

SURREY TABERNACLE PULPIT.

A GOOD GOVERNMENT.

A Sermon

PREACHED ON SUNDAY MORNING, NOVEMBER 17TH, 1861, BY

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AT THE SURREY TABERNACLE, BOROUGH ROAD.

“His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me.”—Psalm lxxxix. 36.

As the government of the Saviour is here compared to the sun, I shall go a little out of my usual way in order to give at least just one sample of the *greatness* of the works of God in creation, and give an outline of the sun and the planets dependent upon the sun; or, as it is called, the solar system. The sun is ninety-five millions of miles from the earth, and is nearly three millions of miles in circumference, and it would take *thirteen hundred thousand* of our globes to make a globe of the same magnitude as is the sun. The sun is in itself a solid opaque body like our earth, but its power of attraction, and diffusing light, is incalculable. Then we leave the sun, and find planets travelling round the sun in larger and larger orbits, at greater and greater distances from the sun. The first we come to is Mercury, about thirty-seven millions of miles from the sun, its circumference ten thousand miles; it goes round the sun in about three months. The next, Venus, millions of miles further from the sun, is about twenty-two thousand miles in circumference, and goes round the sun in about nine months. Then next in order comes our Earth, which goes round the sun, as you know, in twelve months. Then comes Mars, a hundred and forty-five millions of miles from the sun, about thirteen thousand miles in circumference, and goes round the sun in about two years. Then comes the planet Jupiter, four hundred and thirty-five millions of miles from the sun; its circumference being two hundred and seventy-eight thousand six hundred miles; it goes round the sun in about twelve years. The next in order is Saturn, distant from the sun nine hundred millions of miles; its circumference two hundred and forty-eight thousand miles; it goes round the sun in about thirty years. The next in order is Uranus, distant from the sun eighteen hundred millions of miles; a hundred and ten thousand miles in circumference, and goes round the sun in eighty-four years. The next and farthest planet of the solar system yet known is Neptune, almost three thousand millions of miles from the sun, circumference a hundred and fifty thousand miles; it goes round the sun in a hundred and sixty-six years: so that *one* year in the planet Neptune would be equal to a hundred and sixty-six of our years; and if a railway carriage could have set out, at the rate of twenty miles an hour, it would take,—setting out from the sun,—it would take just about twelve thousand years to reach the uttermost planet of our system. So that, if a railway carriage had set out when the world began, and had been going, from that day to this, twenty miles an hour, night and day, it would not be quite half-way yet. Now, that is only our system. But these planets, together with a great many inferior planets, and a vast number of comets that we see nothing of, belong to our system; and yet all these are but one system, amidst countless millions—there are, it is clearly demonstrated now, countless millions of worlds, and that our globe and all, yea, the sun and all that appertaineth unto it, may be blotted from existence, and would not be missed by those who could take in only, I was going to say, a mere fraction of the infinite whole. What must be the skill

of the Almighty?—what must be his power?—what must be his perfections? We feel overwhelmed in the contemplation of the scene. And then if we look for one moment at the fact that all these worlds hang upon nothing, what a mystery is this? And then, if we look—I cannot forbear just making one remark upon the three-fold motion which these planets just them have; first, here is the diurnal, as with our earth, a little more than a thousand miles and hour; and then, second, here is the annual, about sixty-eight thousand miles an hour,—that is a pretty good rate; and then, third, the sun, in addition to going round on its own axis, progresses with all the planets dependent upon it, and has been coming up from infinite depths ever since the foundation of the world. So that, in addition to these internal motions of the planets and of the sun, they all have a progressive motion. So that we never occupy the same space twice. So that we are at this moment sixty-eight thousand miles from where we were an hour ago; and we shall never be in that place again. The whole system goes progressing on, and yet all hanging upon nothing. And yet, as I have said, this is only one out of countless millions of systems. And yet this God is our God, my hearers. When we look at God, as far as we can, through the greatness of his works, we may well join with the Psalmist, and say, “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; what is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?” And these few facts I have stated,—for I have not attempted to speak with anything like scientific accuracy,—these few facts are demonstrated beyond all dispute. They can be no more doubted than can the doctrine of solar and lunar eclipses, which we have all witnessed. So, truly, “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handywork.” The poet might well say of these bright orbs,—of these wondrous worlds,—

“For ever singing, as they shine,
‘The hand that made us is divine.’”

The dear Saviour then, I say, is compared to this great central orb, upon which all the worlds depend to be kept in their orbit; upon which they depend, in a word, for all the good they have. What would this world be without the sun? All would be blank, and all would be dark.

First, then, in the government of Christ, we have *fruitfulness*, or, in other words, by the government of Christ we have a land of plenty. Sin destroyed everything, but, by the Lord Jesus Christ, there is a new inheritance, a new state of things, a land of plenty; and that land of plenty is associated with everything essential to our welfare, and to the glory of God. I refer now especially to the 33rd of Deuteronomy. You read there of the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and of the precious things put forth by the moon, called, in the next verse, the “chief things of the ancient mountains, and the precious things of the lasting hills.” You will observe that the fruits brought forth by the sun mean, of course, the harvest, and pasturage, and also the fruits of the earth; in a word, it means all that by which we are sustained. Now, you will readily see that silver and gold, and all the absolute creations of men, would be of no avail for our sustenance. You see, what we want is sustenance—that is the essential. No nation can prosper without that; we cannot exist without that; and so, by the Lord Jesus Christ, there is an end put to famine. The Lord Jesus Christ brings us into a land where our need shall be supplied; and then to come to it spiritually, the Lord speaketh thus. We will suppose, for instance, that you are brought to feel so much of your destitution and unworthiness of the least of the Lord’s mercies, and brought to feel, somehow or another, so guilty, and so weak, and so wretched, you hardly know what to do with yourself, or what will become of you; now, the Lord has a land of plenty by which he will

supply your need; and, to lay the figure aside for a moment, and to come to the Lord's own account of it, he speaketh thus—and this is all expressive of the luminous and glorious government of the Lord Jesus Christ,—the Lord saith, "My grace is sufficient for thee." No doubt that thorn that came into Paul's flesh, which he calls a messenger of Satan, was something blasphemous against God; something that stirred up Paul's nature—infidel and blaspheming nature. Saul had been a blasphemer; and the devil knew that. Saul had been an enemy to God; and the devil knew that. And no doubt this was a renewed exercise of those principles, and that by the power of Satan; and the apostle felt that, to remain in that state, was to go almost beyond the reach of the grace of God. And we may take it for granted that, in his ruminating over it, he would think thus:—"Is it possible for such a guilty, filthy wretch as I am, to be pardoned? What a heart I have! and here is a messenger of Satan as well! What a poor, guilty, miserable creature I am! Can mercy ever come to me? Can grace ever reach me?" Now the Lord steps in, in all the majesty of his eternity, and of his infinity, in and by Jesus Christ,—“My grace is sufficient for thee.” Jesus Christ hath ripened all the promises of the gospel into perfection. Now, the promises of the gospel being by Jesus Christ ripened into perfection, I would take these promises to be indicated by the corn, and the fruits, and the pasturage, and all those things that are brought forth; and then, I say, stripped of the simile, and to speak in plain language, it comes to this, “My grace is sufficient for thee.” And the apostle not only felt his deep guiltiness and depravity, under this operation of the messenger of Satan, and the rising evils of his nature, but the apostle also felt his utter helplessness, and therefore the Lord said, “My strength is made perfect in weakness.” And there came light with the words; for whenever the Lord speaks, it always gives light. I can generally judge whether I get a text from the Lord, by the light that attends it. Whenever I get a scripture from the Lord, it comes into my soul; there is a light, and a pleasure, and some degree of gladness; and it somewhat endears the Saviour, and it comes into my soul in a way that I know none but the Lord can bring it. “The entrance of thy word giveth light.” And so the apostle understood this matter, and said, “Most gladly, therefore, will I glory in mine infirmities.” I think, for the word “infirmity” there, we may substitute another word—not because there is any fault in the translation—I don't mean that—it is merely to bring out the meaning, that's all; and I think we may substitute the word “necessities,” which I think would make it very clear,—“Most gladly, therefore,” says he, in another place, “will I glory in my necessities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me;”—the power of Christ's victory, of Christ's salvation and government, to reign over him—so that the Lord would not give him up; grace still remained the same. “Most gladly, therefore, will I glory in my necessities,” for as fast as my necessities arise, there is grace to supply those necessities. Thus he was brought into a fruitful land; he was brought into the land of promise,—into the land of the gospel. He was brought into that land described in a great many places in the Bible; and I will just mention one scripture, that lovely scripture in the 32nd of Isaiah: “And a man”—and we know who that man is,—it is the Sun of Righteousness—“a man shall be as an hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.” Here, then, in this gospel land, first, in contrast to the law of God, where there is nothing but destitution; and, secondly, in contrast to sin, where there is nothing but misery; and, thirdly, in contrast to mortality, where there is nothing but death,—in contrast to all these, here, in this gospel land, by Jesus Christ, there stands the declaration—these precious fruits, these yea and amen promises, that assure us of the sufficiency of God's grace, and the sufficiency of his power—“My strength is made perfect in thy

weakness." Ah! Lord, "when I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers," and then this same God who made them all, coming to me in that same omnipotency, and saying to me, "My strength is made perfect in thy weakness"—ah! how safe I am there, where, as Watts sings,—

"Where is the power can reach them there,
Or what small force them thence?"

Thus, then, the intention of the government of Christ is to supply the necessities of the poor and the needy; and all that are reconciled to his government are welcome there; but those who would cast him down from his divinity, or would cast him down from his purity, as the Irvingite system does, or would cast him down from his sovereignty, as free-will and duty-faith do,—for free-will and duty-faith are both bastards, and they are both brothers too;—they are both of one father, the devil, and they are both of one mother, old Hagar;—now these would cast him down from his sovereignty, and such persons are not welcome in his kingdom; for he shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them that are partakers of the mystery of iniquity.

It is the poor and the needy that are brought down to his feet, and made to know their need of his grace, his power, and the promises he has ripened into perfection; all these are welcome in the land. Rahab would not have been welcome if she had said, "Well, I know your God hath given you this land, and I should like to be one of your people, but I don't intend to give up my Canaanitish gods." "Then you are not welcome to our God." But she had done with her Canaanitish gods, and therefore she was welcome to the God of the Hebrews. Ruth had done with Chemosh, the god of Moab, and therefore she was welcome to the God of the Hebrews. Ah! that sweet scripture, "Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." But then, not only in this government of Christ is there every abundance to supply our need, but mark the addition. What would the plenty I have touched upon be without good will? There are many people have abundance in providential matters; but then they don't have it with good will one to the other; and this want of good will spoils everything. Many families are very unhappy for want of good will one towards the other. But it shall not be so in the family of our God. Hence you find, in that same blessing of Joseph to which I have referred, and which is an epitome of the whole government of Christ, after the plenty is set before us, the next thing, to show that this government shall be enjoyed, that it shall not be marred by the presence of any evil or adversary, it says, "And for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush." Now God, or the angel dwelling in the bush, is evidently a type of Christ dwelling in the likeness of sinful flesh. Christ took upon him the likeness of sinful flesh, and in that likeness of sinful flesh he had no sin, but he endured all the thorns of sin; he endured all the briars, all the griefs and all the sorrows of sin, and herein lies the good will with which our Father has given us these good things; herein lies the good will of the Saviour; herein lies the good will of the eternal Spirit. And if thou hast a good will toward Jesus as the sin-bearing Lamb; if thou hast a good will toward him in having put away sin by the sacrifice of himself; if thou hast this good will toward him, then I am sure the Lord hath a good will toward you, for your good will toward his dear Son is the token and the sign and the evidence that the Lord has a good will toward you. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power;" and the next words are, as you are aware, in the hundred and tenth Psalm, "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." So then, in this government of Christ there is not only plenty, but the good will of God; and the people shall be brought to a good will; he hath a good will to them, and they shall have a good will to him, and this good will shall remain, and that for ever.

I never feel at home with people that have not a good will toward Jesus Christ in what he has done; for the Saviour saith, and that is coming as low, I was going to say, as the word can come, "Blessed is he whosoever is not offended in me." Here is a government, then, not only of plenty, but of good will.

But then, it is also said of Joseph, "His glory is like the firstling of his bullock;" at once directing our attention to the sacrificial excellency of Christ. Here is the plenty; here is the good will; and then comes the sacrificial right to it: "His glory is like the firstling of his bullock;" there is the right, you see. So, the Lord Jesus Christ having put away sin, this plenty rests upon right, and this good will is in sweet accordance with right, his sacrifice having perfected for ever all them that are sanctified. Such is the government of Christ; this is the way the Lord rules over us, by the amplitudes of his grace, by the goodness of his will, and by the sacrificial excellency of his dear Son. Ah, my hearer, if you could but see a little more into your heavenly Father's love to you, and counsels on your behalf, and the sacrifice that has been made on your behalf, I am sure you would love him more, be less afraid of him, think less of the few troubles of the way, and, with the saints of old, would be more eager to press forward for the ultimate prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus the Lord.

But this is not all. The next representation we have of this government, after the plenty, the good will, and the sacrificial right, is that of power. Joseph's power follows the indicated sacrifice, and so "his horns are like the horns of unicorns; with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth." So Jesus Christ's power originates in his sacrifice; it is his rightful power; his right to exercise power arose from his sacrifice: "Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof; for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests." Christ obtained all power in heaven and on earth by his sacrificial excellency. "And he shall push the people together." Ah! I like that: they will never go back again. How does he push them together? By showing them their necessities; and he makes necessity push them together: necessity forces them in. He destroys all false refuges, all false gods, and all fleshly religion, and they become poor and needy, and by-and-bye, when they understand this matter, they will then sing with the poet,—

"'Twas the same love that spread the feast
That sweetly forced us in;
Else we had still refused to taste,
And perished in our sin."

Bless his dear name, then; he hath achieved all power; he did no sin, and therefore never lost anything. He not only did no sin; he not only stood clear in the negative, so as not to lose anything, but he stood clear in the positive, to gain everything, for he gained dominion over everything. His doing no sin is the negative side, so as to lose nothing; and his fulfilling the law, and actually suffering the penalty due to our sin, putting away that sin by the sacrifice of himself, and his own omnipotent arm bringing salvation, and his obtaining eternal redemption,—this is obtaining everything. So that he set out, as we have lately had occasion to observe, in the fifth of Revelation, with a solitary crown on his head; but in the nineteenth chapter he hath many crowns. Antichrist, you will see, loses all his crowns; he sets out with seven crowns, and ends with many none at all. Christ set out with a solitary crown, and ends with many crowns, to show the progression of his conquest. "He shall push the people together to the ends of the earth." What shall he push them into? Why, into his land of plenty, into his good will, into acquiescence and harmony with his sacrificial excellency. And then, mark the happi-

ness of the people thus brought together in the government of Christ. Who are they? Why, "they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and the thousands of Manasseh." Why is Ephraim brought in? Why, to denote prosperity. Ephraim signifies fulness, prosperity; and therefore it means that these people shall never come to want. But why is Manasseh mentioned? Suppose you could carry a sight and sense of your griefs, and losses, and sins, and troubles, and burdens with you to heaven, you could not be happy, even if you did not carry any guilt with you; if that were gone, if you could carry a vivid recollection with you and sense of the griefs and troubles you have had, you would not be happy. So, then, Manasseh is mentioned last, to set before us this delightful truth, that the time shall come—that will be the last, you know; you will never be able to say you are brought to a perfection of happiness until the last tribulation dies. "And Joseph called the name of the first-born Manasseh; for God, saith he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house." Oh, what a moment that will be when everything shall be swept from the memory, and nothing be thought of but the love of God, the salvation of God, and that vast, that glorious eternity which you have before you. Ah, this is religion, then, my hearer, to be brought into this land of plenty as a poor and needy sinner; to be brought into this good-will of God, to be brought into this sacrificial excellency of Christ, to be brought under his constraining power, to be brought into the prosperity of his kingdom,—for in his days shall the righteous flourish,—and to be brought into this forgetfulness: and I honestly and plainly, and at the same time affectionately, tell you that one end I have in view in preaching is, to make you forget while you are in the house of prayer, sometimes—at least for a few moments—the things that trouble you. And when you are sometimes taken up, if it is only for a few moments, by the blessed truths of God in a way that makes you cast your cares and burdens upon the Lord, and forget your troubles, is it not a relief? Is it not a kind of oasis by the way? Does it not stand out as a kind of fertile spot in distinction from the general solitude and desert-like experience which you have? I think Job meant something of this when he said, "Thy visitations have preserved my spirit."

The next thing indicated by the sun, taking the Bible for my guide, is *victory*. Tenth of Joshua, "Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, moon, in the valley of Ajalon. And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day. And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man." We say nothing of the philosophy of the matter, we have to do with the divinity of it. Let us apply this now. Did not the Lord Jesus Christ in his humiliation stand by us until he had wrought the victory. Did he not even stand still at Calvary's cross until he had wrought the victory? And he would not go down, he would not die, he would not give up the ghost, until your last foe was conquered. Oh, my hearer, I cannot describe to you the sweetness of those moments that the soul has in coming into a recognition of the completeness of Christ's victory. He stood by us there. And there was no day like that before it or after it; and I am sure there was no day like the day on which Christ died, and there is no day like it after it, for no other such day will ever be needed; it is done, and done for ever; this conquering King hath conquered once, and conquered for ever. And as he stood by us there till the victory was complete, so he will now. The Israelites were not left in the dark; and will he leave you in the dark? Has he shown you the way of salvation, and now forsake you? Has he brought you so to see Jesus Christ, and to say of Jesus Christ that he is the chiefest of ten thousand, and the altogether lovely, and now forsake you? Hath he

brought you into the land of plenty, brought you into his good will, into harmony with it, and brought you to the knowledge of his sacrificial excellency, his power, and the blessings of his people; and although you cannot rejoice, yet you can see that they and they only are truly blessed that are in such a case. Think you he hath thus showed you the gospel, brought you out of darkness into light, slain your enmity, and given you a hope, and now the light will depart, now the Lord leave you and forsake you? Ah, how did he come to you at the first? Did he come to you on the ground of anything good in you? That he certainly did not; for you were dead in trespasses and sins. Well, then, if he came to us in mercy then, will he come to us in wrath now? If he loved us then, will he hate us now? If he received us then, will he reject us now? If we hold that doctrine that he will reject us now, we shall run in our reasoning directly counter to the apostle. The apostle says, "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more, then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." Ah, if the Lord meant to destroy you, he would not have shown you the victory of Christ, nor brought you into the light of his eternal truth. I am fully aware that knowledge that has no communication with the heart is only head knowledge; knowledge puffeth up, but charity buildeth up. Perhaps you will say, Well, I can see the order of eternal salvation, and I like you as a minister because you are decided and honest upon these matters. Well, all that you may see and all that you may say, and yet be dead in trespasses and sins. How am I to distinguish, then? You can distinguish only by that one quality—love; for if a man have the truth, and have not the love of it—Now, come, do you love God the Father in his choice of a people, in that great act of eternal election? Do you see that no sinner can be saved without that? Do you love God the Father there? Yes. And do you love Jesus Christ in what he has done? Yes. And do you love the Holy Spirit in his sovereignty? Yes. And do you love the truths of the gospel? Well, then, if your knowledge be such as to endear to you the truths of the gospel, then you are a child of God; you are born of God; you are a subject of the Saviour's kingdom; you will never be lost, never; for you have no ear, no eye, no heart, for any gospel but God's gospel. His government then shall be as the sun; as the sun stood still to give the victory, so Christ stood by us till the victory was wrought; he stood by us in his humiliation. And he is not like creatures; we always look at those men as paltry, little-minded men, who by a little worldly exaltation become pompous, consequential, and lift their heads above the people of God. Ah, those poor people, I will not go there any longer; I will not mix up with them any longer; I am now a great man. Yes; you are, and you are a great fool, too. Whereas, the man that is taught of God, whatever his worldly exaltation, he thinks nothing of it in comparison of the truth of God and the salvation of God. Moses saw great earthly advantages before him, and he threw them all overboard; if he could not have the two together, if he could not have the earthly advantages that were before him and the truth of God both; if he must cast one or the other away, he through grace cast away the inferior and held the superior. And you may depend upon it Moses never repented of what he had done. No; it is very likely he, like the rest of us, remembered the way which the Lord God led him, and in after years, when God talked with him face to face, Moses said, Ah! what a choice through grace I have been favoured to make; I despised all the honours of Egypt, and was enabled to prize God's truth; here I am in the happy consequences of it; here is my face shining with the glory of God. There I might have been bedizened with precious jewels, and had a little fleeting

honour; but here I have untarnished and untarnishable honour, here I have true riches, here I have everlasting glory. Moses might well say, "Show me thy glory; the rest may go, Lord, so that I see thy glory." No glory like the glory of our God.

But, third, the sun means also *assurance*. How significant those words are in the twentieth chapter of 2nd Kings, the words of Hezekiah, "What shall be the sign that the Lord will heal me, and that I shall go up into the house of the Lord the third day?" And the sun went back ten degrees upon the sundial. Now, I confess I have no scripture to confirm what I am going to say, but I cannot get the notion out of my head; I like it uncommonly well. The sun went back ten degrees. Now there certainly are ten commandments in the law, and we will call each commandment a degree; and Jesus Christ certainly did go forward all his lifetime, he never went back all his life, and shone upon every one of those commandments, and wrought out righteousness. But after Jesus Christ had walked over the whole by an active life of obedience, he had to go back again and begin atoningly; so that he had to go back in his death to the beginning of the law, and go over all the commandments in a way of suffering, and atone for every sin, and thus drive away every cloud, and make everything clear; and that is the sign the Lord will heal you, and you shall go up to his house. It is the sign, the pledge, the assurance.

How do you know that you shall have a place in that house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens? Because what Christ has done and my soul are one; my soul is one with what he has done; and what he has done is the pledge, that is, the assurance, that I shall be healed. But he says, "the third day." How beautiful, if we take the two together! Who can deny that the death and resurrection of Christ are implied in those words—his death in going back the ten degrees, and the third day pointing to Christ's resurrection? The Old Testament saints knew that he would rise the third day; hence it is written, "After two days he will revive us, in the third day he will raise us up." "With my dead body they shall rise." Now, all these things are to endear the Lord, and may the Lord give us an increasing understanding of them. Some people say, I would not overload the brain too much. Bless your heart, you can never study the Word of God too much. The Bible is like its Author, it is exhaustless. I have preached out of it in my time twelve thousand sermons,—make a largish library if they were all printed; and all out of my own cistern, bless the Lord for that,—not borrowed. I love knowledge in its place, but there is not anything will bear a moment's comparison with the Word of God. Pray to thy Father in secret, and when you see good things in the Bible ask God to give them to you; he won't say No; and if he doesn't give you that part you ask for, he will give you something as good, or better. "Go not to glean in another field," to Ruth, "neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens." We are sure to do well in that field upon which are the eyes and heart of the living God. The Bible is a field which the Lord hath blessed.

Then, fourth, when the Saviour died there was darkness over the earth from the sixth to the ninth hour, to indicate the presence of our sin; and at the ninth hour, when the Saviour bowed his head, the sun reappeared, to indicate the end of our sin; finished transgression, made an end of sin. I am sorry I have not time nor space for the other part, namely, *the constancy of the sun*.