

from their hand, and their dominion is gone for ever. He raiseth up one and casteth down another. He removeth kings and setteth up kings. Even their actions, little as they think it, are ruled by Him, determined by Him. However great and seemingly irresponsible their power, they can do nothing, except as the Lord permit. I say "seemingly irresponsible" because in this life there is no such thing. The most violent and relentless despot is hedged in by inexorable laws, which he can no more successfully resist than the vessel the rock against which she is shivered to atoms. While they move within the limits of His permission they are not independent of His will. Little regard as they have to His requirements, though they may consult only their own inclinations and make it their business to please themselves, yet they are but instruments which He uses for the fulfilment of His designs. The hearts of the kings, as of all men, are in the hands of the Lord, as rivers of water, to turn them whithersoever He will. In spite of them, or by means of them, He doeth according to His will in the courts of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. I do not say that kings or other men are treated like material things, and so deprived of their free agency and responsibility. I do not imagine that their actions are controlled and determined as the affairs of nature are: I believe something as different from that as it is possible to believe in this connection, something as different as is consistent with government at all. The Lord governs man as truly as He governs matter. We are of a different nature, and He governs us in a different manner. He rules us by motive and not by force. Despite all reasoning to the contrary, our conscience tells us that we have the power within certain limits to do as we choose. Freedom is granted wherever responsibility is imposed; and though freedom has actually issued in the voluntary rebellion of many of God's creatures, yet still even then the Lord reigns. He has set bounds beyond which rebels cannot pass. His creatures may offer opposition to His will, but they cannot overthrow his dominion. Foreseeing their opposition, He has woven it into the web of His great plan, and will make it all contribute to the accomplishment thereof. The Calvinism may be false, I should say must be false, which impugns the Divine character by limiting the Divine goodness; but the Calvinism which eschews the doctrine of chance, and connects all events with a Divine appointment must commend itself to every man with a right perception of the Divine. He who determined the creation of every atom must assuredly exercise control over the minds of His nobler creatures. If in the kingdom of providence and of matter He has left nothing undetermined, it is difficult to believe that there is any chance in the kingdom of grace and of mind. We may not know, nay, we do not know, how the freedom of his creatures may be made consistent with the Divine control; but we should not forget that God has modes of action of which we know nothing. Much as the problem may perplex us, it is, nevertheless, certain that the assaults of persecutors and the opposition offered by his enemies to the progress of His truth are as assuredly, though in a different manner, under His control, as are the affairs of nature. These things appear to us enshrouded in mystery. What then? Are we on that account to limit His dominion? No, verily, rather should our ignorance lead us to prostrate ourselves more humbly before His awful majesty, and to offer unto Him a profounder adoration. Committing all that concerns us to His righteous disposal without question, and without hesitation yielding up our wills, and identifying our interests with His, His supremacy will be the source of our consolation and the bond of our hope. Gladly shall we join in the song—"The Lord reigneth! Let the earth rejoice." This is our pledge for the destruction of evil and the triumph of good, for the ultimate prevailing of truth and righteousness, for vengeance on the oppressor and justice to the oppressed. He whose name is holy, whose heart is love, who died for us and wears our nature still, who doeth justice and loveth mercy, whose ways are righteousness and truth—He is the King of kings and Lord of lords, He doeth according to His will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. The Lord reigneth! Let the earth rejoice! Let the inhabitants of the world be glad thereof!

In the third place, this title foretells His universal dominion; and in so doing it does but chime with other Scriptures, which need not now be quoted, inasmuch as all

Scriptures, however much they differ as to the means by which such a desirable consummation is to be accomplished, are one in the belief, that the same Lord, who governs in nature and providence, is yet to extend His dominion and be the acknowledged King over all the earth. It is not for us to say in what way this shall be brought about. I cannot quite endorse the opinion that it is to be effected by a gradual, and gentle, and almost imperceptible process, just as the darkness, when the day dawns, gradually gives place to the light of the sun. The vision in which the text occurs, as well as various other Scriptures, seems to justify the belief, that the transition will not be thus smooth and undisturbed, but that great commotions, great judgments on the ungodly, frantic efforts on their part to hinder the progress of the Gospel, followed by terrible disasters to themselves, will precede what we call the millennial age. But neither can I quite assent to the representations of those who speak as if the Gospel had proved a failure, and would try to make us believe, contrary to the evidence of our senses, that the world is constantly going from bad to worse, and will soon reach that state of deterioration and corruption, will soon become so utterly depraved and hopeless, that there will be no remedy at all for it. While loth to criticise the utterances of men who are so manifestly in earnest and devout, I cannot agree, for example, with such writing as this:—

"Evil darkly reigneth;
Fought of love remaineth;
And the Bride complaineth—
Come, Lord, come away.

To write this, is surely to blind one's eyes to all the facts of history, and to view things, not as they are, but as the exigencies of a theory require. Nor can I see what good is likely to arise from the indulgence of such morbid sentimentalism. While it is at variance with fact, it is mischievous in tendency, because it puts an argument into the mouth of the adversaries of the Gospel. It may be—I do not know whether it will or not—that the millennium is to be introduced by the personal appearance of our Lord; but, certainly, the theory is not commended to us, when we find men attempting to ignore the blessed and manifold fruits which the Gospel has produced, by telling us that nothing of love remains, that the world is becoming worse every day, and is worse to-day than it has ever been before—I say we cannot accept the theory any the more, when we find men trying to support it by such manifestly unfounded assertions as these. The world is far from being what it should be, or what it will be, when Christ reigns. True, wickedness abounds in the most enlightened nations, which dishonours God and calls loudly for the efforts of Christian men; but, after all, Christianity, since the advent of our Lord, has effected no slight transformation in its character, nor is there any sign as yet of its influence waning. Why, it is more aggressive, it not more powerful, now than it has ever been. The dew of its youth is upon it still; and whatever reverses may await it in future, it seems destined, ere long, to realise greater conquests than it has ever yet achieved. But whether the grand end will be gained in this way or that, the one comforting thought for every Christian is, that, in some way, the cause of Christ is destined to triumph. His universal sovereignty secures this, being King of kings and Lord of lords, Prince of the kings of the earth, vested with unlimited authority, and wielding an omnipotent sceptre. The prophecies which foretell the triumph of His kingdom cannot fail to be accomplished. Error or evil may be tenacious of existence, and long hold sway in the earth, but ultimately truth and goodness will triumph. The struggle may be long, very long; but the issue is not doubtful. The fiercest opposition cannot hinder, will not even retard for a moment the prophesied result. Faint of heart and faithless, dost thou fear lest the foe should prevail? Remember, we have a King on our side, who makes the clouds His chariot and rides on the wings of the wind, and wields for His own purposes the thunder and the lightning of the skies. Let His enemies do their worst; let infidelity wield its polished weapons of attack; let Popery chain the Word of God, and light its martyr fires, and make rivers of blood to flow as in days of old; let the heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing; let the kings and princes of the earth plot against the Lord and His anointed, saying, "Let us break their bands asunder, and cast their cords from us"; let persecutors cry, "Havoc! and let slip the dogs of war," "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision." Their fiercest hostility will only manifest