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The Link

NORTH ROAD CHAPEL

BIDEFORD

THE TABERNACLE OF GOD

Part 20

“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me: In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me,) to do Thy will, O God. Above when He said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; Then said He, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins: But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.” (Hebrews 10:4-14)

Nineteen articles have been spent in this series upon the Tabernacle: its inception, the materials used, its fabrics and furnishings, and its function. Each aspect is so involved in itself, that it is possible to lose sight of the overall picture. Although great detail is given, the truth being set forth is one. It is a portrayal, in type, of **the New Covenant**. That which ever was the purpose of God, in Christ the Mediator.

This final article will be retrospective. The teaching of the Tabernacle is of such consequence, that I believe a review at this point to be prudent; for many of us are more inclined to forget, than to remember. A minister of the Word of God is to make ‘full proof’ of his ministry (cf 2 Timothy 4:5); thoroughly set it out, and prove all points from the Scriptures. This can, and indeed does, call for repetition. I am in good

company in doing this, for the Apostle Peter took the same approach: *“Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance . . . Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in remembrance”*. *“I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance: That ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before”* (2 Peter 1:12-13, 15; 3:1-2). Even a ‘pure mind’, not prone to forgetfulness, finds it meet to hear the truth again. Having this precedent set by one of the Lord’s own Apostles, I do not hesitate to do the same.

The Camp of Israel

The twelve tribes of Israel encamped in particular positions relative to the Tabernacle – three tribes on either side, with the Levitical families of priests in the centre. A most unusual and awe-inspiring sight this must have been in the wilderness – hundreds of thousands of people congregated into one great family. It serves to illustrate the pilgrim nature of the New Testament Church, and the order and holiness which are its defining characteristics.

The Tabernacle

In the midst of the people the Tabernacle was situated, with its single entrance, and the shekinah glory abiding there. It is a visible illustration of the heavenly dwelling place of God. It is a type of Christ, who is the ‘meeting place’, in Whom dwells all the fullness of God. It is a symbol of Christ in the midst of His Church; the communion of the Head with all His members.

The Ark of the Covenant

At the very centre of the Tabernacle, the Ark was housed, affording further illustrations of Christ. It was constructed of humble shittim wood, overlaid with pure gold, setting forth the human and Divine

natures that meet in Him. Contained within the Ark were a pot of manna (depicting heavenly sustenance), Aaron's rod that budded (priestly intercession) and the tables of the Law (of which Christ was the great 'keeper' and exemplar). The Ark was provided with staves for its transport, that it might accompany the people of God throughout all their wilderness journey; even as does the Lord Himself.

The Mercy Seat

The Ark was crowned with a lid or covering called the Mercy Seat, where the presence of God was specially focussed, and upon which blood was sprinkled on the Day of Atonement. Here is more wondrous typology of Christ – the place of conjunction betwixt God and man. He grants propitiation through His blood, covering the Law, with its demands and penalties, in order that mercy might be shown to sinners.

The Table of Shewbread

This table inside the Holy Place, with its constant supply of bread, depicts both the fellowship and sustenance that the Lord's people derive from Him, the Bread of Life.

The Golden Candlestick

Opposite the table stood an ornate, seven-branched lampstand, beaten from a single piece of gold, providing a continual source of illumination. It speaks of the light of revelation and of glory which is afforded to the saints through Christ.

The Structure of the Tabernacle

The Tabernacle was fashioned with solid walls formed of panels or 'boards', set upon sockets and held together with bars. This serves as a type of the Church – its many members incorporated together into one whole, each standing on the same foundation, and bound together in spiritual union. The ceiling, entrance curtain and veil of the Tabernacle were made from fine linen, richly embroidered. These also

demonstrated the person and work of Christ in their predominant colours. Namely: blue (depicting His heavenly being, Immanuel – God with us); purple (symbolic of royal majesty – He is King of kings); scarlet (typical of His blood, shed that His people might be washed and made fit to enter the Holy Place); white (representing His spotless humanity).

The Brazen Altar

This Altar, with its fire continually burning, and all its utensils and instruments necessary for making sacrifice, would be the first article to meet the eye as one entered the Outer Court. The victim would be upon the Altar, flames rising, and the whole area swamped with blood. Although this article is briefly summarising the detail in order that our memories be refreshed, I must pause for a moment at this point to emphasize the fundamental importance of this item; for the Altar sets forth the sacrifice of Christ.

The only way in which any one can come to God, and attain to Heaven at the last, is by way of the Altar of Calvary. Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins (cf Hebrews 9:22); and consequently, no access unto God. Only the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, can cleanse from sin and guilt. At the place called Calvary, the sinless, spotless Son of God was nailed to an accursed tree. That was the Altar upon which He was sacrificed.

The sinner's sin and guilt was laid upon Him. A Holy God transferred that iniquity to Him. In consequence, He stood before the bar of Divine Justice condemned. Thus was judgment meted out to Him – instead of upon the guilty sinner. The wrath of God was poured out upon Christ. The fires of a burning Hell encompassed Him. He descended into the pit of death and Hell, to destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the Devil (cf Hebrews 2:14), and so to deliver poor captive slaves of sin and Satan from the prospect of eternal torment, and the lake of fire that burneth with fire and brimstone forever (cf Revelation 20:10).

If I address any unsaved reader – understand it is only Christ and His great sacrifice for sin that can save you from such an awful and everlasting existence of woe and utter hopelessness. The blood-soaked, Brazen Altar was the only way to God for the Israelites of old. The blood-stained way of Calvary’s cross is likewise your only hope. Have you come this way?

“You must needs go home by the way of the cross,
There’s no other way but this;
You will ne’er get sight of the gates of light,
If the way of the cross you miss.

You will lose your load at the foot of the cross,
As there on the Lord you gaze;
With a lightened heart on the road you’ll start,
And your heart will be filled with praise.

You must needs go on in that blood-sprinkled way,
The path that the Saviour trod,
If you’d ever climb to the heights sublime,
Where the soul is at home with God.

For the Lord went first by the way of the cross,
He died on that cross for you;
‘Twas a frightful road for the Lamb of God,
Now a new, living way’s in view.

(J. Pounds)

Woe is me, if I do not make the glorious gospel of God’s salvation clear to you! Mercy’s door is open to repentant sinners at this very moment. “Behold, I have set before thee an open door” (Revelation 3:8) says the Scripture. “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden” saith the Saviour, “and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28) – rest of conscience,

peace of mind, yea, peace with God through the blood of His cross (cf Colossians 1:20). This is the timeless message of the Brazen Altar.

The Court

The outer perimeter of the Tabernacle and its court was defined by hangings of white linen, contrasting starkly with the wilderness round about, and depicting the spotless, sinless Son of God once again – He who is the fold or ‘enclosure’ of His people, and the only door by which they have access.

The Altar of Incense

A second altar was provided within the Tabernacle itself, but this was made of gold, and was reserved for the offering of incense before the Most Holy Place. In this, the ongoing mediatorial work of Christ is set forth, who appears in the presence of God on behalf of His people, and “*ever liveth to make intercession for them*” (Hebrews 7:25).

The Laver

It was necessary for those who served in the Tabernacle to have a means of cleansing, and this was granted in the form of the Laver; a large brass vessel of water at which the priests could wash. The Christian is also supplied with a means of continual sanctification, namely, the Holy Scriptures, the antitype of the Laver. For this is the will of the Saviour for His Church, “*that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word*” (Ephesians 5:26).

Interesting as all the detail is, and fascinating as the types in the Old Testament appear, the principal reason why God has caused it to be recorded is to portray **Christ**. The wonder of His person is set forth in the magnificent curtains and tapestries. The fabulous value of all the gold and silver used in this strange structure indicates the majestic glory of the one who left Heaven and came down to earth. That, not to give a display of His matchless power and Godhead, but to become the Lamb of God; to make atonement for guilty sinners.

Thus we see, not only the intrinsic wealth and beauty of this most ornate tent in the wilderness, but in the midst of it all: sacrifice, blood, death and fire – as day by day, victim after victim was led to the Altar of brass. By contrast – Christ was **once** offered. Those sacrifices, which were at the heart of the Tabernacle’s function, could never make the comers thereunto perfect. Indeed, it was simply not possible for the blood of mere bulls and goats to take away sins. But this man – the Lord Jesus – offering Himself as the one sacrifice for sins for ever, thereby perfected for ever them that are sanctified (cf Hebrews 10:4-14). The sins of all believing sinners are ‘remembered no more’, and they are made perfect in Christ forever.

Dear reader, I appeal to you again in conclusion: are you yet in your sins? If so, I must tell you, that the wrath of God abideth on you! Oh, prepare to meet your God, and flee from wrath to come!

“Come every soul by sin oppressed,
There’s mercy with the Lord;
And He will surely give you rest
By trusting in His Word.

For Jesus shed His precious blood
Rich blessings to bestow;
Plunge now into the crimson flood
That washes white as snow.

Yes, Jesus is the Truth, the Way,
That leads you unto rest;
Believe in Him without delay,
And you are fully blest.”

(J. Stockton)

God grant it, for your eternal blessing.

W. H. Molland (1920 – 2012)

THE LORD REIGNETH

[The sermon from which this article is taken was preached in 1682 by a man who experienced in his lifetime the English Civil War, the Restoration, the Great Ejection, the Plague, the Fire of London, the Exclusion Crisis and the ‘Glorious Revolution’. His words are highly relevant in these days of political and social upheaval. Subtitles are our addition – Ed.]

“The Lord reigneth; let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are round about Him: righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His throne.” (Psalm 97:1-2)

The state of affairs is oftentimes (and so it is at this day) so involved and confused, that we need not wonder if we see men of wisdom greatly perplexed in their spirits, and almost sunk into discouragement. The best of saints, whose hearts are most furnished and fortified with grace, would be of all others most subject to discomposure, were it not that they feel peace and comfort flowing into them from the remembrance and sweet consideration of a God above.

What good man could possibly have any tolerable enjoyment of himself, or possess his soul in patience, while he observes the eccentric and irregular motions of things below? The restlessness, tumblings and tossings of the world; desirable comforts and delights blasted in a moment; afflictions and troubles breaking in with a sudden surprise; order quite subverted, laws violated, and the edge of them turned against those that are faithful and peaceable in a land, and all things indeed turned upside down; wickedness rampant and religion oppressed; the spurious brood of Babylon clothed in scarlet and prospering in the world, when at the same time the precious sons of Zion, comparable to the

finest gold, are esteemed as earthen pitchers, yea, broken potsherds, and so thrown upon dunghills, or cast into prisons, and filled full ‘with the contempt of them that are at ease’? (cf Psalm 123:4). These things, I say, would soon break his heart, did he not see Him who is invisible, and firmly believe a ‘wheel within a wheel’, an unseen hand, which steadily and prudently guides and directs all things, is keeping up a beautiful order, where reason can discern nothing but ataxy and confusion.

Those that are conversant in the sacred Scriptures do find, that the flourishing state of ungodly men, and the afflicted condition of gracious persons, have proved to some of the saints so hard a knot, as they have gone to God for the untying of it; and to others it hath been the occasion of so furious and violent temptations, as had almost tripped up their heels, and broken the neck of their religion. Upon that very score, holy Asaph was almost ready to conclude he had ‘in vain cleansed his heart and washed his hands in innocency’ (cf Psalm 73:13). But if we will repair unto the sanctuary, and consult the divine oracles, and believe them when they tell us that the eternal God, our God, is the [Director] and Governor of the world, it will revive our spirits, reduce our souls into their right frame, and preserve them in a due composure when the scene of affairs is most ruffled ...

In the midst of all outward distractions and confusions, God’s governing of the world may, and should, be the support and joy of His saints ... As He made it at first, so He doth still uphold and order it. In a nation there are many magistrates and under-officers; yet it follows, none but the king is supreme, who authorises, influences, directs, and limits them by his laws. There are upon earth many governors, various forms of government; yea, the angels in heaven are ‘ministering spirits’, employed in special and weighty matters; but all of them are set up and set forth by God, and fulfil His pleasure. God Himself sits at the helm, and steers the course; He over-rules and orders all, from the highest to the lowest ...

The sacred Scriptures do abound with testimonies which may afford us full satisfaction in the point. When He was about to punish the world for the wickedness of them that dwelt therein, and to sweep away the inhabitants of it with a flood, He took care that all mankind should not be destroyed; but Noah and his family were preserved, yea, and some of all the general species of animals too; that so seed might be continued upon earth, and that in the ordinary way of generation; which was a famous and eminent instance of Divine Providence and its ordering and governing the world.

Besides that, attend to these passages of scripture: God, *“doeth great things and unsearchable; marvellous things without number: Who giveth rain upon the earth, and sendeth waters upon the fields: To set up on high those that be low; that those which mourn may be exalted to safety. He disappointeth the devices of the crafty, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprise. He taketh the wise in their own craftiness: and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong”*. (Job 5:9-13). *“I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no God beside Me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me: That they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is none beside Me. I am the Lord, and there is none else. I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things”* (Isaiah 45:5-7). *“The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles”* (Psalm 34:16-17).

He *“worketh all things after the counsel of His own will”* (Ephesians 1:11). Not only **some** things – those which are momentous and stupendous, such as strike men with wonder and amazement; but, *“all things”* – all is of God; and all, not according to the will and pleasure of others, but according to His own eternal counsel. His *“dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His*

will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?” (Daniel 4:34-35). *“Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father”* (Matthew 10:29). Scriptures to this purpose might be multiplied; I will add but one more: *“The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom ruleth over all”* (Psalms 103:19) ...

God hath a most unquestionable right to order and govern the world. It doth properly appertain unto Him. The belief and acknowledgment hereof do necessarily follow upon the owning of a ‘God’. To own such a being as God, and yet to deny or question His right to govern, is a gross absurdity ...

THE EXTENT OF GOD’S GOVERNMENT

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

1. The governing providence of God extends itself to **all creatures**, whatsoever have being, both animate and inanimate, the greatest and the least. He rules the stars: ‘the influences of Pleiades and the bands of Orion’ are from Him. He causeth the sun to shine, sets him daily and annual journeys, and when he pleaseth stops him in his course, and turns him back, when he comes out of his chamber as a bridegroom ... He makes small the drops of rain, and causeth them to fall upon one city and

not upon another. He feeds the fowls; and musters caterpillars, locusts, flies as his armies. Angels are His servants, absolutely at his beck, ready to execute His will; and by Him they are sent forth to minister unto His children, and to punish His enemies. He hath enraged devils in a chain, and both confines them and employs them as He Himself thinks good. He suffered one to be a lying spirit in the mouth of Ahab's prophets. He permitted Satan to do much against Job, yet kept him from touching his life. He cast devils out of the possessed, and gave them leave to enter into a herd of swine. He governs men too: keeping Abimelech from violating Sarah's chastity; and Laban from touching Jacob's liberty or goods and Esau from offering violence to his life. The meanest creatures are the objects of His care, and the noblest are over-ruled by His power.

2. The governing providence of God extends itself to **all motions and actions**. 'Without Him we can do nothing'. As a special assistance is necessary to gracious acts, so is a general concurrence to natural ones. Unless He support, we cannot stir a step, nor strike a stroke, nor speak a word, nor form a thought. God suspends the creatures' actions when He pleaseth. Thus He kept the fire from burning the three children that were thrown into it, when put into its greatest rage. He stopped the mouths of lions, and kept them from preying upon Daniel, when hunger was feeding upon them. And it was He that taught and commanded the rapacious raven to forget itself, that it might carry food to a prophet.

God orders and directs actions to ends never designed by the doer; yea, He makes the most vile and wicked actions subservient to most excellent and most noble ends. Adam's sin issued in the glorifying of God's name in a mixed way of justice and mercy. Pharaoh's cruelty made Israel multiply; so that the more they were repressed, the more they flourished. Rome's persecutions have been Zion's enlargements, and 'the blood of the martyrs the seed of the church'. Joseph's brethren's selling him was a step to his preferment in the court of Pharaoh, and a sending him before to preserve the life of his father and of his family.

The crucifying of our dear Lord Jesus was the saving of believers; and by His most precious blood, which the Jews and Romans most wickedly spilt, were all the elect of God redeemed from Hell and everlasting destruction. The king of Assyria thought of nothing else but to destroy and cut off nations not a few; but God sent him as an executioner of His justice to punish a hypocritical nation, and the people of His wrath. Thus God doth not only uphold His creatures in their beings, and assist and strengthen them in their actions, but He doth also direct, order, and over-rule those actions, so that their product and issue shall be admirable. Wicked men have base and sordid ends in the commission of sin; but God hath holy ends in His permission thereof: while they gratify their lusts, He fulfils His pleasure; and while they act like devils, He acts like God . . .

3. This governing and over-ruling providence of God extends itself to **all issues and results of things**, both good and evil. “*The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord*” (Proverbs 16:33). He is the fountain of all the good and comforts which we enjoy; for which we are under everlasting obligations to praise His name, and not to ‘sacrifice to our own net’. That the house is built, we owe more to God than to the workmen; and in the preservation of the city, God is more to be thanked and acknowledged than the watchman. It is unquestionably men’s duty to follow their callings, and mind their business, and study good husbandry; for the sluggard shall be clothed with rags, and the prodigal will be glad of husks; but if, after all endeavour and care, an estate comes in, it is more of God’s sending than of man’s fetching. ‘The blessing of God makes rich’, and not man’s diligence without it.

When you are sick, it is your wisdom and duty to send for the most able, skilful, and faithful physicians, and to follow the method and use the means which they prescribe; but when your distempers are removed, and your health is restored, you are beholden more to God, than to men

and means; for notwithstanding them, your souls would 'dwell in silence, if the Lord himself were not your help' (cf Psalm 94:17). "*The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong*" (Ecclesiastes 9:11); and "*promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: He putteth down one, and setteth up another*" (Psalm 75:6-7).

So, for evil things, we are too prone to rest in secondary causes, and care not to look so high as God; but whether we take notice of Him or no, there is no rod under which we smart, but God's hand lays it on. Eliphaz tells us: "*Affliction cometh not forth of the dust, neither doth trouble spring out of the ground*" (Job 5:6); that is, they do not come by chance. Though many things be contingencies, yet all things have a cause; to us, indeed they are casual, but to God they are certain. He Himself foresaw and fore-appointed them: there is nothing of 'fortune', but all is of counsel. "*Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?*" (Amos 3:6); that is, any penal evil, any afflictive evil. There is not a sickness nor pain that thou groanest under, not a loss which thou meetest with, not a cross that afflicteth thee, but thou mayest write the name of God upon it. He 'creates darkness' as well as 'forms the light' (cf Isaiah 45:7).

When things run cross to men's desires and interest and expectations, they grow tetchy and froward, and quarrel at this and that; but let this silence them, and work them to a humble and patient submission: that all is of God. Israel rebelled against the house of David: thereupon Rehoboam armed Judah and Benjamin to bring the kingdom again to him. "Stay", said God, "*ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren*", the children of Israel, "*return every man to his house: for this thing is done of Me*" (2 Chronicles 11:4). All good is of God; that obligeth us to thankfulness and grateful acknowledgments. All evil is of God; and that should teach us humbly, patiently, and silently to submit. "*I was dumb*", said David, "*I opened not my mouth; because*", Lord, "*Thou didst it*" (Psalm 39:9) ...

THE NATURE OF GOD'S GOVERNMENT

God doth govern the world **mysteriously**. So the text tells us: "*Clouds and darkness are round about Him*" (Psalm 97:2). As there are mysteries in the word, so in the works of God, "*things hard to be understood*" (2 Peter 3:16), many riddles, which nonplus and puzzle men of the largest and most piercing intellects. "*Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive Him: On the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him: He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him: But He knoweth the way that I take*" (Job 23:8-10). God knoweth our ways, and counteth our steps; but the wisest of men do not know all God's ways. His way is frequently 'in the sea and His chariot in the clouds', so that He is invisible, not only in His essence, but also in the design and tendency of His operations.

Those that behold Him with an eye of faith, do not yet see Him with an eye of understanding, so as to discern His way and whither He is going. Paul assures us 'His judgments are unsearchable, and His ways past finding out' (cf Romans 11:33). Some of them indeed are obvious, plain, and easy; we may upon the first view give a satisfactory account of them; we may read righteousness, equity, mercy, goodness, love, in them, because written in capital letters, and with such beams of light as 'he that runs may read them'. But others of God's ways are dark and obscure, so that they are out of our reach and above our sight. He that goes about in them to trace God, may quickly lose himself. They are like that handwriting upon the wall, which none of Belshazzar's wise men could read or give the interpretation of (cf Daniel 5:8).

There are ... 'secrets of state and government' which are not fit to be made common. But this may be our comfort: though God doth not now give any account of His matters, nor is He obliged thereunto, yet He **can** give a very good and satisfactory account; and one day His people **shall** be led into the mystery; and, though many things which God doeth they

know not now, yet they shall know them afterward; and when they know, they shall approve and admire both the things, and the reason, and the end. They shall then be perfectly reconciled to all providences, and see that all were worthy of God, and that in all He acted ... ‘as did highly become Himself’ ...

THE CONSEQUENCES OF GOD’S GOVERNMENT

First, I exhort and advise you that are the people of God, to **fetch support and consolation from this sweet and precious truth**. The times in which we live are indeed very dark and tempestuous. God is shaking all nations. Specially, it is a day of perplexity and casting down in ‘the valley of vision’ the church of God. After all our prayers, and endeavours, and hopeful expectations, things are come to a sad pass, and Israel is brought back to the Red Sea. We may now take up that complaint: *“Like as a woman with child, that draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain, and crieth out in her pangs; so have we been in Thy sight, O Lord. We have been with child, we have been in pain, we have as it were brought forth wind”* (Isaiah 26:17-18). The people of the Most High in all places are in sore trouble; ‘a cup of trembling’, full of ‘the wine of astonishment’, is put into their hands; and God carries it as if he were resolved to give up the dearly beloved of His soul for a time into the hand of her enemies. The antichristian ... party is rampant, and think they have the ball at their foot, and shall now carry all before them. But at such a time as this, let this support and quiet and comfort you; that however things go, **God still governs the world**. And that this may be sweet to you, follow these directions:

- 1. Make sure that you be in the number of Christ’s subjects;** such as have bowed to His sceptre, submitted to His government, and are devoted to His fear. If you have once ‘kissed the Son’ with a kiss of love and homage, you shall not ‘perish in the way’. **Then** you may

rejoice at the thoughts of God's governing the world, **when** you feel and are assured of His ruling and governing in your hearts. **Then** may the remembrance and consideration of His universal kingdom be cordial to you, **when** you find that He hath erected a kingdom within you, and that you are members of the kingdom of His grace. This is firm ground of 'strong consolation' and of 'quietness and assurance for ever'. If you have been made willing in the day of God's power, and are the loyal subjects of Christ's kingdom, then you are the favourites of God's court, yea, the children of His family, and you may promise yourselves that He will carefully look after you, and graciously provide for you ...

2. Heedfully look to it, that you **govern yourselves according to the will and law of God**. Then may you take the comfort of God's governing the world, when you are a well-governed people. When you wisely rule your own spirits, and order your own affections and your lives and conversations, there is a promise, that unto such God 'will show His salvation' (cf Psalm 50:23). The laws of a land protect the subjects, so long as they keep them: a transgression of the law is the endangering of a subject. "*He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways*" (Psalm 91:11). Their commission, as large as it is, reaches no further. When you leave that, you lose your guard; but while you keep your way, angels, yea, the God of angels, will keep you. Do not so much fear losing your estate, or your liberty, or your lives, as losing your way, and leaving your way. Fear that more than any thing. Nothing but sin exposeth you to misery ...

Though you may be sufferers for Christ, you shall not be losers by Him. "*Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God*" (Genesis 6:9), and he was secured in the ark before the world was drowned with the flood. Let the worst come that can, it is not so bad as carnal reason represents it: if a good man should be deprived of his temporal comforts, it will commend spiritual ones the

more to him, so that he shall the better relish and taste them. God's voice is never so sweet as when He speaks comfortably in a wilderness. If a child of God should be cut off by a violent stroke, he is thereby brought the sooner to his Father; such a death is the shortest way home. If enraged persecutors add to his sufferings, in so doing they add to his crown; and by making his burden heavy, they make his glory 'the more exceeding weighty' (cf 2 Corinthians 4:17).

3. **Let God's governing the world be the matter of your faith.**

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

To this end, be careful of this: that you do nothing to the prejudice of your faith. Do not you weaken that which must support you. What a madness was it for Samson to let his locks be cut, when he knew he should lose his strength together with them! Now, there is nothing in the world so prejudicial to faith as sin is. A guilty conscience doth always make a palsy-hand, which is tremulous and shaking, whensoever it goes about to lay hold upon God, and Christ, and the covenant, or any promise ... Guilt makes faith and comfort run low, whereas: "*great peace have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them*" (Psalm 119:165). They have peace in trouble, joy in sorrow, calms in storms, inward sedateness in the midst of outward

commotions. “*If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God*” (1 John 3:21); and if so, then comfort comes in from every prospect which we have of God. Let us then look upon Him whichever way we will, we shall see smiles and delights. That very appearance which is dark to others, will give light to us ...

[Secondly], I exhort and beseech you, to **evidence it unto the world, that your belief of God’s governing the world doth really support and cheer you** in the midst of the present distractions, when many men’s hearts are failing for fear of those things which may come to pass. The truth is, the day in which Providence hath cast us is a day of distraction: the world is stark mad; wicked men are mad upon sin and vanity, and superstition and idolatry, and mad against religion and godliness ... When there are those that make it their design and business to destroy and confound all things, do you rejoice in this: that God governs all; wisely, powerfully, graciously; so that those things which have the most frightful aspect, the most [distressing] passages which we hear of or meet with, are the products of an eternal counsel, and shall at last (it may be, ere long) issue in a happy [conclusion]. How ever affairs go now, God hath bid us, “*Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him*” (Isaiah 3:10). Evidence the powerful and comfortable influence that God’s government hath upon you ... by these three things:

1. First, by **keeping up your spirits**. “*Ye have need of patience*” (Hebrews 10:36). Ye may find, a little will not serve your turn. Lay up, therefore, good store of it; and then fetch out of that store; and “*let patience have her perfect work*” (James 1:4). But withal, “*cast not away ... your confidence*” for it “*hath great recompence of reward*” (Hebrews 10:35). ‘We will not fear’, saith the church, “*though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea*” (Psalm 46:2). Let ‘the wicked fear where no fear is’, but let the saints be fearless in the midst of fears. ‘Why are ye fearful?’ said Christ to His disciples, when the ship was almost covered with waves

(cf Matthew 8:26). He sets men above God in his thoughts, whose fear of man prevails against his faith in God. That man either is altogether forgetful of God, or his thoughts of Him are low and unbecoming. For certain, he doth not ‘sanctify the Lord of hosts in his heart’ ...

2. Evidence it by your **perseverance in godliness**. Hold on your way; make no use of any sinful means; neglect not any part of your duty, to secure yourselves, and avoid danger. Do not offend God; be not beholden to the devil for your liberty and peace. What though there be lions in the way? Go on, and proceed boldly, so long as it is the way of God. You may live by faith, while you walk by rule; you may walk believingly and cheerfully, while you walk regularly. The wound that a man gets by sin, will put him to far greater smart and pain, than all his sufferings for God and godliness would have done. He that purchases the favour of men with the frowns of conscience, will find he hath made a very hard bargain. Every step from God is a step to ruin: ‘If any man draw back, God’s soul will have no pleasure in him’ (cf Hebrews 10:38). Whereas he that walks uprightly, walketh safely.
3. Make it to appear by **the raisedness of your expectations**. So the church did in her low condition: *“Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy: when I fall, I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be a light unto me”* (Micah 7:8). At midnight she looked for the dawning of a glorious day; and so do you ... God will do great things, such as shall outdo all that his enemies have done. God’s last works in the world will be His greatest works, and by them He will get Himself a glorious name. And I hope He will speed it. *“He that shall come will come, and will not tarry”* (Hebrews 10:37). Therefore, ‘encourage yourselves in the Lord your God’, do your duty, and quietly wait; for your *“expectation shall not be cut off”* (Proverbs 23:18).

Samuel Slater (1629 – 1704)

EDITORIAL

‘Popular opinion’ is a significant force in modern society. Politicians wish to court it, retailers to serve it, the media to capture it, and the average man to follow it, in the interests of social acceptance and fashionability. The system of government called ‘democracy’ is founded upon it. This worldly mindset has even infected the Church; many congregations erroneously resorting to a ‘show of hands’ in deciding vital matters of doctrine and practice; as though the absolute Truth of God could be determined by a human vote.

Concerning ‘popular opinion’ the Almighty gives His Divine assessment: “*The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity*” (Psalm 94:11). Indeed, the majority view amongst fallen men can be guaranteed to run contrary to the revealed will of God: “*Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: . . . For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts*” (Isaiah 55:7-9).

To His people, the Lord gives this timely warning: “*Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil; neither shalt thou speak in a cause to decline after many to wrest judgment*” (Exodus 23:2). Where the masses are found, there error abounds; whilst truth is invariably the preserve of the minority. Thus the Christian who finds himself moving with the mainstream of the world, and in concurrence with the prevalent ‘spirit of the age’, has reason for anxiety and serious self-examination. To such persons, that commandment comes with renewed urgency, which says: “*be **not conformed** to this world: **but** be ye **transformed** by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God*” (Romans 12:2). May God evermore answer our prayer: “what Thou abhorrest, let me flee; and only love what pleaseth Thee”.