

SERMON.

THE GOVERNMENT OF GOD OVER NATIONS; ITS EVIDENCES; AND THE MANNER IN WHICH IT AFFECTS INDIVIDUALS

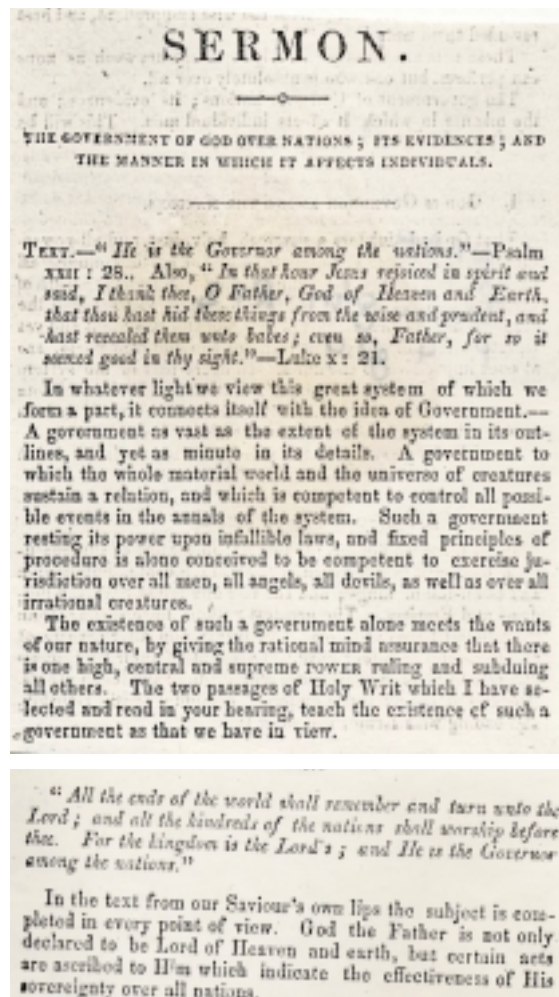
TEXT.—*“He is the Governor among the nations.”—Psalm XXXII : 28. Also, “In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, I thank thee, O Father, God of Heaven and Earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and has revealed them unto babes; even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight.”—Luke X : 21.*

In whatever light we view this great system of which we form a part, it connects itself with the idea of Government.—A government as vast as the extent of the system in its outlines, and yet as minute in its details. A government to which the whole material world and the universe of creatures sustain a relation, and which is competent to control all possible events in the annals of the system. Such a government resting its power upon infallible laws, and fixed principles of procedure is alone conceived to be competent to exercise jurisdiction over all men, all angels, all devils, as well as over all irrational creatures.

The existence of such a government alone meets the wants of our nature, by giving the rational mind assurance that there is one high, central and supreme POWER ruling and subduing all others. The two passages of Holy Writ which I have selected and read in your hearing, teach the existence of such a government as that we have in view.

“All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord; and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the Lord's; and He is the Governor among the nations.”

In the text from our Saviour's own lips the subject is completed in every point of view. God the Father is not only declared to be Lord of Heaven and earth, but certain acts are ascribed to Him which indicate the effectiveness of His sovereignty over all nations.



“Thou hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.”

These acts are strictly sovereign. They are such as none can perform, but one who is absolutely over all.

The government of God over nations; its evidences; and the manner in which it affects individual men. This will be the theme of my discourse.

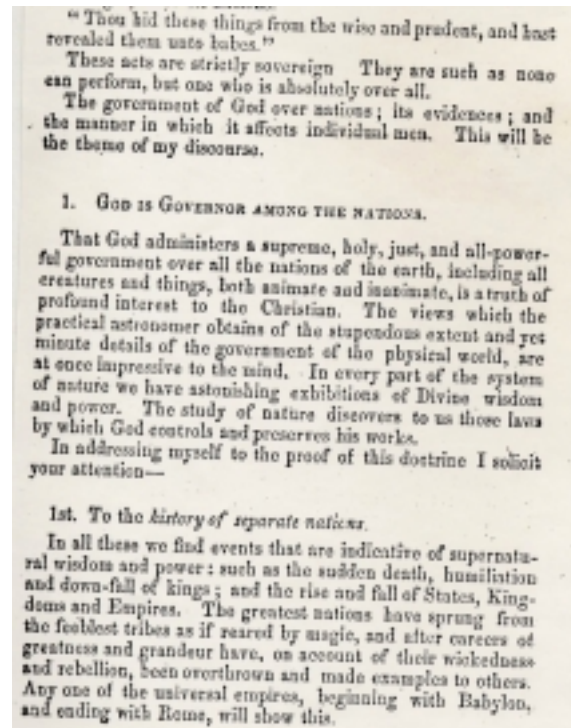
1. GOD IS GOVERNOR AMONG THE NATIONS

That God administers a supreme, holy, just, and all-powerful government over all the nations of the earth, including all creatures and things, both animate and inanimate, is a truth of profound interest to the Christian. The views which the practical astronomer obtains of the stupendous extent and yet minute details of the government of the physical world, are at once impressive to the mind. In every part of the system of nature we have astonishing exhibitions of Divine wisdom and power. The study of nature discovers to us those laws by which God controls and preserves his works.

In addressing myself to the proof of this doctrine I solicit your attention—

1st. To the *history of separate nations*.

In all these we find events that are indicative of supernatural wisdom and power: such as the sudden death, humiliation and down-fall of kings; and the rise and fall of States, Kingdoms and Empires. The greatest nations have sprung from the feeblest tribes as if reared by magic, and after careers of greatness and grandeur have, on account of their wickedness and rebellion, been overthrown and made examples to others. Any one of the universal empires, beginning with Babylon, and ending with Rome, will show this.



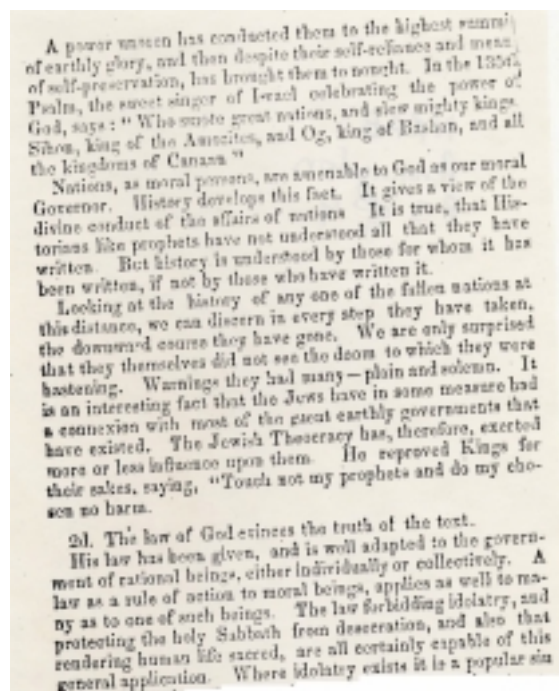
A power unseen has conducted them to the highest summit of earthly glory, and then despite their self-reliance and means of self-preservation, has brought them to nought. In the 135th Psalm, the sweet singer of Israel celebrating the power of God, says: “Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings Sihon, king of the Amozites, and Og, king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan”

Nations, as moral persons, are amenable to God as our moral Governor. History develops this fact. It gives a view of the divine conduct of the affairs of nations. It is true, that Historians like prophets have not understood all that they have written. But history is understood by those for whom it has been written, if not by those who have written it.

Looking at the history of any one of the fallen nations at this distance, we can discern in every step they have taken, the downward course they have gone. We are only surprised that they themselves did not see the doom to which they were hastening. Warnings they had many—plain and solemn. It is an interesting fact that the Jews have in some measure had a connexion with most of the great earthly governments that have existed. The Jewish Theocracy has, therefore, exerted more or less influence upon them. He reproved Kings for their sakes, saying, “Touch not my prophets and do my chosen no harm.

2d. The law of God evinces the truth of the text.

His law has been given, and is well adapted to the government of rational beings, either individually or collectively. A law as a rule of action to moral beings, applies as well to many as to one of such beings. The law forbidding idolatry, and protecting the holy Sabbath from desecration, and also that rendering human life sacred, are all certainly capable of this general application. Where idolatry exists it is a popular sin



—it is national. The fact that God gives such a law to nations that are prone to this sin shows that he claims universal sovereignty. That great principle of law which God proposes to apply to national conduct imposes obligations which are immutable as His throne. It is a law like God's nature which tolerates nothing but that which is right, and condemns all that is wrong. "Justice and judgment are the habitation of God's Throne." How then can he tolerate any injustice in the conduct of nations? "He hath established His Throne in the heavens, and His sceptre ruleth over all." Earthly governments derive all the *authority* they have from His. They are but tributary. Independence of God can in no sense be predicated of nations. His fixed and irrepealable law is the supreme law of earthly rule and empire. Call it the law of nature—the law of nations, or by what name we may, yet still it is there fixed. It is the habitation of His high and glorious Throne. "Mercy and Truth shall go before Him." This is the practice of Divine government—a practice which is solemnly and imperatively binding upon all earthly governments. As a lawgiver His authority extends and applies to nations in their organized and governmental capacity. This truth is fully set forth in the 47th Psalm, where He is represented as being a great King over all the earth, and as subduing all nations.

3d. The form of the *general judgment proves the existence of such a government as we speak of.*

"Then shall He sit upon the Throne of His glory, and before Him shall be gathered all nations." Here the figure of a Throne, and the idea of gathering all nations before one Throne, and one Judge, is at once indicative of that universal authority which can at a word call men to his bar. Such will

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be the day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by His Son Jesus Christ. His power will congregate the living, and raise the dead. His justice will condemn the guilty and deliver the righteous.

But to all this we may add the declaration in the text:—
He is the governor among the nations.” He governs all the nations. His eye is in all places beholding the evil and the good. His ear hears and understands every language and speech beneath the sun. His superintending hand is in all national matters. He has to do with the Throne, and with the Chair of State, the Bench, the Bar, and the Jury Box.—
The hearts of all men are in His hands and he turns them as the rivers of water are turned. The minds of all men are in His hands. He can control the thinking powers. He can communicate His own mind unto men. He can fasten conviction upon the souls of men.

In all his operations as our moral governor He has in view the best welfare of nations. All His creatures are dependent upon Him. He is holy, just and good. At the great day of account it will be seen, that not one single act, or word of any of His creatures has escaped his knowledge.

II. We are now to notice THE MANNER IN WHICH THIS TRUTH AFFECTS OUR INDIVIDUAL RELATIONS.

1st. *We are made to feel conscious of our individual responsibility.*

The doctrine that individual conscience may be merged into that of the multitude is unscriptural, and unphilosophical.—
We may as well advocate the right of the Pope of Rome to have charge of the private judgment of men as to concede to earthly government the right to control or bind the consciences of men. The conscience is God’s viceregent in the soul

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of man. He, as the all-wiseauthor of our being, has furnished us with this fuculty of judging. As an original faculty it must be under the immediate control of God. God appealed to this faculty and predicated man's duty upon it before the fall; and again even immediately after the fall, and before man had become amenable to any other authority. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." Again, "Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldst not eat?"— Here God speaks to man as a sovereign of his conscience, "Who told thee," &c. You are amenable to me. To me you must answer for the act. You have no sovereign but me.

In the fall the conscience of man was deeply corrupted, and became capable of perfectly selfish influences; yet still it was susceptible of Divine sanctions of right and wrong. It may be an evil conscience, such as is spoken of in the Bible. It may be seared with a hot iron, yet still is capable of being influenced by the right rule of action.

Thus, it is evident that the higher and more sacred *duties* of man grow out of the fact that God controls his conscience by direct influences brought to bear upon it. We have no philosophy which will just exactly describe the *modus operandi* of the influence of God upon the inward man. But the fact is clear that such an influence there is. Every conscience responds to the judgments of God in matters of man's duty.— Even men have this experience. Saul had it. Ahab had it. David had it. Man in every state is subject to these impressions. Through this faculty God constantly enforced the duty of obedience te Himself. That which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath shown it unto them.

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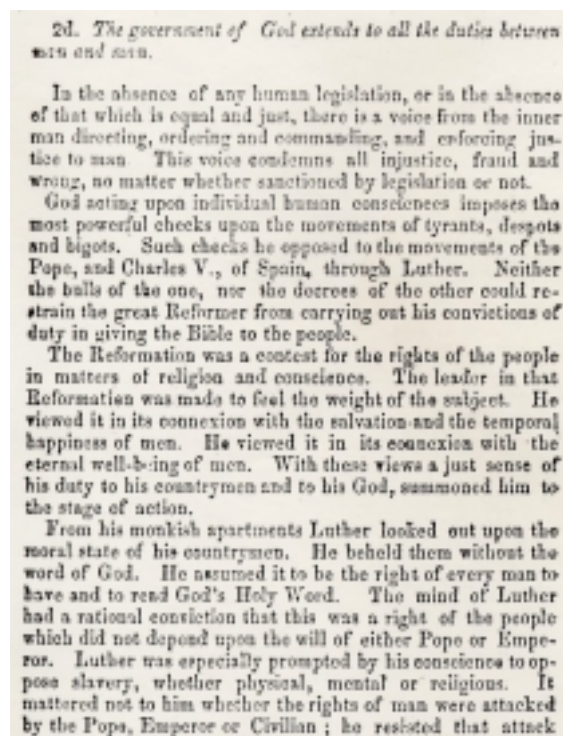
2d. *The government of God extends to all the duties between man and man.*

In the absence of any human legislation, or in the absence of that which is equal and just, there is a voice from the inner man directing, ordering and commanding, and enforcing justice to man. This voice condemns all injustice, fraud and wrong, no matter whether sanctioned by legislation or not.

God acting upon individual human consciences imposes the most powerful checks upon the movements of tyrants, despots and bigots. Such checks he opposed to the movements of the Pope, and Charles V., of Spain, through Luther. Neither the bulls of the one, nor the decrees of the other could restrain the great Reformer from carrying out his convictions of duty in giving the Bible to the people.

The Reformation was a contest for the rights of the people in matters of religion and conscience. The leader in that Reformation was made to feel the weight of the subject. He viewed it in its connexion with the salvation and the temporal happiness of men. He viewed it in its connexion with the eternal well-being of men. With these views a just sense of his duty to his countrymen and to his God, summoned him to the stage of action.

From his monkish apartments Luther looked out upon the moral state of his countrymen. He beheld them without the word of God. He assumed it to be the right of every man to have and to read God's Holy Word. The mind of Luther had a rational conviction that this was a right of the people which did not depend upon the will of either Pope or Emperor. Luther was especially prompted by his conscience to oppose slavery, whether physical, mental or religious. It mattered not to him whether the rights of man were attacked by the Pope, Emperor or Civilian; he resisted that attack



upon the authority of his conscience in the fear of God alone.

Liberty of conscience he claimed as the birthright of man.

The spread of the Gospel is involved here. The Gospel is the great law of progressive civilization. It is an express order of heaven's government that it shall be carried into all the world to every creature. The cause of popular education "Train up a child in the way that he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it."

3d. *Man's individual rights under the government of God*, come into view in the next place.

Every human being has a right to be, and to act as such. To possess life, liberty, and to pursue happiness. This right is given by the author of man's being—God; and it cannot be taken away by any power in the world. The same God who is governor over nations, is also governor over individuals. Man made in the image of God is an object of God's love and regard. The happiness of man is an object of God's government; the greatest amount of happiness to the greatest number of HIS creatures. To effect this happiness he has bestowed upon man certain rights and privileges under his own government which do not depend upon any other government.*

God-bestowed rights are common to all men. They may be invaded, but man never surrenders them. They may be impaired by oppressive legislation, but they are never abandoned. If misfortune ever snatches them from his embrace, the prompting of his conscience moves him to recover them. The most striking illustration of this principle is the American

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Slave in his strife and flight for liberty. God has inspired him with the spirit of the old Jewish Exodus in one of the most sublime fetes that ever occurred under his *Theocracy*.— A fete in which two millions five hundred thousand souls were led out of the tyrant's land under the leadership of one man.

Liberty of conscience is natural to every human being.— Conscience claims and exercises free speech. It tells man that he has a right to be, and to be free. It tells him that he has a right to have a lawful wife and children. It tells him that he has a right to enjoy, and have these in a state of freedom. That such are the convictions of the slave's conscience is obvious by the achievements made by the fugitive slave.

What rouses the most enlightened and spirited of the slaves from the Southern house of bondage, and sends them at all hazards in search of a place where they can enjoy liberty? The loud voice of natural conscience is the tribunal which charges every man with what he has a right to be, as well as what it is his duty to do. It tells the suffering slave what are his rights, and what are his wrongs. It prompts him to escape from his oppressors. Chains cannot bind him. Bolts and bars cannot confine him. The horse whip cannot deter him. Every fugitive who comes to our free district is a living monument of the power and daring of silent prompting by the sacred whisperings of the voice of God, and of nature.

4th. God is bringing the national conscience into sympathy with the oppressed. The whole world is now astir upon the great question of the liberty of conscience. The great war in Europe is a war of conscience against the tyranny of despots. Some of the old races are struggling for very existence. But in the general struggle the moving element is conscience. Hungary and Poland have more physical vitality than the Turks, and other similar races. But the weakest of these

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These men—the oldest of them—begin to see that they have awakened a spirit like to that which moved upon the face of the waters—the dark waters of oppression (which spread gloom and desolation over the world) in the days of the immortal Luther, in the twenty-eight years' struggle between England and Scotland, and in the seven years' struggle between Britain and the thirteen colonies.

The final campaign in this revolution will be fought in our land. We have here many of the unfortunate patriots of the down-trodden races of the Old World. Many from the masses of the European people are also here having their friends in their troubles. We profess to be the freest nation in the world. We have the largest number of slaves of any nation in the world, excepting the *Brazilians*.

For three quarters of a century the descendants of Ethiopia have been waging a powerful warfare against the tyranny of this Republic. Success has attended that warfare in this, that

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