

the fulfilment of His wise designs. Sometimes "*clouds and darkness are around His throne, but mercy and truth go continually before His face.*" *It is the part of wisdom, therefore, to have understanding of the times in which we live.*

We know that God makes known His will to man by His Providence as well as by His word. In His word he speaks, but in His Providence, he acts, and by His acts, he intends to instruct, as well as by His words. His revealed will, indeed, in the Scriptures of truth, is more explicit and easily understood than the intimations of His will, as seen in the movements of His Providence, and His declared will must ever be regarded by us as the universal and infallible rule of life. But in certain circumstances, as His word helps us to understand His Providence, so His Providence helps us to understand His word; and although Divine Providence does not prescribe our duties, yet it does sometimes bring them prominently before our attention, and plainly presents new motives to their vigorous performance; and to understand the times is to be fully aware of the obligations which the character of the age imposes on us. If we do not live and act as the character and spirit of the age require, we cannot be said to understand the times. "We walk in darkness, and know not whither we are going." *Thus to have understanding of the times is of more importance than many people suppose.* Indeed on this point the Bible declares that "Whoso is wise and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord, but because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of His hands, he shall destroy them and not bind them up."

Never perhaps were times more significant than those which are now passing over us. This is true, whether we survey the political, the commercial, or the ecclesiastical state of affairs. Amidst confusion, and overturning, and strife of tongues, liberty is advancing. Light is flashing in all directions upon the surrounding darkness. How wonderful and surprising the facilities of intercourse with the remotest nations and countries of the earth. None of the nations of antiquity ever knew such a day as ours for useful inventions and improvements. It would seem as if the wheels of universal Providence, having long moved slowly, had received a new and restless impulse, and were propelled by an impetuous force to bring about important changes in the condition of mankind. The moral elements of truth and error are all in motion. The great and decisive battle between truth and error has yet to be fought. The war may be waged under the forms of Romanism and Protestantism, between formalism and false religion on the one hand, and the pure and spiritual religion of the Bible on the