, he will make his power known in your destruction. Fall then at his feet, without delay, and accept the gracious terms which the gospel proposes, and which have a thousand times been pressed upon your attention. He does not mock you when he holds out the scepter of mercy, nor does he speak without meaning when he tells you, that his wrath shall sweep away all the finally impenitent. Amen.