

## Doctrinal Paper

### **"THE MIRACULOUS AND MYSTERIOUS GOVERNMENT OF GOD"**

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#### **Introduction**

God created heaven and earth and preserves all He created. God also governs heaven and earth, and His government is miraculous and mysterious.

#### **Theme**

God rules the world, heaven and earth. His government is miraculous and mysterious. God rules the heavens; He governs the good and evil angels. God rules the earth: the powers of nature earthquakes, etc. God rules the nations of the earth -- He permits wars and ends them according to His will. God rules and governs the Church. God rules every individual, the godless, His children. God's government is inscrutable, mysterious but wise. The manifestations of God's government should act as a warning to all nations and individuals, and as consolation for His children.

#### **Exhortation**

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

*"In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth" (Gen.1:1). God, the one indivisible, immutable, infinite Spirit, who is life, wisdom, holiness, justice, truth and power, the one and only God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost created the universe, the heaven and the earth. "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth" (Psalm 33:6). "For He spake and it was done: He commanded and it stood fast" (v.9). "God said, Let there be light, and there was light" (Gen.1:3). "God said, let there be lights in the firmament of the heaven to divide the day from the night, and let them be for signs and for seasons, and for days, and years, and let them be for lights in the firmament of the heaven to give light upon the earth, and it was so" (Gen. 1:14). God made the sun and the moon and the stars to give light upon the earth, and to divide the light from the darkness.*

The Word by which God created heaven and earth, is the personal Word, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who with the Father and the Holy Ghost, was and is from eternity. Under the breath of God's mouth we understand the Holy Ghost, of whom we read, *"The Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters" Gen. 1:2. "In the beginning,"* writes St. John, *"was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him and without Him was not anything made that was made."* Of this Word that was in the beginning with God and by which God created everything, all visible and invisible creatures John says, *"And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father, full of grace and truth."* God, the Father and the Son, and the Holy Ghost, is the maker of heaven and earth. By the Word of the Lord the heavens were made, and the host of them by the breath of His mouth.

God made the heavens and created all the angels, which, when they were made, were holy and without sin, and the number of which is *"ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands"* (Rev.5:11). He also created man and every beast on earth, every fowl of the air, and all the fishes of the sea. God said, *"Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air and over the cattle, and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image" (Gen.1:26).* God, the Triune God, is the maker of heaven and earth and of everything the whole universe contains. The fools say, *"There is no God,"* and all evolutionists are fools, who claim that in thousands of millions of years the earth evolved out of a large morass and mud, and that man descended from an ape. They know of no creator; but they are fools,

*“Because that which may be known of God is manifested in them: for God had showed it unto them. For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and godhead, so that they are without excuse” (Rom.1:19). “The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language where their voice is not heard” (Psalm 19:1f.). But because their foolish heart is darkened they say, “There is no God.” “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools.” (Rom.1:22).*

That God, the Triune God, created heaven and earth is an article of faith. *“Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.”* We confess, *“We believe in God the Father almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.”* But God not only created the world, He also preserves and upholds what He created in the beginning. By His word all creatures exist and do not perish, nor cease to be. God has not forsaken His work, as an architect leaves the building after it is finished, but by His power God upholds all things. Heb.1:3. The sun still rules the day and the moon and stars the night, and give light upon the earth as they did when the Lord made them. It is the Lord who keeps sun, moon and stars in their courses, and it is His almighty hand that regulates the movement of that wonderful clockwork in the heavens above us. When Noah left the ark God said unto him, *“While the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest, and cold, and heat, and summer, and winter, and day and night shall not cease.” “He clothes the lilies and the grass of the field and feedeth the fowls of the air. He gives food to the beast and to the young ravens which cry; He covers the heaven with clouds and prepares rain for the earth. He opens His hands, gives man his daily bread and satisfies the desire of every living thing.”* Psalm 145:6. So the Bible teaches us and so do we believe. God preserves the world and everything He has made; and He takes special care of His children who trust in Him. He will and can never leave nor forsake them. This is also an article of faith and likewise certainly true. God is the maker of heaven and earth and its preserver. He also governs and rules the whole universe.

We are to discuss and deliberate the truth of Scripture, that God rules the world, and shall especially emphasize the fact that God in His government is a hidden God, whose unsearchable judgments and mysterious ways we mortal and sinful beings cannot understand, but which are nevertheless wise and tend to the glory of God and the salvation of His children. Let us then consider the truth, God rules the universe, heaven and earth.

The Lord is God, the King of kings, the only God, who will not give His glory to any other, the supreme Being who is without beginning and without end, to whom the whole creation is subject and whose will every creature has to obey. God still governs the sun, the moon, and the stars, and the influence they have over man, beast, and everything that lives on earth. God rules the heavenly host, the holy angels and also the spirits of darkness, the fallen angels, whom He has reserved in everlasting chains unto the judgment of the great day.

The holy angels, confirmed in holiness, serve the Lord and do His will. Thousands of thousands minister unto Him and execute His commandments. They are ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them that fear Him. He gives His angels charge over His children, to keep them in all their ways. God sent His angel to Zacharias to inform him that a son would be born to him. The same angel came to Mary and told her that the Lord had chosen her to become the mother of the Messiah. An angel appeared to the Lord in Gethsemane to strengthen Him, and the angel of the Lord descended from heaven and rolled back the stone from Jesus' grave. When Christ was born the angel of the Lord announced His birth to the shepherds and a multitude of angels praised the glory of the Lord. God also rules the evil spirits, Satan and the mighty host of devils. When some of the angels kept not their first estate but left their habitation and rebelled against God, they were expelled from heaven. They are God's greatest enemies and eager to destroy His kingdom, and to seduce His children; they are the rulers of the darkness of this world, but they have to submit to God's government and obey Him.

Satan's power here on earth is so great and terrible that no man can comprehend it. St. Peter speaks of the devil as a roaring lion, walking about, seeking whom he may devour. 1 Peter 5:8. St. Paul warns us,

*"We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against principalities, against powers against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places"* and speaks of *"fiery darts of the wicked."* Eph. 6. We sing with Luther, "The old evil foe now means deadly woe, deep guile and great might are his dread arms in fight, on earth is not his equal." When Christ asked the unclean spirit who had taken possession of a man, *"What is thy name?"* he answered, *"My name is legion, for we are many."* Mark 5:9. Great is the multitude of angels which revolted against God and became devils. They form a mighty kingdom under Satan, the prince of darkness, who is the prince of this world. We are surrounded by thousands of evil spirits who try to corrupt us and fill our hearts with evil, sinful thoughts and desires. It was Satan who seduced Adam and Eve, and by whom sin entered into the world. Christ calls him a murderer from the beginning and a liar. It was Satan who caused Cain to kill his brother Abel. It was he who corrupted and perverted the whole world before the great Flood so that of the many millions that inhabited the earth Noah and his family were the only ones that feared the Lord. Satan filled the whole earth with idolatry and persecuted the children of God. He hardened the heart of Pharaoh that he refused to obey God's command and set Israel free. That Israel became a stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, that they always resisted the Holy Ghost and rebelled against God and His prophets, was Satan's work. He made David commit adultery and murder and put it into the heart of Judas to betray the Lord. The terrible persecutions under the Roman emperors, the massacre of the Huguenots in Paris, the slaughter of millions of Christians by the Church of Rome, the devastating wars that filled the whole earth with blood, are the devil's work.

When we consider the great apostasy in the Christian Church, when we notice the growing influence of Rome, which denies every Christian denomination the right to exist, and tries to get control over all civil government and to suppress religious freedom, when we see that so many of the Protestant churches become Christian in name only by permitting the most soul-destroying doctrines to be preached in their midst, when we consider that the difference between the children of God and of the world is almost disappearing, that so many Christians have become carnally and worldly minded, when we look at the terrible devastation of whole countries by war, the indiscriminate bombing of cities by which thousands of women and children are slain, when we think of the latest invention, the atomic bomb, which in a few seconds can lay the largest city in ruins and kill all its inhabitants, then we partly understand what the apostle means when he speaks of the wiles of the devil, of principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world spiritual wickedness in high places. We are inclined to ask, Does God still rule the world? Satan is the prince of darkness, the prince of the world, and sinister is his power. Who other than the devil could have inspired the communist Commissary for Education Lunarcharsky to write thus: "We hate Christians. Even the best of them must be regarded as our enemies. They preach love to one's neighbours and pity, which is contrary to our principles. Christian love is a hindrance to the development of the revolution. Down with love for one's neighbour. What we want is hatred. We must know how to hate. For only at this price can we conquer the Universe." Think of the atomic bomb in the hands of such a man and his party! Does God rule the world? Who can see His almighty hand?

Even the world begins to notice this sinister power of Satan. Some years ago the "British Weekly" wrote: "Is there a sinister brain behind our troubles? Has the human race a public enemy number one? Anyone who ponders the recent trend of things is certainly tempted to entertain the suspicion that there may be a brain working behind the frustration and confusion of the European and the world scene. Certainly, if there is such a brain and if its purpose with our generation is to put back the clock of sane and human art of life; and if there should be all the while a planning, operating intelligence whose purpose is to checkmate man -- to lead him to suspect himself and to be afraid -- I do not see how during the last few years such an intelligence could have contrived a larger strategy and diabolic ingenuity." The writer might find an answer to his question in the political conditions of the world; but we Christians know the public enemy number one who has his hands in all the dirty politics of the nations, and leads them to rebellion, war, and bloodshed. It is the devil with the multitude of evil angels who, knowing that their time is limited, seek the destruction of the world and cause indescribable chaos. But his power is limited. God rules the world.

The late Ramsay MacDonald, Prime Minister of Great Britain, said: "People are beginning to feel that something devilish is going on. It was as though we are in the grip of some sinister fate." Commenting on the unrest of Europe the Right Honourable David Lloyd George said: "There is in the background the sinister

figure of that foe which used to be known by our Puritan forefathers as the devil. I never saw his name in the casualty list. Every day science is brought under contribution to discover new methods to destroy life; in fact, there exists a deep-laid and powerfully concerted plot against civilization.”

Satan is the prince of the power of the air, the spirit *“that now worketh in the children of disobedience,”* says the Apostle. He is the ruler of the darkness of this world. Christ Himself calls Him the Prince of this world. John 14:30. He rules the world; great, indescribably great, is his power, in earth is not his equal. Yet, his power is limited; there is still a mightier one than the devil, the Lord of Hosts. God, the almighty, the maker of heaven and earth, He rules and governs the universe. He rules heaven and hell, the good and the evil angels. Great is the power of the angels, terrible is the might of the devil, but God is the almighty, whom the whole creation must obey. *“Come out of the man,”* Christ commanded the unclean spirit, and the devil left the man he had possessed. Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, and destroyed them.

God rules the world and all who live therein. We read in Psalm 33: *“The Lord looketh from heaven; He beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of His habitation He looketh upon the inhabitants of the earth. He fashioneth their hearts alike. He considers all their works.”* v.13f. Here God is spoken of as the Governor of the Universe, especially as the ruler of mankind who does not allow human events to take their course without His will, but shapes the course of every individual as such, as well as the course of every nation. What we call history is really nothing but the traceable outlines of what God has been doing among the nations of the world. Everything comes to pass according to His will, there is no such thing as chance or blind fate. For in Him we live and move and have our being, as even Greek poets and philosophers admit, and every man's conscience testifies. Our lives are guided by Him. Every breath and step is governed by His will. Whosoever denies this truth will never understand the history of the world and of the Church.

God rules the world, He governs the earth. He has filled it with all kinds of minerals with silver and gold and iron ore and with many precious stones. *“The silver is mine and the gold is mine, says the Lord of hosts.”* Mal.2:8. He made it for the benefit of men and teaches them where and how to find it. God made the grass and the herbs for men and beast and still clothes the lilies of the field and the flowers with a beauty which far exceeds the glory of King Solomon's raiment. The flora of the earth with its thousands of species is a miracle of God's creation and government. God rules the earth. He lets man have a look into nature's workshop, into its powers and mysteries, and enlightens man's faculties to solve the mysteries and use the power to serve mankind. The invention of steampower, of railways, electricity, the telephone, the radio, the atomic bomb reveals the unfathomable power and wisdom of God, who makes nature's secrets known to men to His glory and the benefit of man. But so great is man's corruption and the pride of the world's scientists that, instead of giving God all the glory man has made science his God, and denies His eternal power and wisdom, and uses these inventions for personal purposes and profit, and to the detriment of his fellow men and the whole community. Owing to this attitude man, instead of being a master has become a slave to machinery, and millions of labourers have become unemployed. Capitalists no longer need many labourers, because the machine does their work. Thus the world becomes filled with class hatred, with strikes and uproar. But all this does not happen by chance or by blind fate, God rules, governs everything. Man by his sinful nature always opposes God and tries to rob Him of His honour. So God lets him go his own way till he finds out himself that pride causes a man to fall. He rules men even in their pride and governs whatever they do.

Though the printing press and the radio are great blessings, what indescribable harm can be done to many millions by an immoral, godless press and a wireless placed in the service of unbelief and immorality. With most men the daily paper has taken the place of the Bible. They always have time to read the paper but no time to search the Scriptures. A section of the press, controlled to-day by unscrupulous proprietors and irresponsible politicians has a demoralizing influence over the masses which take as truth what they see in print and suffer their hearts to be poisoned by lies and insinuations. Most modern novels also exert an evil influence, and should not be permitted to enter a Christian home. They tend to undermine all Christian virtues, to pervert the heart and poison the mind. Millions of Christians have lost their faith through immoral literature, which has also led thousands of married people from the altar to the divorce court.

The radio, too, can be demoralizing, when it broadcasts immoral doubtful stories, spoils the taste for good, beautiful music by jazz and induces people to visit the ball rooms. But the press as well as the radio are under God's rule and government. He makes His children use these inventions for building up His kingdom and destroying the works of Satan. Christ has commanded His disciples to preach the Gospel to all nations, and has enabled them most effectively to do so by giving to men the printing press. Who can describe the blessings derived from this invention? The Bible, for instance, is printed in over one thousand languages and dialects, and millions of copies are annually distributed all over the earth. The same refers to Christian tracts, by means of which God, often in a miraculous way, has saved many souls and brought whole countries to the knowledge of the Saviour. And who can overestimate the influence of the radio, placed into the service of the Lord, by which the Gospel is brought to the uttermost ends of the world and Christ crucified made known to lost but redeemed sinners. God rules and governs the world. However, the children of the world abuse God's gifts, they cannot hinder them from effecting and doing that for which they were given. A very evil influence is exerted also by the picture shows, a wonderful invention but abused in the service of the world, the lust of the flesh. Those who frequently attend the picture shows are in danger of becoming estranged from the Church.

God rules the world, He governs everything. Nothing can happen without His will, without His permission. *"Shall there be evil in the city and the Lord hath not done it?"* says the Lord. Amos 3: 6. There are no chance happenings, no casual events in the history of the world or of man; everything is done according to God's will and happens according to His plans. Heavy floods, earthquakes, thunderstorms, conflagrations, tornadoes, typhoons, etc., by which large cities have been destroyed and millions of men have been killed, though they may have, and indeed have natural causes, happen in accordance with God's knowledge, and He permits them for His own purposes, namely, His glory, the salvation of mankind, and the punishment of evil.

In the year 1755 two-thirds of the city of Lisbon was destroyed by an earthquake. The awful severity of the great earthquakes which destroyed so many cities in the year 1906 will long be remembered, especially the dreadful experience through which San Francisco and many other places on the west coast of America passed in April of that year. Without inkling of the dire destruction that awaited them, the people of California retired for the night to be rudely awakened at 5:15am the next morning by an earthquake shock which caused many to cry out: "The world has come to an end, the judgment day has come." Within thirty seconds cities, the construction of which had occupied many years, were laid in ruins. In the same year Valparaiso and the surrounding district were laid in ruins, and Santiago, a city of 400,000 people, suffered also in the wholesale destruction of its seaport. On December 28 the beautiful city of Messina was destroyed by earthquake and on January 14, 1907, the city of Kingston, Jamaica, passed through a similar experience to that of San Francisco. By far the greater part of the houses was completely wrecked. In order to prevent the outbreak of pestilence carloads of mangled bodies had to be cremated. Was it God or was it the devil who caused all this destruction? It happened in accordance with God's knowledge and plans.

In 1866 a conflagration laid a great part of London in ruins. In 1871 a large part of Chicago was destroyed by fire, caused by a burning lantern which a girl dropped in a barn. Similar conflagrations took place some years ago in South Australia and Victoria when fire swept over the country and on September 8, 1900, a mighty tidal wave swept over Galveston, U.S.A., causing death and destruction.

God rules the earth, He governs the storm, the clouds, the hail, the fire, earthquake, and other phenomena of nature; nothing can happen without His knowledge or permission.

Has the devil anything to do with these disasters? He certainly has, for He is the cause of all the evil here on earth, but God controls him. It was Satan who moved the Sabeans and Chaldeans to rob Job of all his property and kill all his servants and made fire from heaven kill his sheep and shepherds; and again it was the devil who caused a great wind from the wilderness to smite and destroy the large house in which Job's children were eating and drinking, so that all perished. But God permitted him to do so. We may certainly believe that in all the turmoil of this world, in wars, rebellions, strikes and the many accidents on land, sea, and in the air Satan plays a most important part and is responsible for them. But God rules and governs

every thing. Nothing can or does happen against His will. He certainly hates the evil and the sin, but He makes use of the sinner and the evil to carry out His plans. Judas betrayed the Lord and the high priest and the elders delivered Him unto the Gentiles; it was the greatest sin ever committed. But this very sin carried out God's plan of salvation. Judas' betrayal and Christ's death were foretold hundreds of years before, and had to take place. We therefore hear the Lord saying, *"Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into glory?"* Luke 24:26. And again, *"These are the words which I spake unto you while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses and in the psalms concerning me."* And to Peter, who tried to defend Him in Gethsemane, He said, *"Put up again thy sword into his place. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"* Matt. 26:52. The plan of man's salvation had to be carried out. Again and again we read, *"Now this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet,"* Matt. 1:22. God governs everything. God made use of Judas' sin, of the hatred of the Pharisees, of the blindness of the Jews, of the injustice of Pontius Pilate, of the frivolity of the soldiers under the cross, to fulfil all His prophecies and to carry out His plan of salvation. Though He hated the sin and punished the sinners He governed their actions. They fulfilled the prophecies not by an absolute decree or absolute necessity but by the necessity of circumstance. Judas was warned even in the night when he betrayed the Lord, but hardening his heart he permitted the devil to enter it. The necessary consequences were that He betrayed the Lord.

God governs the world. When God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually, He said, *"I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth, both man and beast and the fowls of the air";* and the great Flood came and all flesh died that moved upon the earth, and the whole human race perished in the water, except Noah and his family, eight persons altogether.

When the sons of Noah and their descendants went to build a city and a great tower, whose top was to reach unto heaven, God confounded their language and scattered them abroad upon the face of the earth. Gen.11. When the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah cried to God, the Lord destroyed the cities by fire that fell from heaven and the whole plain of the Jordan which was like the Garden of Eden, became a desert, and the Dead Sea covers the ground where Sodom and Gomorrah were once situated. God rules the world. He governs the nations of the earth. He removeth kings and setteth up kings. When Pharaoh rebelled against God he perished in the Red Sea with his whole army. When Saul disobeyed the Lord, Samuel, the prophet, said to him, *"Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, He hath also rejected thee from being king"* (1 Sam. 15), and God commanded Samuel to go to Bethlehem and anoint one of Jesse's sons to be the king of Israel. The history of the nations is written by the Lord Himself. He revealed unto King Nebuchadnezzar the future and what would happen in his latter days. After him a kingdom would arise inferior to his, and another kingdom which would rule over the earth. And the fourth kingdom would be strong as iron. In the succeeding kingdoms of the Medes and Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans, this prophecy was fulfilled. God has made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation. Acts 17:27. He divideth to the nations their inheritance and says to the conqueror, *"Hitherto shalt thou come but no further."*

To the mighty city of Tyrus God through Ezekiel prophesied her doom, saying, *"Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causes the waves to come up. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus and break down the towers. I will also scrape her dust from her and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea, for I have spoken it saith the Lord God"* (26:3). This prophecy has been verbally fulfilled, also those against Nineveh, Capernaum, and Jerusalem.

In Deut. 28 we read of the terrible curse that would come upon Israel, if they should not hearken unto the voice of the Lord and observe all His commandments. *"The Lord shall scatter thee among all people from one end of the earth unto the other."* How have all these prophecies against Israel, even in the smallest details, been fulfilled and how thoroughly and explicitly do all these fulfillments prove that God rules the nations, every nation!

Where are the 600,000 men that left Egypt for Canaan, the promised land? All of them except two perished in the desert according to God's decree. Where are the kingdoms of Assyria and Babylon, of Greece and Rome? They no longer exist, they disappeared from the face of the earth with all their glory. The pyramids still proclaim the splendour and power of ancient Egypt, but the land of today has lost its glory. God rules the world. The mightiest kingdom and empire is nothing but dust and ashes before the Lord. He speaketh and it is gone, and it is soon forgotten.

God governs the nations of the earth. He permits wars and ends them according to His will. When He led Israel to Canaan, He commanded them to destroy all hostile nations. The strong fortified city of Jericho was destroyed by God's mighty power and all her inhabitants were slain. To Saul the Lord said, *"I remember that which Amalek did to Israel, how he laid wait for him in the way when he came up from Egypt. Now go and smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have and spare them not, but slay both men and women, infant and suckling, ox and sheep camel and ass,"* 1 Sam. 15:2. Israel was formerly a very warlike nation, but their warriors were none of those noted heroes and professed conquerors whose business it was to ravish cities and provinces and bring foreign nations under their dominion merely for the sake of governing them or for glory's sake; there were commonly wise and valiant generals, raised up to fight the battles of the Lord and to exterminate His enemies. Such were Joshua, Caleb, Gideon, Sampson, David, and Josiah, who were known as God-fearing men. God led Israel to Canaan to occupy the country. He elected Gideon to liberate Israel from the Midianites, who greatly troubled them, and called Samson to fight the Philistines. God sent Nebuchadnezzar to occupy Jerusalem and keep Judah seventy years in captivity, and induced Cyrus to send the Jews back to rebuild the city and the holy temple. The Romans were an instrument in God's hands to occupy the holy land and destroy Jerusalem. Titus intended to save the beautiful temple but could not hinder its destruction, for Christ had predicted that not one stone would be left upon the other. Matt. 24:2.

Wars are instigated by Satan who fills the hearts of men with greed, selfishness, hatred, enmity, envy, vengeance, and has many means to lead men and whole nations to wars and bloodshed. Who does not know something of sordid trade wars, made and carried on solely for the purpose of monopolizing business and commerce? -- Gold mines, oil or diamond fields are great inducements for one country to invade another where these fields are found. The history of the Indians in America and the suppression of natives in other countries clearly manifest the rapacity of the invaders who, led by the devil, exterminated whole nations. -- In war times Satan gathers in the richest harvest, hundreds of thousands of men, dying without God, die without hope. He makes one nation rise against the other and fills the earth with wars and rumours of wars. But the Lord governs all his actions and he must submit to God's government. God makes use of Satan to punish nations for their sins.

The Thirty Years' War (from 1618-1648), by which Germany was almost laid waste, America's War of Independence and Secession, the many wars of Great Britain and the continental powers, in Europe, Asia, Africa, America, etc., the first and last world wars, though instigated by Satan, were governed by God and ended according to His will and His wise plans. The many millions who lost their lives in all these wars, fell and died because it was foreseen and ordained. -- God rules everything, the whole world.

God rules the nations, all the nations of the whole world. Not the powerful armies, not the great fleets, not the bombing planes, nor the atomic bombs, not the famous generals nor the statesmen decide the country's fate, but God, in whose hands men and all their inventions are nothing but instruments to execute His plans.

When all the kings of the Amorites gathered together to fight against Gibeonites and Israel, the Lord said to Joshua, *"Fear them not, for I have delivered them into thine hands, there shall not a man stand before thee."* *"And the Lord discomfited them before Israel and slew them with a great slaughter, and when they fled from before Israel the Lord cast down great stones from heaven and they were more which died through hailstones than they whom the children of Israel slew with the sword."* When the Assyrians besieged Jerusalem and demanded of King Hezekiah to surrender, when Sennacherib boasted, *"Has any of the gods of the nations delivered all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Who are they among all the gods of*

*the countries that have delivered their country out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?"*, the Lord said to Hezekiah concerning the king of Assyria, *"He shall not come into the city nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it."* – *"And it came to pass that night," we read in the Second Book of Kings, "that the Angel of the Lord went out and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred four score and five thousand (185,000)";* and when Jerusalem arose early in the morning, behold the camp of the Assyrians was full of dead bodies --- Chapters 18 and 19.

When Napoleon with a mighty army invaded Russia to conquer it, he was defeated by the cold winter, and his army buried under the snow or perished in the icy floods of the Beresina. --- When the Spanish Armada threatened England, God sent a heavy storm and destroyed the fleet. --- O the foolishness of men, to trust in themselves and in their own power. They are less than dust and ashes. It is the Lord, who governs the nations and makes an end to war and bloodshed.

God rules the universe, the whole creation. He laid down the laws of nature and in His hands lies the destiny of all nations. He is the governor of the world the King of kings. He especially governs His Church. God has built a Church which is the communion of saints; it is as old as heaven and earth and has existed since the creation. When our first parents sinned God promised to send the Seed of the woman who was to destroy the works of the devil. Adam and Eve believed in the coming Saviour and were saved. When Cain killed his God-fearing brother, God gave another son to their parents whose children were called the children of God. But Satan hated them and tried to pervert them. When men began to multiply on earth and the sons of God saw the daughters of the children of men, Cain's descendants, that they were fair, they took them wives of all which they chose. And the wickedness of man became great, so that the Lord decided to destroy man and everything He had created. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. When the whole human race perished in the flood, Noah and his family were saved in the ark, and thus the Church was preserved. But even among Noah's three sons there was one who cast away the fear of God and piety. To Shem was given the promise of the Messiah, Japheth was to live in the tents of Shem, and Canaan was to be their servant. Japheth's as well as Ham's descendants were to partake of the blessing of Shem. But after the flood Noah's children soon forgot the Lord and served the devil in having other gods. Even the children of Shem had their household gods. Then God called Abraham and told him to get out of his country and from his father's house, and go into a land which He would show him. He promised him a son in whom all families of the earth would be blessed, i.e., Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God. Abraham believed and obeyed the Lord and became the father of the faithful, of the children of God. The Lord told Abraham that his descendants would serve a nation in a strange land four hundred years, but He would deliver them and lead them to Canaan which should be their future home. All these prophecies were fulfilled in Israel. Israel became God's holy nation, a chosen people, with which God made a covenant and to which glorious promises of the Messiah were given. The history of Israel since it left Egypt, their wandering in the desert, their occupation of Canaan, their life under the judges and the kings is a great and convincing testimony of God's wonderful government. He protects His people, His church; the very gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The Spirit of God kept the Church of the Old Testament through faith in the coming Messiah through many tribulations and severe persecutions to life everlasting. Though Jerusalem was destroyed and her inhabitants kept in captivity seventy years, God had not forsaken His people but kept and governed it, and delivered it when His time was come. In the Psalms the holy singers praise God for His protection and for His wonderful government. The Church has always been a small flock. The kings of Judah and Israel and the leaders of the people always opposed the Lord and rebelled against His government; they hated and persecuted the true children of God, but the Lord protected His faithful children.

When the fullness of time was come, when the Son of God came into the world, His own received Him not, but to them that received Him He gave power to become the sons of God. The Pharisees hated Him, Judas betrayed Him, the high priests condemned Him, and the Romans crucified Him, but they only carried out God's plan of salvation; through suffering and death Christ reconciled the world unto God. He rose again from the dead and commanded His disciples to preach the Gospel to all nations, and when on Pentecost Christ poured out His Spirit upon the disciples and they began to speak of God's wonderful work of redemption, three thousand souls were converted to the Lord, and Christ added to the Church daily that should be saved. Though almost all the Apostles died a martyr's death, though many thousands of Christians

died under the terrible persecutions of the Roman emperors the Gospel of Jesus Christ spread over the earth and the Church grew over the ruins of the Gentile world. Christ came to destroy the works of the devil and did destroy them. He rules and governs His Church, but Satan hates it and tries to destroy it. In the seventh century, when the Christian churches in the Orient left their first love and became indifferent, lukewarm, and worldly minded; when the Christian congregations no longer took to heart the warning of the Lord, *"I have something against thee," "I know thy works that thou art neither cold nor hot," "That thou hast a name that thou livest and art dead. I will come unto thee quickly and will remove thy candlestick out of thy place and will spue thee out of my mouth because thou art lukewarm and sayest I am rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked,"* -- then God permitted Satan to raise up a man among the Arabs who claimed to be the prophet of Allah, the only true God, and filled the hearts of his followers with bitter hatred against the Christians. With fire and sword the Christians were persecuted and Palestine, Syria, Egypt, the north coast of Africa as far as the Strait of Gibraltar, fell into the hands of Mohammed's successors; Carthage was sacked and all Christians slaughtered. Since then North Africa, once the seat of Roman culture and civilization, ceased to be a civilized country.

But desiring to occupy the whole world and make the Christian countries accept the religion of Mohammed his successors, the Caliphs as they were called, also began to threaten Europe. The finest provinces of Spain were occupied about 711 and the following years, and the government of the Moors, with Cordova as capital, established. But not satisfied therewith the Moors crossed the Pyrenees, the mountain ranges which separate Spain from France, and threatened to destroy the Franconian Empire and the Christian Church. But here the Lord, who governs the world and rules the Church, interfered, saying, *"Hitherto mayest thou come and not further."* In the battle of Poitiers (732) the Moors were defeated and driven back over the Pyrenees, and thus the Occident was saved. But for several centuries the Arabs held sway in Spain and Italy, and especially Sicily had to suffer under their attacks. The destruction of Syracuse in the ninth century and the cruelties committed by the Arabs as described by an eye-witness were so inhuman and terrible that the details are too revolting to relate. In the fifteenth century Constantinople, the beautiful capital of Constantine the Great the first Christian emperor, surrendered to the Turks, and the magnificent Christian church was turned into a mosque.

Islam, the religion of the Mohammedans, has been a scourge for the visible Christian Church because of her great apostasy. The Mohammedans have not changed; they are still fanatical foes of the Christians. Thousands of Christian Armenians have died under Turkish rule. Great is the Mohammedan influence in India and in Africa. In their colleges and high schools thousands of young men are instructed and sent out to Africa and other countries, to oppose Christianity and win the nations for Mohammed. We have still need to pray with Luther, *"Lord, keep us steadfast in Thy word, Restrain and foil the craft and sword Of Pope and Turk, who from Thy throne Would wrest Christ Jesus, Thine own Son."*

Islam has about 250,000,000 adherents, while the number of those who call themselves Christians is about 800,000,000. But while of the so-called Christians hardly twenty-five per cent are true Christians, all Mohammedans are fanatical adherents of Islam. If they should get control over the natives in Africa and India, the Christian missions would be greatly endangered. But God, who commanded the Gospel to be preached and the Christians to pray for His kingdom to come, can easily destroy the power of Islam. But He says, *"Watch and pray,"* and again, *"Be ye faithful unto death."*

The Lord governs His Church. He supports and sustains it even under the severest persecutions. When in the course of centuries the great apostasy took place of which St. Paul writes in his Second Epistle to the Thessalonians when the man of sin set himself in the temple of God, calling himself Christ's representative, and cursing everyone who would not accept him as such, when under the false doctrines and superstitions of the Church it was almost impossible for a Christian to be saved, when thousands through Satan's lies and deceptions were sent to hell, when the Bible became an unknown book which only few were permitted to read, God kept His little flock under all the idolatry and errors of the Church and restored it through His faithful servant Martin Luther by His pure Word and the proper administration of His Sacraments, and though hundreds of thousands had to die for Christ's sake and confessed their Saviour and

His truth, the devil could not overcome it. The open Bible which is now printed in many hundred languages, brings light to the sinful world; the kingdom of God is like an immovable rock, the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. God governs His Church and spreads the seed of His Word all over the earth.

When the forefathers of our Church here and in America were persecuted in their homeland, because they obeyed God's commandment rather than the laws of the civil government, they emigrated to build God's kingdom in foreign lands and serve Him according to His Word and the dictates of their conscience. And God blessed them and gave to them faithful leaders who by the Word kept them in the fear of God; and the small plant grew and became a mighty tree, the branches of which are spreading over all the countries of the world. The growth of the Lutheran Church here, and especially in America, notwithstanding the hatred and opposition she experienced from the world and other churches, is a grand manifestation of God's wonderful government. God rules and governs His Church, the communion of saints wherever it exists and proclaims His saving Gospel. Though during the war hundreds of Christian ministers and faithful missionaries were interned, and though large and flourishing mission fields suffered grievously because of the loss of the teachers and of the support on which they had to rely, God still protected these mission fields, which had become gardens in His kingdom, and blessed them. During the war all congregations in Poland connected with our Church were swept away. Of the total Lutheran membership of 500,000 in Poland before the war only 50,000 remain. Thousands of Christian churches have been destroyed in Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy and many other countries; millions of God's children, many pastors included, died on the battlefield; Satan, the murderer from the beginning, had a great harvest, -- but God still rules the universe and governs His Church. What the Church had to suffer it suffered according to His will. It takes everything as coming from God's hand; it looks not at the losses but at Him who permitted them to be inflicted, for without God's will nothing can happen.

God rules the universe. He rules heaven and earth. Nature must obey Him and all creatures do His will; nothing can happen without His permission. God is the King of kings; all the kings of the earth are rulers by the grace of God; He removes kings and fixes the boundaries of their lands which they are not to pass. God governs His Church, His whole Church in all countries of the earth; He spreads out His kingdom; He gives His Word, and great is the company of those that publish it. *"Though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea, though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake,"* the Church, the city of God, Zion is not moved. *"God is in the midst of her";* He governs and protects her that no evil can befall her.

*"The Lord looketh from heaven, He beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of His habitation He looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. He fashions their hearts alike, He considereth all their works"* (Psalm 33:13f.). God rules and governs every single individual, young or old, man or woman, rich or poor, king or beggar, good or evil. He not only beholds all the sons of men; He also fashions their hearts, rules and governs, shields, protects, or punishes them. *"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 trouble. The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart, and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all. He keepeth all his bones. not one of them is broken. Evil shall slay the wicked and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants; and none of them that trust in Him shall be desolate"* (Psalm 34). None of them! God governs them all.

*"The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord as the rivers of water, He turneth it whithersoever He will"* (Prov.21:1). As a man reins his steed and makes it turn to the right or the left, to go slowly or to canter, so God turns and governs the hearts of men. *"O Lord, I know,"* says Jeremiah, *"that the way of man is not in himself; it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps"* (10:23). The meaning is not that a man necessarily and automatically must do what the omniscient God knows he will do, there is no absolute necessity, but that God governs and rules everything man does, even his evil deeds. God knew that Peter would deny and Judas betray the Lord, and Christ earnestly warned them not to commit the sin; God was not the author of their sin but governed it to execute His plans of salvation.

In God all men live, move, and have their being; nothing can happen without His will. He governs the evil as well as the good.

When Cain slew his brother Abel, the Lord said to him, *"Now art thou cursed from the earth which has opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand; when thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength, a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth,"* and when Cain answered, *"Everyone that findeth me shall slay me,"* the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him, and said, *"Whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold"* (Gen. 4). When Ham and his son Canaan despised Noah, their father and grandfather, Noah cursed them to be servants of servants unto their brethren and this curse is still in force even now, after four thousand years. The sons of Ham and Canaan have been slaves of the children of Shem and Japheth since that day; thus does God govern the destiny of individuals and their descendants. When Esau sold his birthright he did not receive the blessing of Abraham, though his father wanted him to inherit it. God permitted Isaac to be deceived by Rebecca, his wife, and Jacob, his younger son, and caused him to bless Jacob, who was to be the ancestor of the Messiah. When Jacob secretly left his uncle and father-in-law Laban, who had most shamefully treated him, though Jacob had served him faithfully twenty years, the Lord, who had told Jacob to return home with his family, told Laban, who followed Jacob, *"Take thou heed that thou speak not to Jacob either good or bad"* (literally, from good to bad, i.e., from a hasty greeting of his daughters and their children to reproaches and insult). So God made Laban speak kindly to Jacob and his family. When Jacob left his father's house Esau, his brother, intended to kill him; but when he returned and passed through his brother's country, Esau met and embraced him, fell on his neck and kissed him. Thus God changed Esau's heart. When Joseph's brothers intended to slay him, God prevented them from doing so. Reuben, the oldest son, wishing to save him, advised his brothers to cast him into a pit; this they did, and sold him afterwards to Midianite merchantmen.

God decided the fate of the chief butler and baker whose dreams Joseph interpreted while they were in prison. The butler was restored to his stewardship but the chief baker was hanged.

When Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, said to Moses; who in the Lord's name commanded him to let Israel go, *"Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go,"* God said to Moses, *"I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and Pharaoh shall not hearken unto you, that I may lay my hand upon Egypt and bring forth my armies and my people, the children of Israel, out of the land of Egypt by great judgments. And the Egyptians shall know that I am the Lord, when I stretch forth Mine hand upon Egypt and bring out the children of Israel from among them."*

The Lord sent nine great and terrible plagues to come upon Egypt, but the king each time hardened his heart, and finally was hardened by the Lord Himself. When the Lord in a tenth visitation slew all the firstborn in Egypt, both of man and beast, the king drove Israel out. Soon, however, Pharaoh regretted that he had permitted Israel to go, God hardened Pharaoh's heart and when he with a strong army pursued Israel, God led His people through the Red Sea, but Pharaoh perished.

How wonderfully did God govern Job's life and restored to him everything of which he had been deprived by Satan!

When King Solomon was old and his wives turned away his heart after other gods, the Lord said to him, *"I will surely rend the kingdom from thee and will give it to thy servant. Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake; but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. Howbeit, I will not rend away all the kingdom but will give one tribe to thy son for David My servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen"* (1 Kings 11). *"And the Lord stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite"* (v. 14). Also Jeroboam, servant of the king, lifted up his hand against him. And God said through His prophet Ahijah to Jeroboam, *"I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee."* *"Because that they have forsaken me ... I will take the kingdom out of his hands and will give it unto thee, even ten tribes. And to his son will I give one tribe, that David, My servant, may have a light alway before Me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen Me to put My name there. And I will take thee and thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel"* (vv. 31, 36). When Solomon tried to kill

Jeroboam the latter went to Egypt and stayed there until Solomon's death. What God had spoken to Solomon and Jeroboam He carried out. When Rehoboam, Solomon's son, went to Shechem to become king, Jeroboam and all the congregations of Israel came and said to Rehoboam, *"Thy father made our yoke grievous, now, therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee."*

*When Rehoboam consulted the old counsellors who had served his father and asked them what he should do, they answered him, "If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants forever."* But he forsook the counsel of the old men, and consulted with the young men, who were grown up with him, and who stood before him, and asked them what he should answer the people who had requested him to make the yoke lighter which his father had put on them. And the young men told him, *"This shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins. And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke; my father hath chastised you with whips but I will chastise you with scorpions"* (1 Kings 12). The king followed the advice of the young counsellors; he refused to make the people's yoke lighter but threatened to make it heavier. Then all Israel answered him, *"What portion have we in David --- now see to thine own house"* --- and Israel departed unto their tents. *"But,"* we read, *"the cause was from the Lord, that He might perform His saying, which the Lord spake by Ahijah unto Jeroboam, the son of Nebat."* So Israel rebelled against the house of David and made Jeroboam king over all Israel; only the tribe of Judah remained with the house of David. It was the Lord who decided the fate of Solomon and his descendants and of Jeroboam and his followers. When Rehoboam returned to Jerusalem he assembled his whole army, 180,000 men, to bring the kingdom back to his house. But the Lord interfered and told the king not to fight against his brethren, and they obeyed. Thus does God govern the life of every man!

Into every man's heart has God inscribed His divine law and makes every man responsible for everything he does. *"Cursed is every one who continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."* God threatens to punish everyone who transgresses the law and He carries out His threats.

*"Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed."* When King Ahab caused Naboth to be accused of blasphemy and to be killed God sent Elijah, the prophet, to the king to tell him, *"Thus saith the Lord, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine"* (1 Kings 21:19). At the same time He threatened to cut off all his male descendants. A few years later when Ahab was killed in a battle against the Syrians and someone washed the chariot into which the king's blood had run, the dogs licked up his blood (1 Kings 22:38). Thus God carried out the threat spoken against Ahab... *"I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and adulterers, and against false swearers,"* says the Lord, and whosoever commits these sins will soon find out the truth of these words. When Saul went to the witch at Endor he was told that he would die, and on the following day he killed himself. When David committed adultery with Uriah's wife, God told him. *"The sword shall never depart from thine house, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die. And the Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick and died"* (2 Sam. 12:10f.).

When Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, broke the covenant he had made with the king of Babylon, the Lord said, *"As I live, surely My oath that he hath despised, and My covenant that he hath broken, even it will I recompense upon his head"* (Ezek. 17:19). When the king of Babylon besieged Jerusalem and Zedekiah the king was made prisoner, he was brought before Nebuchadnezzar, and the king of Babylon slew the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes; moreover, he put out Zedekiah's eyes and bound him with chains to carry him to Babylon.

*"Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit?"* asks the psalmist, *"Or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me"* (Psalm 139:7). God's hand leads us and every man. His hand holds us, He governs and

rules us; nothing, nothing can be done, nothing can we do without His ruling all our actions. He resisteth the proud (Psalm 5:5). He scattered them in the imagination of their hearts and puts down the mighty from their seats (Luke 1:51, 52). *"He doth according to His will among the inhabitants of the earth and none can stay His hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?"* (Dan. 4:35). In God we live, He rules and governs the life of all men and all they do according to His plans.

When Christ was born King Herod sought to destroy the child, but God frustrated his plan. Being warned by the angel of the Lord the parents with the child escaped to Egypt. Herod commanded all children two years old and under to be slain, but soon afterwards he received his reward for all the crimes he had committed; he died a horrible death. While he still lived he was slowly eaten by worms.

Profane as well as sacred history is full of examples which manifest God's wonderful government and prove that the destiny of man is in His hands. *"The heathen rage and the people imagine a vain thing. The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us. But He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision"* (Psalm 2). What are men even the mightiest and greatest in the sight of God? Less than dust and ashes, like grass that groweth and is cut down and withereth. When Pharaoh blasphemed the Lord he perished in the sea. When Goliath, the Philistine, defied the armies of the living God and all Israel was afraid to fight against him the Lord gave him into the hands of David, a young man, who killed him with a sling and a stone and delivered Israel. When Alexander the Great was at the zenith of his power God made a sudden end of his power. When Napoleon had occupied almost the whole of Europe, he was defeated at Waterloo and died a political prisoner at St. Helena.

In the history of any man's life we recognize the hand of the Lord, who rules and governs it. Still today we can see how God visits the sins of men and punishes those that reject Him. Famine, drought, floods, storms, cyclones, fire, earthquake, wars are means in the hand of God to punish a rebellious world and to make manifest that He still rules the earth. The Lord rules everything and everybody; the evildoers as well as His children. *"The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and His ears are open unto their cry. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth them out of them all. He leadeth them as a shepherd leadeth His flock and maketh them lie down in green pastures and beside still waters."* He says, *"I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go. I will guide thee with mine eyes"* (Psalm 32:8). *"Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night nor for the arrow, that flieth by day. Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness. A thousand shall fall at thy side and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee. There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone"* (Psalm 91:10), and again, *"When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned, neither shall the flames kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord, thy God"* (Isa. 43:2). How can God's wonderful government be described in plainer words? Who can fathom and explain the many hundred assurances of the Bible that God defends His children against all dangers, and protects them from all evil? Look at the great cloud of witnesses whose whole life is unique evidence of God's wise and wonderful and gracious ruling and governing of His people. When the wickedness of man was great and God threatened to destroy the whole human race, Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, and while millions of men perished in the great flood he and his family were saved in the ark. When God decreed the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, He sent two angels to Lot to save him and his family, and when the men of Sodom compassed the house round, both old and young, all the people from every quarter, and demanded that the men be delivered to them, the angel smote the men with blindness, both small and great, that they could not find the door.

When Hagar and Ishmael, her son, had to leave Abraham's home and wandered in the wilderness, and the water was spent, and the child was dying, the Angel of the Lord called the sorrowing mother, saying, *"Fear not; God hath heard the voice of the lad where he is. Arise, lift up the lad and hold him in thine hand; for I will make him a great nation."* And God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water and she went and

filled the bottle with water and gave the lad drink. And God was with the lad (Gen. 21:14). The descendants of Ishmael are the Arabs.

When Abraham sent his servant to Mesopotamia to find a wife for his son Isaac among his relatives there, the Lord led him to meet Rebecca, Abraham's brother's daughter, and made her willing to follow the servant and become Isaac's wife. The Lord to-day still governs the married life of man and woman, and gives to each of them a life's companion suitable to them.

When Jacob fled from his brother Esau, who intended to kill him, the Lord appeared unto him during the night in his sleep, saying, "I am the God of Abraham, thy father, and the God of Isaac; the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it and to thy seed; and thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and in thy Seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed. And behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Thus did the Lord govern the patriarch's whole life. The same applies to Joseph, whom his brothers sold to the Midianites.

How wonderful is the story of Moses, the man of God. When king Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, *"Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river,"* God saved the child; He led the daughter of the king to come down to bathe in the river and find the child, lying in a little basket in the reeds near the river. It was God's plan to have Moses educated at the king's court and instructed in the arts and sciences of Egypt. Through him God led Israel out of Egypt and brought it to the borders of Canaan, where Moses died and God Himself buried him.

When Balak, the king of the Moabites, asked Balaam to curse Israel, the Lord told him not to do so. When he went to see the king, the Angel of the Lord, with drawn sword, withstood him, and when the Lord permitted him to see the king, he blessed Israel instead of cursing it (Num. 22). When Joshua sent two spies to Jericho they came into a harlot's house and lodged there. When the king demanded that the men be delivered up, she hid them on the roof with stalks of flax. Before the spies went away again she made them swear by the Lord, in whom she believed, that they would show kindness unto her father's house and save her, her parents, brothers, and sisters, and all they had, and deliver their lives from death. The men gave the promise and when Jericho was destroyed Rahab and all her relatives were saved and her house not destroyed. And by God's miraculous providence Rahab became an ancestress of King David and thus of Christ Himself. How graciously did God lead, defend, and protect David against Saul and his many enemies, and made him confess, *"Like as a father pitieth his children so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him. The Lord is My refuge and My fortress; My God, in Him will I trust."*

Through Malachi the Lord speaks of a messenger whom He would send to prepare the way for the Messiah. About four hundred years later this prophecy was fulfilled in John the Baptist. At the child's circumcision his father, filled with the Holy Ghost, said of him: *"Thou child shalt be called the prophet of the Highest; for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people by the remission of sins, through the tender mercies of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us"* (Luke 2:76). Four thousand years did the children of God in the Old Testament wait for the Messiah to come. When Rome ruled in Judea, when the house of David no longer occupied the throne, it did not look as if God's promises would ever be fulfilled. But whatsoever the Lord chooses He certainly will fulfil and will bring into being whatever is His will. John the Baptist confessed of Christ, *"There standeth One among you whom ye know not; He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoes' latchets I am not worthy to unloose"* (John 1:27), and Christ said of him, *"What went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet, for this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face which shall prepare Thy way before Thee"* (Matt. 11:9f.).

Though generations after generations and centuries after centuries passed, God's plans were not changed; all came to pass as He ordained it from the beginning. Look through the genealogical tables of Mary and Joseph and marvel at the wisdom of God's plans and the wonderful ways and means to preserve

the lineage of His elected race through thousands of years. These records and tables are the most perfect evidence of God's providence, management, and government.

Jesus was a descendant of Judah, the fourth son of Jacob. Israel, or Jacob, had twelve sons. Who saw to it that the records of Judah and his sons, i.e., a certain one of every generation be preserved? Joseph and Mary were both descendants of David, Joseph a son of Solomon, Mary a daughter of Nathan; but David had more sons. Who saw to it that the records of Nathan's descendants were kept as well as those of Solomon? And how were these records kept during the Babylonian captivity? It is the Lord who rules and governs the history of the nations, and also of every individual, who kept these records of the forefathers of His Son according to the flesh, to prove His eternal providence and the truth of His Word, and the origin of His Son according to His human nature.

God governs and rules the life of His children. Levi was a publican and despised by the Pharisees as a sinner, but God elected him to be a disciple of His Son. And does not St. Paul's whole life prove and manifest God's providence and fatherly care and love? He was a Jew, a Roman by birth, a highly educated man, a Pharisee, and zealous towards God and His Law. He hated the name of Christ and His followers and persecuted them unto death, delivering them into prison, both men and women. But God had chosen him as a vessel to bear His name unto the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel. He was to show him how great things he was to suffer for His name's sake. When Saul, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the Lord's disciples, went to Damascus with letters from the High Priest to arrest the Christians and bring them to Jerusalem, a light from heaven suddenly spread around him and he fell to the earth. And he heard a voice saying unto him, *"Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?"* And when he said, *"Who art Thou, Lord?"* the Lord answered him, *"I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks."* When Saul, trembling and astonished, asked, *"Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"* Jesus said to him, *"Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do."* When Saul opened his eyes he was blind three days, and they led him into the city. Here the Lord in a vision told one of His disciples, Ananias, to go to a certain street and house and ask for Saul and lay his hands upon his eyes that he might receive his sight. Ananias did as he was told and Saul's eyesight was restored, and he was filled with the Holy Ghost, and at once began to preach Christ in the synagogues. And there is hardly a man who suffered as much for Christ's sake as this apostle. His life's aim was now to preach Christ crucified to Jews and Gentiles. *"For to me to live is Christ,"* he says, *"and to die is gain."* He died a martyr's death, his whole life having been a convincing testimony of God's providence and guidance. And hundreds of thousands of God's children through all generations will proclaim with one accord, *"We believe, we know from the Word of God and we have experienced it and still experience it every day, that God defends us against all dangers and guards and protects us from all evil."* Ask all members of a Christian family, father and mother, parents and children, what they believe of God's government and they all will answer you, *"The Lord hath helped us hitherto by His surpassing favour. His mercies every morn were new. His kindness did not waver. God hitherto hath been our guide, hath pleasures hitherto supplied and hitherto hath helped us."* Ask our Christian boys who returned from the front what they believe of God's government, and with one voice they will answer, *"God has been our shield and our protection. Christ, our Saviour, has been with us at sea and in the air, in the trenches, on the battlefield and in the jungle. He helped us many a time to escape dangers; His angels surrounded us and the wings of His mercy did shade us."* And even our wounded sons, our blinded and cripple boys will join in the song ---

Now thank we all our God with heart and hands and voices,  
Who wondrous things hath done, in whom His world rejoices;  
Who from our mother's arm hath blessed us on our way  
With countless gifts of love, and still is ours to-day.

God has performed great miracles and still shows us today that our lives are in His hands, and that He governs and leads us on.

During the Franco-Prussian War a friend of ours was struck by a bullet and thrown to the ground. When he was picked up no wound could be seen, but there was a blue mark on his back and a button,

smaller than an inch, was missing from the back of his coat. The bullet had struck the button and the button saved his life. The next day he found the button in his vest pocket. Was it chance that directed the bullet and saved him? No, it was the Lord who fulfilled His promise, *"No evil shall befall thee."*

In a daily paper we read the other day of an amazing escape. "An eighteen-months-old baby of North Sydney had an amazing escape from death during the torrential downpour yesterday morning. Swept down a surging gutter she was carried twenty-three yards under the ground to the other side of the street and was saved by the safety bar from being carried into another pipe which leads to the harbour:" What saved the child? The Lord who gave His angels charge over it --- the Lord, who heaven and earth commands, who points the clouds their courses, whom wind and waves obey, He will direct our footsteps and find for us a way.

We believe that heaven and earth are ruled and governed by God, that He governs everything, and that nothing can and does happen without His will. This we believe, for the Bible, the infallible Word of God, tells us so. That God governs the world is an article of faith, and faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Heb.11:1).

It often seems to us that everything depended on chance, that God had absolutely nothing to do with the government of the world and the affairs of man. During the war you could hear the remark, "There is no God. If there were a God how could He permit such terrible things to happen and such crimes to be committed?" Nevertheless nothing is left to blind chance; no, it is God, the almighty, just, and righteous God, who governs the world, the whole earth, and the life of every individual. But God is a hidden God, and His ways, His government and means are past finding out. We can understand His ways only as far as He has revealed them to us. When we read the Scriptures, the history of the world and of the Church, when we consider our life, with its many experiences, many hundred questions crowd into our minds to which we find no answers. We can only say, O God, how miraculously dost Thou govern and rule the world. Why did God create man when He knew that he would fall and all his descendants perish in the great flood? Why did He suffer Cain to kill his brother Abel? Why was Jacob chosen to receive the blessing and not Esau? Why Judah and not an older brother? Of the 600,000 men (20 years old and upward, Ed.) that left Egypt only two were permitted to enter the promised land; all the others even Aaron and Moses, died in the wilderness. Why such terrible judgment? Why were the children of Israel, when they occupied Canaan, commanded to kill all their enemies, even women and children? The modern critics of the Old Testament speak of the annals of Israel as of books dripping with blood. When Saul, Israel's first king, disobeyed the Lord he was rejected and David anointed as king; but when David committed adultery and murder he was permitted to keep the throne. Why? Why did God permit Herod to kill all the little children in Bethlehem under two years old? Why was John the Baptist murdered and why had many thousands of God's children to die for Christ's sake? Why does God permit Satan to fill the earth with war and bloodshed and whole countries to be devastated? Why did God not prevent all the crimes which were committed during the war? Why is victory given to one nation and another is defeated, though both deserve the same punishment? If the Bible is in truth God's Word why do most men reject and the wise men of the world ridicule? If God wants all men to be saved, why are not all saved? If no one can save himself, if all men alike are conceived and born in sin and no man can believe in God and come to Him by his own reason, will, and power, why do not all men believe when the Gospel is preached to them? Why have so many millions of men never heard the Gospel? Why did God permit our schools, which were erected to the glory of His name and the welfare of His own children, to be closed during the last war? Why were some of our churches destroyed by arson?

Look at Jerusalem once the chosen city of the Lord. Why is it still under the heels of the Turks and a place of idolatry and of constant strife? Why are the Jews, dispersed over the whole earth and scattered among all people of the globe still a nation and why will they remain so until the end of the world? Why has God cast Israel away and chosen the Gentiles? Why is Africa still a dark continent, while the light of the Gospel has been shining over Europe for many centuries? St. Paul, considering Israel's fate, exclaims, *"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God; how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out. For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been His counsellor?"* (Rom. 11:33). Where are the Christian congregations of Asia Minor - Ephesus, Smyrna, Sardis, Philadelphia, and

others - to which St. John in the name of Christ wrote the letters recorded in Revelation? They are swept from the face of the earth. Why has the whole Orient come under the rule of Mohammed and why has Rome the eternal city, as she is called, where St. Paul and hundreds of martyrs died, become a place of apostasy, superstition, and idolatry? Who can explain the course of the Gospel? Its birthplace is the Orient, the East. Here it spread its light, from here it went west, illuminating the people which sat in darkness, and now it is returning to the East, leaving the people and nations, who received but rejected and lost it again, in darkness and in the shadow of death. We are now sending missionaries to the coloured nations but we badly need missionaries to be sent to us, for the so-called Christian nations are fast falling back into paganism.

When we consider many of the events in man's life we are faced with many problems which we cannot solve. God's government is mysterious, inexplicable.

St. Mark tells us of a ruler of the synagogue whose daughter was dying; he came to the Lord asking Him to help her. How many thousand parents have lost an only child, the sunshine of their home? How many have been deprived of all their children? During the first world war some parents lost two or three sons; others had five sons at the front and lost none. Why this distinction? When the Lord went with the ruler a certain woman who had been sick for twelve years and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all she had and was nothing bettered, touched the Lord's garment in order to be healed. There are men or women who have been bedridden for ten, twenty, thirty years, yea, their whole life; there are others who are born blind, or deaf, and no one can help them. Why all these afflictions? Some people have to suffer during the whole life, others know of no trouble. Why such a distinction? *"As for me,"* says the psalmist, *"my feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death, but their strength is firm; they are not in trouble as other men, neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; they have more than heart can wish; they are corrupt and speak wickedly. And they say, How does God know? ... Behold, these are the ungodly who prosper in the world"* (73:2). How does this agree with God's just and righteous government? God is a hidden God and no man has a right to ask Him, What doest Thou?

We read in the New Testament of many men who were possessed by an unclean spirit, demoniacs, who dwelled among the tombs or in the hills and were a terror to whole districts. There are even today in lunatic asylums among the demented men who are possessed by unclean spirits, who make them curse, use obscene language and commit sins of uncleanness. Who can understand why these men are subject to such a terrible fate. Once, when the Lord came to the city of Nain, there was a dead man carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. What a terrible blow. She had lost her husband and was now following to a similar burial her only son, who was cut down in the flower of his manhood. To lose a dear child is a great affliction, but to lose an only son, who was the only support and comfort of a widowed mother, is indeed one of the sorest earthly bereavements. Here a mother or even both parents are called away from their little children, who are left alone, destitute, without anybody to take care of them, and there is an old invalid who for many years has been waiting day and night for the Lord to take him home, but death does not come to him. Here a husband must part with his young wife, the sunshine of his home, the joy of his heart, or a young wife must bury her husband, the only supporter of herself and her little children, and just across the street a married couple lives in constant strife and unhappiness, and death does not separate them. --- Here a bushfire breaks out and, sweeping over hundreds of miles, destroys homes, farms, villages, and many lives; in another State a dam breaks and hundreds perish in the floods; others are miraculously saved.

Here is a poor farmer; faithfully he works his farm, but for years he had no harvest and lost most everything. But this year the prospects are exceedingly good. He can expect a very good harvest and get rid of his debts. But suddenly a storm breaks and the whole crop is destroyed by hail; he reaps nothing and must leave his farm and homestead to his creditors. But his rich neighbour lost almost nothing; who can explain why this happened?

In one of my own congregations in U.S.A. a farmer wanted his son to be confirmed because he needed him on the farm. I asked the father to let his son attend our school and confirmation lessons another year, for the boy was rather young and his knowledge not very good. I pointed out to the father that he, if the

son fell sick, would in any case have to do the work alone, but he insisted on his son being confirmed. Not long afterwards, as far as I remember even before the son was confirmed, the father fell from a straw stack and injured his spine. Just a day before he had removed the loose straw that was lying close to the stack and might have saved him. A few months afterwards he died. Now the son had to do the work without his father. How inexplicable and mysterious are the ways of God. He is indeed a hidden God.

In capital cities of various countries thousands of families live in slum districts and under the most terrible conditions. Twenty, thirty, and more families live in tenement houses; four, five, or more members occupy one single room, and four or more children sleep in one bed. The children are left to themselves; they sit in the gutter, play in the streets, and learn all kinds of vices; their mothers work hard, perhaps the fathers too, but there are many whose wages are to a great extent spent in drink. If you want to know what poverty, misery, despair means, go into the homes of the poor in slum districts, and look into the sad eyes of hungry, suffering children. Why this misery? Wealth, extravagance, licentiousness in one street, and poverty, hunger want, sickness, misery, and despair in the next; and there are few who really care to change and improve these social conditions. Why are you and your children not born in slum districts? If you want to know what sickness means, go into the hospitals and look at the patients, and at what they are suffering. Count the tears that are shed during one night and listen to the sighing and groans of those that are in great agony. You and your children are well and happy, why not they? Why are you not in a hospital, suffering great pains? Why are your children not playing in the gutter, half-naked, starving, ill, and miserable? Can you explain it? Is it because you deserve a better fate? Certainly not. It is grace, nothing but grace. Can you explain why thousands of children are born under favourable circumstances, in a nice home, and brought up decently, yea, as Christian children in the fear of God, and many other thousands born under terrible conditions, in dirty homes, of godless parents, and grow up in dirt and vice knowing almost nothing of a mother's love and a father's care, hearing nothing but curses and filthy talk? O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! Who can understand Him and His ways? The Lord is a hidden God. We know Him, and His ways, and His means only as far as they are revealed unto us in His Word. What He has not revealed we must not try to find out. *"Verily, Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel,"* exclaims Isaiah. Though God revealed Himself as the Triune God, who created, redeemed and sanctifies the world, He is and remains unto us a hidden God, and His ways are past finding out.

We know and understand very little of God and His government, not only because "All our knowledge, sense, and sight is in deepest darkness shrouded," and all we know, even of God's revelation is only patchwork, and we behold the glory of the Lord only as in a glass, but also because there are so many things in regard to God, His person, His will, His work and His ways which are not revealed unto us. We know, for instance, that God created man in His image, holy, without sin, so that he could obey God and sin not, but we do not know why God did not create him so that he could not sin, or did not prevent him from sinning.

The history of the nations of the world from the beginning and the history of every individual, his life and work, his successes and misfortunes hide so many things and contain so many mysteries that they can never be explained, and it is not our business to try finding out what the Lord has hidden from us, and to ask questions for which we find no answer in the Bible. *"O man,"* says St. Paul, *"who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour and another unto dishonour?"* Indeed, who are we sinful beings, made of dust and less than a worm in the sight of God, to ask the Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, to explain why He does things so and not otherwise? What arrogance and impudence to try to solve the mysteries which God has hidden from us. *"Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?"* asks St. Paul, and adds, *"It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe – because the foolishness of God is wiser than man, and the weakness of God is stronger than men"* (1 Cor. 1:21), and again, *"Professing themselves to be wise they became fools."* God has in His Word revealed everything that it is necessary for us to know for our salvation. This we are to study as the Christians in Berea did, who received Paul and Silas' word *"with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily whether those things were so."* God wants us to accept His word and submit to His ways, even if we do not understand them. What God has revealed unto us in His word is sufficient for us to know, and the more diligently we search the Scriptures the clearer many things will become to us which we at first did not

understand. When God created man in His image His glory demanded that He did not make automata but living souls who willingly and gladly, not automatically, obeyed His commandments; they were to have the power to sin and not to sin. When He destroyed the old world by the great flood, He did so to show forth His holiness and justice. It was to be a warning for future generations, to all men and at all times, not to despise the Lord and His Word, His patience and longsuffering. The same refers to Lot's wife. Christ speaking of the last times and the security of the people, warns His disciples, saying, *"Remember Lot's wife."* She only looked back. Was that a great sin? It was disobedience and she was turned into a pillar of salt. In the eyes of the Lord even the smallest sin is an abomination. What a warning for everyone, especially to-day.

Whatever God does is good, though we may not see it; the time will certainly come when we shall recognize it. God makes no mistakes and often God lets us see even here that all His ways are perfect and wise.

It was a terrible crime which Jacob's sons committed, when they sold Joseph to the Midianites and made their old father believe an evil beast had devoured him. How many times and under how many tears may the old father have cried to the Lord, "O God, why hast Thou thus dealt with me?" and how terrible must it have been for Joseph, to have been sold into slavery by his own brothers, to be separated from his father, who served the Lord, to live amongst heathen, who lived in idolatry, to be imprisoned as an immoral youth, and to have no hope ever to see his father again. God led him through deep waters of affliction. How many times may he have asked, almost despairing, "My father's God, why dost Thou make me suffer thus?" Thinking of his brothers' crime, hearing his father's lamentations, seeing Joseph's sufferings, who could understand God's counsel and His ways? But Joseph's history reveals unto us God's wonderful wisdom, His miraculous government. He was sold to slave dealers who took him to Egypt and sold him to Potiphar, an official of the king. Here God blessed him and all he did. But soon another blow struck him. Potiphar's wife slandered him and without a hearing he was cast into prison. Also in prison God showed him His fatherly love. Here he met two of the king's officers whose dreams he one morning interpreted. He asked one of them to remember him when he would be released, for he was innocent. The man promised to do so, but forgot it. God wanted Joseph to stay in prison. Some years afterwards God showed Pharaoh in a dream what would happen in the next fourteen years, but there was no one who could interpret the dream. Then the forgetful officer remembered Joseph and told the king about him. When Joseph was called and heard what the king dreamed he told him the interpretation of his dream, viz., that first seven years of abundance and then seven years of famine and poverty would come over Egypt and the surrounding countries; and he told the king what to do to save the people. For this Joseph was made supreme ruler under the king of all the land of Egypt, and was enabled to save the life of his father and his brethren and of all his relatives. When during the great famine his brothers came to Egypt and Joseph, recognizing them, treated them as spies to test them, they showed their penitence, saying, *"We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us."* And again, when Joseph at their second visit told them they could all go home, but he would keep Benjamin as prisoner, for in his bag Joseph's silver cup had been found. They showed an altogether different spirit towards their brother and their father; they refused to return without Benjamin, for they would bring down their father's grey hairs to the grave if their younger brother did not return with them. What a change in the hearts of the brothers, what wonderful work of God. Whatever God does is right. When Joseph in tears made himself known to his brethren he said, *"Be not grieved nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither, for God did send me before you to preserve life. God sent me before you to preserve you a posterity in the earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. So now, it was not you that sent me hither, but God. He hath made me a father and lord of all his house, and a ruler throughout the land of Egypt";* and again, after his father's death he assured his brothers, *"As for you, ye thought evil against me, but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day to save much people alive."* Joseph knew and confessed that it was God who brought him to Egypt, who governed his whole life and led him through many tribulations to great honour and glory, and all this in accordance with His wise plans and gracious will. God had told Abraham that his descendants would have to live in Egypt four hundred years. He had promised Abraham and Isaac and Jacob to make Israel great and bring it back to Canaan, their future home. So Jacob's sons sold their brother to the Midianites, and they sold him to Potiphar. That he was slandered, cast into prison was the means to make him acquainted with the butler. That the king's officer forgot Joseph happened under God's providence. If

he had been set free and sent home to his father he would not have been able to interpret Pharaoh's dreams and many thousands would have starved during the famine. With unerring hand God led Joseph towards the goal to which He had determined to bring him, and Joseph had learned in all the trials to trust in God. When Jacob heard that Joseph, his beloved son, was still alive he said, *"I will go and see him before I die."* And the Lord spoke to him during the night, *"I am God, the God of thy father; fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation. I will go down with thee into Egypt; and I will also surely bring thee up again."* Jacob trusted in God's miraculous government. Before he died he made Joseph swear not to bury him in Egypt but to bring him to the promised land and bury him in the burying place of his fathers. He trusted in the Lord to fulfil all His promises and bring all his children back to Canaan.

Pharaoh issued the cruel decree that all sons born of a Hebrew mother be thrown into the river, but God saved Moses, whom the king's daughter adopted, and who became the man of God who brought Israel to the promised land.

When the Syrians brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid, she came into the household of Naaman, a captain of the army of the king of Syria. She could certainly not understand why God permitted her to be separated from her parents and be sold into slavery, and serve a master who knew nothing of the true God. Naaman was a leper, and no man could cure him. When the little maid saw him suffer she said to her mistress, *"Would God, my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria, for he would recover him of his leprosy."* When Naaman came to Samaria and to the house of Elisha, the prophet sent a messenger unto him, saying, *"Go and wash in the Jordan seven times and thy flesh shall come again to thee and thou shalt be clean."* But Naaman was angry; he could not understand how the waters of the Jordan could cleanse him; the prophet's advice seemed to him foolish. But advised by his servant he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan according to the prophet's word, and he was cleansed. Then he went back to the prophet and said to him, *"Behold, now I know there is no God in all the earth but in Israel"* (2 Kings 5:1). Here we see God's wisdom in all His ways. He led the little maid of Israel to Syria into Naaman's house. He advised her to speak of the prophet to her master's wife. He induced Naaman to go to Samaria, and made his servant urge him to follow the prophet's advice. Naaman was cleansed from his leprosy according to God's plan, and he learned that there was a prophet in Israel and learned to know the one true God.

One day when the Lord saw a man blind from his birth, His disciples asked Him, *"Master, who did sin, this man or his parents that he was born blind?"* They could not understand why a child should be born blind, except its parents had committed a great sin. When we come to a home for the blind and see the many inmates, young and old, who were born blind or lost their eyesight, we are inclined to ask, *"Why this misery?"* If God still makes us and gives us body and soul, eyes, ears, and all members, reason and all our senses, why are so many born blind or deaf, cripples or feeble-minded? When the disciples asked the Lord about the blind man if he or his parents sinned, Jesus answered, *"Neither hath this man sinned nor his parents, but that the work of God should be made manifest in him."* Then He cured him and let everyone behold His glory; and the blind man believed in Him and worshipped Him as the Son of God.

Who can count the thousands of men who were bodily blind but with spiritual eyes saw the Lord, their Saviour, believed in Him, and were saved? God never makes a mistake; whatever He does is good.

When Lazarus, the brother of Martha and Mary, fell ill, the sisters sent to Jesus and informed Him, *"Lord, behold he whom Thou lovest is sick"* (John 11:3). Since Jesus was an intimate friend of Lazarus and his sisters, they expected Him to come at once, and anxiously waited for Him to cure him. When Jesus heard of Lazarus' illness He said, *"This sickness is not unto death but for the glory of God that the Son of God might be glorified thereby,"* and He tarried two days still in the same place where He was. Meanwhile Lazarus died and was buried. When Jesus came to Bethany Martha went to meet Him and said unto Him, *"Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother had not died";* Mary said the same when she fell down at Jesus' feet. Why did the Lord permit Lazarus to die? He loved him and his sisters. He could cure him. Why did He not come in time. The sisters in their great sorrow could not understand Him. But soon they would see that their brother's death was for the glory of God, and that He, in whom they believed, would be glorified. When Christ came to the

grave and commanded to take away the stone that lay upon it, Martha tried to hinder it, for the body had been dead already four days and was decaying. But Jesus said to her, *“Said I not to thee if thou wouldst believe thou shouldst see the glory of God?”* Then, when the stone was taken away the Lord lifted up His eyes and said, *“Father, I thank Thee that Thou hast heard Me. And I knew that Thou hearest Me always, but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that Thou hast sent Me.”* And when He had thus spoken He cried with a loud voice, *“Lazarus, come forth.”* *“And he that was dead came forth.”* Lazarus was alive again and many who came to Mary and saw this miracle believed on Him (John 11). Thus was Lazarus' death and resurrection the means to reveal the Lord as the Son of God and to praise His Father in heaven. And so must everything the Lord does serve to God's glory and to man's salvation, even if we cannot see or understand it here. It may be hidden now, but will in the end be comprehended and clearly understood.

Whatever God ordains is good. He leads His children through many tribulations over rugged hills and thorn-infested fields, but the way leads home into their Father's house. Though we must experience hunger and thirst, poverty, sickness, persecution, though lonesome we must wander through deep waters and through the valley of the shadow of death, and must part with those who are dear to us, though God's mysterious plans in vain we ponder and heaven's counsel still to us is sealed, everything must work out for good to us who love God. Thousands, many hundreds of thousands of souls would have gone astray and be eternally lost if God in His wisdom and merciful kindness had not led them through great troubles and afflictions on the narrow path unto eternal life. We therefore sing –

*“Take Thou my heart and hide it in folds of grace,  
Though weal or woe betide it to know Thy face.  
Draw, Lord, of Thy good pleasure Thy child to Thee  
And grant me faith full measure, though nought I see.”*

God rules and governs the whole universe, heaven and earth, and everything contained therein. *“The Lord looketh from heaven; He beholdeth all the sons of men. From the place of His habitation He looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. He fashioneth their hearts alike, he considereth all their works”* (Psalm 33:13). *“The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and his ears are upon their cry. The face of the Lord is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.”* *“He putteth down the mighty from their seats and exalteth them of low degree.”* *“He resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble.”* *“He knoweth the way of the righteous but the way of the ungodly shall perish”* (Psalm 1). God governs everything, nothing can nor does happen without His will or permission. This is most certainly true, and it is revealed unto us in the Word of God for our admonition and for a warning as well as for the consolation of God's children.

*“Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?”* asks the Lord. *“The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder and cast away their cords from us.”* But *“He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall He speak unto them in His wrath and vex them in His sore displeasure. Yet have I set My King upon My holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree, The Lord hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of Me and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel”* (Psalm 2). God removeth kings and setteth up kings. He giveth wisdom to the wise and knowledge to them that know understanding. There is nothing saved by the multitude of an host and a mighty man is not delivered by much strength, and those who profess to be wise become fools. During the last decades many changes have taken place in which a Christian recognizes the ruling hand of the Lord. Czars have been assassinated, emperors dethroned, kings and rulers compelled to abdicate, and monarchies, centuries old, have been swept away. What an impressive warning! New systems of government have been introduced by war or revolutions, such as democracy, dictatorship, totalitarian states, national socialism, bolshevism, and communism; a revolutionary spirit is pervading every nation of the world; through disputes and strikes whole states, yea, whole nations, are made to suffer real losses, annoyances, want, and all sorts of troubles, and many anxiously ask, What has the future in store for

us? One nation wants to rule the seven seas, another the air, a third the continent; they all are looking out for trade, power, supremacy. One must see that it is the Lord who rules the world and has fixed the borders of every country and its destiny. Because the rulers of the world and their governments try to arrange all affairs without God and exclude the Lord from peace tables, letting the prince of the world fill their hearts with hatred, envy, suspicion, rapacity, and ambition and vindictiveness, the whole world is like a volcano and in uproar, and peace finds no place here any more. Since men refuse to submit to God and to His government, since they despise the Lord and reject His Word and have become wholly obdurate, the Lord lets them have their own way, and the result? War, destruction, utter, everlasting ruin. What a warning for all ambitious rulers and politicians.

*“Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling”* says the Lord, and *“kiss the Son, lest He be angry and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little”* (Psalm 2:11). Every man, whether king or subject, every government, whether monarchy or democracy, which sets God aside and opposes His will must perish. God rules the world and every man must fear Him and be subject to Him. We must not question His power nor His right to do as He pleases. We are told to pray, *“Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven,”* and must willingly, without grumbling, submit to His will. When Satan under God's permission deprived Job of all his property, when on one and the same day his ten children were killed, Job humbled himself before God, saying, *“The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord”* (Job 1:21), but when Satan smote him with sore boils from the soles of his feet unto his crown he sat down among the ashes and cursed the day of his birth. Had God not delivered and saved him He would have perished. What a warning not to murmur against the Lord.

When after the first world war Germany was crushed to the ground, when six million unemployed turned to communism, when money depreciated to such an extent that a letter to foreign countries cost two hundred and fifty thousand million marks, 296,600 people committed suicide in their great distress. They had lost all faith in God and in His government, so they despaired. Utter ruin and despair is the end of all who reject God and do not believe in His providence.

Some time ago a man asked me on the street if I believed in God. When I answered, “I certainly do,” he said, “If there is a God, why did He not prevent this war? Why does He permit these terrible crimes to be committed?” Then his friend asked, “Do you believe in the Bible?” When I told him I did, he began to curse and to swear. Thousands of fathers and mothers blasphemed God when they lost a son at the front; instead of submitting to God's will they cursed. What will be their end? God is not mocked.

A child became seriously ill. When her pastor visited the mother and offered to pray for the child the mother assented but when the pastor prayed, “If it is Thy will, O God, if it is possible,” the mother cried aloud, “Not if it is God's will. It must be God's will, it must be possible, I do not want to lose my child,” it was impossible for the pastor to quiet the mother. But the boy recovered and became an ill-behaved child. When he grew up he caused his mother much pain and sorrow; he finally became a criminal and ended his life on the gallows. When a child of a minister became seriously ill, the father urgently besought the Lord to save his beloved son. Though his conscience told him to add, “Thy will be done,” he could not say the words. The boy recovered, but after a few years he met with an accident and became a cripple for life; he suffered much and needed all the attendance of both his parents. How often and with how many tears did the father then admit his little faith and expressed the wish, “O, if my son had died when he was so ill; what sufferings would he have been spared, and we with him.” --- God never makes a mistake. He wants us gladly and willingly to submit to His will, even though we cannot understand it. How many parents whose children went astray, have wished they had died when they were young. Is it not better to know our children to be safe in the arms of Jesus than lost in the sins and pleasures of this world. Let it be a warning unto us not to grumble if God's ways are hidden from us.

Though God's ways are mysterious and unsearchable and His judgments past finding out, He teaches and reveals to us in His Word that He is a holy God who threatens to punish all that transgress His commandments, yea, that He visits the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation. Jerusalem was destroyed and her whole population led into captivity because of her sins; and

droughts, floods, conflagrations, epidemics, pests among men, beast, and on the field, wars, bloodshed, earthquake, etc., are, according to God's Word, punishments of God for the unbelieving world and an apostate Christianity. They are to teach the world that God is not mocked and remind the Christians of their duty to work out their salvation with fear and trembling. When we are asked. "Why these terrible wars and this bloodshed? Why this misery and destruction?" our answer must be, "It is our own wickedness and sin for which we are punished." God calls the world to repentance, the whole world, and especially all those who claim to be Christians. And let us not deceive ourselves when others are punished and we are spared. We all deserve the same punishment. You see a man collapse and die in the street or meet with an accident and be killed. Why not you? Hundreds and thousands of pious Christians fell on the battlefield, and hundreds and thousands of unbelievers and scoffers safely returned. Judge not; speak not of the sins of others, think of your own. And if God in His great mercy spared you and abundantly blessed you, He wants to test your charity. He afflicts and grieves others to arouse your compassion and induce you to comfort and help them. *"Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? When thou seest the naked that thou cover him, and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh,"* says the Lord.

O how much could be done for the poor, the sick and suffering, for orphans and poor children in slum districts if the love of Christ filled the hearts of the Christians. God wants His children to have and to show compassion on all who suffer according to God's inscrutable government. Try to learn this and you will more and more understand the wisdom and mercy of God in His mysterious and miraculous government.

God rules the world and every individual. Nothing can happen without His will. He governs His Church, He governs all His children. This is most certainly true, and in this truth all children of God find the most glorious comfort and consolation.

"Whatever God ordains is good, Holy His will abideth,  
I will be still whate'er He doth, and follow where He guideth.  
He is my God, though dark my road, He knoweth how to shield me.  
Wherefore to Him I yield me."

When doubt in our salvation fills our hearts because of our many sins, when despair threatens to crush our souls, we find consolation in the assurance that our salvation lies in the hands of our crucified Saviour, to whom all power is given in heaven and on earth and who says, *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand"* (John 10:27). *"The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanses us from all sins,"* we read in the Word of God, and *"Where sin abounded grace did much more abound,"* and thus we learn to speak with the apostle, *"I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus."* What a comfort to know God looks after our salvation. He governs our whole life. He wrote our name into the book of life, we are His children, His royal priesthood, He will see to it that we reach the goal.

When great poverty oppresses and grieves us, when our children cry for bread, but the larder is empty, when there is not a penny in the house, and we are unable to pay our debts, even our rent, and must fear to be driven out of our home, to lose our farm, to become insolvent, how comforting is it to know we have a rich Father, who is in heaven, who can and is always willing to help; who can never leave nor forsake us. *"As a father pitieth his children so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him."* *"Behold, the fowls of the air,"* He says, *"for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?"* and *"If God so clothe the grass of the field which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?"* (Matt. 6:25); therefore in poverty and all distress cling to Him. He who points the clouds their courses, whom wind and waves obey, He will direct thy footsteps and find for thee a way. Leave all to His direction, in wisdom He doth reign. And in a way most wondrous He will His course maintain. Await His time with patience, then shall thine eyes behold the sun of joy and gladness, His brightest beams unfold. Are you tired, worn out and feeble? Does it seem as if your life had been unsuccessful, all your labours and your endeavours in vain? Do not complain, even

though your work often seems unblest and dreary and scant the sowing for eternity. It is the Lord, who has your work appointed for you and He says, "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2). God does not look at our successes, they are His, not ours, but at our faithfulness; and He blesses a faithful servant. Therefore do not despair though small thy harvest be, thy work is not in vain, as once thine eyes shall see.

There are many here and in other countries who have parents, brothers, sisters, near and distant relatives in Europe, who have lost everything and are homeless, friendless, sick and starving. The conditions are so terrible that we cannot describe, not even imagine them. We can understand how their hearts must be troubled and be exceedingly sorrowful, especially as no information regarding relatives has so far been obtainable, and it is impossible for them to help. But God wants us to trust in Him, who governs the world, who cannot forsake them that trust in Him, and can change all sorrows into joy and happiness. Though help seems to be impossible, with the Lord nothing is impossible. Only believe.

You are sick; for weeks, months, years you have been bed-ridden. You cannot count the many sleepless nights, the many tears you shed, the many prayers for help you sent to heaven, but you know of little relief, you feel a burden to your loved ones, the costs for hospital, nurses, doctors and medicine are great. You often wish, O that I could die, but you linger on. Is there really no comfort for you? There is. God knows what ails you, and He says, "*I am the Lord, thy physician,*" and He makes no mistake. His diagnosis is always correct. Think of the sick man at the Pool of Bethesda, who had been ill thirty-eight years. What a long time! Had he reason to despair? When the Lord saw him He cured him by His almighty word, and His power is still unlimited. Think of the many sick which the Lord healed when He was here on earth. A leper said to Him, "*Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean,*" and Jesus touched him, saying, "*I will, be thou clean,*" and immediately his leprosy was cleansed. He said to John the Baptist's disciples, "*Go and show John those things which ye do hear and see. The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up*" (Matt.11). The Lord's hand is not waxed short. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever. To Him is given all power in heaven and on earth. When His hour is come He will deliver you from all evil. Trust in Him, who rules the world and has promised you, "*No evil shall befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.*" Is it an evil when your home is destroyed by fire, but in the ashes you find a tin with sovereigns, twenty or fifty times the value of your destroyed home? Is it an evil to lose an arm or leg, or become a cripple, if thereby you obtain eternal life, which you were in danger of losing. Remember God rules your life. He has given His angels charge over you; they shall bear you up in their hands lest you dash your foot against a stone. Though you cannot see the Lord, He is with you always; though you do not feel His help, He will not leave nor forsake you; though you must still suffer and must remain in bed for many more months, yea, even to the end, you are in His hands and everything must work out for good to you if you trust in Him. Therefore be content and ask the Lord ---

Lead Thou me on, lead me my journey through, in weal and woe,  
No other light, no guide but Thee I know, with Thee I'll go;  
Cheer Thou my heart, My faith and hope increase,  
'Midst storm and strife, let all within be peace.

Speak with the psalmist, "*Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise Him, who is the health of my countenance and my God*" (Psalm 42:11). If your heart is troubled, if there is no peace in your home but constant strife between you and your wife or husband; if your children no longer obey you but go their own way, leave the church and become worldly-minded; if those you love are in danger of being forever lost, trust in the Lord, commit thy cares to Him, and pray without ceasing and the Lord will hear you. He governs also the hearts of men.

When the world hates you and persecutes you because you are a Christian, when they drag your name through the mire and say all manner of evil against you falsely, when you must suffer, yea, die for Christ's sake; God's wonderful providence and government gives you comfort. Remember the Saviour's words, "*In the world ye shall have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.*" How can the world harm you, when Christ protects and defends you? But also think of what your Master expects of you.

*"If any man will come after Me,"* He says, *"let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me."* Remember that it is God's will and so ordained that we can only through many tribulations enter the kingdom of heaven. *"He that taketh not his cross and follows after Me is not worthy of Me; he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it."* Knowing that our life is in God's hands, that He watches over us and protects us on all our ways, we can exclaim with the psalmist, *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea. Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah. There is a river the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved. God shall help her."* What supported the Christians in the last war during the terrible bombardments from the air? Their faith in God's miraculous government. In all troubles of this world, in all distress and anxiety, in all attacks of Satan and his followers the Christian relies on God's providence and sings with Luther, "Though devils all the world should fill, all eager to devour us, we tremble not, we fear no ill, they shall not overpower us. This world's prince may still scowl fierce as he will; he can harm us none, He's judged, fore'er undone, one little word can fell him."

Our life is in God's hands. He turneth man to destruction and saith, Return, ye children of men. When He calls we must go. When our hour is come we must depart. Death is the greatest foe of mankind and fills the heart of men with terror and despair. No man knows how soon, how suddenly death may be here and life be gone.

Thousands, hundreds of thousands die every year by accidents. The children of the world who believe in chance, in an evil fate, but not in the government of a holy, just and merciful God mourn without having any hope. The children of God mourn too. Mary and Martha, even Jesus Himself wept at Lazarus' grave. Also for Christians it is hard, very hard to lose a beloved child an only son, father, mother, husband, wife; but they submit to God's will. *"What I do,"* said the Lord to Peter, *"thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter"* (John 13). What we do not comprehend here we shall understand hereafter. No Christian dies too young. He dies when the appointed time has come, and he knows, for him to die is gain. He knows that his Redeemer liveth. He clings to Christ, who is the resurrection and the life and who said, *"He that believeth on Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live, and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die"* (John 11:25). He knows that through death he shall enter eternal life. He buries his beloved ones in the firm conviction that he will meet them again at Jesus' feet, and thinking of his own death he prays ---

Be Thou my consolation, my shield when I must die.  
Remind me of Thy passion when my last hour draws nigh.  
Mine eyes shall then behold Thee, upon Thy cross shall dwell,  
My heart by faith enfold Thee, who dieth thus, dies well.

As a child in its mother's arm so rest the children of God in the arms of their Lord and Saviour. To Him they commit themselves, body and soul and they firmly believe that the Lord will preserve them by His mighty power unto eternal life.

O, blessed are all who trust in God's government; they are blessed in time and eternity. There are no men anywhere who are happier than the true Christians who, with Luther can confess, "I believe that God richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life; that He defends me against all dangers and guards me and protects me from all evil." They trust in God, and the Lord lets none of them be ashamed. And all this God does purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit and worthiness in us. For all which it is our duty to thank and praise, to serve and obey Him; this is most certainly true. Thus we confess, every one of us, and thanking God for His wonderful, miraculous, yea, mysterious government we pray, "Since then neither change nor coldness in my Father's love can be, so I lift my hands with boldness, as Thy child I come to Thee. Grant me grace, O God, I pray Thee that I may with all my might, all my lifetime, day and night, love and trust Thee and obey Thee, and when this brief life is o'er praise and love Thee evermore." Amen.