

# Man's Misconceptions of the Works of God.

by Horatius Bonar

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*God's connection with earth is real and direct, and He speaks to us through natural phenomena, bringing us a message of divine goodness and love.*

**Scripture:** Job 36:31, Psalm 19:1-4, Psalm 104:14-15, Isaiah 40:26, Matthew 6:26, Matthew 10:29-31, Luke 12:6-7, Acts 14:17, Romans 1:20, James 1:17

**Topics:** "God's Sovereignty", "Understanding God's Voice"

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## Description

Horatius Bonar emphasizes that God's governance and judgment over nations are evident through natural phenomena, which serve as His voice and means of communication with humanity. He argues that God's presence is not distant but intimately involved in the world, using everyday occurrences to convey messages of care, warning, and love. Bonar warns against the misconception that separates God from His works, urging believers to recognize the divine meaning in both the beauty and calamity of creation. He highlights that both nature and Scripture harmoniously reveal God's goodness and desire for humanity's joy and repentance. Ultimately, Bonar calls for a deeper understanding of God's continuous interaction with the world and the messages conveyed through His creation.

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## Transcript

"By them he judges the people." - Job 36:31

"By his mighty acts he governs the people." - Job 36:31

This verse suggests Acts 14:17, "He left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." Both passages call on us to listen to the voice of God speaking to us through what are called "natural phenomena." By "judging" we understand more than inflicting judgment, more than sitting as judge, or sentencer, or executioner. It means "ruling" as well, wielding the scepter and governing. By "people" we specially understand the gentile or idolatrous nations of the earth; or generally the inhabitants of earth. Two things are here declared, first, that God judges the nations; secondly, that he does so by the changes and occurrences of nature.

I. He judges the peoples (or nations). This judging is not a thing of the past, or of the future merely; but of the present. He has been, and he is now "judging." Creation is past, the new creation is future, but governing is now. All are equally sure and true; and they who deny the present governing or the future

interposition in the great day, might as well deny creation. God's connection with earth is as close and as direct now as ever. Not so obvious or so visible, but quite as real. A thing does not need to be visible, or audible, or palpable in order to be direct and real. Many things are the latter which are not the former. The power of the silent and distant moon over the sea; of the atmosphere over all life; of the soul over the body in every movement: these are instances in point.

Only God's connection with earth is more real and direct than these; for in Him we live and move and have our being. His purpose comes in contact with earth and its dwellers; not generally and by means of laws, but directly and minutely. His will, his voice, his hand, his arm, all come into contact with this world, as well as with all other worlds, the creations of his power. He has not left them alone. He sustains and rules as truly as he creates them. Not for a moment does he let go his hold. He is the governor among the nations. He rules by his power forever; his eyes behold the nations. He does according to his will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.

It is with no distant, unheeding God that we have to do; but with that God who fixes the bounds of our habitation, who counts our hairs, who feeds the ravens, notes a sparrow's death, clothes the lilies of the field. He is nearer to us than the nearest earthly object or being; more closely in contact with us than we are with one another. All other links are as nothing compared with this; they are threads, this is an adamant chain.

II. He judges the people by means of the changes of nature. We use "nature" for lack of a better word: we mean earth and sky with all their motions, and alternations, and transformations, great and small, all "natural phenomena" as they are called. These phenomena, or appearances, appear to us common things; by some ascribed to "chance", by others to "laws of nature." Here they are ascribed directly to God. They are His voice by which He speaks to us, His finger by which He touches us, His rod by which He corrects us; His sword, by which He smites us. It seems to be the thought of many, that in none of these can we or ought we to recognize, directly and specially, the interposition of God; that it is fanaticism to interpret them so as to make them special messengers of God to us.

But the words before us are very explicit, "By his mighty acts he governs the people." The things by which He is here said to judge and govern the people, are the common things of the day and year- the rain, the clouds, the lightning, and such like. He uses these as His voice in warning, or commanding, or chastising, or comforting. These common things do not come by chance, or at random, or by dead law, but go out from God as his messengers. Thus everything has a divine meaning and a heavenly voice. Let us listen and interpret and understand.

Summer speaks to us with its green fields and fragrant gardens; winter speaks to us with its ice and snow and frost. By these God judges the people. The pestilence, the famine, the earthquake, the lightning, the storm, the shipwreck, the overthrow of kingdoms and kings. Each of these has a special message to the nations- and to each of us. Let us see God drawing near to us in them- showing His care and love- manifesting an unwearied concern for our welfare.

Woe to us if we either misinterpret them, or refuse to interpret them at all. The common daily changes of personal or family life, all speak in the same way. Not only the sweeping calamity that carries off its hundreds, but the sickness, the pain, or the gentle indisposition, these have a voice to us. He that has an ear, let him hear! We disjoin God from creation, and so see nothing in it of divine life and power. We disjoin God from the changes of creation, and so find no meaning in these. We disjoin God from the

beautiful or the terrible, and so realize nothing in them which overawes, or attracts, or purifies, or comforts. We have so learned to separate between God and the works of God, that we seem to imagine that they contradict each other.

The fair sky, and the clear stream, and the green hills, all speak of divine goodness, and bring to us a gospel which can hardly be mistaken. But we have learned to deny the gracious meaning, and to say that all this beauty means nothing, and contains no message from God, and embodies no glad tidings of great joy.

This separation of GOD from His works is one of the awful features of human unbelief. How much more of Him should we know, were we to interpret His works aright, and hear His voice in each, whether in love or discipline. These skies of His are not bent over us in beauty without a meaning. These seas of His do not roll for nothing. These flowers of His are not fragrant and fair for nothing. They do not say to us, God is your enemy, He hates you; but God is your friend, He pities you, yearns over you, wishes to make you happy. How full a gospel does creation preach to us, according to its kind and measure!

The separation of the works of God from His WORD, is another sad feature of human unbelief. Creation and inspiration are in harmony. The Bible does not contradict the works of Jehovah. It means what they mean; and they mean what it means. Each little part of both speaks out most intelligibly. God wishes to be understood in both. Men would misinterpret both; they try to discover as little of God as they can in both. Yet both preach the same gospel. In both we see the goodness of God leading to repentance; in both we discern the loving-kindness of the Lord. The fact that we sinners are out of hell is one gospel; that we who should have been in hell, are dwellers on a fair and fruitful earth, is another; God in these ways showing that He has no pleasure in our death or misery, but in our life and joy.

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