

**A SERMON DELIVERED BEFORE HIS
EXCELLENCY GEORGE N. BRIGGS,
GOVERNOR, HIS HONOR JOHN REED,
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR, THE HONORABLE
COUNCIL, AND THE LEGISLATURE OF
MASSACHUSETTS, AT THE ANNUAL ELECTION,
WEDNESDAY, JAN. 6, 1847**

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A sermon delivered before His Excellency George N. Briggs, governor, His Honor John Reed, lieutenant governor, the honorable Council, and the legislature of Massachusetts, at the annual election, Wednesday, Jan. 6, 1847 by John H. Bisbee

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JOHN H. BISBEE

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GOVERNOR,

HIS HONOR JOHN REED,

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR,

THE HONORABLE COUNCIL,

AND

THE LEGISLATURE OF MASSACHUSETTS,

AT

THE ANNUAL ELECTION,

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 6, 1847.

BY JOHN H. BISBEE,

Pastor of the Church in Worthington.

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COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS.

IN SENATE, January 7, 1847.

Ordered, That Messrs. Shepard, Rising and Perkins, be a committee to present the thanks of the Senate to the Rev. JOHN H. BISBEE, for the Discourse delivered by him yesterday, before the Government of the Commonwealth, and to request a copy thereof for publication.

CHARLES CALHOUN, *Clerk*.

S E R M O N .

II Samuel, xxiii. 3.

THE GOD OF ISRAEL SAID, THE ROCK OF ISRAEL SPAKE TO ME,
HE THAT RULETH OVER MEN MUST BE JUST, RULING IN THE
FEAR OF GOD.

“THE most essential quality in any government,” says a distinguished writer, “is justice.” This is unquestionably true. It may be safe, therefore, to affirm, that any government is good, and accomplishes the object for which it is properly instituted, in proportion as the principles of justice are inviolably maintained.

The only perfect government, of which we have any knowledge, is characterized by the never-failing administration of justice, at the head of which, as Supreme Lawgiver, Governor, and Judge, is a “just God.” Human governments approach perfection, in proportion as they embrace those excellencies which constitute the Divine.

It is a principle, asserted by our fathers, and maintained by us, as fundamental, that "government is instituted for the common good ; for the protection, safety, and happiness of the people," which is virtually but another form of expression to denote the maintenance of justice in the most comprehensive sense of that term. It is designed to secure to all, the undisturbed possession and peaceable enjoyment of their " natural, essential and unalienable rights."

God has wisely instituted civil society, and ordained human government. " There is no power but of God." " The powers that be are ordained of God." This truth, though often perverted by the despotic, and made to defend tyranny and oppression, is still none the less important, and surely not less worthy to be defended.

As King of kings and Lord of lords, God has described the character which rulers should sustain, and has specified the great and leading principles in accordance with which all their official acts should be performed.

" The God of Israel said, the Rock of Israel spake to me, He that ruleth over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God." This, though spoken centuries ago, is as true now as then, and as important to be regarded. It is the assertion of a claim which God

has upon those who stand at the head of human government as an "ordinance of God."

The text implies that rulers, in the discharge of their official duties, may have difficulties to encounter, and obstacles to overcome. And there are, it may safely be presumed, always in existence, causes more or less powerful which, in their operation, tend to prevent justice, disturb the order, and mar the harmony of society, and thus to defeat "the end of the institution, maintenance and administration of government." These, however, are not always precisely the same, but vary according to time, place, and circumstances. Each generation is characterized by its own peculiarities, and has its own prominent, well-defined features. Each, it may be, has its peculiar virtues, and, perchance, its distinguishing errors. No two generations, more than any two individuals, are, in all respects, precisely alike. Though in many things there may be a striking resemblance, yet in many other important respects, there is an equally manifest diversity.

It may be appropriate to the present time and occasion, therefore, to contemplate some of those causes which now exist, and inquire what is necessary in order either to remove them, or so to meet and counteract their effect, as to protect society